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Do Good Fences Make Good Neighbors? An Investigation and Analysis of the Nature of the Trinity College and Surrounding Neighborhoods Relationship as Seen Through Gates

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Do Good Fences Make Good Neighbors?

*An Investigation and Analysis of the Nature of the Trinity College
and Surrounding Neighborhoods Relationship as Seen Through
Gates*

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Submitted to Professor Jane Nadel-Klein

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to the Gates and their Effects

Mending Wall – Robert Frost

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors'.
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows?
But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather

He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me~
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

(Frost and Untermeyer 2002:95)

Robert Frost, the great American poet, dissuaded his readers from interpreting the content of his poems as anything other than what he had written in plain ink. In the case of the "Mending Wall", "He denies that the poem says anything more than it seems to say" (Frost and Untermeyer 2002: 95). I, however, cannot read this poem solely as words on paper. I use this poem as an introduction to my exploration of the gates surrounding Trinity College. I use this poem to eloquently illustrate the notion of a gate. And I use this poem as a stimulant, for poems are open to constant interpretation, and it is through my own interpretations that I stumbled across a situation, a relationship, and a problem that has become my study of interest at hand.

It is hard to know exactly what Frost intended to say when he put pen to paper, but what is clear is that there is a contradiction in this poem, between two types of people, two spirits. The poem tells a story of two men, the speaker and his neighbor, meeting one day to embark on their annual wall mending. Frost opens his poem with the speaker announcing, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall" (1), only to later hear from his neighbor that, "Good fences make good neighbors" (27). The two statements juxtapose one another; while the speaker expresses a desire for

freedom, his neighbor dictates the importance of upholding traditions and uniformity. This juxtaposition becomes clear when the speaker articulates the nature of their annual meetings to mend the fence, emphasizing the two sides of the conflict: "And on a day we meet to walk the line/And set the wall between us once again./We keep the wall between us as we go." (13-15). The imagery here is overwhelming, as Frost describes the role of barriers in human interaction. The speaker and his neighbor physically oppose one another. The complex nature of this poem makes itself clear when you realize that this physical opposition is fundamental to both parties' task, that of mending their shared wall.

The next theme that is introduced is larger than the distinction between two individuals, and applies to the breadth of society as a whole. The speaker states, "To each the boulders that have fallen to each./And some are loaves and some so nearly balls/We have to use a spell to make them balance:" (16-18). Herein lies the notion of segregation, to use the broadest term. Although he is speaking about the stones that make up their wall, Frost is emphasizing the disappointing nature of segregation in society. The boulders that make up these neighbors' shared wall continue to fall, year after year, and yet each year they both set out to put them back in their designated place. This reconstruction is representative of societies role in creating barriers, physically as well as socially. Things do fall apart, barriers are broken, fences are removed, and yet there is something that is inherent within society that maintains divisions.

These divisions are articulated in the poem as the speaker states that: "He is all pine and I am apple orchard" (24). On either side of this wall there is a juxtaposition of flora, on the neighbors side, a coniferous landscape, while the speaker's is deciduous. Here the conflict becomes one that can be observed nearly anywhere in the world, the sole trait that dominates all others, power. "My apple trees will never get across/And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him./he only says, "Good fences make good neighbors" " (25-27). Here it becomes clear that the fence is what structures their relationship as neighbors, where one, the speaker, is weaker than the other. This is the turning point in the poem, where the speaker begins to question this relationship that has come to mimic their wall. He asks what I asked myself when I began my study, "Why do they make good neighbors?" (30). He gets to the heart of the matter, discovering the true nature of the barrier and its relationship with its surroundings, stating:

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
and to whom I was like to give offence.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall, (33-36)

What is the purpose of a wall? Is it used to retain its contents, to keep something in? Or, is the purpose of a wall to dissuade those on the periphery, to keep something out? And to whom does this restriction effect, and how? The speaker expresses his desire for wall-breaking as a means of establishing trust between peers. A simple feat in theory that in reality proves seemingly impossible.

In response to this radical desire for both freedom and unity, the poem concludes on the other side of the barrier, with his neighbor. It is in this conclusion that the notion of upholding social norms is emphasized, generating a sense of hopelessness in respect to the potential for change. "He will not go behind his fathers saying,/And he likes having thought of it so well/He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors." (44-46). In other words, the wall, the fence, the barrier, the structure that creates this divide, is a human tradition. Barriers exist in the world of Robert Frosts "Mending Wall" because they always have, because they are commonplace in society, and because they provide structure in ones life whether we recognize it or not. However, through the careful words of the speaker, it is made clear that this notion of a barrier can be challenged, for it elicits a sort of divide that defines "us" and "them", and it is the individual who creates and maintain this notion, just as his neighbor maintains his wall.

You may be curious as to why have I taken the time to analyze this poem. This poem has been read by people all over the world, and being a poem, is open to a number of different interpretations. Through my analysis, however, I believe that the stage has been set, and the themes have been introduced that will allow me to dive into my study of the gates that surround Trinity College and their effects on the campus-neighborhood relationship. Themes present themselves in this poem that reach the heart of the issues I have come to recognize during my three years spent at Trinity. Power, surveillance, detaining and retaining, homogenized notions and the fear of breaking them; all of these issues come with a gate, whether one see's it or not.

Trinity College is a prestigious small liberal arts college that is located in the heart of one of the East coasts many post-industrial factory cities, Hartford, Connecticut. If one were to read this in a college pamphlet, it would not appear unique; there are hundreds of small liberal arts colleges on the East coast. What makes the College unique is the character of the school and that of the city it is located within. They juxtapose one another; the disparity between the two is black and white, figuratively and literally. This juxtaposition, given the geographic situation, and the symbolic sub-structures that underlie the way communities operate has created a tense environment grounded in ignorance.

Hartford has certainly felt the effects of the departure of the industrial boom of the late 19th century. Like other factory cities in New England, take Worcester and Lowell for example, the City of Hartford experienced a massive influx of immigrants before World War II. At this point in time, there was no stigma attached to being poor; everyone was poor, or in other words, a very small minority of the population belonged to the upper class (Pawlowski 1973). After World War II a shift occurred that created a broad scale notion of a lumpen lower class. The poor became a minority, they were those who did not succeed, the left over's, those who had been rejected from the industrial boom. It is at this time that Hartford became socially and structurally divided on ethnic, racial, and class terms, and has remained as such through today.

Today when you look at Hartford you see the old factories and warehouses, many with windows broken, bricks missing, appearing exactly as they are,

abandoned. In the heart of the city there are a few skyscrapers advertising insurance companies, one of Hartford's profitable businesses. There is the modern faced public library, the elegantly designed Wadsworth Athenaeum, and of course, the gold plated Capitol building, boasting intricate gothic architecture and placed delicately atop the green hill of Bushnell Park. This picturesque image is limited; moving South from the downtown area, a separate world unfolds before your eyes. Here, one enters the world of three-story apartments, their facades stained with rust and graffiti, family owned ethnic restaurants, abandoned homes, chain link fences, bodega's on every corner, and Trinity College.

To contrast this vision of poverty in the South end of Hartford, walking along Broad Street, New Britain Avenue, Allen Place, or Summit Street, one will happen upon a series of black wrought-iron gates. Ten vertical poles to each gate, forming a spear point at each tip; these are the gates that surround Trinity's campus. The gates line the entirety of Broad Street, opening on both ends of Vernon Street, they line Allen Place opening only at parking lot entrances. These same gates line about half of Summit Street, leaving the other half of the Street exposed. The gates briefly form again on New Britain Avenue until they hit Broad Street again, coming full circle around Trinity's campus. It would be easy to think nothing of these gates, for there are fences throughout Hartford, lining homes and apartment complexes. What makes this situation impossible to ignore, however, is what lies within. Peering through the openings one will see green manicured lawns, a state of the art athletic turf, and of course, the gothic style chapel with its 49 bell Carillon, creating the

highest point seen from land. The campus is clean, neat, and organized; it is picturesque.

The communities mirror the landscapes they reside within, serving to further exacerbate the visual juxtaposition of the neighborhood and the College. In the communities neighboring Trinity College, one will find a diverse population. I spent many hours observing the interactions that occur around the gates, and in doing so, gained a solid idea of the demographic that live in the neighborhoods around campus. Residents surrounding Trinity are mainly of Hispanic origin. The age range of those moving about the environment is broad; any given day one is likely to see young children walking home from school, teenagers riding bikes with friends, young-adults with children, adults walking home from work, as well as elderly individuals. Baggy jeans and hip-hop brand apparel accurately characterize the dress of many residents surrounding the College. To contrast this image, looking into the gates, one will undeniably notice a mass of Caucasian students, with only a handful of African America, Hispanic, and Asian students sprinkled into the mix. Wealth is obvious, in dress and in accessory. It is not surprising to see a Lexus and BMW in the same lot. As far as clothing is concerned, the fit and style is representative of upper class East Coast America, with tailored cuts and conservative elegance.

For three years I have been a member of this community inside the gates. With blonde hair and a North Face backpack, one could not distinguish me from the crowd of students walking to and from the dining hall. It is as though Trinity College

is an island, surrounded by a sea of the unknown, unwilling to set foot in the water, with divisions defined by the tides that just barely reach the shoreline. The gates that surround campus serve as a literal representation of this shoreline. Robert Frost addressed the hidden structures that a gate imposes upon those who interact with it; given the context that I find myself in today in light of my fast approaching graduation and the recent concerns on campus this past year I feel as though the gates that surround campus deserve to be explored in a similar light.

So what is it that you see when you look at a gate or fence? There are countless styles, and with each style, there is a distinct purpose. Gates can be used for agricultural purposes, like one would see on a farm to hold livestock. There are perimeter fences, used to distinguish ones property, and, to prevent exit and entry. There is such a thing as a mere decorative fence, imposed to enhance the appearance of ones property or a certain feature of their landscaping. To add to this palette of purpose, there is the added option of design and construction of said fence. By simply driving through a neighborhood you are bound to run into a number of fencing designs including: chain-link fencing, concrete fencing, palisade fencing, picket fencing, post-and-rail fencing, stockade fencing, vinyl fencing, wrought iron fencing, hedge fencing, stone fencing, and of course wire fencing. Given this vast array of design and purpose, it should be clear that fences are deliberate structures; they do not just appear, they are installed.

There are certain places where fences are required, such as prisons where detainment is the motive. These are not the sorts of fences that I am interested in. I

am interested in fences of free will, fences that were consciously constructed, the types of fences that you see in residential areas, like those surrounding Trinity's campus. Physically, it is clear what a fence delineates, but what are the underlying notions that push an individual to put up a fence? A fence physically divides an area into two distinct environments; it is a partition. Within this context the motives are clear, either the individual installing the fence wants to keep certain things in, or they want to keep other things out. But fences are much more than mere visual deterrents, and what many individuals don't consciously perceive still effects their subconscious thoughts and actions; this is the power of symbolism.

Gates as Symbols

Surely the fences are put up for a reason, but what are the structures that shape this reasoning? What are the larger issues at hand that pushes an individual, a family, a college to put up a fence? What does this say about the parties involved? And above all else, what does this say about the relationship they share? In asking these questions I believe it is first important to briefly explore the nature of cultural symbols, and here I turn to the work of late anthropologist Clifford Geertz.

Clifford Geertz, one of the great American anthropologists of the 20th century is fondly revered as the father of symbolic anthropology. His methods of research and study were based on the examination of cultural symbols. In his essay, *Religion as a Cultural System* (1973), Geertz articulates what he means when he uses the term "symbol", for although many appear simple at first glance, his conceptualization of the term boasts a system of inherently complex thought.

Geertz is eager to discern what defines a symbol in anthropology by first laying out all assumed definitions. He writes that, "In some hands it is used for anything which signifies something else to someone" (1973:91), using the term symbol to represent something of a precursor to a situation. He goes on to say that, "In others it is used for explicitly conventional signs of one sort or another" (1973:91), utilizing a symbol as a representation of something else. He offers another definition, stating that a symbol can be, "...confined to something which expresses in an oblique and figurative manner that which cannot be stated in a direct and literal one" (1973:91), where a symbol is used as a sort of alternative language of expression. Finally, he presents the definition that he himself utilizes, writing that, "In yet others, however, it is used for any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception – the conception is the symbols "meaning"" (1973:91). He uses the example of the Cross in Christianity; a symbol that represents meaning within faith, persons who interact with the Cross hold it to be something in and of itself. With the appropriate definition of a symbol articulated, Geertz goes on to define why a symbol is representative of meaning and states that it is because, "...they are tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs" (1973:91). This being said, what can be interpreted as a symbol is not limited, for the utilization of symbols is inherently social, as they are public in nature, and culturally grounded in humankind.

Geertz introduces the notion of culture patterns as being synonymous with systems of symbols in that they are extrinsic sources of information, by which he

means that the information symbols provide, "...lie outside the boundaries of the individual organism as much in that intersubjective world of common understandings into which all human individuals are born, in which they pursue their separate career, and which they leave persisting behind them after they die" (1973:92). In other words, symbols are not specific to the individual, but to the community in which they lie as a whole, be it on a broad scale like that of the Cross and Christianity, or on a micro-level like what we see in the gates that surround the Trinity College campus that have been built into the context of their surrounding neighborhoods. In short, symbols provide the means that enable us to socially and psychologically shape the behavior that they induce.

While he makes a point to clearly define what he perceives to be a symbol (interchangeably referred to as a model) in anthropological studies, he goes even further to delineate a model *of* something versus a model *for* something. When Geertz uses the term model of, "...what is stressed is the manipulation of symbol structures so as to bring them, more or less closely, into parallel with the pre-established nonsymbolic system" (1973:93). In contrast, with the term model for, "...what is stressed is the manipulation of the nonsymbolic systems in terms of the relationships expressed in the symbolic" (1973:93). The two definitions seem to mirror one another, making the model's representation either based in its symbolic or nonsymbolic form.

