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**Behind Closed Doors:
Exploring the Gated Community in Ontario**

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**BEHIND CLOSED DOORS:
EXPLORING THE GATED COMMUNITY IN ONTARIO**

Christina Strasbourg

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, Criminology

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Abstract

This study examines the ways in which residents of a Canadian gated community in southern Ontario, Canada socially construct the meaning of both “community” and “safety”. In particular, the study examines whether the assumptions and findings on community safety found in the literature on American gated communities apply to similar communities in Canada. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with four participants to explore the underlying assumptions and stereotypes that participants used in the discussions of community safety. Participants defined a safe community as one that is: homogeneous; excludes strangers and ‘others’; provides both physical and social security; built on a sense of community life; and governed by rules and regulations. This study found empirical evidence that helps to validate many of the assumptions in the existing literature: the restriction of access helps residents feel safe; physical infrastructure is needed in order to feel safe; the ability to recognize who is a member of the community makes residents feel safe; and gated communities are viewed by their residents as nostalgic neighborhoods.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

*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 offense.
(Frost, 1930)*

The gated community is a rapidly growing phenomenon that has left its mark on all corners of the world. For instance, gated communities account for roughly 11 percent of all new housing in the United States and provide housing for approximately 4 million Americans (Atkinson & Flint, 2003; Blandy & Lister, 2005). Gated communities have also been constructed in the United Kingdom (Gooblar, 2002), South Africa (Jurgens and Gnad, 2002), Turkey (Dundar, 2003), Mexico (Giglia, 2003), China (Giroir, 2003), Brazil (de Moura, 2003), several Arab countries (Glasze & Alkhayyal, 2002), Indonesia (Leisch, 2002), New Zealand (Dixon and Dupuis, 2003), Argentina (Thuillier, 2003), and Canada (Grant, 2003).

As gated communities continue to be constructed around the world, important issues are being raised by those studying various disciplines in the social sciences (Grant, 2003; Low, 2003; Blakely & Snyder, 1999). Scholars to date have unanimously argued that people move to gated communities because they are afraid and want to increase their sense of safety and security (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Durlington, 2006; Halberg, 2001; Kim, 2006; LaCour-Little & Leisch, 2002; Malpezzi, 2001; Sanchez, Lang & Dhavale, 2005). A subset of the literature suggests that residents may also be motivated by an interest in asserting markers of prestige and superior socio-economic status (Billig & Churchman, 2003; Low, 2003). These trends, especially when combined, raise troubling questions about the potential impact of gating on the discrimination of

marginalized groups, especially if a safe community is defined as one that excludes troublesome others who are less advantaged and therefore more dangerous.

Criminology is rooted in several schools of thought, such as positivism and constructionism. Positivism posits that knowledge is authentic only when based on natural, physical and material experiences (Kremer-Marietti, 1972) while constructionism theorizes that reality is socially constructed by individuals in a given culture or society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Examples of social constructs include social status or the use of currency¹.

This study is inscribed in the constructionist school of thought. I am interested in the phenomenon of gated communities and in particular how people living in such communities understand the notion of community safety. More specifically, I am interested in learning whether the findings on community safety found in the literature, largely based on American gated communities, apply to similar communities in Canada. This study therefore examines the ways in which residents of a Canadian gated community socially construct the meaning of both “community” and “safety”. The project is based on semi-structured interviews with residents of a gated community located in southern Ontario. My discussions with research participants may or may not be based on “authentic”, natural, physical and material experiences as would be required by the positivist viewpoint. However, I am interested in examining the ways in which individuals describe what “safe” means to them in general and in the context of their gated community in particular. My project is therefore conceptually rooted in a theoretical perspective that argues that such socially constructed phenomena are implicated in the ways in which

¹ The use of currency is considered a social construct, as individuals in a given society must agree that the item used as currency has a worth and is valuable.

individuals living in these communities come to define themselves as a community and interact with each other on issues related to safety.

To date, only a few criminological and sociological research studies (Baron, 1998; Bjarnason, 2000; Chisdes, 2000, Kim, 2006; Mittelsteadt, 2003) on the gated community have been conducted as much of the literature is found in disciplines other than criminology, such as geography, housing and urban planning (Blandy & Lister, 2005; Gordon, 2004; Grant, 2003; Helsley & Strange, 1999; Jacobs, 1993; Lang & Danielsen, 1997). My study provides exploratory information about the similarities/differences between Canadian and American residents' descriptions of safety, community, strangers, and rules and regulations. In this way, my project contributes to the gaps in knowledge regarding Canadian gated communities and its link to the existing literature base and suggests new areas of research in this emerging phenomenon. Given the fact that most of the research (Atlas & Leblanc, 1994; Fowler & Mangione, 1986, Kim, 2006; Sanchez, Lang & Dhavale, 2005; Wilson-Doenges, 2000) to date has been conducted on American communities, my study provides some much needed data on this phenomenon in the Canadian context.

Perhaps most importantly, the data obtained from the participants help validate some of the assumptions and theories found in the literature on this topic about the essential role that the desire for security plays in the gating phenomenon. However, it should be noted that the sample size is limited and, given the method chosen, generalizability is not possible. Still, the data provide some insights into what motivated the participants to move into a gated community, and

how the gate reinforces the elements of separation, exclusion and protection that are integral to their understanding of safety.

This study can be understood from within overall theories of gated communities that currently exist in the literature. I used a conceptual framework based on social constructionism, with supporting theoretical notions from Teun A. van Dijk's *Theory of Ideology*, to inform my analysis of the ways in which the meaning of the gated community is constructed and how participants describe what a "safe community" means to them.

The following chapters discuss the literature review, conceptual framework, methodology, analysis, conclusions and limitations associated with this project.

The literature review chapter introduces the reader to the topic of gated communities and presents what is currently known about gated communities in Canada. It also presents a typology of gated communities that frames my inquiry as well as summarizes the social science knowledge to date. It is organized around recurrent themes in the literature, including the desire for security and safety, the search for community, nostalgia for the idealized neighborhoods of the past, and attitudes about the exclusion of strangers and undesirables, the protection of property values, the control of neighborhood quality, and the need for prestige.

The conceptual framework chapter provides an overview of van Dijk's Theory of Ideology, which posits a tripartite relationship between cognition, society and discourse. The

chapter will use van Dijk's work to provide a framework for my study of the representations of a safe community.

The methodology chapter describes the steps taken to select the sample, as well as collect and analyze the data. It will outline the research question and discuss the analytical method of thematic analysis.

The analysis chapter presents the results of the interviews conducted with the residents of Ocean View, a gated community in southern Ontario, and focuses on identifying the prior experiences, opinions and beliefs drawn upon by them to help them describe the elements of a safe community. Specifically, I explore their construction of security, community life, the need for homogeneity, their fear of strangers and others, and the role of rules and regulations in helping to make a community safe.

The concluding chapter summarizes the study and its results, and opens the discussion to areas for further research.

Chapter 2 – Gated Communities: A Literature Review

A gated community resident pulls up to the gate in her car, rolls down her window only long enough to insert her card to electronically open the gate. She drives through, drives down the street to her house, presses the garage door remote control, drives in, and shuts the door. She enters her home after deactivating the alarm system, closes the door behind her, and reactivates the alarm. This total lack of community interaction is just the kind of result that...is completely feasible in the... gated community (Wilson-Doenges, 2000: 606).

Although most research on gated communities is of an exploratory nature (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Low, 2003), the gated community has been the subject of studies conducted within the disciplines of geography, architecture and urban planning (Blandy & Lister, 2005; Gordon, 2004; Grant, 2003; Helsley & Strange, 1999; Jacobs, 1993; Lang & Danielsen, 1997); there are few in-depth criminological or sociological studies on this topic. Indeed, a significant portion of the literature is opinion-based. Some articles (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Low, 2003) describe gated communities as exclusionary, private or unfriendly without providing any empirical data to support these statements. Although empirical research on the different facets of the gated community is beginning to surface (Bjarnason, 2000; Chapman & Lombard, 2006; Romig, 2005; Wilson-Doenges, 2000), many journal articles lack proper evidentiary support (Brunn, 2006; Tijerino, 1998). Additionally some articles (Atkinson & Flint, 2003; Barnett, 1986; Dunder, 2003; Leisch, 2002) summarize the studies of other authors or attempt to match a gated community to an existing typology. Accordingly, opinion-based articles, summaries and articles lacking methodological information have been reviewed but not included in this literature review, as the conclusions they offer must be treated with caution.

The first part of this chapter reviews attempts by scholars to categorize the gating phenomenon into specific sub-groups, to enable a more finely grained analysis. I present the most cited typology, and define the various terms contained within it.

The second part of this chapter reviews the literature from a variety of disciplines, including urban planning, geography, architecture, and sociology on the topic of gated communities. I also provide an overview of what is currently known about gated communities in Canada.

Defining and Categorizing the Gated Community

While gated communities have been defined in several ways in the literature, most scholars agree that a gated community is defined as a subdivision or neighborhood, often surrounded by a barrier, to which entry is restricted to residents and their guests (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Grant, 2003; Landman, 2006; Low, 2003). In other words, a gated community is a “residential area with restricted access, making public spaces such as roads privatized” (Kim, 2006: 1).

Some researchers expand the definition to include other types of residences such as apartment buildings and condominiums as their front entrances usually have some sort of mechanism to restrict entry to non-residents. However, Blakely and Snyder argue that this definition is overly expansive as apartment buildings and condominiums do not “preclude public

access to streets, sidewalks, parks, beaches, rivers, trails, playgrounds” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 2) and other amenities that can be found within the walls of a gated community.

The gated community is also synonymous with gated enclaves, common interest developments (CID), gated environs, walled communities, and fenced neighborhoods. For consistency in this study, the term “gated community” is used, but refers to any of these phenomena.

The most frequently cited definition of gated communities in the literature is Blakely and Snyder’s (1999: 2). They define gated communities as “residential areas with restricted access in which normally public spaces are privatized. They are security developments with designated perimeters, usually walls or fences, and controlled entrances that are intended to prevent penetration by non-residents. They include new developments and older areas retrofitted with gates and fences”. Although this definition of a gated community is somewhat broad, it captures the sense in the literature that people move into a gated community at least in part to seek out improved security and safety. It has the added advantage of including communities that were built without plans for fences, walls or gates but were later retrofitted to add a controlled entrance, the most visible representation of a secure environment. This definition also specifies the types of security features found in a community where are as Green’s (2006) definition does not. Accordingly, I adopted this definition for this research.

The gated community is distinguished by four key elements: security features; specific forms of property ownership; the existence of a Homeowner's Association; and shared amenities. I will now discuss each in turn.

Security Features

As noted in the Introduction, increased security is central to the gating movement. Gated communities have, at the very least, a walled (or fenced) perimeter and a gate to control and restrict access (Atkinson & Blandy, 2005; Blakely & Snyder, 2007; Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Blakely & Snyder, 1998; Grant, Greene, & Maxwell, 2004). Gatehouses can be staffed or the gate may consist of a mechanical arm that is opened by an electronic key. It is not uncommon for such communities to have other types of security features such as closed caption television (CCTV) and roving patrol cars. Although the level of security varies with each community, the visible presence of security technologies and the incorporation of security practices are essential to the meaning of a gated community because they are what sets a gated community apart from a normal residential subdivision. Additionally, the safety and security features of gated communities are used in promotional and marketing materials by the developers, reinforcing the notion that when one moves into a gated community, one is buying increased security and "peace of mind" (Maxwell, 2004).