What must be understood, however, is that this notion of one or the other in terms of defining a model of versus a model for is not relevant. The reason for this

lies in what Geertz deems the “intrinsic double aspect” (1973:93) of culture patterns. In other words, when it comes to examining culture and symbols that exist within culture, one cannot place more emphasis on the nonsymbolic implications or the symbolic form. The two act together and, “...give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves” (1973:93). Therefore, to study a cultural symbol, one not only has to explore the manipulation of the symbolic structure in relation to its nonsymbolic system (for example, the gates in relation to the attitudes on and off campus), but also the manipulation of the nonsymbolic systems in relation to the symbolic (in other words, how the attitudes on and off campus define the gates’ purpose). By carrying this system of study out together, one binds a symbol to its socio-cultural context.

So far, Geertz’s primary definition of a symbol has been explored, and in doing so we have only managed to scratch the surface of understanding what Geertz meant when he established this semiotic approach to anthropology. He writes in his work, *Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols* (1973), that, “The role of such a special science as anthropology in the analysis of values is not to replace philosophical investigation, but to make it relevant” (1973:13), this, in short, is what I am attempting to do in the many pages that follow. The countless varieties of symbols found within cultures across the globe are in a sense clues. They are studied in the hopes of recognizing the unseen, finding the cultural context within a coded situation. While the pursuit of this cultural context involves an interaction with the symbol itself, Geertz clarifies that, “...meanings can only be “stored” in

symbols” (1973:1). This gives me hope. Hope that in the pages that follow, through my bold articulation of the current campus-neighborhood climate, I will open the eyes of those who as a collective, have the potential to break down this symbolic and physical barrier that currently surround the campus.

It would be easy for me to continue defining Geertz’ theory in more and more detail, for he certainly has enough literature to explore. Instead I would like to illustrate how Geertz’ notion of a symbol, and the tools used to analyze this symbol, can be tied to the physical structure that is a barrier, be it a fence, wall, or gate. One might think that this notion is far-fetched, for what is a white picket fence around a colonial house in American suburbia today? This, however, is not the context that I have observed, and it is the context that grounds the symbol within a culture specific to Trinity and its neighbors, as Geertz writes, “...man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun” (1973:3). The barrier that I have studied takes the form of this wrought-iron gate that surrounds the perimeter of the Trinity College campus that I have described; a gate that divides the haves and the have-nots, so to speak.

The intention of my study has been to investigate the relationships that Trinity and the surrounding neighborhoods share. Through fieldwork, research in existing literature, and various interviews with members of the community both on and off-campus, I aim to highlight the conflicting messages that are sent and received between the existing gates. I hope to expose the misunderstood and disappointing nature of the relationship at present, and identify what much change

in order for a positive relationship to be fostered. The gates that surround Trinity serve as a symbolic representation of the assumptions that pervade the campus regarding its neighbors, physically and mentally dividing “us” from “them”. I will explore the history of gated communities, and their associated notions of gentrification and segregation, urban fear, class and power dominance, and finally the current climate on campus in regards to increasing concerns about safety and the negative effect the proposals to fully gate off the campus will have on this potential relationship.

Chapter 2

Demographics, Statistics, and an Introduction to the World of Gated Communities

The city of Hartford is divided into seventeen distinct neighborhoods: Blue Hills, North End, North Meadows, Clay Arsenal, Upper Albany, West End, Asylum Hill, Downtown, Sheldon Charter Oak, South Green, Frog Hollow, Parkville, Behind the Rocks, Barry Square, South Meadows, South End, and South West. The Trinity College campus is located between three of these neighborhoods, settled into the heart of the city residing mainly within the Barry Square neighborhood, and bordering Frog Hollow and Behind the Rocks. Geographically, the campus and the community are irrevocably entwined, but the nature of the campus and the obvious visual disparity between the campus and the surrounding neighborhoods fosters assumptions, which give rise to tensions, and result in overwhelming attitudes that paralyze the potential for action, and thus, for a relationship

From early September through late December 2011, I spent time observing the periphery of the campus. My primary focus was on the interactions that members of the neighboring community had with the gates that define the campus from its surroundings. At this time I find it imperative that I paint a picture for you, the reader, of the landscape that I, as well as the rest of the Trinity community and the surrounding neighborhood residents, are located within every day.

The three neighborhoods surrounding Trinity College span no more than 1.7 miles, with populations ranging from 9,024 residents in Behind the Rocks, to

roughly 15,000 in Barry Square, and 19,000 in Frog Hollow (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The vast majority of residents are between the ages of 18 and 29 years old. In all three neighborhoods, over 50% of the population is listed as Hispanic, with roughly 15% self-identified as Black, and about 15-25% identified as White. Roughly 45% of the neighborhood residents are foreign-born, leaving about 55% as U.S.-born citizens. The population of single parents in the neighborhood (about 25%) outweighs that of married families with children (about 15%). As far as education is concerned, about 50% of residents have less than a high school education, with about 24% having something equivalent to a high school education. Finally, between 25% and 40% of the residents in these neighborhoods live below the poverty line (CityData 2009).

With these statistics in tow, let me now delve into the statistics and demographics of the Trinity College community in order to provide a basis for comparison. Trinity College is situated on 100-acres of land in the middle of the three neighborhoods that surround it. 2011/2012 statistics conducted on campus note that the total number of undergraduate students consists of 2,325 persons. With the total number of minority students on campus a mere 23%; 5.5% of which identified as Asian, 6.3% as Black, 4.6% as Hispanic, and 6.5% identifying themselves as being of more than one ethnicity. To emphasize this dismal showing of diversity let me reiterate that this being said, about 77% of Trinity Students are White. 72.5% of Trinity Students live in the Northeastern United States, 17% of which reside in Connecticut. I assure you however, that this is not to say that 17% of these individuals live in Hartford. Connecticut is a large state that borders New

York City, where many students' parents commute to work. About 48% of Trinity students attended private high schools, with roughly 44% attending public schools. 39% of Trinity Students receive financial aid, a statistic I find to be somewhat surprising given the fact that tuition in 2012, including room and board, lies at \$55,450 (Hughes 2011), making Trinity the 13th most expensive college in the nation (O'Shaughnessy 2011).

Based on statistics alone, it is clear that the neighborhoods surrounding the College, and the College itself, experience life through entirely different lenses. Where one depicts poverty in youth, a lack of formal education, a lifestyle of independence, and a majority non-White public, the other boasts a well-off, educated community, reliant upon family for shelter and monetary means, blanketed within a primarily White populous mirroring shared values. The College community may be different from the neighboring communities, but these are the circumstances the College and their neighbors find themselves in. Given how inherently distinct these two populations are, it is doubtful that the makeup of either community will change dramatically in the near future, but again, these demographics are not the problem, they are merely the circumstances.

The problems are many, and the solutions will be difficult to implement. By shedding light on the notion of a gated community and the negativity it entails, I hope to make clear the issues that lie within the Trinity College community in regards to its relationship with its neighbors. It is at this point that I would like to

not only define the term gated community, but also point out the inherent values that are associated with their membership.

Is Trinity College a Gated Community?

Trinity College, with neat gates lining its periphery, manicured lawns, and a Porsche-driving populace, has visually defined itself as inherently different from the community that surrounds it. It is these unjustified notions of inherent difference that separate the campus from the community, and it is the gates that serve to facilitate this applied separation.

Upon distributing an online survey to members of the Trinity community, one question posed was, "Would you consider Trinity to be a gated community?". The results show that 89.7% of students said that no, Trinity is not a gated community (Schuster, 2012). This statistic is staggering, lending to the fact that there is close to a unanimous consensus among respondents that Trinity is not a gated community. Gates surround the College. Yes, they have openings and do not completely restrict access to campus, so in this respect the College is not definitively gated. My surprise no doubt comes from the research I have done regarding the nature and history of gated communities in America, which has confirmed the fact that Trinity College conducts itself as a gated community. There is an overwhelming visual and social desire for an idealized oasis lifestyle on campus, and a rigidly maintained homogeneity that gives rise to the socio-economic and socio-cultural stereotyping that is seen in most gated communities.

In defining a gated community, let us first explore its most basic definition. According to Webster's Dictionary, a gated community is, "...a form of residential community characterized by a closed perimeter of walls and fences, and controlled entrances for pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles. Gated communities usually consist of small residential streets and include various amenities. For smaller communities, this may be only a park or another common area. For larger communities it may be possible for residents to stay within the community for most day-to-day activities" (Webster's Online Dictionary N.d.). Within this definition there lies a paradox. It is true that at this point in time, the gates that surround Trinity are not entirely closed, and thus, are not physically controlled to keep non-Trinity members off-campus. Regardless, the gates remain a clear symbol, defining that which is inside from that which is outside. Furthermore, Trinity College as a gated community is representative of what Webster defined as a larger community, in that students are provided all possible amenities on campus, and thus can, and do, stay on campus for most, if not all day-to-day activities.

I argue against this majority opinion of the campus community, believing that because of the amenities and the population that resides within these gates, Trinity College is in fact a gated community. It must be fundamentally understood by the entire College community that these gates do much more than simply stylize the landscape; the gates are a symbol, and what is inherent within this symbolism is a reflection of the values held by the majority community residing within their confines.

In my on-campus survey, I asked students what purpose the gates served, giving the options: Protection, A deterrent, Merely visual in nature, A tool to define campus, and providing an open-response box. 62% of students who responded found the gates to be merely visual, and 55% found them to be a tool used to define the campus (Schuster 2012). Again, while it is true that the gates do not restrict access to campus, they do make access difficult. The issue at hand is not what the gates do per-se, but rather what they say. We have previously investigated the symbolism surrounding gates and fences, but this investigation was one absent of players. That is, we have investigated what a gate means symbolically without the fundamental human contact that defines its nature and fosters their symbolic representations; this is where I turn next.

Picture This...

You are walking through your neighborhood, noticing houses of similar style to that of your own, differing only in color, landscaping, etcetera. Your eyes are passively engaged in that which lies before you, as the scenery blends together after so much repetition. Suddenly you come upon a property that is lined with tall gates, its potential for opening only found at its entrance. This catches your attention; you are now actively engaged with the environment. As you peer into these gates you notice that which resides within its confines is exponentially different than its external surroundings. At this moment you step back, comparing this fortress to the seemingly exposed homes that line the rest of the street. All the while you are wondering why; why does this home have a gate when the rest do not? Is it because the owners of this house want to keep something out? Or is it that they want to

keep certain things in? Does this reflect their judgment of the neighborhood? Do they see it as unsafe, surrounded by a community of deviants? Is this merely a sign of ostentatious showmanship?

The chances are that in a situation such as this, these questions will remain unanswered. This is a large part of the problem. While these questions linger in the minds of the majority community, assumptions are made, and quickly engrained into a population's concrete opinion; this is something I have come to recognize at Trinity. I can speak from experience when I say that there are a set of baseline opinions that the majority of the Trinity community hold, or are at least familiar with when it comes to the surrounding neighborhoods and their residents. These opinions, illustrated physically, socially, and mentally, revolve around prestige, urban fear, and privatization/segregation; all of which are notions that are fundamentally representative of a gated community mentality.

Though walling off areas has been a symbol of class delineation, exclusivity, and security since the medieval times (Low 2003:13), gated communities in urban America have grown exponentially in the past 30 years. It is at this point that I would like to turn to the literature regarding gated communities, and explore the trends and reasoning that push communities to put up a fence. A quote from Teresa Caldeira, from the collection of works entitled *Theorizing the City: The New Urban Anthropology Reader*, serves as a brief and concise preface to what implications come with a gated community mentality. She writes that, "A new aesthetic of security shapes all types of constructions and imposes its new logic of surveillance

and distance as a means for displaying status, and it is changing the character of public life and public interactions” (2003:87). Upon sifting through the literature, it becomes clear that all fortified enclaves share the same basic characteristics. These include; private property that is not for collective use, a community that is turned inward away from the streets that surround it, controlled by some sort of security system or enforcement, separate in social makeup from that of its surroundings, and finally, containing a demographic that is for the most part socially homogenous (Caldeira 2003). Sounds a lot like Trinity, no?

Chapter 3

What Comes with a Gated Community?

Prestige Within Gated Communities

Between 2001 and 2009, the United States experienced a 53% growth in gated communities (Benjamin 2012). This increasing frequency brought with it certain notions that were tied to the lifestyle that serve to define this newfound residential status. The politics of homeownership, if you will, were based on ones quality-of-life and what came with being an upper/middle-class American. Gated communities, quickly becoming a new form of urban livelihood in the 1980's, became "...codified as something conferring high status" (Caldeira 2003:88). This construction of a new sort of status symbol, "...is a process that elaborates social distance and creates means for the assertion of social difference and inequality" (Caldeira 2003:88). Blakely and Snyder, in their extensive study of gated communities in America, have come to term gated communities as prestige communities (1997). This is not surprising, for when a fence is put up there is an immediate sense of belonging; that of belonging either in or out of the gates that define the residential community.

In the case of Trinity College and its relationship with the surrounding community, I find the notion of class and power to be dominant. As mentioned earlier, Trinity is one of the most expensive colleges in the country, and paradoxically, Hartford is one of the poorest cities. In an interview with David Corrigan, the head of the Frog Hollow NRZ (Neighborhood Revitalization Zone), an

organization concerned with reviving the area from its current impoverished and somewhat stagnant state, articulated the visually imposing appearance of prestige the Trinity community imposes upon the neighborhood the surrounds it. When speaking of the gates that run along campus, he made a point that along Summit Street, there is no fencing. This is because the College does not own Summit Street, and the majority of Summit Street is linked to housing and parking, therefore a gate would make entry and exit difficult. He noted that while this stretch of campus was not gated, parallel to it lies Broad Street, a stretch that is fully gated. He said that while these two borders reflect different restrictions regarding access to campus, from Zion Street, in the Behind the Rocks neighborhood directly under Summit Street, Trinity looks like a fortress. The famed Long Walk buildings tower above Summit Street, with its arches, narrow windows, and intricate rooftop piping. To neighbors passing by, this towering structure exudes an air of danger and defense, as if there could archers in the windows looking down upon those that are barred from entry to the prestigious fortress that is the College. On the other side of campus, from Broad Street, Mr. Corrigan notes that Trinity looks like a prison, with its black wrought-iron gates lining the streets entirety, giving outsiders a mere glimpse at life on the inside. While life on the inside does not by any means appear unpleasant, from this angle there resonates the idea that what is inside must remain inside, and that which is outside must similarly remain as such (Corrigan 2012).