Property Ownership

Property ownership within a gated community also sets it apart from normal subdivisions. Someone buying a property in a gated community purchases the home but not the land on which it is built. Simply put, the homeowner enters into a landlord-tenant agreement with the property developer. The “lease” requires the homeowner to respect all deed restrictions, rules and regulations and to make monthly payments to a homeowner’s association. Monthly fees are put towards the upkeep of the community. This is especially important because once a community is gated and public access to roads or amenities is restricted, the municipality is no longer obligated to provide certain services such as snow removal, maintenance of roads, sidewalks and green spaces, and waste collection, among others. In a very real sense, the gated community is “privatized”, indicating that its members have set themselves apart from the general community which surrounds them.

Deed restrictions typically include rules regarding behaviour. Although regulations can vary wildly, typical rules include regulations such as no parking of vehicles on the street overnight, no rowdy parties, no basketball hoops to be erected on the front of buildings, no hanging of washing out to dry, no landscaping or changes to the exterior of the home (e.g. paint, shutters) without written permission, no more than two occupants per housing unit, etc. Property ownership is an important element to the definition of gated communities as well as the constructed nature of community. Gated communities are highly regulated through covenants, codes and restrictions (CC&Rs)² in order to construct a “perfect” community. Gated

² CC&Rs refer to deed restrictions associated with the sale of homes in gated communities. CC&Rs are generally introduced to maintain the look and feel of the neighbourhood by restricting things such as building materials, lawn

communities also appoint a Homeowner's Association to set new rules and to enforce existing regulations.

Homeowner's Association (HOA)

A Homeowner's Association (HOA) is a voluntary governing body comprised of approximately 5-7 residents of a gated community which is supported by a small team of lawyers and other professionals (i.e.: real estate agents, sales or communications teams). The HOA is given the authority to enforce the covenants, conditions, and restrictions in the lease, to collect and manage fees, and to manage the common areas, services and amenities of the development. Members of an HOA can be elected if too many individuals volunteer for the committee (McKenzie, 2005). According to the Community Associations Institute, HOAs are growing at an approximate rate of 10,000 per year in the United States (Blakely & Snyder, 1999)³.

Amenities

Gated communities often offer amenities to their residents such as a shared pool, gym, golf course, restaurant and/or clubhouse. These amenities are considered common areas and are to be used by all residents of the gated community. However, the amenities remain private in the sense that they are not open to or accessible by the general public, again reinforcing the notion that the gated community is set apart. As previously mentioned,

maintenance and exterior paint colours. In some cases, CC&Rs also restrict behaviours or lifestyle factors such as the weight of a pet or number of pets, the number of individuals per household as well as noise level restrictions. Failure to comply with CC&Rs can result in fines or, in serious cases, eviction from the community.

³ The study does not distinguish between HOAs established for gated communities and those established for condominiums.

monthly fees are collected to maintain the common areas of the community and are also used as membership fees for amenities such as gyms and golf clubs.

Typology

As more researchers have been studying the gated communities, a typology of gated communities has been created to facilitate further categorization and analysis. Typologies provide a framework in which research and knowledge can be accumulated and used to categorize a concept. They also allow researchers to see the evolution of a concept as new and emerging research contributes to an existing typology and creates new categories where necessary or desirable.

A typology of the gated community is important as it allows us to provide a more detailed conception of the gated community and set out additional elements of what a gated community entails. As much as typologies allow us to categorize a phenomenon based on similarities, they also allow us to delineate differences within a concept. The use of a typology in this study allows the author and reader to clearly understand the different types of gated communities and the symbolic meaning attached to each type. This study will also contribute new knowledge on a particular type of community in order to further contribute to the work of a typology on gated communities.

In their seminal study, Blakely and Snyder (1999) classified gated communities into three main categories⁴: Lifestyle; Prestige; and Security Zone. Each category of gated community has three sub-types. Table 1 presents the sub-types as per Blakely and Snyder's typology of gated communities.

Table 1 - Typology and Sub-types of Gated Communities

	Typology of Gated Communities		
	Lifestyle	Prestige	Security Zone
Sub-types	Retirement	Rich and Famous Enclaves	City Perch
	Golf and Leisure	Top Fifth	Suburban Perch
	Suburban New Town	Executive Home Developments	Barricade Perch

Lifestyle

In this type of gated community, the gates provide “security and separation [from outsiders] for the leisure activities and amenities offered within” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 39). Blakely and Snyder have also created three sub-types of the Lifestyle gated community: Retirement; Golf and Leisure; and Suburban New Town.

Retirement communities are designed for retired individuals from the middle to upper socio-economic strata who seek social and recreational activities along with some form of structure for their social interactions. In these communities, social and recreational activities are built into a daily, weekly or monthly calendar. For instance, planned activities such as a card

⁴ To the author's knowledge, Blakely & Snyder's typology has not been updated since its publication. As such, it is possible for overlap to exist between types and sub-types of gated communities.

tournament or a golf tournament may be organized and built into the community calendar. Other activities such as “evening tea” may occur every Monday night, between 5:00 and 7:00 PM in the community Clubhouse to encourage socialization among residents. Structured and planned activities ensure that residents are provided with frequent opportunities to interact with each other, reinforcing the social interaction that is central to the experience of community. In the second subtype, Golf and Leisure communities, amenities such as a golf course or tennis club become the central focus of the community (Blakely & Snyder, 1999). Most interactions among residents tend to take place during the use of the community’s amenities. Residents will choose to purchase a home in a gated community based on a specific amenity offered that also matches their interests.

The Suburban New Town is considered to be a new type of suburbia where the gated community is “large, comprising [of] as many as several thousand housing units, and attempt[s] to incorporate both residential and commercial/industrial and retail activities within or adjacent to the development” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 40). An early example would be Celebration, the town built by the Disney Corporation, which created a closed environment which included all aspects of institutional community life, such as schools, employment, commerce and recreation (Celebration Town Center: 2007).

Prestige

The Prestige community is similar in appearance to a normal subdivision with the exception of the gates. The gates are meant to symbolize prestige and “create and protect a

secure place on the social ladder” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 41). Security, in this sense, has as much to do with social capital as with physical security. In this regard, the gates are meant to project an upscale image while attempting to protect property values and investments. In such communities, property ownership, as described in the preceding pages, continues to apply to a Prestige community. Amenities such as a clubhouse are still offered but are not the main focus of the community.

As with the previous type of community, the Prestige community also has three sub-types: Enclaves of the Rich and Famous, developments for the Top Fifth, and Executive Home developments. The first sub-type is designed to provide privacy and security for celebrities and the very rich. Interestingly, security is matched with the ability to retreat from public interaction and create a larger, communal private space. We have often seen these types of communities lining the streets of Beverly Hills on TV shows and movies. The Top Fifth and Executive communities are “meant to confer some of the prestige of the rich and famous enclaves to those with less-exclusive status. The intention is also in part to artificially induce community in an ersatz homogeneous neighborhood, where physical security and social security are enhanced both by sameness and by controlled access” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 41). Top Fifth communities are developed for successful professionals such as senior executives, CEOs and others. Executive developments are the “wannabe cousins” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 42) of Top Fifth communities and are designed for the middle class.

Security Zone

According to Blakely and Snyder (1999), security zone gated communities are distinguished by the fact that residents are motivated to live in them because of fear of crime and outsiders. The security zone gated community has three sub-types: the City Perch, the Suburban Perch and the Barricade Perch. Blakely and Snyder (1999) use the term “perch” as it is the residents who retrofit their neighborhoods with gates instead of a developer building a community with gates⁵. It should be noted that all three sub-types occur at all income levels.

The City Perch is created when residents erect walls around their neighborhood in order to protect themselves from crime, predators and traffic. The Suburban Perch is a more recent phenomenon as residents build walls around their community “as more and more of the problems previously thought of as urban occur in inner-ring suburbs and smaller towns...The danger may be traffic more than crime, as residents fear the impact of overburdened residential streets on their quality of life” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 43). The primary difference between the City and Suburban Perch is location. The City Perch is located in the inner core of the city while the Suburban Perch is located in the surrounding suburban areas of the city. Barricade Perches are not fully walled and not all entrances are secured with gates. Rather, barricades, such as cement poles, are used to block some streets and help to control traffic. In this regard, vehicular access is restricted, but pedestrian access is still possible.

⁵ In this typology, the property ownership element previously described does not apply as residents already own the home and property and band together to retrofit their existing neighbourhood with a gate. Other aspects of property ownership come into effect as the retrofitted neighbourhood has now become private property and fees must be collected to pay for the upkeep of the community and its amenities.

The Security Zone community is a reactive one, where barriers are seen as a response to threats of some sort. The emphasis is less on “safe community” than a “safe space” in which to live.

I am interested in exploring the ways in which people who chose to move to a gated community experience and define both “safety” and “community”. I am therefore interested in examining the cultural and social values that are brought into play by residents when they talk about community safety and what it means to them. Blakely and Snyder (1999) briefly outline the importance of social values in a resident’s choice of gated community:

Table 2 - The Importance of Social Values in Residents’ Choice of a Gated Community

Value	Lifestyle	Prestige	Security Zone
Sense of Community	Tertiary	Tertiary	Secondary
Exclusion	Secondary	Secondary	Primary
Privatization	Primary	Tertiary	Tertiary
Stability	Secondary	Primary	Secondary

Source: Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 44

Blakely and Snyder (1999) posit that the three main categories of gated communities “reflect to varying degrees four social values: a sense of community, or the preservation and strengthening of neighborhood bonds; exclusion, or separation and protection from the outside; privatization, or the desire to privatize and internally control public services; and stability, or homogeneity, and predictability” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 44).

Blakely and Snyder do not go into detail as to how they arrived at the conclusions of linking specific social values with the categories of gated communities. Although one can infer

linking a particular social value to a specific type of gated community, this inference cannot be reliably used as the authors do not present empirical data or methodological information to support their choices of social values and their links to the types of gated communities.

However, their typology does provide a way to think about the meaning of safety, as it relates to other enumerated values, including the public/private divide and the notion of excluding others from communal spaces. It also allows one to focus on a specific category of community within the very broad definition of gating and, in this way, begin to deepen studies that can contribute knowledge to this area of gated communities⁶. My study, which provides knowledge about the social values and meanings that residents call upon when describing safety, is a first step in this direction.

What Do Academics Know About the Gated Community?

Although the literature on gated communities is not large, there are a number of recurring themes discussed across a variety of disciplines, including: the desire for security and safety; the search for community; nostalgia for the idealized neighborhoods of the past; the exclusion of strangers and undesirables; the protection of property values; the control of neighborhood quality; and the need for prestige. These themes have been grouped under four headings: (1) Security and Safety, (2) Community: Nostalgia, Community Life and Social Interaction, (3) Exclusion and Segregation, and (4) Property Values and Prestige. Several other trends, such as the prevalence of lawsuits⁷, urban planning policy and gated communities in the context of post-

⁶ At the time of undertaking this research project, no studies empirically examining social values and gated communities had been published to my knowledge.

⁷ Lawsuits are focused on the rights of homeowners versus the decisions and actions taken by Homeowner's Associations (HOA), such as evictions or fines.

apartheid South Africa, are found in the literature but have not been included as they are beyond the scope and focus of this project. It is important to note that the majority of the studies presented below are American. This literature review will provide the basis for a comparative study that seeks to corroborate the findings stemming from American studies among Canadian gated communities.

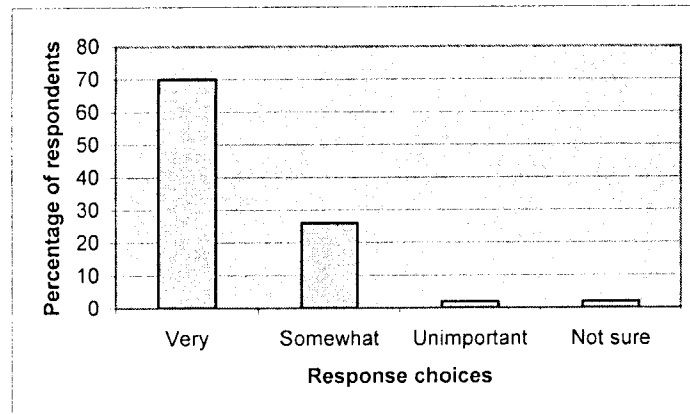
This review provides an overview of the landscape of the available research on gated communities. The four headings: (1) Security and Safety; (2) Community: Nostalgia, Community Life and Social Interaction; (3) Exclusion and Segregation; and (4) Property Values and Prestige, are relevant to this discussion as they help identify the types of issues and concerns that are expressed in the literature at this time. Once again, safety and security are paramount, as scholars have begun to move beyond assumptions and examine the reasons why people move into a gated community.

1. Security and Safety

Safety and security are the most common reasons cited by people when they explain why they are interested in living in a gated community. A number of scholars report that people perceive gated communities to be a way to reduce risk and protect oneself from crime (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Durlington, 2006; Halberg, 2001; Kim, 2006; LaCour-Little & Malpezzi, 2001; Leisch, 2002; Sanchez, Lang & Dhavale, 2005). A telephone survey carried out in the UK (Live

Strategy, 2002) indicated that 72% of a sub-group of their random sample⁸ said greater security was the most attractive statement about gated communities, while Blakely and Snyder (1999) noted that nearly 70% of respondents⁹ living in a gated community indicated that security was a very important factor in their decision to move to a gated neighborhood. As Figure 1 indicates, security was a significant motivating factor for the vast majority of residents studied.

Figure 1 – The Importance of Security in the Choice of a Gated Community



Source: Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 126.

Interestingly, this motivation is strong even though research indicates that security features such as gates and fences do not diminish the potential to be a victim of crime. It is estimated that “approximately 4,000,000 people [live] in ‘closed-off, gated communities’ in the U.S.” (Helsley & Strange, 1999: 81) as of 1995. Moreover, there are reports that one-third of all new developments in Southern California are gated and that similar percentages can be found in large metropolitan areas such as Phoenix and Washington (Helsley & Strange, 1999). However, the evidence that crime rates in some locations change significantly once gates are erected is

⁸ The random sample consisted of 1,001 respondents. Of this number, 345 respondents indicated that living in a gated community was appealing. The statistic of 72% is based on the sub-sample of 345 respondents who demonstrated an interest in living in a gated community.

⁹ Blakely and Snyder sent out approximately 7,000 surveys to boards of directors of Community Associations Institute members across the United States. They did not specify how many individuals responded to their survey.

inconclusive at best (Baron, 1998; Chisdes, 2000, Kim, 2006; Mittelsteadt, 2003). Newman (1980) reported a decline in crime in certain gated areas of St. Louis, Missouri; others suggest that there is no difference (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Fowler & Mangione, 1986, Kim, 2006; Sanchez, Lang & Dhavale, 2005; Wilson-Doenges, 2000). For example, in a study of street barricades in Hartford, New York, Fowler & Mangione (1986) found a decrease in burglary rates in a gated community during the first year. However, follow-up research demonstrated an increase in the following two years¹⁰. In a study of Miami Shores' street barricades, Atlas and LeBlanc (1994) found a reduction in crimes such as burglaries, larcenies and auto thefts since the introduction of the barricades. Kim reported that residents' property crime experiences "did not differ according to the conditions of gating and fencing" (Kim, 2006: 166) in their communities.

In spite of mixed results, gating can clearly influence an individual's perception of increased safety and security. Some argue that this creates a false sense of security (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Lang & Danielson, 1997). Underlying opinions and stereotypes play an important role in perceptions of safety as they concretely link the way in which individuals represent events, actions or situations to how they enact the models that regulate social practice. For instance, a number of scholars argue that believing that safety is linked to physical infrastructure such as a gate, appears to motivate an individual to hide behind the walls, cameras, gates and personal security forces of a gated community in order to take his or her safety into his or her own hands (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Low, 2003; Stoyanov & Frantz, 2006). Blakely and Snyder (1999) found that the higher the level of security present in the gated community, the

¹⁰ The author did not specify if the crime rate returned to the level that was present prior to the community being gated.

safer residents felt. In fact, individuals' perception of safety was greater in gated communities than in non-gated communities (Kim, 2006).

Although residents' sense of increased security may be false, a number of researchers (Atlas & LeBlanc, 1994; Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Blandy & Lister, 2005; Atkinson & Flint, 2003; Fowler & Mangione, 1986; Lang & Danielson, 1997; Mittelsteadt, 2003) also report that walls and gates reduce the amount of uncertainty and anxiety for residents and residents report feeling safer. However, fences, gates and walls may make the neighborhood potentially more dangerous as it fragments neighborhoods and takes eyes off streets (Gooblar, 2002). This has important ramifications for a safe community as several researchers theorize that the safest communities have strong ties among neighbors (Bellah et al., 1996; Putnam, 2000) and a strong presence of natural surveillance¹¹ (Abrams et al., 1993; Jacobs, 1961; Mayhew et al., 1979; Newman, 1996) and yet, studies on the gated phenomenon have not examined the link between natural surveillance, strong community ties and residents' feelings of safety thus far. In addition to reducing natural surveillance, gates and walls "may contribute to placing residents at increased risk by marking the community as a wealthy enclave where burglary is lucrative and by creating a social environment characterized by lack of social integration" (Low, 2003: 131). Moreover, walls may cloak delinquent activities and reduce possibilities of being apprehended (Low, 2003).

The search for safety behind gates appears to be linked to fear of others. Most individuals, whether they live in a gated or non-gated community, are afraid of "strangers" and

¹¹ Natural surveillance is a term used in "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" and "Defensible Space" models for crime prevention. Natural surveillance is theorized to minimize opportunities for crime by increasing the possibility that individuals can be seen. Natural surveillance is developed by strategic environmental design (lighting, minimal shrubbery, fences), incorporating social activities and engaging people in order to increase visibility and foster positive social interaction (Jacobs, 1961; Newman, 1996).

feel safer in areas that are more homogeneous where people are more “like them” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Low, 2001). Nine out of ten interviewees living in San Antonio, Texas cited crime and a fear of “others” as their *main* reason for moving to a gated neighborhood (Low, 2001). Dillon (1994) reports that developers are able to capitalize on this fear of the “other” by advertising safe and friendly gated developments. Indeed, “the physical distance between them and the “others” is so close that contact incites fear and concern, and in response they [construct] exclusive, private, residential developments where they can keep other people out with guards and gates” (Low, 2001: 36).

Maier (2003) also reports that gating is entertained as a strategy to respond to the threat of “strangers” who may enter a neighborhood. Indeed, residents of a gated community identified “strangers” as their primary source of anxiety and defined “strangers” as individuals who were present in the community without a valid reason (Maier 2004). From this perspective, gates become tangible representations of fears about the Other (Mittelsteadt, 2003). According to Maier’s study, strangers are individuals who resemble working-class immigrants and minorities but who are not service workers employed by residents of a gated community. Interestingly, an individual matching the description of a stranger and once labeled as dangerous was no longer considered a stranger once employed by a resident. The notion of stranger is accordingly connected to the relationships between outsiders and members of the community. Earlier work indicates that even though residents may not know one another, they can assume that the individuals whom they meet within their walled community are not strangers and in fact, are “one of them” (Maier, 2003). That being said, there is little empirical work that explores if and how residents of gated communities sort out strangers from community members.

2. Community: Nostalgia, Community Life and Social Interaction

A second theme in the literature reflects the idea of community. It encompasses nostalgia and fondness for the ideal small-town feel of a close-knit community, community life and a related high level of social interaction between residents.

Gated communities are often marketed as a private space that enhances community ties and is reminiscent of nostalgic neighborhoods (Maxwell, 2004; Salcedo, 2004; Wilson-Doenges, 2000). Interestingly, communal relationships are conceived of as separate and apart from the communal or public sphere. Maxwell (2004) demonstrated that marketing materials idealize and commodify place, community and lifestyle. She notes that:

marketing materials [tell] us that good places can be bought: community, friends and acquaintances can be bought; lifestyle and health can be bought; exclusivity, prestige and privacy can be bought; and security can be bought. According to the marketing materials, these are not things to be created by civic action, careful relationship building or self-discipline, but purchased with the price of a home. (Maxwell, 2004: 76)

In addition to selling homes, gated community marketing materials also attempt to sell scripted lives. Romig (2005) argues that these scripted lives attempt to address the fear of not fitting in. For example, gated communities provide a blueprint of homes and home décor through advertising, the enforcement of CC&Rs and the appointment of an HOA. In this regard, home

ownership, sense of community and community image are commodified, packaged and sold. By purchasing the right to live there, a member can also purchase the desired identity and lifestyle.

Gated communities also project the idea that they are able to hold on to and create a nostalgic small town feeling: their master plans strictly limit growth (only a certain number of homes can be built inside the gates) and membership (only those who live inside can be a part of the community) so that residents “will never feel crowded or surrounded by too many strangers” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 63; Low, 2003). Again, privatization is linked to both community (a group experience) and exclusion (maintaining a private space that others cannot penetrate). A number of scholars report that homeowners attracted to gated communities are searching for a community of people who are “like them”, where nostalgic communitarian images of a harmonious neighborhood where everyone knows everyone and where residents are carefree and do not need to lock their doors at night can be found (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Low, 2003). Accordingly, the notion of community is tied directly to identity and a certain form of social relationships, on the one hand, and safety on the other.

In order to share experiences and self-representations within their group, future homeowners need to interact with other residents (Low, 2003). In a study of new residents purchasing a home in a gated community, Blandy and Lister (2005) found that approximately 73.9% of purchasers thought that they would have more contact with neighbors than in an ordinary community and 52.1% thought that they would make friends through the use of the gated community’s planned leisure facilities. However, Low (2003) posits that gated residents may have less and less interaction with their neighbors. Other studies show that the quality of

“community” is no different in gated communities than in non-gated communities (Blakely & Snyder, 1999).