These two distinct perspectives of campus capture this air of exclusivity that is associated with gated communities. There is a duality of inclusion and exclusion when you look at a barrier of any kind. This impression comes from both sides of

the fence, and it is an impression that is often times, as in the case with Trinity and its neighbors, reliant upon visual cues and grounded in unjustified assumptions. At Trinity the aura of prestige and dominance oozes from within the gates. This aura no doubt goes on to affect those beyond the gates, rooting itself within the surrounding communities, fostering an image that illustrates an assumed fundamental difference and an air of upper-class righteousness.

While the notion of prestige is common in gated communities, as they provide amenities and exclusivity to those who reside within their confines, this notion becomes problematic when these feelings and assumptions spread beyond the community in question. Unfortunately this spreading is inevitable, especially in circumstances where visual juxtapositions are obvious; like at Trinity. In the survey I distributed throughout the campus community, one question asked was how students on campus thought the neighboring communities would characterize the College community. I gave the options: Intelligent, Wealthy, White, Pretentions, Open, Accepting, Diverse, and left space for open-commentary. The results show that the vast majority of students believe the surrounding neighborhood would classify Trinity as a wealthy, white, and pretentions community (Schuster 2012). These same assumptions were echoed when I spoke with members of the Administration on campus as well as officers in the Hartford Police Department whose opinions I will explore in detail later. I mention this to emphasize how it is clear that the Trinity community is aware of the impressions they send to our neighbors. Given this apparent awareness, the problem then becomes whether or

not the Trinity community cares to alter this impression that has come to define the nature of the campus-neighborhood relationship.

The Fear of Community and the Fear of Crime in Gated Communities

It should be clear now that there is a certain level of prestige that is associated with gated communities, and with this prestige comes notions of privilege and power that are often imposed upon those with less means. This prestige represents one important facet of gated communities, but became such as a response to the new environment that has been created. As families moved into gated communities, certain needs were voiced. One such need was the, "...need to "defend" the community from the effects of this poverty within-crime, drug abuse, homelessness, and other manifestations of "urban blight"" (Gregory 1999:51). Herein lies the issue of urban fear. It is estimated that over 3 million American households have turned to gated communities to seek refuge from the problems of urbanization (Blakely and Snyder 1997). With a gate comes the notion of the estranged other, and as such, one of the main justifications in literature surrounding gated communities, is the fear of violence from this excluded and gentrified other.

Before delving into the nature of urban fear in gated communities and its relevance to Trinity and its neighbors, let me explore the term as it is found in literature. Within the domain of urban fear come two predominant fears; the fear of community, and the fear of crime. In her paper, *Urban Fear: Building the Fortress City*, Seta Low notes that, "...privatized social spaces will expand in order to provide white citizens with immunity from immigrants, poor people, and other

“undesirable” minorities” (1997:53). When using the term community, however, one is referring to not only the community that resides within the gated enclave in question, but also the community that remains outside. Blakely and Snyder write that to the inside community, “Community is more than a commodity...it is a sense of both shared territory and shared destiny” (1997:121). Due to this notion that territory and destiny are related and deserved rights, individuals who feel as though the unwanted urban community is “...spilling over from nearby” (1997:120), turn to gates as a means of asserting their dominance in order to avoid relinquishing their claim over their territory and community. This is an example of a community’s self-ascribed status, and therefore, is an indirect reflection of who they consider unwanted outsiders to be. These unwanted outsiders, more or less, are those members of the community who do not fit the status quo, i.e. individuals who fall outside of the same racial, ethnic, and class archetype found within the dominant community. Clearly, the disparity of race and class on and off-campus is a representative example of this situation

In terms of the fear of crime, Architectural Theorist Charles Jencks sees the barriers of gated communities as what he defines to be defensible architecture (1993), fortresses equipped to protect those inside from those outside. Referencing Los Angeles, Jencks points towards the problem of heterogeneity in gated communities, saying that it is the cause of chronic ethnic strife, and thus, crime, and consequentially, urban fear (1993). He believes separation is the only solution, assuming that problems will increase without dividing structures. Critics of this position, myself included, point out that these separations only serve to fuel the fire.

Mike Davis, defensible architecture critic, writes that “We live in “fortress cities” brutally divided between “fortified cells” of affluent society and “places of terror” where the police battle the criminalized poor” (Caldeira 2003:101). Given the current state of hysteria in regards to crime on campus, a point I will explore in detail later, one could consider Trinity one of these fortress communities in the making.

Gentrification and the Other

In the 1940’s and 50’s, the majority of gated communities were built to protect property values. While this does not seem to be relevant to urban fear, one must ask themselves, what was this protection waged against? The answer to this question illustrates gentrification that is associated with urban fear, that being, fear of the other. These gated communities in question were built, “...as a barrier to blacks and other minorities in entering specific, mostly white and affluent, neighborhoods”(Vesselinov 2008:537). In this sense, and in the context of the historical attitude at the time, gating parallels segregation. Architects in Los Angeles between 1965 and 1992 noticed the aversion to crime in gated communities. They honed in on the opportunity to mass produce small enclaves that played to their consumers needs, and even began advertising gated communities with the motto: “everything for your safety” (Zonneveld 2011:49).

The main justification for living in gated communities is perhaps the most investigated question in literature, the answers to which are beginning to create an echo. There is a resounding fear of violence but more importantly, there is a

paralyzing fear of the poor and non-White. Those who live in gated communities leave the urban street life to the poor and the homeless, and in doing so, distinguish themselves as better than this urban other. With this line drawn, clear-cut notions of class and race are defined, and the other is no longer a mysterious entity, but an apparent manifestation of urban traits. Social inequalities become explicit, and social boundaries are rigidly constructed. The physical and social boundaries that are created in regards to urban fear become taboo; there is a notion that these lines are not to be crossed, and when they are, there is a justified reaction of aggression and fear, and an accompanied feeling of suspicion and danger (Caldeira 2003).

In my survey to Trinity students, I asked questions regarding their activity off campus, in order to gain a sense of whether or not a majority of students carry this gentrified attitude in their aversion to the city. The results I collected and analyzed affirmed my fear, although it is sad to say that this did not surprise me. I asked students how often they left the confines of campus per week on average, and their main reasons for leaving. The majority of students said they left campus 1-2 times a week, primarily for shopping and dining reasons (Schuster 2012). At the very base level, from these two simple responses, it is clear that when students leave campus, they are not in the neighboring communities, they are most likely driving to West Hartford, a town that represents everything that the Frog Hollow neighborhood is not. With its brick homes, manicured lawns, outdoor malls, and general atmosphere of upper-middle class suburbia, West Hartford is not an area Trinity students would feel uncomfortable in. This illuminates one problem I see on campus, and that is the closed-minded nature of many students in regards to stepping out of their comfort

zones. These students chose to attend Trinity, and were well aware of the locations context upon matriculation, yet there is still a resounding effort made to reject change and integration by remaining inside the “Trinity bubble” the College has created if you will.

Given students aversion to leaving campus, I naturally became curious as to why this was the case. I asked students to explain how they would characterize the neighborhood surrounding Trinity, and again, the answers I received were shocking and yet not all that surprising. Adjectives like “slum”, “hostile”, “dangerous”, “poor”, “non-white”, “threatening”, “gross”, and “ghetto” appeared frequently (Schuster 2012). While some students went against the grain, the majority of students eluded to the fact that they felt as though they would be attacked, even shot, if they stepped off campus. This illustrates that there is an overwhelming notion that off-campus is “their territory” (Schuster 2012). From these responses alone, it is clear that stereotypes and assumptions run rampant on campus. While it is true that the neighborhoods surrounding Trinity are low-income, and the majority of residents are non-White, that is not to say that our neighbors are, “gross, ghetto, and hostile” (Schuster 2012).

The fact of the matter is that Trinity College is located within a post-industrial working-class city. In cities, one must conduct themselves differently than in the suburbs, or say, in rural Montana; this should come as no surprise. In cities one must be aware of their surroundings; walk in groups, avoid unlit areas, steer clear from big crowds, these are suggestions I am sure that every parent has

given their child. As college students, we are considered adults, and by holding onto unjustified fears and staying inside this “Trinity bubble”, we are not allowing ourselves the freedom and responsibility that comes with adulthood and the privilege of making our own decisions.

I believe familiarity plays a large role in students’ perception of danger (Merry 1988). As stated earlier, over 50% of the neighboring residents self-identify as Hispanic, with 15% Black and between 15-25% Caucasian (CityData 2009). Now compare this to the 77% of Caucasian students at Trinity, and the mere 23% of students identified as minorities (Hughes 2011). These statistics alone illustrate that students on campus do not share much racial and ethnic similarity with that of the surrounding neighborhood. Already there is a disconnect between the campus community and the surrounding Hartford residents. Along with the visually apparent disparity of wealth between the two communities, students at Trinity may fear engagement with the Hartford community because they represent an unfamiliar body of race and class that dramatically opposes their own. This, however, is certainly not a problem that exposure cannot fix.

Overall, one can delineate that urban fear is represented in gated communities through the residents desire for homogeneity, and their preoccupation with crime. Speaking of the effects of this preoccupation and the consequent gating, Fainstein in her study of the logic of large developments in New York and London writes that, “This built environment forms contours which structure social relations...in other words, through clustering, the erection of boundaries, and

establishing distance” (1994:1). The resulting segregated community is marginalized and referenced along racial and class lines; it is this problem that I observe around campus on a regular basis. What must be made clear is that these xenophobic assumptions are not based in truth; this is a point I will explore shortly. Here I would like to explore what we as a College impose upon the neighboring community indirectly by maintaining this gated community mentality.

Segregation as a Result of Gentrification and an Aversion to the Other

Having discussed the motivation for living in and creating gated communities in respect to class, and recognizing that these motivations are founded in assumptions that are consequently based in stereotypes regarding urban life and its synonymous negative associations, we must now investigate the consequences of this barricade mentality. One hypothesis frequently presented in literature on gated communities is that gating reinforces the process of segregation, perpetuating the notion of urban disadvantages and privatizing space for the already described elite. Blakely and Snyder in their in-depth study of gated communities write that, “In socially isolated environments, social distance leads to stereotyping and misunderstanding, which in turn leads to fear and even greater distance” (1997:138). Along these same lines, gated community authority Setha Low writes that, “Gated communities and the social segregation and exclusion they materially represent make sense of and even rationalize problems Americans have with race, class, and gender inequality and social discrimination”. (2003:231). This being said, it is clear that by segregating space and contact between a diverse community with

gates, gentrification recurs as a cycle of exclusion based on prevailing assumptions and prejudices.

Although segregation ended historically, individuals' reasons for living within gated communities for the most part remain based on an aversion of the other that is defined by marginalized racial and socioeconomic status. In fact, as mentioned earlier, many of those responsible for developing gated communities went so far as to direct their advertisement campaigns to build upon consumers already-existing aversion to urban blight and fear of danger. Today there are gated communities that contain a majority population of non-White residents, but this participation of minorities and immigrants in the process of gating does not mean that there is any implicit integration (Vesselinov 2008:542); correlation is not causation. Homogeneity is a central feature to gated communities, creating a blank slate where difference, whether it is in regards to race, class, or ethnicity, is rejected.

While segregation based on race is frowned upon, and despite the fact that I can safely assume that if you asked a White family if they would oppose living in close proximity to a Black family the resounding answer would be "No", the fact remains that White-Black proximity remains a source of tension (Blakely and Snyder 1997:148). Because of this, gated communities remain, for the most part, racially homogenous. Studies surrounding minority presence in gated communities have found that income does not affect levels of segregation. With this said, it becomes clear that while prestige is often a factor in choosing to live in a gated community, race is more of an immediate concern than wealth.

Setha Low, in her ethnographic study *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*, links racial segregation with a notion of Whiteness, which she defines as, "...not only about race, but is a class position and normative concept...defined by a persons "cultural capital" – that is, the ability to have access to and make use of things like higher education and social graces, vocabulary, and demeanor that allow one to prosper or at least compete within the dominant culture" (2003:18). With this said it is clear that conceptions of race are based in socio-economic stereotypes, and while this comes with no surprise, it serves to highlight the preoccupation with race and class that define gated communities such as Trinity College in relation to its neighbors.

Concerns about cultural capital and the resulting economic segregation are on the rise. By physically separating society in terms of class and race, gated communities dictate the opportunities available to those who live beyond their confines. Economists have termed this disadvantage the "geography of opportunity" (Blakely and Snyder 1997:149), as both the poor and the minorities excluded from the confines of gated communities find themselves isolated from not only society, but from many public services such as jobs and schooling. This racial and economic segregation creates an air of "what's mine is not yours", and with this mentality ingrained in the present and future generations, what is to stop this segregation from continuing?

The Negative Effects of Privatization

There is a resounding notion when it comes to gated communities that there is a distinct, “Over-the-Wall Crowd” (Blakely and Snyder 1997:80). By referencing a small proportion of a community in this manner, it is obvious that the notion of a general public is far-gone, having been replaced by stigmatized sub-categories of a divided community from either side of the gates. With this divide, we must ask ourselves what has been lost in human interaction? Where has the concept of neighborliness gone? And finally, how is this affecting peoples notions about social interaction in urban space today? The sad truth is that gates, fences, and barriers have become manifestations of social trends in communities, the majority of which are based on race and class, and as these trends continue to flourish, separation is enforced with increasing extremity.