Involvement in community activities and engaging in social interactions with neighbors have been demonstrated to help foster a sense of community and sense of belonging in the general, non-gated population (Flora & Flora, 1996; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Perkins & Long, 2002). Interestingly, some studies of gated communities have found that most residents in gated communities report low levels of involvement in activities within their gated community (Blakely & Snyder, 1999). However, the evidence is conflicted; other studies have found that residents of gated communities report high levels of participation within the gated community (Lang & Danielsen, 1997; Sanchez, Lang & Dhavale, 2005). It appears that, despite built-in opportunities for community interaction (HOAs, clubs, meetings, other shared amenities), gates do not in and of themselves seem to create stronger community ties or stronger feelings of community than are present in non-gated neighborhoods.

3. Exclusion and Segregation

Several authors have concluded that most gated communities are exclusionary and allow residents to escape and ignore issues that may be present in the larger community (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Bjarnason, 2000; Dillon, 1994; Ellin, 1997; Elton, 2000; Gordon, 2004; Lang & Danielsen, 1997; Low, 2003). In this regard, the function of gated communities is “to exclude the unwanted, those feared by residents” (Marcuse, 1997: 102). Again, the desire to remove oneself from the general community is linked to perceived fears about a lack of safety.

Interestingly, excluded individuals include not only the previously discussed dangerous “other” but also those who are different from “us”. Low (2003: 172) reports that gated communities are a “pure space” that “excludes everyone except the signifiers of middle-class mainstream status. These communities define and maintain a culture of whiteness, in the sense of race and also of the privileges of being a member of a socially unmarked class”. Additionally, gated communities tend to segregate individuals based on their socioeconomic status and physically reinforce social inequality and spatial segregation (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Gooblar, 2002; Low, 2003; Maher, 2004; Miller & Blevins, 2005). Often, gated communities are viewed as a “fortification” of an area where an elite class “with funds to create and maintain isolation and separation from the urban community” (Stoyanov & Frantz, 2006: 58) reside (Blakely & Snyder, 1999).

Research indicates that residents of enclaves create social distinctions in order to exclude “strangers” who do not belong in their communities. “Strangers” are easier to recognize in homogeneous populations, as they *look* different (Maher, 2004). Gates and regulations governing esthetics position gated communities as “suburban, private, white, and middle class, in opposition to those that are urban, public, minority or working class” (Maher, 2004: 794). Accordingly, the phenomenon raises interesting questions about potential discrimination.

Billig and Churchman (2003) report that some individuals feel that a clear physical boundary, such as a gate or wall, is important and can affect their attitudes towards individuals from groups of differing economic and social status and whether they feel threatened by the

other groups. They theorize that clear and visible physical boundaries may define a group's sense of belonging and social identity while a lack of physical architecture that separates two populations "exposes people behaving and dressing in ways considered inappropriate for their own class" (*ibid*: 237).

Some theorists of urban planning do not exclude the possibility that landscapes are inscribed with meaning (Duncan & Duncan, 1988). From this perspective, the intended function of physical architecture plays a secondary role in the defense of space. The first role is based on the interpretations of individuals who "read" landscapes, which will determine whether or not they attempt to enter the premises. Rofe theorized that the "reading" of physical architecture and landscapes creates "powerful, exclusionary cognitive barriers transcending the need for obtrusive physical barriers" (Rofe, 2006: 316).

4. Property Values and Prestige¹²

Homeownership is viewed as an investment and property values are often at the forefront of a homeowner's mind, whether he/she lives in gated communities or not (Blandy & Lister, 2005). The CC&Rs require homeowners to follow rules and have homes with similar appearances in order to ensure that the community remains attractive to newcomers. In this respect, it is theorized that new homeowners are looking for sameness, likeness and homogeneity (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; LaCour-Little & Malpezzi, 2001; Mittelsteadt, 2003). Accordingly, the elements of a new home and neighborhood that are sought by new homeowners may be

¹² Prestige refers to the respect and admiration given to an individual in connection with a reputation for high quality, success or social influence

connected to their desire to “fit in” and “be safe”. There is some evidence that the presence of a gate alone in communities without additional amenities makes the neighborhood more appealing, as demonstrated by the fact that property values increase rapidly by approximately 6.07% (Bible & Hsieh, 2001) to 26% (Mittlesteadt, 2003) as soon as the gate is installed. Still, some research exists countering the notion that the value of homes in gated neighborhoods is higher than non-gated homes (Blakely & Snyder, 1999).

The gates found at entry points in most gated communities are often designed with prestigious flair. Some studies found that the use of status symbols emphasized the class differences and “stigmatize[d] particular attitudes and behavior patterns” (Billig & Churchman, 2003: 234) and helped provide some assurance of maintaining class status and position (Low, 2003).

Gated Communities in Canada

There has been little academic research on gated communities in the Canadian context, but this is changing as more Canadian researchers (Grant, Greene, & Maxwell, 2004; Grant, 2004; Grant, 2003; Greene, 2004; Maxwell, 2004; Mittelsteadt, 2003) are beginning to undertake empirical studies on this topic. The increase in empirical studies is important as it will create a literature base on Canadian gated communities. As such, further comparisons between themes found in the literature and American and Canadian gated communities can be made.

As of March 2004, the number of documented gated communities in Canada was approximately 314¹³, although the true number is estimated to be at least double this figure (Grant, Greene, & Maxwell, 2004). Table 3 presents the provincial distribution of the known 314 gated communities in Canada. As the table demonstrates, gated communities in Canada are predominantly found in British Columbia, with none in Quebec, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

Table 3 - Gated Communities Documented in Canada

Province	Total Documented Gated Communities
British Columbia	228
Alberta	21
Saskatchewan	8
Manitoba	1
Ontario	49
Nova Scotia	7
Total	314

Source: Grant et al. (2004)

Most gated communities in Canada tend to fall under the Lifestyle category of Blakely and Snyder's typology. According to Grant, Greene, and Maxwell (2004: 74), a third, or 104, of the 314 known gated developments in Canada presented in Table 3 "are adult communities or [aimed] at seniors with active lifestyles". Table 4 demonstrates the provincial distribution of the 104 known adult gated developments in Canada.

¹³ Data on the number of individuals living in gated communities in Canada are not available. However, a study is currently underway by Professor Jill Grant at Dalhousie University to determine how Canadian community planning policies are responding to gated communities. As part of this project, an inventory of known Canadian gated communities has been created. Grant has identified 314 gated neighbourhoods. New gated communities are added as they are identified. For more information on Grant's project, please see <http://gated.architectureandplanning.dal.ca/>

Table 4 - Adult Oriented Gated Communities

Province	Number of Adult Communities
British Columbia	80
Alberta	4
Manitoba	1
Ontario	17
Nova Scotia	2
Total	104

Source: Grant et al. (2004)

In sum, the construction of gated communities in Canada highlights the need for research exploring this phenomenon within the Canadian context.

This review has indicated that much of the research to date has focused on the safety and exclusionary aspects of the gated community. However, little research is available with regard to the aspects of privacy and prestige. Some authors allude to these themes (Blake & Snyder, 1999); however studies exploring and expanding the body of literature on privacy and prestige as it relates to gated communities have yet to surface.

Another important observation throughout this review is the lack of Canadian information on gated communities. Most studies are American, although there is a small number of studies originating from Latin America, Western Europe and Asian countries. This project will therefore contribute to expanding knowledge on the gated phenomenon in Canada. It will also test the application of some of the assumptions made in the literature to Canadian gated communities.

The following chapter outlines the conceptual approach used for this project.

Chapter 3 – Conceptual Notions of Community Safety

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, criminologists situated in a social constructionist perspective focus on how ideas about social phenomena develop in a given social situation. Social constructionism accordingly aims to unpack the black box of social meaning and examine which roles individuals (or groups) play in the creation of ideas and practices which form the building blocks of a perceived social reality (Vygotsky, 1978).

Underlying this perspective are four foundational assumptions (Burr, 1995):

- The world is not presented objectively. Human experiences shape and influence what is known about the world and these experiences are dominantly influenced by communication (i.e.: language).
- History and culture influence how language is categorized and understood. As such, categories of understanding vary from one situation to another, from one time period to another, and from one culture to another.
- The conventionally accepted social rules of communication determine an individual's understanding of reality.
- Society and knowledge are directly linked. Communication patterns among interconnected individuals play a significant role in the construction of meaning and reality.

Communication and language therefore play a large part in the social construction of meaning (Burr, 1995). Indeed:

people communicate to interpret events and to share those with others. For this reason it is believed that reality is constructed socially as a product of communication. Our meanings and understandings arise from our communication with others. How we understand objects and how we behave towards them depend in large measure on the social reality in force (Littlejohn, 1992: 190-1).

I am interested in the ways in which residents of a gated community in Canada understand safety. To do so, I have conceptualized the following constructs to better guide my line of inquiry: community, safety, and social groups.

Community

The notion of community is the subject of significant debate among researchers in numerous fields of study (see Hillery, 1955) and an agreement has yet to be reached. Indeed, according to Hillery (1995), approximately 94 distinct definitions were found in the literature by the mid 1950s. Generally speaking, community has been defined as a group of individuals living in geographical proximity and interacting with each other. Indeed, the members of a gated community would adhere to this broad definition as their residences are confined geographically and due to the structure of their community, interaction is inherent.

This study has viewed community not only as a geographic area but also as a sense of belonging or a *sense* of community. My study is interested in the ways in which residents

understand community safety and therefore their experiences of community, and their relationship to the community and to other members of the community. Indeed, individuals form opinions, attitudes and beliefs on their social experiences. They subsequently draw upon these opinions, attitudes and beliefs in order to socially construct their realities. Through discourse, this constructed reality informs and is informed by the constructed realities of others and leads to the development of a common understanding of meaning. Individuals within a social group interact and communicate with each other and regulate their behaviour in accordance with this common understanding upon which their opinions, attitudes and beliefs are based. As a result, their socially shared knowledge and understanding of reality are reinforced (van Dijk, 2000).

Sarason (1974) posited that sense of community “is one of the major bases for self-definition”. Indeed, Sarason (1974: 157) defined sense of community as “the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure”. This is an important definition for my study as the literature base on gated communities consistently assumes that residents of a gated community prefer to be surrounded by individuals that are similar to them. Therefore, it can be conceptualized that sense of community, as used in my study, requires that individuals feel that they are similar to each other. Moreover, members of a gated community are interdependent as residents need other residents in order for the community to exist. As previously discussed, gated communities privatize space and are thus responsible for providing services and amenities to residents that would traditionally be provided by the municipality. For instance, sewage services, outdoor lighting, garbage removal, and road repairs are all services

generally provided by the municipality but are no longer provided to gated residents. Gated community residents must then collectively pay for such services through HOA fees. This is perhaps the most evident and concrete example of interdependence as residents require that a minimum number of individuals live within the community and pay their fees on time in order to make the community affordable and attractive. In order to maintain their interdependence, the community and the developer create CC&Rs to regulate behaviour as well as to maintain the community's amenities and shared spaces (i.e.: golf courses, roads, clubhouse, gym, walking trails, etc.). Indeed, these regulations and restrictions strongly contribute to the meaning and understanding that are socially constructed and shared among residents. Maintenance of interdependence is achieved by residents following established rules and regulations and, where necessary, developing new rules to address issues as they emerge. By following the rules, residents are doing what is expected of them in order to maintain order in the community.