When barriers are built, they create a stage for public life to act upon, or rather, on either side of. Gated communities physically restrict access to public space, creating a stage inside and outside, without providing a middle ground for mutual interaction. This speaks to the resounding notion of a “residents only” (Blakely and Snyder 1997) community, where an area is blocked from one side or another. By gating a community, one is privatizing space. This notion of privatization is explored by authors Vesselinov and Cazessus in their article *Gated Communities and Spatial Inequality*. They note that the privatization of space reinforces the notion of commoditization, denying non-members access while simultaneously creating a visual representation of the exclusivity of its members

(2007). Herein lies the most pressing issue, both in general and in relation to the Trinity College community and its absent relationship with its neighbors.

Public space creates unplanned social interaction between individuals who may not otherwise associate with one another. Take, for example, a dog park. Individuals go to these parks with their pets and more likely than not find themselves in some sort of interaction with a complete stranger. Public spaces serve as areas that foster relationships and diffuse preconceived notions about individuals based on race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or any number of assumptions individuals may hold. With the privatization of public space, these opportunities are lost, and therefore, the “...expansion of private space threatens the level of tolerance and integration in the smaller areas as well as in society at large” (Vesselinov and Cazessus 2007:101). Here is where the issues that have begun to boil at Trinity of late come into play.

With a lack of interaction, assumptions and stereotypes gain momentum, and without intervention soon become engrained into a community’s psyche. This is an issue that is currently at its tipping point at Trinity, and if it moves in the direction it has been, towards further isolation, the misconceptions that already pervade the campus will become nearly impossible to reign in. As the trend of privatization continues, gated communities impose methods of outright exclusion. Blakely and Snyder term these communities security zone neighborhoods, whose primary goal is to exclude people and places they deem threatening to the quality of life protected within their confines (1997:45). As security increases, stereotypes and unjustified

assumptions are inevitably reinforced, and clear messages are sent to the communities both inside and outside of the gates, abandoned for interpretation without intervention. What must be understood, above all else, is that perceived exclusion is just as significant as physical exclusion; whether this exclusion is defined in terms of race, class, gender, or ethnicity is not important, it is the social consequences of this alienation that are cause for immediate concern.

Chapter 4

The History of the Neighborhood and Disillusioned Attempts to Establish a Relationship

Trinity College calls itself an open-campus, and as mentioned earlier, students do not believe the campus to be representative of a gated community. Having explored what is inherent within gated communities, however, and noting the resounding similarities these communities share with Trinity College, I stand by my prior statement that Trinity is in fact a gated community. My disagreement with the student population in defining the campus is not a wrong worthy of making right. They do not need to see, necessarily, that Trinity is an enclave in and of itself. What they do need to see, however, is that there exists a paralyzing force between the campus and the surrounding neighborhoods, and that this force is the source of the mounting tensions on campus, and thus cannot be ignored any longer.

It has always been my understanding that students at Trinity blame the neighboring residents of Hartford for most of the negative happenings on campus. Why would I think otherwise when the term “Hartford Local”, a derogatory term that generalizes the neighborhood residents is thrown around so freely on any given day? As the small presence of the gates has become a symbol containing stereotypes and assumptions that are rooted in the Trinity College culture, the gap between us and them, on-campus and off-campus has been solidified. Trinity College and the neighboring communities are irrevocably connected, and yet they

are held apart by a social consciousness that dictates the way both parties think, feel, and act.

Trinity College can be found on a map at the heart of Hartford, Connecticut, so why is it that the College has such a hard time associating itself as a part of the city and its constituencies? Here lies the root of the problem, beyond the symbols, stereotypes, and assumptions. Trinity College is not a part of the Hartford Community. No student, faculty, staff, or member of the Administration at the College wants to believe this, for it is horrifying to think that a small liberal arts college such as Trinity can be so closed minded, but the facts remain. Because of the xenophobic attitude we as Trinity students, faculty, staff, and Administrators perpetuate, we have made it extremely difficult to escape the “Trinity bubble” we have created for ourselves. We have let our fears, our prejudices, and our ignorance dictate the way we think, act, and move about our environment. There is an overwhelming lack of communication when it comes to Trinity and its neighbors, and I believe this lack of contact and the ignorance it fosters is the root cause for the tensions that have been flaring on campus of late in regards to safety on campus.

30 Years Ago: A History of the Neighborhood and its Relationship with the College

Before delving into the current climate on campus and the many problems I have consequently noted in the relationship between the College and its neighbors through interviews, surveys and personal observations, I believe that it is important to first look at the history of Trinity and its relationship with the community over the past 30 years. In this section I will explain the reasons the neighborhood

surrounding Trinity came to be perceived as dangerous, and highlight the progressive stance of President of the College Evan Dobbelle in the mid 1990's in his efforts to draw the College and the community together.

The neighborhood surrounding Trinity College in the 1980's and 90's was a place entirely unlike the neighborhoods we see around us today, although most of the Trinity community would beg to differ. Speaking with Carlos Espinosa, the director of Trinity's Trinfo Café, a neighborhood technology center serving Hartford residents, and a Hartford resident and Trinity Alum himself, I gained a real life perspective of the area at the time. He illustrated a counter-culture revolving around the prevalence of drugs and gangs that pervaded the area. There was an open-air drug market two blocks from campus, and the current location of the Hartford Magnet School was at the time one of the largest prostitution rings on the East Coast. There was constant inter-gang and drug related violence as they competed for territory and business (Espinosa 2011). These marks of deviancy and poverty, however, did not simply materialize out of thin air. In a ride-along with South End/Franklin Avenue Community Service Officer Carlo Faienza, who also grew up in the neighborhood surrounding the College, I was told that there was a significant turning point in the history of Hartford, sending the neighborhoods into a sliding cycle of delinquency and depravity.

Officer Faienza noted how his perspective is one that is unique as he grew up just down the street from campus, and now patrols this same area. Because of this attachment to the community and intrinsic understanding of the city, he is confident

when differentiating “good” from “bad” people on the street. Like Mr. Espinosa, he characterized Crescent Street in the 90’s as “rough”, recalling how gangs suddenly, “popped up” (Faienza 2012). He then directed a question towards me, asking why I thought there was such a sudden shift towards violence and crime in the neighborhoods. Recognizing that I had no foundation to accurately answer this question, he went on to explain why this was the case. Gangs, prior to the 90’s, were concentrated within housing projects. These projects were scattered throughout the city, and within them was a huge concentration of individuals who shared intimate and aesthetically unpleasant quarters. Being as such, these projects were considered communities that were equivalent to gangs, and soon became affiliating themselves as such. There were inter-gang animosities, and between projects, residents boasted their gang loyalties through tattoos denoting acronyms of their project, for example; Charter Oaks (C.O), and Dutch Point (D.P). To this day, Officer Faienza says it is not uncommon to see someone proudly declaring these old gang loyalties on their bodies (Faienza 2012).

The Hartford government began noticing these trends in projects were growing and consolidating; recognizing that within them there was a growing concentration of not only gangs, but also drugs, and violence. They hired individuals to study these projects and the lifestyles associated with them before they decided to tear them down. The problem now became where to displace this mass of now homeless residents. Despite this task, the city thought that dispersing the families throughout the city was the best plan. Had they perhaps considered the

consequences of displacing entire communities, the consequential outcome may have been different.

Displaced and separated from their desired communities, residents of the projects were spread throughout the city. This meant, of course, beginning life in a new environment, and in doing so, experiencing an unavoidable intermingling of races and ethnicities, creating an immediate source of tension. As residents moved into new apartments, they continued living in the same manner they had in their old projects. This lifestyle was one that tested the boundaries of the law as new residents did not care for their properties and continued the activities they had in the projects. This is much of why landowners moved out of the properties they tenanted. Now, with absentee landlords, there was no one onsite to oversee properties, and they soon fell into material and social decay. Soon neighbors who were not accustomed to being exposed to the lifestyles of these new renters began moving to the periphery of the city (Faienza 2012).

This sudden flight created an environment where there was no longer a sense of community, no sense of a home. With gangs displaced throughout the city, it became harder to regulate illegal activities. It is at this time, from the mid 80's to the mid 90's, that the neighborhoods in Hartford, including those surrounding Trinity College, found themselves in an escalating cycle of decay. With businesses moving towards the heart of the city, Hartford soon became a commuter city, and as such was less residential. The College's perspective of the neighborhood soon became one of aversion as, "Students not only had no reason to go into the

neighborhood, they also felt unsafe doing so” (Perry 1998:42). The College had been noticing this downhill trend in the physical and social makeup of the surrounding neighborhoods since the early 80’s, and proposed many plans to engage the neighborhood in the hopes of creating a positive relationship. Unfortunately, the hopes of creating this holistic community founded in shared experiences and outreach has been raised, “...again and again without success” (Perry 1998:42). These consistent failures serve to illustrate that, “the College really was not willing to put the effort into building a strong relationship with the community until the 1990’s” (Perry 1998:31). Unfortunately, I believe the situation remains largely the same today.

The failure of these plans has been the fault of the College, and more specifically, the Administration. Robert Pawlowski, appointed director of Trinity’s Office of Community Affairs established in 1968 left the College due to the recurring failures in regards to community engagement. He became the first director of SINA (Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance) in 1976, an example of a successful institution geared towards neighborhood revitalization. In an interview after his departure from the College, Pawlowski expressed his disappointment in the fact that, “The College was very hesitant to put any money into things in the community” (Perry 1998:35). Instead their primary concern remained geared towards attracting prospective students and donors. Furthermore, the goals of the many community engagement proposals that were discussed in actuality had little to do with the direct neighborhood surrounding Trinity’s campus. Instead the goals were attempts to establish an alliance of sorts with the overarching city of Hartford, with

the hopes that the publicity of this relationship might “...improve Trinity’s national reputation” (Perry 1998:48). In short, the motivation behind the many proposals that circulated throughout the Administration but were never implemented in the past were due to the fact that Trinity was more concerned with its own appearance, as many of these proposals were focused on drawing attention away from the threat that the declining community posed on the College.

A Step in the Right Direction

It was not until the early 90’s that Trinity recognized that the neighborhood could not be ignored any longer, realizing that the campus’ surroundings could be utilized as a resource in building the success of the College. Again, Trinity’s focus was self-serving, but it is at this time that plans were actually being implemented. Evan Dobbelle stepped into the role of President of the College in 1995, and is revered for making great strides towards improving the physical and social landscape of the community that surrounds Trinity. In other contexts, however, he has been villainized for the amount of money he allocated in implementing these initiatives, reflecting the prior hesitancy towards utilizing College funds for the good of the community.

The most significant contribution, and perhaps the biggest step the College has made in terms of creating a relationship with the surrounding community was the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative. The Initiative was announced in 1996, when 175\$ million was set-aside in an effort, “...to rebuild a community infrastructure for families that sustains stable home ownership, neighborhood

economic development and educational improvement” (Trinity College Center for Urban and Global Studies N.d.). This initiative was specifically designed in the hopes of jumpstarting economic activity within a 15-square block area adjacent to the campus in the Barry Square and Frog Hollow neighborhoods. The initiative was heralded as a symbol of renewal, emphasizing the impact that one College can have on its community (Stowe 2000).

The plans for the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative included The Learning Corridor, which would be a 16-acre campus adjoining Trinity’s existing campus. The Learning Corridor would consist of four public schools, an Early Childhood/Elementary Montessori School, and Arts/Science/Math Middle School, a High School Arts Academy, and a High School Math and Science Academy. This plan was also to include a multi-purpose theater, community space, a neighborhood family center, and a Boys and Girls Club (Sullivan and Trostle N.d.). The Learning Corridor would be constructed between Trinity College and the Hartford Hospital, on an abandoned bus depot where much of the drug dealing and prostitution had been taking place. Some would argue that this still illustrates that the College remained largely preoccupied with its own image, as the Learning Corridor served to not only beautify the location it was built over, but also to hide the decay of the blighted and abandoned homes along with their alleged hostile residents. This attitude is one that is representative of the gentrification found in the campus-neighborhood community relationship today. By knocking down housing and businesses, the College was not truly embracing the community, and furthermore, by building our own structures over them (i.e., The Learning Corridor, the Koppel

Ice Rink) the College essentially demonstrated that they simply didn't want to deal with the community, and would much rather control it.

In a paper written by two Trinity professors regarding The Learning Corridor and Trinity's involvement, the authors write that another motivation of these projects was to link Trinity's future with the hopeful success and stability of the neighborhoods that surround it. This apparent genuine motivation is also deceiving, as the turning point in implementing this plan came with the College's realization that it would be difficult to get students and faculty to come to a school where the surrounding neighborhood is deemed unattractive and destitute (Sullivan and Trostle N.d.). This further illustrates the true motivation of the College, that once-again being self-serving. This is directly reflected by the fact that with the installation of The Learning Corridor, Trinity's applications increased 77% (Stowe 2000).

Under President Dobelle's term, which ended in 2001, the Community Learning Initiative was established. This was as a faculty-led movement geared towards incorporating community learning in the Trinity curriculum. The first Dream Camp was held in the summer of 1998, as a program "...to enhance out-of-school educational opportunities for Hartford's children, build confidence and academic skills, and improve success in school – and, therefore, build interest in pursuing higher education" (Trinity College Center for Urban and Global Studies N.d.). Furthermore, on campus The Community Service and Civic Engagement Office was formalized in order to encourage students to support the development of the

Hartford community. With this said, there is no doubt that the mid 90's were a time of change for Trinity, when plans and proposals that were previously disregarded in the year's prior were finally examined, redesigned, and implemented. The success of these programs, however, and their underlying motivations remains dodgy.

Currently on campus I do not see a great focus placed on community outreach in the surrounding neighborhoods. This is a point that I will explore in the next section where I intend to analyze the various interviews and surveys I have conducted over the past semester in order to shed light on the problems that exist on campus.