Safety

Safety can be interpreted in numerous ways. For example, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines safety as “the condition of being safe from undergoing or causing hurt, injury or loss” while others define it as a freedom from danger. I am interested in the concept of safety as described by residents of a gated community. I am primarily interested in the ways that interviewees define and understand safety. For instance, safety is loosely defined as a “state or situation characterized by adequate control of physical, material or moral threats which contributes to a perception of being sheltered from danger” (Welander et al., 2000: 122).

I am interested in the elements that participants deem necessary in order to feel safe from real or perceived physical and social harms or risks. This is important as the overall sense of safety experienced by an individual has a significant impact on how they engage in day to day activities and how they regulate their behaviour. Indeed, people “structure, understand and experience [the world] (directly or through instruments) in terms of their beliefs” (van Dijk, 2000: 25). Various types of socially shared beliefs exist, such as attitudes, norms, values and knowledge, and they are shared by members of groups (van Dijk, 2000).

I have also assumed in my project that each HOA member may have his/her own version of what safety is, “a version that is obviously a function of individual socialization or ideological development” (van Dijk, 2000: 30). Indeed, the understanding of what safety means forms the assumption of group beliefs and can feature the social opinions or evaluative beliefs of a group. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, gated residents often believe that crime rates are increasing and that protecting themselves from crime and fear of strangers is of the utmost urgency.

I have defined safety in a broad sense in order to be able to pick up on the meaning of safety expressed by HOA members. I have broadly defined it as a sense of being free from harm or risk of harm as each member may have a personal version of the definition of safety (van Dijk, 2000). This is also true of opinions, attitudes and beliefs related to specific constructs, such as safety, as they are subjective representations of “personal experience[s] and interpretation[s] of [an] event by the participant” (van Dijk, 2000: 79). Opinions, attitudes and beliefs are not only built for situations in which the participant is engaged, but also draw on the events he/she

has witnessed, heard or read about. Attitudes and beliefs concretely link our understanding of safety to social practices and discourse, “namely, the ways individual social members represent events, actions or situations in models, and how they manifest, enact or accomplish these in actual acts and discourse” (van Dijk, 2000: 83). Indeed, attitudes, opinions and beliefs influence personal opinions and individuals may selectively choose to activate one opinion while ignoring another that may be inconsistent with the group attitude. Research in the field of racism has often highlighted this issue. For instance, a Caucasian group member may choose to recall (or activate a belief of) negative stories in the media regarding an African American. However, they may choose to “forget” (or ignore a belief of) positive stories or other information that is inconsistent with their group’s attitude towards African Americans. By “forgetting” an inconsistent belief and activating another that is aligned with the attitudes of the group, the individual is able to regulate his/her behaviour and discourse in order to remain consistent with his/her group’s attitudes. From a social constructionist standpoint, the individual is able to behave in accordance with the group’s common understanding and interpretation of reality and is further able to contribute to and reinforce the group’s construction of meaning and understanding of the world.

Social Groups

In order for HOA members to share a common understanding of safety, it is important to conceptualize them as a social group. By studying residents of a gated community as participants for this project, I have the opportunity to access a collection of individuals who can be constructed as a social group and who share in the identity of a particular group. Van Dijk

(2000) partly defines group identity in terms of the “characteristic social practices of group members, including collective action. Indeed, members of a social movement might identify as much with the ‘ideas’ shared by the group, as with such typical group activities as demonstrations, strikes, meetings or rituals” (2000: 123). As such, social identity consists of a shared self-definition based on shared social representations that is deemed to be typical of group members. Van Dijk (2000: 124) notes that “the social practices, symbols, settings or forms of organization that are typical for a group and with which members identify, would in that case be the contextually variable manifestations of social identity”. This is significant for my study as it is important for HOA members to view themselves as part of a group, a large collective who are interdependent, share similar goals and values and therefore, similar understandings of safety and community.

Groups are defined as collectivities of people who have “some continuity beyond one event” (van Dijk, 2000: 140). For instance, a collective of individuals on a bus is not a group, as they do not share joint goals and interests. In order to be a group, certain criteria must be fulfilled: membership; shared activities, goals, social representations, and problems or conflicts; shared social position; shared resources; defense of group interests and resources; and norms and values (van Dijk, 2000). According to van Dijk (2000: 69), common understandings among group members

are representations of who we are, what we stand for, what our values are, and what our relationships are with other groups, in particular our enemies or opponents, that is, those who oppose what we stand for, threaten our interests and

prevent us from equal access to social resources and human rights. In other words, an ideology is a self-serving schema for the representation of Us and Them as social groups.

Membership

Membership in gated communities can be defined with relative ease as “boundaries determine membership: someone must be inside and someone outside” (Blakely & Snyder, 1999: 1). As such, residents living within the walls of the gated neighborhood are members of the “gated group” as they have purchased a home in the gated community. As purchasers, they hold the deed title to the home and the home has become their main (or permanent) residence. Indeed, “the gated community constitutes a ‘territorial organization’ of the community members’ property rights” (Manzi & Smith-Bowers, 2005: 348). Moreover, these individuals pay homeowner (or membership) fees while living in the community.

In order to be considered a group, members must know about other members, “about a shared problem or conflict, or about possible collective actions,” (van Dijk, 2000: 141) and must share social representations. In the context of the gated community, residents know of other residents as they form a fairly homogeneous group. As described in her study¹⁴, Maher (2003) noted that residents were able to identify other residents from strangers and service workers. According to the residents in Maher’s study, “strangers” were identified by class and race cues while service workers were identified through informal social rules such as staying close to tools, service vehicles or employer’s children, and congregating at the bus stop at the end of the

¹⁴ For details on this study, please refer to the literature review in Chapter 2.

workday. Residents of a gated community share social representations as these are used to distinguish between other residents and strangers as well as between strangers and service workers. Gated residents view crime, “strangers”, access to adequate services and preservation of social status as shared problems (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Low, 2003; McKenzie, 2005).

Social position

Residents of a gated community have a shared social position. Gated residents have similarities in social status due to their income and ability to purchase a home in a particular neighbourhood. Homes and property within the gates are of similar market value that requires that purchasers have a specific level of income in order to purchase a home in the community.

Residents can also share in a social position by pooling their finances (e.g.: HOA fees) and protecting their property investments. According to Low (2003: 21) constructing gates and walls around property attempts to ensure property values “and provide some kind of class status or distinction [from other groups]...as a partial solution to upholding...middle- or upper-middle-class position”.

Resources

Resources are not limited to financial or economic assets. Gated residents share a number of resources such as the community streets, service delivery¹⁵, security, privacy, clubhouses, pools, parks and other amenities. Monthly fees are collected from residents by the

¹⁵ Service delivery includes trash pick-up, snow removal, lawn mowing, irrigation systems, sewage systems, street lighting and other services often taken care of by local and municipal governments.

HOA in order to upkeep existing amenities or to introduce new services. Residents must find ways to protect their resources and interests. Constructing gates “ensure[s] that private community facilities are used only by those who pay for their upkeep or their guests” (Maxwell, 2004: 18). The introduction and enforcement of the CC&Rs allow the HOA to protect the community’s resources, aesthetics, and standards of service delivery. The use of security measures such as private guards or cameras also allows the gated residents to protect themselves, their resources and their interests.

Activities, Goals, and Conflicts

One of the main purposes of walling in a community is to wall out others who present a threat to the residents. According to Low (2003), residents of a gated community feel safer however, the gates may put residents at an increased risk for certain crimes such as burglary as the gates or walls brand the community as wealthy. Low (2003: 131) also theorizes that it may be that “fear of crime and violence may be about other fears that are not as easily expressed”. Low notes that the majority of gated communities in the United States are located in the suburbs where crime rates are typically low and are rarely the scenes for street violence. As such, Low hypothesizes that other fears that may not be socially acceptable to verbalize are masked by a generic fear of crime and violence. These fears may be based on stereotypes that each individual may have about crime, strangers and perpetrators of violence.

Group activities revolve around maintaining a level of exclusion: enforcing CC&Rs, ensuring only members of the group use the community’s amenities, and alerting security staff if “strangers” are in the community. Other group activities can include participating in social

activities such as golf, neighborhood parties, and other social gatherings. Engaging in such group activities allows members to provide “[feelings] of stability and comfort for ‘insiders’, ... [reinforce] perceptions that those who are not in the community are ‘outsiders’ or marginal, and unworthy of being included” (Low, 2003: 65).

Gated residents also engage in conflict with local and municipal governments as they are taxed for services that they are not receiving. For instance, residents pay monthly fees for the delivery of various services such as trash pick-up and snow removal. Although municipal governments offer these services to residents of the municipality and subsidize them through the collection of property taxes, the municipal government does not provide services to residents on private property (Bislev, 2004; Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Kennedy, 1995). Gated communities are considered private property as the communities are fenced in and only residents have access to the community and the amenities located behind the gates. As such, residents must pay for their own services while still paying taxes to the municipality.

*Norms and Values*¹⁶

Gated communities have formal and informal norms. Formal norms include those written in the CC&Rs, which restrict and govern resident behaviour and changes to the community. For instance, some CC&Rs indicate that residents can have as many pets as they wish providing that their combined weight does not exceed 31 pounds. As such, this regulation

¹⁶ Norms are rules for behaviour in specific situations, while values identify what should be seen as good or bad. This simplified definition is presented to provide the reader with a general sense of the meaning of the words ‘norms’ and ‘values’. As these elements are not the main focus of the study, the body of literature on these terms has not been presented. See Deutch & Gerard (2005) and Hechter & Opp (2001) for a more in depth study of norms and values.

limits the homeowner to a small dog or two cats. Other CC&Rs limit the number of guests that residents can have at any one time. The rules and regulations also extend to aesthetic changes made to the homes or property. Gated residents are required to submit in writing any changes they wish to make to the exterior of their home (painting, planting flowers or trees) and must receive approval from the Home Owner's Association or property developer before proceeding. Informal norms are those developed by the group such as those demonstrated in Maher's (2003) study of gated residents and Latino service workers. The service workers adopted behaviours such as staying close to their tools in order to be identified as individuals who have permission to be in the community and not as dangerous "strangers".

Gated residents also share group values. Values identify objects, conditions or characteristics that group members consider important or valuable (Van Dijk, 2000). For example, values may include security, material comfort, wealth, individualism, privacy, or homogeneity. According to Low (2003), a homogeneous population based on being a member of a socially unmarked class is of importance to gated residents. A socially unmarked class "dominates national ideas of beauty, social class, and goodness" (Low, 2003: 173). Low notes that maintaining the culture of an unmarked class "provides access to education, elite taste cultures and behaviours, and allows a group to prosper within the dominant culture" (Low, 2003: 173).