Chapter 5

On-Campus Perspectives

I believe it is important to articulate that I would not have been able to come to the many conclusions I have come to, had it not been for the many conversations I have participated in over the past semester with members of the Trinity faculty, Administration, and student body, as well as members of the Hartford Police Department and Hartford neighborhood institutions. These conversations provided me not only with new information to examine, but different perspectives of which I found myself either agreeing or disagreeing. It is at this point that I would like to share these interviews.

In each of my interviews, I asked a set of key questions. These questions were raised in order to open up the floor for discussion regarding the interviewee's individual thoughts on the various matters addressed. There were no answers that I was gearing my questions towards per se, so the questions were asked in an unbiased and straightforward manner. I took the role of a participant-observer as they took their time mulling over the questions, and responding thoughtfully and truthfully. The questions that I will explore in this section are many, and involve perceptions of Trinity and the surrounding community from both sides of the gate, the relationship of the two communities focusing on their sources of tension, connects, and disconnects, the role of the gates in campus/community life, as well as inquiries regarding the potential for change on campus.

How Would a Student Characterize the Neighborhood?

The first question I will explore asks how the individual believes the average Trinity student would characterize the neighboring community. Before delving into the responses I received when posing this question, I must state that there is no overarching Trinity student; there are diverse personalities and perspectives on campus, and many of those I interviewed noted this before responding to my question. There is, however, a majority culture on campus, as is represented in the racial and financial disparity discussed previously in terms of the Colleges demographics versus that of the neighborhood. Here, I am referring to this majority culture on campus.

In the online survey I distributed to a random sample of 250 Trinity students, most responses I received to this question consisted of adjectives that described the neighborhood as; “hostile”, “dangerous”, “scary”, “frightening”, “poor”, “unsafe”, “run down”, “slum-like”, “ghetto”, “intimidating”, “threatening” and “volatile” (Schuster 2012). I was happy to see a minority of responses that saw the neighborhood as culturally diverse, having a community representative of a typical residential urban area. The majority responses, however, did not surprise me, as I hear negative talk about the community on a regular basis. The mere fact that the term “Hartford local” is a part of our vocabulary is representative of the negative association Trinity students hold regarding the neighboring community.

In an unbiased interview with a Trinity professor, her response held that the perception of the neighboring community by Trinity students is one that can be

“...characterized by ignorance and fear and stereotypes” (Anonymous 2012); this fear is a result of the inherent ignorance the College fosters regarding the community and urban life as a whole. I agree with this perspective; the majority of Trinity students know nothing about the city they live in, let alone the lifestyles and backgrounds of its residents. This ignorance, due to an overwhelming lack of education and experience makes stereotyping an easy scapegoat, further perpetuating this detrimental cycle of ignorance. Director of Community Relations at Trinity Jason Rojas responded similarly, stating that there is a general “fear of the unknown” (Rojas 2012). Dispelling this fear is the key to developing a relationship between the two currently dissociated communities.

Jorge Lugo, a member of the Campus Safety office, and the man in charge of sending the student body e-mails regarding crimes on campus, offered me another unique perspective. Growing up around Trinity as a resident, and later attending Trinity as a student, when posed this question he articulated a sense of resentment that Trinity students feel when it comes to the community’s perception of them. He states that, “some students feel that they might even be targets of any kind of crime, but I don’t think that’s the case at all” (Lugo 2012). This serves as another example of the College’s self-serving attitude; renouncing the potential for a positive relationship with automatic assumptions that those outside the confines of campus are to be feared, and that the neighborhood is to be blamed for the uncomfortable nature of the current relationship.

What took me by surprise was the response I received from the current President of the College, James F. Jones Jr. He stated that the students' reaction to the neighborhood was, "apprehensive" (President Jones 2012). In my opinion, this response is extremely safe. As President of an urban College currently dealing with mounting tensions in regards to campus safety, he should be acutely aware of how students feel about their surroundings. This relationship should be one that has been investigated to exhaustion, and carefully tracked over time. This should be a relationship that has been remedied, but from what I have gathered throughout my research has remained unaddressed, past and present.

Apprehensive is far too simple a term to describe the perspective that Trinity students hold regarding the neighborhood and its residents. It is conservative, over-generalizing feelings of fear and prejudice to the extent that students could be perceived as innocent bystanders trapped wide-eyed in a community full of hostile vagrants, who, given any interaction may take advantage of Trinity's precious assets. This is one of the key problems that exists in this Institution, and contributes to its unhealthy relationship with its neighbors. The man with the most power on this campus at any given day should know exactly how students perceive their urban surroundings. He should have recognized the inherent fear and prejudices the student body holds on average long ago, and responded to these feelings immediately in the hopes of remedying the detrimental relationship that currently exists between the campus and the neighborhood. The fact that even he cannot address this question with more than an elementary adjective is horrifying; it is here, within the Administration that change must be implemented, and if our

current President cannot yet see the desperate need for change, there is an immediate problem to be dealt with.

Trinity student's perceptions of the community beyond the gates are founded in ignorance, and are a result of not only a lack of education and experience, but of exposure. If the administration cannot recognize this ignorance and the consequential effect it has on the relationship, or the lack thereof, between the College and the neighboring community, this proves there is a serious disconnect between the leaders of this College (the Administration), and their followers (the students). Because of this disconnect, there can be no formalized understanding of the problems that do exist, and bridging the gap that exists between the College and the community will never be carried out effectively.

How does Trinity think the Neighborhood Perceives Them?

The next question I will investigate is geared towards exposing the assumptions that the College holds when it comes to their perception of the community by having them take the position of a community member. This question took people out of their comfort zone, as they had to take an opposing stance assuming the role of a community resident, when I asked how they think the community would characterize Trinity. This is a question I was excited about asking because I believe the answers that I received reflect the stance the College has taken regarding their opinion of who they believe our neighbors to be. This is a question that is also somewhat dangerous, as the vast majority of responses reflected unjustified assumptions regarding how they identify our neighbors, and reflexively

using a resident's point of view as a tool to unknowingly describe their own Trinity community. Before delving into this question, I must point out that some responses came from thoughtful and informed perspectives. Again, I must point out that there is not one overarching community member. There are thousands of residents living around Trinity's campus, and I do not intend to speak for them universally. Rather, I utilize this question as a tool to analyze how the campus perceives the outside community by putting them in their shoes, simultaneously touching upon how the campus community in turn sees themselves.

As was mentioned earlier, when I posed this question in my student survey, I offered five adjectives to choose from, and left room for open-responses. In thinking about how a community member would characterize a Trinity student, I offered the responses: Intelligent, Wealthy, White, Pretentious, Open, Accepting, and Diverse. The majority of students responded by choosing "White", with 90.6%, followed by "Wealthy", with 87.5%, and "Pretentious", with 71.9% (Schuster 2012). These statistics I found to be very accurate of the environment students at Trinity visually illustrate on a daily basis. These responses are also accurately representative of the statistics collected by the school in regards to their racial and socioeconomic demographic. In a sense, these responses can be looked at in a positive light. They show that students are aware of the image they emanate on campus. At the same time it is problematic because this image serves to further confirm the nature of segregation and homogeneity within gated communities. It also alludes to the notion that the neighboring communities see us as White wallets, which is a

common assumption on campus, furthering the unjustified belief that students are sitting ducks; targets waiting to be picked off by some ever-present criminal.

In many of my interviews, individuals relayed to me first hand accounts of what they had heard neighborhood residents say about Trinity. When I posed this question to President Jones, he responded, “Elitist, white, rich, entitled. I’ve heard all those words” (President Jones 2012). When I met with Lieutenant Allan, the Zone Commander of the Trinity College area, he stated bluntly and without hesitation, “Rich rats” (Allan 2012). He went on to explain why he believes he has heard this term with such frequency, stating, “You only need four Land Rovers and a couple things to make them think like that” (Allan 2012). Clearly Trinity’s image is one that has, to some extent, created a negative association with the neighborhood. Speaking with Carlos Espinosa, a lifelong Hartford resident, Trinity Alumni, and current faculty member at the College, I gained a sense of the extent to which this visual image has affected youth in the neighborhood. He spoke confidently, stating that on several occasions he has heard kids, eight, nine, ten years old express how they think the Trinity student body is racist (Espinosa 2011). This shows that similar to the perspective student’s hold regarding the community, many community members also hold notions based in ignorance. As mentioned earlier, this ignorance is in large part due to a lack of contact in the form of physical interaction. With this lack of interaction, tensions are easily exacerbated. False pretences become inherent truths without proper intervention. Blame cannot be placed on the community for this ignorance, and as this same ignorance is present on campus, it cannot be blamed on the student body either. To remedy this

situation, change must be made by those who hold power within the Institution, the Administration.

The final conversation I would like to touch upon was a conversation I had with Dean Frederick Alford, the current Dean of Students at Trinity College who defended my argument that the key to change must be recognized through experience. When asked how he thought the surrounding community would characterize the College, he responded simply by stating that the neighborhoods perception of the College community, “depends on their experience with us” (Alford 2012). To a certain extent, this response is safe; avoiding judgment by remaining neutral, and not pointing fingers towards specific characteristics of the College or the community. The truth is, in this response there is a finger pointed, and it is pointed in the right direction. With this simple, safe statement, Dean Alford articulated the overarching problem that has been rooted in the foundation of the relationship between the community and the College that has yet to be realized. This being that there is an urgent need for interaction between the gates. There must to be a dialogue, there needs to be contact, a mutual relationship must be established if the assumptions and misconceptions that are held on both sides of the gates are ever to be demystified.

What does the College think about the Current Relationship?

After exploring how members of the student body, Administration, and faculty, characterize the nature of how both sides of the gates understand the other, I find it fitting to explore their general opinions regarding the relationship these

distinct communities share, including their perceived connects, disconnects, and current sources of tension. Regardless of whether there is animosity from one side of the gate or the other, it must be understood at the most basic level that the campus and the neighboring communities are inherently connected. Given this undeniable fact, it becomes even more troubling to see that the College has yet to make more of a concentrated effort in mending this historically estranged and uncomfortable relationship.

After reflecting on interviews with the Dean of Students, the Director of Community Relations, and professors at Trinity, I have come to the conclusion that there is a resounding notion held among the Administration that the relationship between the campus and the community is one that is positive. As should be understood by now, this is not a perspective that I share, and again, I believe this disillusioned notion only serves to further articulate the reasons the campus has yet to fully embrace and foster a positive relationship with the neighboring communities.

Dean Alford spoke of the College-neighborhood relationship in a positive light, saying, "I think we have a good reputation. I think that the College is an economic force, as an educational enterprise, and I think people in the neighborhood say Trinity, that's a good College" (Alford 2012). When asked about the connects and disconnects that exist between the gates he responded similarly, emphasizing the economic support students provide local businesses. Given the nature of his responses, it is clear that his focus rests on the supposed economic

support the College provides the community. I believe this could not be further from the truth. As mentioned earlier, in my survey sent to the student body, one of the main reasons students left campus was to get food. While this is by no means a fact-based assertion, I believe I can say with confidence that most of these students roaming off campus are doing so in their cars, and thus are not likely to be driving 100 feet to a restaurant in the direct neighborhood around campus. On a separate note, I did not ask what he thought our reputation was in the eyes of the community; I asked how he perceived the relationship. To be honest, given the current hysteria with security on campus that I will introduce shortly, having a “good reputation” as an “economic force” would not be the first phrases to come to mind in describing this relationship.

When speaking about the disconnects that exist between the campus and the surrounding community, Dean Alford responded “...prejudices that we have...I don’t feel these so much. The crimes are our disconnects” (Alford 2012). This response is troubling in my eyes; the fact that the fear of crime on campus surpasses the prejudices that lie within the gates is a perfect illustration of why this relationship has yet to be truly established. This is yet another example of the ignorance that exists within the confines of the gates, reinforcing the “Trinity bubble” if you will.

The responses I received from the Director of Community Relations Jason Rojas proved to be similar, although his responses were more experience-based. When asked how he would characterize the relationship between the College and the community, he responded carefully stating, “For me its very positive. At least

that's the feedback I get from most of the people in the neighborhood", going on to state that, "Overall, the community love our students...they love when they come out to intern" (Rojas 2012). My focus shifted immediately when he included "intern" in his response, and I followed up by asking whether or not the community members he was referencing are residents in the direct Trinity neighborhood, or members of organizations affiliated with the College. He responded by stating that student's interaction with Hartford residents are generally through some type of organization, adding shortly thereafter, "You know, I don't work individually with residents in the neighborhood" (Rojas 2012). While the relationships he refers to are positive, and a step in the right direction, even these relationships prove to be problematic. The reasons being that only a minority of students on campus are involved with these organizations. This is not an example of integration with our neighbors. These sporadic interactions will not bridge the gap that separates us from them, it will not transcend the gates and all that they symbolize. Furthermore, his statement that as the Director of Community Relations he has no real contact with residents of the surrounding neighborhood is extremely problematic, and to no fault of his own. There needs to be an effort to work individually with residents in the neighborhood, these are the people we come into contact with the most, these are the people that whether we like it or not affect our daily lives, and most importantly, these are the people that we base our assumptions and prejudices on.

It was not until I looked back on an interview with a Trinity professor that I felt my concerns about the two interviews mentioned above were justified. This is the only interview where I asked about the current relationship between the

campus and the surrounding community, and received a response that was more negative than positive. In describing the two communities that reside on either side of the gate, this professor said, "I think they could not be more different" (Anonymous 2012), going on to use the term "conflicted" to describe the relationship, acknowledging that the basis of this conflict, again, lies in the lack of knowledge of the mysterious and feared other. Delving into the sources of tension that flood the gates, public safety was mentioned again. Clearly this is no random occurrence, leading me to the next chapter, where I intend to bring the issues that have already been explored and relate them to the current climate on campus preoccupied by the fear of crime, and more specifically, the fear of the neighborhood.

Chapter 6

Campus Safety Hysteria : a Letter, a Rally, and a Proposal

The Letter

Having explored various perspectives on campus regarding the neighboring communities, and exploring the theory and history of gates, gating, and gated communities, I would like to begin by stating my point of view in regards to safety on campus. Security is simply not the problem, and is a result of the lack of attention to the real problem, that being the lack of interaction the campus community has with the neighborhood community. I will argue that the recent campus safety events and concerns should serve as a beam of light to finally expose the parasitic host Trinity has been fostering in its relationship with the surrounding community, that host being ignorance. In analyzing the recent events on campus, and drawing upon various interviews, I will dispel the unjustified fears and prejudices that infect the campus mentality, and delve into what I believe is the true nature of the Trinity-Community relationship.

This past Fall I began to notice the number of Campus Safety e-mails I was receiving on a weekly basis was increasing. One week it would be a theft, another week a robbery, followed by an alleged knifing incident in a fraternity. These e-mails quickly became repetitive; the College noticed this as well because at the start of the second semester President Jones sent out a letter of his own articulating the College's efforts to improve campus safety. This letter will serve as my introduction to the recent proposals on campus aimed at increasing campus safety, exposing

what they say about the assumptions that define the College-neighborhood relationship.

President Jones' letter was sent out on January 25th, 2012, and was addressed to Trinity students, faculty, staff, and parents. This letter is telling of how the College regards their relationship with the surrounding community. Through word choice and general composition, this letter illustrates the attitudes that the overarching campus community holds in regards to its outside-the-gates neighbors. In the opening paragraph of his letter, President Jones writes that the College has been studying the safety practices of other urban universities, meeting with safety professionals, and reviewing our current campus safety team. He goes on to state that, "We (the Administration) have also heard many constructive ideas from students, staff, and parents." (President Jones 2012); what is missing from this statement? What's missing is the key to remedying the perceived problem, the neighborhood community. How can the College expect to gain a complete understanding of the problem when they are not engaging those who they see as the problem? This dominant idea, that the neighboring community is responsible for the issue of campus safety, is a point I will return to later in my argument about why none of the current proposals for increasing safety are relevant to the real issue at hand.

Further into the letter, President Jones writes that, "...the Campus Safety staff has organized a tactical patrol of five additional officers during the hours of 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m." (President Jones 2012, in an effort to comfort the College

community. The use of the word “tactical” struck me immediately. The word creates an illusion of warfare on campus, as if the officers are carrying out strategic orders to defend their campus from a fast-approaching eminent threat. Along these same militaristic lines, he goes on to state that for the time being the campus safety team will, “...rely on overtime until we are able to hire additional officers” (President Jones 2012), again making the situation appear dire, as if the College is forced to act out of desperation. If a member of the neighboring community read this letter, they would undoubtedly take offense. By using these words and phrases, the College is fitting every resident of the neighborhood community into a category characterized by violence and deviance.

Towards the end of the letter, President Jones addresses the current proposal circulating around campus, and it is this proposal that I find to be the most disturbing response the College has expressed regarding campus safety. If implemented, it will prove to be tremendously detrimental to the present and future relationship of the campus and the neighborhood. He writes:

“We have received a formal proposal from the SGA and have heard from some faculty and staff and numerous parents and students that we need to do more to monitor access to campus at certain times of the day. We have no intention of withdrawing our welcome to the local community to enjoy the benefits we extend to them, but we need to do more to discourage criminal activity that undermines safety and creates resentment and fear instead of appreciation for the assets of Hartford...We are in the process of selecting a security consulting firm to help us determine the feasibility of such a plan. It would most likely require some additional fencing, landscaping, and cameras in critical areas and could mean providing internal access to some of the parking areas on the periphery of campus that are currently accessed from the city streets to allow for controlled access.”

(President Jones 2012)

When speaking of the campus' intention to maintain a relationship with the local community, he uses the phrase, "...to enjoy the benefits we extend to them" (President Jones 2012). This one-sided statement comes off as nothing less than patronizing. Illustrating that the College sees itself as a superior institution providing unselfish benefits to that which surrounds it while gaining nothing in return. He goes on to dance around what this potential plan would require, and it is here that I recognize the problematic ambivalence of the Administration. He writes, "It would most likely require some additional fencing, landscaping, and cameras in critical areas..." (President Jones 2012); I find his response to be extremely ambiguous, as it essentially proposes closing off the campus, which obviously entails additional fencing, yet he never mentions the word "gate" up front. To me, this vague proposal serves to subtly introduce the Trinity community to the notion of a closed campus without saying it blatantly.

He continues in the concluding paragraphs of the letter, stating that:

"We want to hear from the campus community as we develop our plans. We also want to assure you that we have no intention of separating ourselves from Hartford and diminishing the mutually beneficial relationship with have with out neighborhood and the city. That is a relationship we want to see grow" (President Jones 2012)

There is no doubt that in this letter President Jones is careful to include the off-campus community, but it almost feels as though he felt obligated to mention the relationship, as he still does not address any desire to hear from the neighborhood residents regarding the issues that directly pertain to them. In an interview with a Trinity professor, this concluding paragraph was referred to as "lip service"

(Anonymous 2012), and that is precisely what it is, and has been, since the College moved to its current location and found themselves irrevocably intertwined with the campus' neighboring residents. It is as though the College, or rather, the Administration, feels the need to defend their relationship, and this acknowledgement becomes apparent only when it is convenient for the College to do so, for example, on their website, in order to attract prospective students.

All in all, I found this letter to be very disappointing, as it explicitly illustrates the assumptions that are perpetuated throughout campus. There was little response to this letter from the student body, as the growing fears revolving around campus safety had not yet boiled over. It was not until a member of one of the elusive and exclusive fraternities/societies on campus, St Anthony's Hall, was assaulted and severely injured late one Saturday night that students jumped on the bandwagon, expressing a sudden dire need for extreme measures of campus safety to be implemented.

The Rally and a Push for Exclusivity

On Saturday March 3rd, one of Trinity's own, a sophomore student Chris Kenny, was brutally beaten on the corner of Allen Place and Summit Street just outside of the gates that surround St. Anthony's Hall, of which he was a brother. The following morning, the student body received an e-mail that was at first glance not all too surprising. The e-mail was short, and did not provide much information other than that there had been an assault by multiple persons, and a student was injured. What caught my attention, however, was the inclusion of a single sentence

that seemed to enrage the student body into a state of hysteria. The sentence was as follows, “The student was assaulted by several persons, but it is unclear whether the suspects in this assault were Trinity or non-Trinity students” (E-mail from Jorge Lugo, March 5, 2012).

Almost immediately after this e-mail was circulated, an angry response e-mail was sent out. It is also important to note that it was a fellow Hall brother, Mr. Kenny’s friend, who composed this email. In his response he chastises the campus safety department for their vague and short e-mail. Reading through this student’s heated response, I was anticipating some mention of the neutral stance that campus safety took regarding the potential suspects. Sure enough, I found it as he exclaimed, “‘Unclear’ whether or not this was Trinity students!?!?” (E-mail response from student, March 5, 2012). This student’s use of snide punctuation expresses utter disbelief and revulsion at the prospect of a Trinity student committing this crime. There is no doubt in this individual’s mind, none whatsoever, that the assailants could have been anyone other than a “Hartford Local”.

On March 8th, four days after the incident occurred, there was a rally held on the main quad at noon to support the victim, Chris Kenny, and give students a chance to voice their opinions and concerns in regards to safety on campus. Hundreds of students attended the rally, along with much of the Administration, including Dean Alford and President Jones. Many Trustees of the College were also in attendance, as were various news reporters. It was amazing to see the turn out at this event, and it was surprising to see how passionate many of the speakers and

students in attendance were about this topic. Clearly safety is an issue that students take seriously, as some were carrying signs that read “Not just another email”, and “Safety is our right” (Signs at Rally, March 8, 2012), but again, safety on campus serves as a direct reflection of the disabling biases and assumptions that prevent the College from truly engaging its neighbors.

As students delivered impassioned speeches on a podium elevated before the crowd, much of what they said revolved around the topic of gating off the campus in its entirety. This proposal had been introduced by not only President Jones in his letter, but also by the Student Government Association (SGA), represented in a survey sent out to the student body. 682 students responded to the SGA’s survey, and of those students, roughly 82% were in favor of restricting access to campus (Pollawit 2012). This feeling was supported by much of what students said at the rally that day, and throughout the speeches, it was clear that the blame was being placed not only on the campus safety team, but on a deeper level, on the neighborhood residents that surround our campus. This assumption has been implicated again and again throughout my research, and is one of the main reasons the College has yet to engage our neighbors.

At the rally students referred to the College as having an, “...overly idealistic open campus policy”, and that these new gates would serve as, “...a reminder of the dangers of wandering off at night” (Speeches at Rally, March 8, 2012). It is clear that fear has been grounded into the mentalities of much of the student body. This fear has led to a defensive attitude, and fully gating off the campus would serve as a

physical representation of this. In the survey I distributed to the student body, I asked if their sense of security changed when they saw a community member on campus. Roughly 77% of those who responded said that yes, it does (Schuster 2012). Even President Jones expressed this fear, stating that he worries when he is away from campus, “And I think, oh my word, I hope Jan doesn’t run out of gasoline at 10:00 at night, and she runs of gas at Sam’s” (President Jones 2012). Sam’s is a gas station/convenience store located just across the street from campus on the corner of Broad Street and New Britain Avenue; if the President of the College is worried about his wife running out of gas just beyond the already existing gates, it shows that this fear has affected not only the student body, but also the Administration. Countering this fear will prove to be a challenge, but clearly it is a challenge that must be undertaken immediately. This fear is irrational, and while I am not insinuating that the crimes that occur on campus should be simply overlooked by any means, this fear is a detriment that serves to perpetuate the preconceived and unjustified notions that the College holds regarding the neighboring community.

Campus safety is not the real issue on campus. The problem in regards to campus safety lies in the minds of those who see safety as the issue, and closing the campus as a solution. The problem lies in the tendency most of the student body has in grouping the entire neighborhood population into one concrete archetype; that archetype being one of deviancy and bad intentions. The fact that there are currently 18 campus safety officers patrolling campus on foot between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. is also representative of this fear, not to mention entirely ridiculous. This is an issue that needs to be looked at more closely, and the College

as a whole would benefit from stepping back and assessing the absurdity of this current situation before making concrete decisions about action.

The Reality of Crime on Campus

A bunker mentality pervades the campus. In a recent New York Times article written in response to the controversial Trayvon Martin shooting that occurred within a gated community, author of the recent book, *Searching for Whitopia: An Improbable Journey to the Heart of White America*, writes that in his experience researching and living in gated communities, “Residents often expressed a fear of crime that was exaggerated beyond the actual criminal threat” (Benjamin 2012). This is exactly the case at Trinity College today. In speaking with members of the Hartford Police Department, as well as Campus Safety, the facts are undisputable. Lieutenant Allan, Zone Commander of the Trinity neighborhood guessed that anywhere between 60 and 70% of crimes on campus are student on student, Jorge Lugo guessed that the percentage may be even higher. He went on to assert that he believes the campus to be a safe environment, making the convincing argument that, “I wouldn’t be here for more than 25 years if I didn’t feel that way” (Lugo 2012). Given the nature of the response to Chris Kenny’s assault, it is clear that in general the student body does not feel the same way. What must be understood, and may help dispel these irrational fears of targeted violence, is the fact that the crimes that do occur on campus involving non-Trinity students are crimes of opportunity. Associate Director of Campus Safety at Trinity and long time Sergeant of the Hartford Police Department states that most of the crime on campus is larceny or theft (Lyons 2012). These are not violent crimes, and often times these crimes take

place without students even noticing. Lieutenant Allan recalls incidences of students reporting stolen TV's taken from open windows, and stolen computers left unattended at the library. Crimes of opportunity rely on the spontaneity of a situation; they are not calculated like the campus community would like to believe.

On campus there is an overwhelming tendency to have a paranoid eyes-on-the-streets mentality. The facts, however, are undisputable, and call for more attention to the activities that occur within the campus community. Jason Rojas notes that students are quick to jump to conclusions, and that "...we never take the time to look internally at our own students and our own College community to see if perhaps were engaged in some of the same activities that we don't like the community engaging in on our campus" (Rojas 2012). Lieutenant Allan spoke of his experience responding to calls from Trinity, noting the defensive attitude students have in regards to the crimes that are reported. He expressed frustration, because over the course of his many investigations he has become acutely aware of how facts are exaggerated and how quickly rumors spread throughout campus. To use an example, immediately after Chris Kenny's assault, word began to circulate that the beating was a gang-initiation. The rumor held that the criminals who had been locked up in the 90's were just now getting out of prison and re-establishing themselves on the streets. When Lieutenant Allan came to campus to get a feel for the rumors related to this event and my roommates and I all relayed this same rumor he sort of chuckled, and dispelled it immediately. He told me that there have not been reports of gang-initiations for years, and furthermore that when gang-initiations do occur, they are not reported because they are targeted at competing

gangs, they do not target random members of the general community. This lends to the fact that there is an overwhelming paranoia on campus that makes students believe we are targets. Lieutenant Allan, is aware this is not the case, stating that, "Very rarely if somebody's gonna be the victim of a robbery or a crime, very rarely are they targeted because they are a student" (Allan 2012). Defending his point by referencing the huge rate of crime in 1994, when, "There was probably 60 homicides...all around Frog Hollow...and I can't remember any Trinity students ever being targeted, to be victimized and those were crazy days" (Allan 2012).

There are irrational fears on campus regarding crime and the neighborhood, and this fear is due to ignorance, which is a result of the lack of contact the campus has with the surrounding community. We are quick to jump to conclusions, basing them in our assumptions and prejudices. What must be understood is that it is impossible to assume that an entire community can be characterized by a set list of attributes. But do we ever think this way? Given the way the Administration, as represented in President Jones' letter has articulated the College's defensive stance towards crime, and the way in which students responded to the recent assault on campus, it is clear that the College generalizes the neighboring community, placing them into a narrow framework. In regards to this sort of mentality, journalist Rich Benjamin writes that, "Gated communities churn a viciously cycle by attracting like-minded residents who seek shelter from outsiders and whose physical seclusion then worsens paranoid groupthink against outsiders" (2012). The fact of the matter is, it is only a miniscule portion of the community that are involved in the crimes that occur on campus. In reality there are a mere handful of people out of the

thousands living around campus that take part in these behaviors we fear. In fact, the community shares the same concerns that the College does when it comes to safety.