Group Relations

Group relations are central criteria to the formation of a group (Van Dijk, 2000). Groups define who they are by who they are not. By creating barriers, groups separate themselves from

those that are “different”. This results in an increase in “fears related to the unknown mass of ‘other’ or ‘them’...thus [widening] social divides” (Lemanski, 2006: 398). Moreover, “tolerance of, or interaction with, diversity becomes increasingly rare” (Lemanski, 2006: 398).

An important element of the ideological schema is the relation between groups. Van Dijk (2000: 162) notes that “by controlling the access to public discourse, only specific forms of knowledge and opinions may be expressed and widely circulated, and these may persuasively lead to mental models and social representations that are in the interest of the powerful”. In sum, ideologies have a number of functions (maintaining group cohesion, protection/acquisition of resources) and are developed in order “to make sure that group members think, believe and act in such a way that their actions are in the interests of themselves and the group as a whole” (van Dijk, 2000: 163).

In sum, the residents of gated communities can be constructed as a social group as they fulfill specific criteria: they become members of a geographically contained group by purchasing property in the community; they participate in common activities, and share goals, social representations, and problems or conflicts; they enjoy a shared social position as members of the gated community; they share the resources of the community (both physical and social capital); they work together to defend group interests and resources; they expressly share specific norms and values; and they as a group are polarized against others and can readily identify “us” and “them”.

Limitations

The above conceptualization assumes that ideologies are group-based and therefore is heavily centered on group elements related to the “social interaction and social structure in the formation, functions and reproduction of ideologies” (van Dijk, 2000: 319). For instance, I do not discuss the role of organizational and institutional dimensions in the development of ideologies. However, one can view the Homeowner’s Association as having an organizational role in a gated community. From this perspective, the HOA would not only play the role of elites and ideologues, but also an organizational role that would contribute to the institutionalization of shared values and social meaning in the gated community.

My thesis is clearly situated in a constructivist paradigm. This paradigm assumes that realities are reconstructions and that multiple reconstructions exist (Guba & Lincoln, 2004). Constructivism views knowledge as “constructed” and assumes that we construct our own realities and understanding of the world. Constructed realities are not concerned with whether reality is “right” or “wrong”. Rather, it is contingent on human perception and understanding of our social experiences (Grennon Brooks & Brooks, 1993). According to Guba and Lincoln (2004: 26), “realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based...and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions”.

My conceptualization draws from Teun Van Dijk’s theory of ideology. This presents both advantages and disadvantages, because Van Dijk’s work contains both a theory and a

methodology (Fairclough, 2002). Having a theoretical framework enables the researcher to situate his or her analysis. The use of linguistics as a stand-alone methodology does not provide insight or context for interpretation or analysis. However, when the linguistic techniques are intrinsically coupled with a theory, such as van Dijk's theory of ideology, the analysis and extracted data take on meaning. However, the intimate link between theory and methodology provides difficulties for new and existing analysts. Given the broad spectrum of theories, qualitative discourse analysis can be applied to a never-ending fountain of studies. For new analysts, it is difficult to separate the theory from the methodology in order to fully comprehend how each should and can be applied to a given topic. A reader may have difficulty comprehending which methodology was employed to obtain the study's stated results and conclusions. Also, studies based on van Dijk's work (van Dijk, 2000) often neglect to detail the methodology and focus more on the theoretical aspect. Granted, the theory plays a dominant role in situating and understanding the data, however, the core methodological components are often not described.

Van Dijk's theory of ideology produces important concepts for the analysis of the social construction of meaning. However, his theoretical framework remains an outline. His contribution to this theory is important as it has incorporated a multidisciplinary approach and allows for the introduction of a cognitive interface to explain ideological interaction and discourse as it relates to social and discourse structures. However, many elements of the theory have not been fully worked out which may weaken an analysis stemming from linguistics as the elements of text and talk cannot be studied independently of a theoretical framework.

Nonetheless, cognition is an important concept for constructionism in criminology. Cognitive models inform our discourse and social actions in a given situation and therefore the study of these models from a criminological perspective has important implications for the discipline of criminology and the social sciences as a whole. For instance, much of the literature on gated communities suggests that these enclaves are exclusionary and promote racial segregation. Given the proven negative consequences of social exclusion and racial segregation, the study of cognitive models may help to provide empirical support for some of the assumptions in the literature on gated communities and for the analysis of social practices. Additionally, van Dijk's theory provides a framework with which to examine the formation of group attitudes and identities. This theoretical contribution is important to this study as moving into a gated community is an act of joining a group.

Chapter 4 - Research Design and Methodology

As social scientists search for ways to gain a deeper understanding of human experiences and the meanings that people bring to these experiences, qualitative inquiry has emerged and evolved into a key method of choice. As Creswell (1998) explains, qualitative research is based on the assumptions that subjectivity is inherent in research and that meaning arises from direct contact with the studied phenomenon or individual. First, qualitative methods have been demonstrated to be effective in empirical studies of complex human attitudes and opinions (Eyles, 1988; Jacobs, 1993; Pickles, 1988; Silverman, 2006; Sommer & Sommer, 1997). They are therefore appropriate for this study because I am interested in exploring the ways in which members of a gated community come to understand the meaning of a safe community. Second, qualitative approaches are well suited to relatively little-studied topics (Singleton et al., 1993; Sommer & Sommer, 1997, Walker, 1985) such as the gated community, as qualitative data gathering techniques such as the semi-structured interview offer greater flexibility to the researcher who is seeking to understand a relatively under-explored area. Accordingly, interviews are an appropriate data-gathering tool for this project.

Research Question

In this study, the general research question was: How do members of a Canadian gated community construct the meaning of a safe community? The sub-questions for this project were:

- Are these constructions consistent with the principal themes identified in the American literature?

- Can the principal themes associated with community safety that are presently identified in the literature on American gated communities be empirically corroborated among gated communities in Canada?

Members of a gated community are defined as individuals who are permanent residents of a community with restricted access delineated by a perimeter such as a gate, wall or fence. The use of “describe” pertains to how residents talk about a specific concept, such as a “safe community” or “status”. Safe community has not been defined in this study, as it is the participants who will be defining “safe community”.

Participant and Site Selection

Participants were selected based on the following criteria. Participants must:

- be 18 years or older (“adult”)
- currently serving on their gated community’s HOA
- have a good understanding of and be able to communicate in the English language.

It was important for my participants to be currently serving on their gated community’s HOA as studies demonstrate that few residents participate in the community meetings and trust that the members of the HOA make the right decisions or choices (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Heisler & Klein, 1996). The HOA consists of a small group of residents, usually no more than 10, and is responsible for enforcing the CC&Rs, collecting fees and delivering services, resolving conflicts and introducing new rules and regulations. As such, the members of the

HOA become the leaders of the group and speak on behalf of the residents with respect to decisions made about the community and its amenities, the spending of funds, and any disciplinary measures taken for residents who do not respect the rules and regulations set out for the community. As spokespeople for residents, HOA members are responsible for communicating the residents' views on a variety of issues, such as safety and community, to the developer. From this perspective, HOA members are a rich source of information to gather data from with respect to how individuals in a gated community construct the meaning of safety.

As community leaders, HOA members teach the rules and regulations of the neighbourhood to newcomers and monitor the application and social practice of the residents (van Dijk, 2000: 159). In the context of the gated community, HOA members hold regular meetings to discuss community issues such as the introduction of new CC&Rs and discuss amongst themselves strategies and approaches that will be used to resolve conflicts, decide which services or amenities are required as well as which new regulations may need to be introduced. During such discussions and decision-making exercises, members will draw upon their views of the community and their understanding of safety. Additionally, the HOA members are interconnected and as such, their discourse and behaviour are interrelated and contribute to the construction of meaning and understanding of their community. As a result, group values, as determined by the HOA, will inscribe themselves in formal documents, communications and meetings with residents.

Site Selection

Since I am interested in exploring the social construction of concepts among members of a defined group, I sought to identify a Lifestyle community for recruitment purposes. The Lifestyle community was chosen as it is the most common type of gated community in Canada. Participants were from the same gated community in order to ensure that they were members of the same social group. It is possible that members of a different gated community are members of a different social group with different models and representations. Recruiting members from the same community ensured that they were of the same social group and that their discussions were about the same community.

In order to find participants, I obtained a list of known Canadian gated communities which was publicly available on the website¹⁷ of a research project entitled “Gated Communities in Canada – A Research Project” led by Jill Grant at the University of Dalhousie. The list contained the names of gated communities, their addresses and the URL of their websites (if applicable) and e-mail addresses of HOA members. I then selected the names of all communities located in the southern region of the province of Ontario that fit with the following criteria:

- must be a Lifestyle gated community as per the definition at the beginning of this chapter
- a simple majority (50+1%) of HOA members must be willing to participate in the study.

¹⁷ The research project is located at <http://gated.architectureandplanning.dal.ca/>.

To preserve privacy, I sent a brief e-mail, found in Appendix A, explaining the study to the first generic corporate HOA address on the list to invite them to participate in the study. Privacy was preserved as the e-mail was sent to a generic e-mail address for the HOA and not to specific individuals. As such, the names of the HOA members were unknown and would remain unknown until an HOA member revealed them to the student investigator. If the generic e-mail obtained a positive response, discussions between the researcher and the HOA representative were undertaken to learn the number of HOA members in order to know when a simple majority was achieved and whether or not the members would consent to being contacted by the researcher. If no response was received, the community declined or a simple majority of participants could not be obtained, I contacted the next community on the list. I contacted 14 gated communities before reaching a simple majority (50% + 1) of the members of an HOA. Of the 14 contacted communities, 12 declined to participate, one community agreed to participate but only two participants would be available; and one community, which was the focus of this study agreed to participate and could provide four interviewees (or 50% +1).

In order to preserve the anonymity of the community, the pseudonym of Ocean View is used in this study. The President of the HOA for Ocean View invited members to contact me individually to confirm their interest in participating in the study. The President also provided me with the total number of members in order to know when and if a simple majority was reached. Upon confirming the interest of Ocean View's HOA members, participants were provided with copies of the Letter of Information, found in Appendix B, which detailed the study in full, as well as a consent form. Shortly after receiving the consent forms, found in Appendix C, participants were contacted, with their permission, via phone to schedule an in-person interview at a convenient time and date. Recruitment was further delayed as the bulk of

participants were away during the winter to spend time in homes located near sunnier and warmer weather. Moreover, on the day of the interviews, one participant cancelled. The participant later re-scheduled the interview for the following day after receiving positive feedback from the other participants' experiences during their interviews.

The total number of HOA members contacted was six; however only four confirmed their interest in participating. The sample was thus composed of four Caucasian individuals, one woman and three men, between the ages of 50 and 65. One participant (male) was presently working in a professional career while the remaining three participants (1 woman; 2 men) were retired from professional careers. Given the relatively small number of gated communities and small sample size, the precise professions of each participant as well as other demographical and potentially identifying information have not been reported in this study in order to preserve anonymity.

Site Description

Ocean View is located in Southern Ontario near a city of approximately 500,000 in population, with a crime rate of 6,885 per 100,000 population. It is located in the suburbs of the city; however, residents of Ocean View have quick and easy access to several amenities. For example, within an eight to ten minute drive from the community, residents have access to a number of stores such as a grocery store, pet store, furniture store and several clothing stores. Residents also have access to entertainment options near the community such as a number of restaurants and a movie theatre. Moreover, residents have easy access to services such as medical, dental, and grooming.

The gated community has been in existence for approximately five years and upon completion will include approximately 250 homes. Presently, only half of the homes have been built and sold and are presently occupied. During the first two years the community did not have a brick wall or fence surrounding the community. Residents lobbied the developer to erect the fences and brick wall, as intended in the site plans, citing that the gatehouse was ineffective without a perimeter wall to further restrict access. The HOA has existed since the creation of the community (five years), but has not received full authoritative powers. The developer will transfer these powers and associated responsibilities to the HOA once the community is fully built.

Ocean View is considered a Lifestyle community due to its security, amenities and property ownership features.

Security Features

Access to the community is restricted as a brick wall and fences surround Ocean View. A security gatehouse is located at the entrance of the community and is controlled by a mechanical arm. The security guard takes down the information of each guest (including name, driver's license number and license plate number of the vehicle). Visitors must inform the guard whom they wish to visit. The guard will then proceed to contact the resident by telephone to validate the request. Alternatively, individuals who are expecting a visitor can call ahead to the gatehouse and provide the guard with the individual's first and last name to expedite the entry process. Individuals are still required to provide a form of photo identification to validate their

identity to the guard. When I arrived to conduct the interviews with the participants, I was asked to present my driver's license and provide the license plate numbers to the security guard at the gatehouse who proceeded to record the information. A mechanical arm prevented me from driving my car further. The guard called the name of the resident that I was seeking to see to confirm the appointment. After receiving confirmation, the guard requested that I park my car in a designated area and informed me that I would be accompanied to clubhouse to meet with my interviewee.

Amenities

Ocean View is built around a private golf course and has walking trails and paths. The community also has a Clubhouse where many social activities take place. The Clubhouse contains a dining hall, a reception room (which is available to residents for parties), a gym and a pool. The community does not have public spaces that are shared with individuals outside the gates. However, there are shared spaces for community members such as the Clubhouse, golf course and walking trails.

Property Ownership

The residents of Ocean View own their homes but lease the land on which the home is built from a developer. The term of the lease is generally for 49 or 99 years, depending on the homebuyer's preference. The lease agreement also states that no more than two individuals can be signatories on the lease and only these signatories can be residents. As a result, children are only permitted to live with their parents for no more than four months at any given time.

Residents pay a monthly fee to the developer to cover the lease and the services provided to their community such as sewage, snow removal, garbage disposal, roads, lighting, and grounds keeping. The developer is responsible for maintaining the common areas as well as individual properties. Therefore, the developer is responsible for mowing and weeding the lawns of each individual property. The developer is also responsible for any floral gardens that may be present in the community. Residents who wish to create a garden or do any landscaping to their property must receive written permission from the developer.

Data Collection Method: Interview Procedures

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with the four participants. This type of interview involves unstructured and open-ended questions in order to elicit a participant's views and opinions on a given subject (Creswell, 2003). In the current study, open-ended questions provided opportunities for participants to express themselves and their ideas and allow the researcher to have more data to use to identify opinions, attitudes and beliefs. Using this method allows the researcher to analyze the interview data and identify the participants' personal experiences, opinions and interpretations of events; other methods, such as restrictive lines of questioning (yes/no questions), do not allow for this type of analysis to the same degree. Qualitative interviews are useful when researching social phenomena as they can provide access to an individual's

attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire. Open-ended and flexible questions are

likely to get a more considered response than closed questions and therefore provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretation of events, understanding, experience and opinions (Byrne, 2004: 182).

The interviews took place in a meeting room in Ocean View's Clubhouse, a quasi-public setting, and each lasted roughly 45-60 minutes.

I used a series of questions to guide the interviews, found in Appendix D, in order to extract relevant information pertaining to participants' understanding of a safe community. Since many of my questions required that subjects give opinions and personal perspectives on the issues surrounding their gated communities, the questions were drafted in a neutral way, to avoid bias either for or against gated communities as a residential form. Reliable answers of a good quality require that subjects be asked clear, direct questions free of implicit meanings.

When a participant brought up pertinent information not covered in the interview guide, the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the flexibility to follow up and explore in more depth the ideas shared by the participant. In order to ensure I could generate an accurate transcript, the interviews were audio recorded with permission and later transcribed for the purposes of analysis (Spradley, 1979). In order to minimize the influence of or a potentially nervous or negative reaction to the recording device, a compact device was used.

Thematic Analysis: An Overview

The social sciences have benefited from the application of various methods and techniques of data analysis from other disciplines. Indeed, with such a wide variety of subjects

and topics that fall within its umbrella, social scientists have been able to integrate various methods into their analyses. One such method, qualitative thematic analysis, has been widely adopted by researchers in various disciplines. This type of analysis is based on the identification of themes in various materials such as transcripts, reports and other qualitative materials. I have applied this method as I am interested in the subjective representations of community safety as presented by the residents of a gated community.

In order to analyze the interviews, I read the interviews in their entirety several times in order to identify potential themes in the data. Through this first step, a number of themes were identified. Each theme was ranked, from highest to lowest, with respect to the number of times it was referenced. The most commonly referenced themes were included in this study while others with a low number (ten or less) of references were discounted. The following themes were identified: Homogeneity, Strangers, and Others; Security; Community Life; and Rules and Regulations. I then assigned a colour to each theme and proceeded to colour-code each passage that corresponded to a particular theme. For example, each time a participant discussed strangers, the passages were highlighted in green. When a participant mentioned rules or regulations, the relevant passages were identified in yellow. Once the transcripts had been coded, the passages were cut and copied into a separate document in order to visually see the thematically identified discourses. Once separated by themes, passages were read in order to ensure that they were properly grouped and whether or not additional themes could be identified.

Once the transcripts were analyzed, a storyline was identified in order to make my analysis more cohesive and to better make sense of the meaning attributed to the themes in the interviews. The data are presented in Chapter 5 – Analysis and Discussion.

Study Assumptions

This project is rooted in the social constructionist stream and, in order to enhance the precision of the research, some assumptions were advanced:

- a. Social representations and constructs exist and are used by individuals in the context of their daily lives.
- b. Some of the “evidence” of the ways individual understand a particular concept, such as safety or community, may be hidden from the interviewer because it is socially unacceptable to talk about certain topics such as class or race. This “evidence” may also be hidden from the interviewee “as well because these concerns are also psychologically unacceptable” (Low, 2001: 33).
- c. Data sourced from the interviews are representations of reality rather than true or false.

Limitations

This study was subject to a number of limitations which must be kept in mind in order to properly contextualize the findings set out in Chapter 5.

The first limitation is that Ocean View Community was not fully operational when the data were collected. The community was designed for approximately 450 families but only 200 homes had been sold or were occupied at the time of this study. Accordingly, under the community's constitution, the HOA was a volunteer group without any "official" powers, as the property developers cannot transfer such responsibilities until a pre-determined occupancy rate is met. The HOA did, however, discuss the concerns and issues brought forward by the residents with the developers, and worked with the developers to craft a solution that is beneficial to both the community and to the developers. In this sense, it operated like an official HOA and was an interesting object of study. The lack of authority attributed to a volunteer HOA may have a potential impact on mental models. Representations of community safety may have been more strongly defined by the HOA if they had a stronger authority as to the introduction of new rules and regulations. Additionally, having additional residents may change the structure of the HOA. For instance, there may be more members on the HOA, additional roles to play within the HOA as well as more choices for residents to elect to the HOA.

Given the practical realities that apply to a Master's thesis, the sample size of this study was small, containing only four individuals. It would have been ideal to speak with several HOAs across Canada. However, given the scope of this project and the difficulties inherent in recruiting participants from multiple sites, this was not feasible. Additional participants may have provided an opportunity for additional themes and beliefs to be identified and discussed.

In keeping with the methodology selected, comments made by the participants during the interviews were analyzed to determine the personal experiences, interpretations and opinions that

they drew upon when describing their understanding of the gated community in general, and safety within that community in particular. As such, I had to assume that participants were honest and forthcoming in the information shared throughout the interview process. Moreover, no crime data were available for the specific community of Ocean View to objectively assess the community's safety, so there is no way to determine whether or not participants' perceptions of community safety and risks were consistent with statistical data on crime rates in the community.

Face-to-face interviews present some drawbacks. Participants may feel uncomfortable discussing issues such as their neighbors and therefore may not answer questions entirely or honestly. In such a personal interaction, respondents who are uncomfortable responding to questions of a sensitive nature as well as respondents who may want to obtain the researcher's approval can influence the data collected. It is important to keep in mind that utilizing a less intimate means of exchange between participant and researcher may provide more accurate results for topics which may be seen as sensitive or that have the potential to evoke unpopular views or opinions as they provide a stronger sense of anonymity and confidentiality. However, thematic analysis adopts a specimen perspective, specifically as it relates to the truthfulness of information provided by the source. A specimen perspective, as defined by Alasuutari (1995: 63), is "a form of research material [that] is not treated as either a statement about or a reflection of reality; instead, a specimen is seen as part of the reality being studied". Alasuutari (1995: 63) notes that this perspective deems honesty to be "an irrelevant concept to be used in assessing the material" because all texts and acts are embedded within discourse; it is therefore impossible to completely eradicate all traces of it.

Thematic analysis also raised questions regarding reliability and validity as it. Since no statistical data are provided through this type of analysis, the findings obtained are largely dependent on the strength of one's arguments and the logic to defend one's findings. According to Steinke (2004), inter-subject verifiability cannot be applied to qualitative research. He notes that "identical replication of an investigation is impossible, if only because of the limited standardizability of procedures in qualitative research" (Steinke, 2004: 186). However, one can wonder if inter-subject reliability can be applicable to thematic analysis, specifically as it relates to texts. It is true that an exact interview with a human subject cannot be reproduced with another individual; however, with a detailed methodology, it may be possible for an individual to develop a similar reading of a text. For instance, it is possible that multiple individuals¹⁸ will obtain the same reading of the transcribed interviews by using an analytical tool as well as using the conceptual constructs and frameworks presented in this study.

The elements of a good research project are not always based on traditional foundations such as validation, authenticity, or transferability, among others. Indeed, Steinke (2004) proposes different elements such as the documentation of the project's limitations, the study's coherence and pertinence, as well as the empirical foundation of the results. However, applying Steinke's elements of a sound research project, thematic analysis can be defended as a methodological choice through which a researcher can support his/her conclusions through strong arguments concerning the pertinence and coherence of his/her study as well as by acknowledging the limits of his/her work.

The following chapter discusses the analysis and results of the interviews.

¹⁸ This study did not test to see if multiple individuals received the same reading as the author.

Chapter 5 – Analysis and Discussion

This chapter both summarizes and discusses the research results. Its focus is to explore the opinions, beliefs, prior experiences and attitudes that are used by four residents of a Lifestyle gated community when they discursively describe a safe community.

The following discussion is organized around the themes that were most commonly expressed during participant interviews: Homogeneity, Strangers and Others; Security; Community Life; and Rules and Regulations. Each participant made several references to each theme. The themes come together to express a common understanding of community safety by all participants: a safe community consists of people who are similar, who follow established rules, who socialize with one another and who exclude strangers.