Chapter 7

Common Ground, We Are Not Targets

Shared Concerns

The desire for safety is universal, no one wants to feel exposed and unprotected. Yet on campus, we rarely think that there is a possibility that the surrounding neighborhood could share the same desires and fears that we do. The gates as they exist now are not an insurmountable barrier, yet the symbolic barrier they create is so grounded in perceived truth that it is as if what lies on either side are two inherently different worlds, unable to reach common ground. Jason Rojas spoke to me about the community's shared concern regarding safety, he relayed a recent experience he had saying, "I talked to a couple of people in the neighborhood, and they're like yeah, you gotta protect your students. I mean folks in the neighborhood have concerns about public safety too...the folks in the community have the same concerns we do." (Rojas 2012), and of course they do! The neighborhood is filled with working parents and families with children, their priorities are the same as ours, to protect themselves and their loved ones. The difference is, they are more susceptible to the dangers of living in the city, dangers that are universal to all urban areas.

In 2001, a community resident survey was circulated by Trinity College and the Aetna Center for Families. This survey was distributed door-to-door and spanned a 15-block area surrounding the College. 650 households were contacted in order to assess resident's needs. Of the numerous questions asked, one such

question was, “In your own words, identify the most urgent needs in your neighborhood”, the highest percentage of responses identified a need for “greater security/more patrols” (Sibirsky 2001). When asked what problems the residents saw in their neighborhood, drug dealing and abandoned properties were the two issues raised with the highest frequency. In regards to perceptions of their own neighborhoods safety, residents indicated that they felt safe at home at night and walking during the day, but felt unsafe walking at night (Sibirsky 2001). The results of this survey illustrate that the residents of the neighboring communities share the same concerns as the College when it comes to safety. This must be kept in mind and recognized on a broad scale if the College is to dispel the overarching notion that they are inherently different than us.

Removing the Bulls-Eye

In order to dispel the paranoid misconception that the community is preoccupied with taking advantage of students on campus, I would like to turn again to my ride-along with Officer Faienza. I spent an afternoon with Officer Faienza riding in his cruiser through the neighborhoods that surround Trinity. From 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. I sat in the passenger seat and listened as he told me stories of his childhood growing up down the street from Trinity, his daily routine on the job, and the history of the area. In that four hour window, I got a sense for how the city functions. I left the cruiser, my mind racing, formulating conclusions, and piecing together his stories and experiences with my analysis of Trinity’s place in the greater Hartford community.

I believe that after this experience, I can genuinely argue that the residents of Hartford in no way, shape, or form target Trinity College students, in fact, our presence in the city is so minimal that they do not even consider us a part of their lives, and I will articulate why. The vast majority of criminal activity that occurs in Hartford is drug and gang related. Individuals who are involved in these activities live a lifestyle that is a reflection of their situation, and it is a lifestyle that we, the College-community, are incapable of truly understanding.

Officer Faienza asked me how much money I thought a mid-level drug dealer made in a month, a question I had no basis for answering. He told me that on any given month, one of these mid-level drug dealers will make about \$50,000 on average (Faienza 2012). The next question he asked me was why, given the amount of money they make, would they choose to live the way they do; in a three-decker apartment in Hartford, living and working primarily on the streets. The reason they continue to live the way they do is simple; this is their job, this is their lifestyle, this is what they know and love. Why would they move to a development in the suburbs and surround themselves with people they don't know, isolating themselves from their desired community? In the city they can walk to the corner, sell drugs, buy drugs, get food and alcohol, and hang out with their friends and family all within walking distance of their front door. Officer Faienza went on to tell me that the majority of these people made the conscious decision at a young age to pursue this lifestyle. Perhaps their older siblings emulated this lifestyle, maybe their uncle or their friend's father; regardless of how they were exposed to it, this world and the perks that are associated with it impressed them. He went on to say that by age 15,

most of these individuals had committed a number of small felonies to show that their elders could trust them. This represents only the first step in working their way into this game that Trinity students know nothing about.

These guys are not stupid; in fact they are far from it. They know this lifestyle so well, it's a game to them. They do exactly what they intend to do, there are no random acts of violence, there are always reasons. To the vast majority of students on campus, this lifestyle is entirely foreign. This is a large part of the reason the campus fears the community so much, there is an inborn ignorance. Trinity College is so far removed from this lifestyle and this game that there would be absolutely no reason for a gang-member or a drug-dealer to target anyone on campus. They are so invested in their own turbulent lifestyles that we, the College community, do not even exist as a part of their subconscious. Why would a gang member come onto campus and shoot a student? There are no campus gangs or competing drug-dealers, so what reason would they have to hate us? Again, in their lives there are no random acts of violence, and the College community poses no threat, so what would their motivation be?

Here is the bottom line when it comes to safety on campus; don't be ignorant of the environment that you are in. Every person I spoke with about campus safety echoed this statement. Trinity College is located in a city; a city is an urban environment where the population far exceeds the spatial landscape. Cities across the world share this feature, and there is a code of conduct that one should be aware of, and adhere to, when one is in this environment. I vividly remember the day I

learned this urban code of conduct if you will. I was seven or eight years old and I was walking with my father through Boston. I had always been visibly nervous in cities, often relying on my dad's hand as a means of solace. On this occasion I grabbed his hand as we walked past a homeless man asking for change on a corner. My father, having grown up going to school in Boston and Cleveland, noticed how my level of comfort changed in this situation. He turned to the homeless man and offered to buy him lunch at the store he was sitting in front of. Needless to say, I was horrified. After lunch he explained to me that this man was not necessarily a bad man, and that people in cities are no different than people in the suburbs.

The lesson he taught me to ease my urban fear reflected the importance of having street smarts. He told me that in any urban setting, the key to these street smarts is to simply be aware of what is going on around you. If you see something that looks questionable, simply avoid it. When it is dark, be more vigilant about your surroundings, avoid dark and confined spaces like alleys, and walk in numbers. These rules are universal to all settings, but particularly to urban areas. As such, these rules should be adhered to in Hartford just as they should in Boston or New York. Just because gates and a beautiful landscape distinguish Trinity College from the surrounding neighborhood does not mean that it is inherently separate from the community and its atmosphere that surround it.

Trinity College does not have a large presence in the community, and is certainly not a target for crime. In fact, In an interview with David Corrigan, a long time Hartford resident and a member of the Frog Hollow NRZ (Neighborhood

Revitalization Zone Committee) noted that, “You could ride right by it and unless you looked out the window, you wouldn’t even notice it was there” (Corrigan 2012). Security on campus is in a current state of hysteria, and while the safety of Trinity’s students is the top priority for the Administration, faculty, and staff, remedying these security concerns by physically closing the campus will only serve to exacerbate problems that already exist, proving that security is not the real issue at hand. The suspicion and terror individuals on campus feel when they interact or observe members of the surrounding community on campus is a direct reflection of the College’s lack of interaction with individuals on the other side of the gates. This lack of interaction is the problem that must be attended to, for with interaction, the College will soon recognize that their fears are irrational, and their prejudices are based in myth.

Chapter 8

Is this Engagement?

On a Saturday morning, it is not surprising to see neighborhood residents walking through campus; whether they are pushing a stroller, walking a dog, or riding bikes with friends. At night from the library looking out over the football field it is not uncommon to see a number of non-Trinity members playing a game of football or soccer. In this sense, it is apparent that members of the community are aware that the Trinity campus is currently open to them. This is not to say, however, that they feel comfortable on campus. The activities that they do engage in on campus do not involve contact with the campus community. As Director of Trinfo Café and long time Hartford resident Carlos Espinosa put it, “The community outside Trinity simply sees the campus as space to be utilized” (Espinosa 2012). Trinity should be more than just space to the community, it should be an extension of the community, but as it stands today, space is all the College truly offers.

Anthropologist Peter Benson in his ethnography *Tobacco Capitalism: Growers, Migrant Workers, and the Changing Face of a Global Industry* describes a desire to maintain homogeneity in space as a face-landscape, where, “Human Faces can be structured or staged by landscapes; spatial arrangements and the literal lay of the land dramatically shape how faces are configured and interact...” (Benson 2011:176). On campus there exists this notion of a face-landscape, it is a part of our sub-conscious, as our on-campus environment is dramatically different from that which surrounds it. Because of this aversion, and the implied ignorance that

accompanies, the College has yet to truly engage the community. I believe this lack of engagement is the cause of the prejudices, pervading assumptions, and fears that the vast majority of the College holds regarding the neighboring residents. The current gates symbolize this loaded aversion; they define the campus from the community that lies beyond it. If the gates were closed, however, this aversion would become physically applied, and the relatively permeable nature of our open-campus policy today would be solidified.

As was mentioned earlier, after many conversations with members of the campus community, I have come to the conclusion that the Administration is proud of its efforts to engage the neighborhood to date. President Jones and Jason Rojas both named a number of programs the College is involved in, but I do not believe that these programs truly engage the community. They do not intend to integrate the campus with the community, rather, they primarily give children from the neighborhood space to take part in activities offered on campus. These efforts are not geared towards student-resident interaction and education, and the majority of the student-body on campus is entirely unaware many of these programs exist.

Speaking about The Learning Corridor, President Jones writes that it is, "...a towering success and it does have a ton of kids from the neighborhood" (President Jones 2012). When I went on to inquire about the College's role in The Learning Corridor, he responded that, "Its huge...we let them use campus facilities in the summer...half of the faculty are their faculty, half the faculty are ours" (President Jones 2012). With this said, I think it is obvious that the problem lies in this alleged

“huge” role the College plays. This program is extremely limited, as it is offered in the summertime when students are not on campus at Trinity. He went on to mention other programs like the Hartford Area Youth Scholars and the Dream Camp the College hosts every summer, noting that, “...we let them use space on campus for free” (President Jones 2012). The wording of this statement alone is a direct reflection of the attitude the College holds about the neighboring community. By using the phrase “...we let them”, Trinity appears elitist, making the neighborhood residents seem desperate for our help. He went on to state that these programs “...run their tutorials here. I don’t charge them a cent.” (President Jones 2012). While this donation of space is generous, it still shows that the College is not truly affiliated with the logistics of these programs. The College purely provides space; we host them as guests, not players in a mutualistic relationship. Little to no interaction or coexistence with Trinity students occurs within these programs. This is problematic because it is the Trinity students as well as the neighboring residents that need to interact with one another if the relationship between the two is to be positive.

An interesting example of community engagement that Dean Alford, President Jones, and Jason Rojas boasted was the Koeppel Community Center. This “Community Center”, in the eyes of the College community, is simply the ice rink where the men and women’s hockey teams practice and play games. I had no knowledge prior to my research that the building was referred to as a community center, but apparently there are programs that take place in the Koeppel Center, and Hartford residents can ice skate for free between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. every

day. As three members of the Trinity College Administration mentioned this, it is clearly a feature that the College is proud of, but at the same time, how many neighborhood kids are home between 11:30 and 1:00 in the Winter, or even want too, let alone know how to ice skate in the first place? The Koeppel Center is not looked upon highly by everyone on campus, as it also serves as a reflection of the self-serving interest that Trinity still holds in community outreach.

Plans to build the Koeppel Center were set into motion just as the school discovered a massive budget deficit that much of the College-community blamed on the President at the time, Evan Dobelle. Programs had to be cut in order to build the ice rink; the programs that were cut were consequently programs for the community that President Dobelle implemented earlier in his term. One Professor recounted this, emphasizing the absurdity of cutting community programs to build a multimillion-dollar ice rink. “The way it was defended was that this ice rink will be for the community” (Anonymous 2012), another professor said, “I talked to community residents cause I actually have friends that live in this neighborhood who say that it is the biggest joke” (Anonymous 2012). This serves as another example of the lip-service the College carefully articulates to justify the nature of their plans.

The College boasts its relationship with the Hartford community by emphasizing their generous allocation of space and money in the various programs that are hosted on campus. While this does show that the College is open to the community, the incentive behind these efforts is of primary concern. By naming the

Boys and Girls Club located across the street the Boys and Girls Club of Trinity College, the College is doing itself a favor, hoping that individuals who drive by the building will associate Trinity College with a positive image of community engagement and generosity. Similarly, by naming the Koepfel ice rink the Koepfel Community Center, Trinity is advertising their devotion to the community. The issue is not so much that these efforts of promotion are self-serving, for it is important the College maintains its prestige in academia. The issue is that the programs and organizations the College boasts are not effective in truly engaging the community. I believe that they are not effective because they do not require any real integration and interaction on-campus with the College community, whether it be students, teachers, or the Administration.

While the programs that exist are not geared towards real integration, what I find to be even more problematic is the fact that the College is largely unaware of what is going on within the campus community in regards to urban outreach and engagement on a smaller scale. This is inexcusable if the College is ever going to foster a positive relationship with the community. In the survey I distributed around campus, 70% of people stated that they had no relationship with the surrounding neighborhood (Schuster 2012). In my interview with President Jones, however, he stated with confidence that, "...there are 3 or 400 of you involved somehow in the community all the time" (President Jones 2012). Clearly there is a lack of organization when it comes to student's actual level of engagement with the community; this is a problem that could be easily resolved, but in order to do this, the College must first make an effort and a commitment to do so.

Current Director of Community Relations Jason Rojas echoes this notion, emphasizing that, "...we don't know exactly what everybody is doing on campus" (2012). When I asked the Dean of Students what sort of resources are dedicated to managing the relationship between the community and the College, he expressed that he did not know, and that the best person to speak to was Mr. Rojas, who also does not know! David Corrigan, a member of the Frog Hollow NRZ noted, "I never see Trinity making any real effort to sort of advertise its presence, to say this, hey, this is what's going on" (2012), going on to reference President Jones' letter discussed earlier saying that, "He wrote that Trinity was not going to withdraw what it offers. And I kind of figured well, all right, what does Trinity actually offer?" (Corrigan 2012). The College is playing a game of hide and seek when it comes to tracking engagement with the community on campus; this game that has been going on for far too long.

I am very aware that professors include community engagement as requirements in some classes. I myself became involved with the Jubilee House on Clifford Street about a mile from campus, and worked as an ESL teacher (English as a Second Language) through one of my classes, Immigrants and Refugees. The bottom line is this, only a fraction of students on campus are actively engaged with the community, and much of this engagement remains unknown on campus. The lack of awareness in regards to community outreach initiatives is extremely disappointing, and lends to the fact that there has yet to be a real selfless commitment to establish and maintain a positive relationship that will transcend the gates and the negative relationship they have created. It is the culture of Trinity

that needs to change, and although culture is in part grounded in history, this is not to say that it cannot change. This change, however, will only be successful if the College and the neighboring community find a common ground, and the only way to reach this common ground will be through the platform of contact and integration.

Chapter 9

Returning to the Gates, an Extended Conclusion

It should be clear now that the College currently has very little contact with its neighbors. It should also be clear that this lack of relationship is in large part due to the absence of programs, and thus possible interactions between individual members of the campus and neighboring community. Above all else it should be obvious that the College and the community, as they coexist today, cling to negative associations they have of one another, and use these negative associations as a crutch when it comes to placing blame and justifying actions, or rather, lack thereof. With the Administration putting so much effort and attention into revamping campus safety of late, I believe it is important to redirect this attention to the root of the problem, this being the overwhelming lack of engagement with the community. Given the recent talk of fully gating off the campus and restricting access to non-Trinity members, I find it of immediate importance to note the potential impact this may have on both the College and the neighborhood, arguing that this plan should absolutely not be carried out.

Currently, the gates that surround the campus are incomplete. There are gaps and breaks, but the gentrification that the gates symbolize is concrete. When Vernon Street was closed to through traffic in 1994, President Dobbelle was acutely aware of the message this sent to the neighborhood, and referred to it as a, "...a circling of the wagons" (Goldscheider 2000). There is a great deal of irony in the closing of Vernon Street. When the road was closed the gates at the bottom of the

hill were specifically designed to illustrate that the campus, although closed to through traffic, was still open to the community. The irony lies in this design, and the motivation for its construction.

The gates on either side of Vernon Street spiral upwards, intended to denote an unfurling of the gates, opening the campus to the neighborhood that surrounds it. This design is perplexing, as it was constructed in response to the school closing a major street to non-Trinity members. Although the reasons for closing the street were legitimate given the concentration of students moving about the street and the speed at which cars would cut through, the act of closing the street serves to further divide the world of privilege from that of destitution. What is ironic is that this sculpture was erected in order to, in a sense, make up for what it had taken away. The fact of the matter is, gates, whether they are complete or broken, define two spaces as separate. “The purpose of gates and walls is to limit social contact, and reduced social contact may weaken the ties that form the social contract” (Blakely and Snyder 1997:137), given the fact that the College is vastly different from the neighboring community in terms of its overarching appearance, ethnic makeup, and socioeconomic status, physically implementing an additional divide in the form of closed gates would visually represent the gentrification that exists between the College and the community.

Having spoken with students, professors, members of the Administration, and members of Hartford community organizations, three notions were introduced in regards to the potential symbolism these new gates would possess if they were to

be fully closed, all of which I will explore in further detail in the paragraphs that follow. The first being that gating the campus will intensify the notions of exclusivity that are already associated with the campus. This will physically and mentally push the community away from the College, and with it, the potential for positive interactions. Second, the College will undoubtedly come off as scared, which will further the already grounded assumption that the community is inherently dangerous. Finally, and the point of utmost importance, is that fully gating off the campus will serve to intensify the biases that already exist on either side of the fence. Combined, these factors will make it exponentially harder to create a positive relationship in the hopes of bridging the gap that is already physically demarcated around the campus.

As has already been discussed, there is an inherent air of privilege when it comes to gated communities. As of now, the gates are not closed, yet as such, they still send out a message that in essence says you can get in, but only if you know the code. The gates already serve to physically define the campus from the neighborhood, and closing them would further isolate Trinity from its surroundings, making the campus more of a confined bubble than it already is. Fully gating the campus would solidify the notion that communities are defined by their landscapes, and consequently that these landscapes define their communities. This demarcation of space would send messages to both sides that space is exclusive to a certain population. This is certainly not the type of message that should be, and will be publicized, if the College hopes to establish a positive relationship with the neighborhood that surrounds it.

If the gates were to be closed around the College's periphery, particularly after the recent public concern regarding campus safety, the school will appear scared, if not terrified, of that which surrounds it. As far as facts are concerned, Blakely and Snyder found that, "...data on the effectiveness of barricading are anecdotal and inconclusive, with examples of less crime, greater crime, and no change at all" (1997:121). This being said, if the College is reliant upon the gates as a means for security, there is no guarantee that these measures would even have an effect on the current situation. But this is hardly the real issue, as I have already discussed how this fear of the neighborhood and its residents is irrational.

The bottom line is the only way to dispel these fears is through actual contact with the neighborhood residents. Fully gating the campus would create a physical barrier dissuading this interaction, and as one student said in the Rally for Chris Kenny, it would serve as a, "...reminder of the dangers of wandering off at night". This "reminder" would only perpetuate the assumptions that the College holds about the neighborhood residents, or as they are deemed on campus, the "Hartford Locals". I believe this would negatively impact not only the College-neighborhood relationship, but also the College's future admissions, which is an area of fundamental importance for both the Administration and the Board of Trustees. Touring students will come on campus and seeing the gates and additional measures of security and get the impression that the neighborhood is dangerous, and because of the inherent danger that lies on the other side of the gates, the College had no choice but to barricade themselves in. I can say with confidence that if a prospective student got this impression, they would not attend Trinity. This

being said, as Trinity is concerned with the future success of the College, it would be in their best interest to avoid this sort of representation and refrain from fully gating off the campus.

Assumptions, prejudices, and biases define the campus-neighborhood relationship to date. As the two communities are isolated by visual and social homogeneity, these notions of the other are solidified. I believe that gating the campus fully would exacerbate these notions to a point of no return. Journalist Rich Benjamin puts it simply when he asserts that, “The rise of “secure,” gated communities, private cops, private roads, private parks, private schools, private playgrounds – private, private, private – exacerbates biased treatment against the young, the colored and the presumably poor” (2012).

The relationship between the College and the surrounding community is poor, there is little effective engagement, and the tendency to remain isolated exists in the climates of both communities. If the gates that surround the campus were to be fully closed, and access to campus restricted, contact with the surrounding community would not only become physically difficult, but there would be a tremendous mental deterrent, grounding the prevailing biases Benjamin mentioned in the inherent nature of the communities in question.

Change is Possible; Where to Begin?

Board of Trustees Chair Paul Raether articulated a fundamental notion that every member of the Trinity College community should understand, this being that when individuals speak poorly about Hartford, they speak poorly about Trinity.

“We (Trinity) are a part of Hartford, so we are part of the problem” (From Rally March 8, 2012). Accepting and understanding this is imperative to the College’s success. The College must be willing to not only donate space, as they do currently with the various summer programs that take place on campus, but to share space. There must be contact between the residents and the student body, and actual conversations must be held in order to dispel the negative beliefs both sides of the gates carry about one another. The lack of contact between the gates as they stand today is the agent for the ignorance that pervades both communities in question, and given the current concerns regarding campus safety, it is of increasing importance to shift the attention in order for these infectious notions be remedied.

The notion of an all-inclusive community is sadly part of the American political myth of democracy, and of late, “The fabric of civitas, communal commitment to civic and public life, has begun to rip” (Blakely and Snyder 1997:176). Communities are becoming increasingly fragmented, creating smaller and smaller enclaves of exclusivity and thus, exclusion. Trinity College has become preoccupied with looking inward, ignoring mounting tensions that exist with the neighboring community until they have come to a tipping point. The tipping point is now. With the current campus climate in a state of disarray due to increasing concerns over campus safety, and the end of another school year, the College must make a commitment to change the nature of their relationship with the neighborhood and community. Recent talk of fully gating the campus is an issue that I believe would be tremendously detrimental if there are any hopes of fostering a positive relationship with the neighborhood. “It is the mutual support and shared

social relationships of community that require protection and deserve our material and intellectual resources, not the symbols of separatism and alienist consumption” (Blakely and Snyder 1997:176). Gating the campus fully would transform the College into what Blakely and Snyder call a “security zone neighborhood”, whose goal is to, “...strengthen and protect a sense of community, but their primary goal is to exclude the places and people they perceive as threats to their safety or quality of life” (1997:45).

Abraham Lincoln said that, “a house divided against itself cannot stand” (1858). There are many perspectives on campus, and I am well aware that there are many students and professors who support me in writing this call to attention. Forty students posted a letter expressing their attitude against the recent talk of fully gating the campus. The letter outlines five reasons why the gates would have a negative impact on not only the neighborhood residents, but the College community as well (Provost 2012). Because of public voices such as these, I am aware that I am not arguing for change without support. We, however, are not a majority, as 52% of the campus community responded to my online survey that they would not like to see Trinity make more of an effort to engage the surrounding community (Schuster 2012). This statistic is extremely disappointing. Given the prestige of the institution, and its visually striking and economically juxtaposing geographic location within Hartford, there should be a commitment to the neighborhood that we as a College play an active role in. The issues I have outlined must be fundamentally recognized and embraced by the majority on campus; we must become a house united.

In a 2001 Community Resident Survey, 66% of neighborhood residents stated that they knew nothing or little about Trinity College (Sibirsky 2001). While this was eleven years ago, the College has been around for much longer, and this statistic alone lends to the fact that Trinity is a very small presence in the Hartford community. During my ride-along with Officer Faienza, I was exposed to a first hand account of the neighborhood and its history. The neighborhoods that immediately surround Trinity are currently in a state of stagnation. With engagement and actual interest, the College could have a huge impact in turning this around. As mentioned earlier, this is a direct result of the lack of a sense of community in the neighborhood.

Officer Faienza brought me down Franklin Avenue in the Barry Square neighborhood, the nature of which changed before my eyes as we moved up the street. Where the South end was dominated by graffiti covered storefronts with cluttered advertisements, hosting groups of individuals gathered on the sidewalks, the North end boasted new uniform storefront facades, with enticing window displays, and pleasant walking space. He told me that the entirety of Franklin Avenue looked like its South end five years ago. When I inquired as to how this dramatic change took place, he simply said that if a neighborhood cares, and if residents are engaged, any area can turn around. He went on to state that through community meetings, residents and businesses came together and spoke about the problems they perceived in the area, voicing their opinions as to what they would like to see change. David Corrigan of the Frog Hollow NRZ shares this belief, and expressed to me that his involvement with the NRZ is representative of his

engagement to the revitalization of Hartford's neighborhoods, recognizing that problems exist within the community, and given this fact, that he is also a part of these problems, and as such is working to fix them. This is the stance that Trinity must take, and if we shut ourselves out further, we will only make it harder for our College as an urban institution, and the neighborhood as an urban community, to coexist.

Trinity needs to take down the barriers that currently insulate them from local demands and conversations. This will not be easy, and its potential for success will not be recognized immediately. The first step if changes are to be made must come from within the Administration, as "Successful external engagement is not likely to be sustained without equally successful internalization, and that means change within the college or university" (Walshok 1999:32). It is the Administration as well as the Trustees of the College that hold the ultimate power that is necessary to change attitudes and actions on campus. Vesselinov and Cazessus warn that, "Once produced, a built environment is inherently static and requires extensive effort to change" (2007:118); the Administration should heed this warning as talk of gating off the campus continues, and before decisions are made. Trinity College as it stands today has internalized the gated community mentality despite the fact that the campus is technically open. This internalization, if changes are made, will prove to be difficult to eradicate. As the Administration is organized today, I do not see the sort of leadership necessary to break down these already internalized notions. This being said, the College must amend the current Administration, creating a team that includes individuals who have experience with institutions in urban areas, and more

specifically, in Hartford. Hartford is a city that most of the student body is unfamiliar with, and I believe it is safe to say that the same goes for most of the Administration. It is imperative that Trinity has a powerful link to the city, and I believe that it is within the Administration that this link must be established.

While I believe that the most effective means for change at the macro level lies in the power that the Administration holds, it does not mean that students and teachers are not capable of making change for themselves. As mentioned earlier, there are many students and teachers who interact with the community, and would like to see a positive and integrated relationship between the campus and the neighborhood. I commend these individuals for their efforts, and hope that in writing this I will open the eyes of those who do not recognize the importance of community engagement and its potential for a positive impact on campus.

Trinity College is a prestigious institution; known across the country for its excellence in academics, and the successes of its graduates. I am a member of the Trinity College community, and I am proud to say that Trinity is the school I will have received my undergraduate degree from. As I complete my senior year, reflecting on my time spent at Trinity, I feel it is my responsibility to express my concerns. To return to Robert Frost and his *Mending Wall*, “And on a day we meet to walk the line/And set the wall between us once again/We keep the wall between us as we go” (13-15). Trinity must meet with their neighbors to walk this line, and on this walk there must be a conversation. This conversation must break down the wall between the campus and the neighborhood, breaching the intrinsic barriers

that exist in order to walk freely, speak freely, and coexist freely as humans, as equals, as neighbors. For this is what we are, we are neighbors, and neighbors are not meant to draw lines that define their lives based on symbols of isolation and belonging. As was demonstrated in the decline of Hartford in the 1980's and 90's, a sense of community is crucial to the success and livelihood of an environment. At Trinity there is little sense of community that goes beyond the gates lining the campus today. As an urban institution it is our responsibility to engage this sense of community. As a student looking towards the future I want to see the horizon before me, not a gate. I want to see possibilities, risks, opportunities, not a mirror reflecting the present and past.

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