Homogeneity, Strangers and Others

“We’re quite happy with a selected culture here.” (Diane)¹⁹

The literature review found in Chapter 2 presents several dominant themes in the body of knowledge on gated communities. Some authors (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Low, 2001) have proposed that individuals feel safer when they are surrounded by people who are similar to them. During my interviews, the participants spoke of the similarities amongst themselves with particular emphasis on their similar age. All four participants touched upon the notion of age as

¹⁹ In order to preserve privacy and anonymity, interviewees were given pseudonyms.

Ocean View was designed and built to attract residents who are 50 years of age or over²⁰.

Accordingly, members and non-members alike are easy to identify. Bill stated that “age is the most [obvious] factor. If someone is 30-40 years old [and] walking around, they are either visiting or trespassing”. Mike added that “[Ocean View] is a 50+ community and we’re around the same age, the 50-60 age group, it’s a nice social strata”. Age acts as a visual cue for identifying members of the community. As Bill mentioned, residents who are not of the 50+ age group are identified as visitors or trespassers. By giving the example of “30-40 year olds”, Bill has implied that the residents of Ocean View have physical traits related to the 50+ age group. These physical traits allow residents to sort out those who live in the community and those who don’t: “If I see, or if anyone sees, some young people walking around in here, immediately attention is drawn to them because nobody lives here of that age” (Bill).

Residents feel that the community is “safer because of the age group” (Bill). Bill’s statement implies that the community is safer because the age group sorts out who belongs. It also implies that individuals in the 50+ age group do not pose a security threat: “Because of the age group of the community, it doesn’t, hasn’t to this point anyway, it hasn’t had any issues with break and enters and thefts and those kinds of routine crimes that happen in all of our cities” (Bill).

However, age is not the only commonality shared by residents. Participants touched upon the fact that they share many similarities due to their stage in life. Members of their

²⁰ Provincial laws in Ontario do not allow a property builder to discriminate to whom the home is sold. However, properties and communities can be designed and built to suit the specific needs of an age demographic in order to generate and attract interest from the potential type of purchaser. For instance, a family with young children may seek out a home that is close to schools, parks and playgrounds and discount other homes or neighbourhoods that do not provide such amenities.

community over the age of 50 and have accordingly generally reached a stage where they are retired or thinking of retiring and do not have young children (but may have grandchildren); their desires regarding life and community have changed to adapt to that stage²¹. As Mike noted, “we’re pretty well the same age group, with the same social standing, same children, grandchildren issues, it’s really homogeneous that way”. Bill added that “we all have the same desires in noise, and trespassers, and thefts and property damage and we all have very similar interests”. Additionally, residents also stated that they shared health concerns due to their age. Throughout their discussion, they assumed that all the residents are living in Ocean View for similar reasons. Bill described the types of things that were important to look for in a community in his particular life stage. He describes a quiet neighborhood, with little to no extraneous traffic (i.e.: trespassers) and a low crime rate. Bill added that he:

didn’t want to live in a place where there’s a basketball net in my next door driveway, I didn’t want to live in a place where there’s kids screaming and tearing around. I like my peace and my quiet here. You can walk around the community at any time, day or night, evening, whatever you wish and it’s just a peaceful, quiet place.

As such, when they moved to Ocean View, the interviewees expected quiet and a low crime rate, and they also expected that others in the community to be quiet and not participate in criminal activities that affect the community. Indeed, Bill explained that the community offered neighbors that were “like minded”.

²¹ For example, a teenager’s life focus may be to figure out what he/she would like to do and which university or college to attend while someone in their early thirties may focus on secure employment or raising a family.

Residents also discussed their similarity in income range as the homes in Ocean View are of a particular price range. Jim noted that “the net worth if you will of the people that are here is higher on average than it might be where I was [living before]”.

The discussions on similarities amongst the participants bring an important contribution to the body of knowledge on gated communities. Blakely & Snyder (1999) assume that individuals feel safer with people who are similar; however, they did not provide data to support this theory. They have theorized that an individual’s fear of strangers is linked to his or her safety concerns and that this, in turn, becomes a motivating factor to live in a gated community. The data presented in this study bring the literature a step closer to exploring this link and contributing to the process of validating the link as my data demonstrates that people feel safer being with people who are similar to them. As such, the motivating factor to live in a gated community may be homogeneity.

According to the existing literature, gated communities provide an opportunity to separate oneself from strangers. The participants in this study felt that one component of a safe community is the ability to know who belongs and who does not belong to the community. In order to know who is part of the community and therefore the individuals that do not pose a threat, residents must defer to the characteristics they have in common. For example, Maher’s (2003; 2004) studies on strangers and gated communities focused on strangers as being service workers (i.e.: landscapers, gardeners, nannies, etc.) and who resemble working-class immigrants and minorities. In my study, all four interview participants touched upon the homogeneous characteristics of their community members as well as what visual or social cues, such as age,

they would use to identify non-residents. Visual cues such as age were an important factor in the process of sorting out who didn't belong. Unlike the literature, the residents in my study discussed similarities among themselves in regards to age, life stage, social status and economic status. These factors allowed residents to know who was a part of "us" and who was a part of "them". The ability to recognize who was a member of their community made residents feel safe. The existing literature does not delve deeply into matters related to the identification of strangers. However, the data presented here provide different criteria that members of a gated community may use to sort out and identify strangers and expand on the existing definitions of strangers found in the literature. That being said, my data are aligned with the assumptions in the existing literature that the ability to recognize who is a member of their community makes residents feel safe.

Despite describing their community as homogenous, the residents talked about socially divisive aspects of their community life. Interestingly, the existing literature has not discussed whether there are social divides present in gated communities and what these divides might be based on, given the tendency for these communities to have homogenous members. In Ocean View, one dividing feature is the presence of a golf course within the gates. Participants identified a division between golfers and non-golfers:

You have two distinct groups of people who live within this community...half the people living here are living here because of the golfing aspect of the community and the other half, including myself, are living here 'cause it's a neat place to live and has a lot of good attributes. (Bill)

This translates into half of the community being very involved in one aspect of community life, golf, while the other half is not interested. Bill explained this division:

there is that distinction between the two groups, one group is very interested, involved in one portion of the community and the other group of us are not, we don't golf, we don't care. So you tend to end up socially with a division within those groups. Whether that's a good thing or a bad thing, I don't know. I don't know.

As such, golfers tend to socialize more with other golfers while non-golfers tend to spend more time with other non-golfers. Jim noted that he had met a number of community members, "because we all play golf, a lot of us play golf. Not all of us but a lot of us play golf. We play regularly". Mike added that, "There is a bit of a divergence between golfers and non-golfers in our community. Non-golfers don't frequent the clubhouse as much as the golfers. So we know several non-golfer couples but nowhere near as much as golfers".

The residents are concerned that having two distinct groups might be a detriment to the community in the future. Bill noted that, "There are all kinds of growing pains but that's one of them that has the potential to be -- I don't know what -- because of the very obvious division between the residents that are golfers and non-golfers". As more homes are sold, residents are concerned that one group will gain a majority over the other. Should this occur, individuals who participate in the HOA might be pre-dominantly golfers and will make decisions based on the needs of the golfers in the community and neglect those of the non-golfers. Bill discussed this aspect:

Maybe that will show up as a detriment to the community when we vote we're only, this is only half a community so far. And the problem is that you don't know what direction the future sales are going to be. Will this community develop towards a non-golfing community where 75% of the people who live here are non-golfers? If that happens, now you have a tool, a different approach to the use of the whole community. Or will this community develop in a direction where it's 75% golfers and then individuals, such as ourselves who are non-golfers, will have probably some issues because the community council are running the community and everything will be under control by the people who have a definite focus in one way and that may not be my focus as a non-golfer.

The concerns expressed by the residents regarding the division between golfers and non-golfers are important. The interviewees assert that the community is built on sameness and commonalities, in keeping with van Dijk's theory of group identity formation. As the division continues to grow over the years, this can have an important impact on the feelings of sameness among residents. It may be possible that a golfer's or non-golfer's needs become the primary focus of the HOA, shifting the types of rules and regulations that are created or the way in which the budget is allocated. A strong social division could create turnover in the community where one group decides to leave the community and live elsewhere. Ultimately, if the social divide grows between golfers and non-golfers but residents continue to share other similarities such as age, lifestyle, social status and economic status, how will the two groups identify who belongs to which category outside of the golf course (golfer/non-golfer)? This is an important link to the

issue of safety as potential turnover means that newcomers will move into the community. Community members may have to change their definition of who belongs to the community and who does not: who is now considered a stranger and a potential threat and who is not. As such, my study has contributed to expanding the definition of strangers, beyond that which is described in the literature, to include golfers/non-golfers. Moreover, a larger percentage of golfers or non-golfers in the community will not only change the make-up of the community but all the choices and decisions made by the HOA. Additionally, the relationships forged between community members while living in the community may change once their former neighbors move outside the community.

Youth

All four participants described several different types of “others” and “strangers” and used different evaluative beliefs and mental models to identify different types of strangers. According to the residents, strangers fell into one of the following categories: youth, criminals and outsiders. The existing discourse on gated communities assumes that criminals and outsiders are considered strangers to residents of a gated community. These discussions have not included youth, however. Although my data contribute to validating these assumptions, it also widens the current knowledge by potentially adding a new type of stranger. At the very least, it challenges the current assumptions in the literature to explore what other definitions of strangers may be held by residents of a gated community.

As noted above, residents of Ocean View are generally over the age of 50. As such, identifying strangers based on age is relatively easy in this community. However, age was not only used as a way to identify a stranger but it also became synonymous with particular negative behaviours. Diane listed “a young person there all day, not in school” as suspicious behaviour that needed to be watched. Jim associated youth with negative behaviours: “There aren’t many kids around here so you don’t get a substantial amount of thefts and drug users and that type of thing”. Indeed, residents perceived youth as people to fear and remove from the community: “occasionally kids on bikes or scooters will gain access but usually that’s reported almost immediately and the staff will find out what’s going on and get them out of here” (Jim). Bill reiterated this sentiment by acknowledging that, “you’ve got to remember that this is private property, if you’re not invited you don’t have a right to be here. So if you see somebody that’s out of character, whether it be age or whatever, there’s a system within the community to investigate that. And that’s important if you want peace of mind”. Residents accordingly saw age as a visual cue that helps them to identify dangerous strangers; in addition, youth in particular posed a threat to their safety because of a shared assumption that they belonged to an age group that engaged in criminal activity.

Criminals

One of the main “types” of strangers discussed by the interviewees is the criminal. This “criminal” is a separate identity than that of a youth (as described above) who may engage in criminal activities. The concept of the criminal portrays images of violent and threatening behaviours. Given that people believe that criminals pose a great risk to the safety and security

of residents and naturally, a safe community is one without the presence of criminals: “Not only is it safer from outside radical dangerous druggies or whatever, you’re safer from scam artists coming to your door, goodness knows there’s tons of them. Especially when you get older, your defenses can be down” (Diane).

Participants felt that Ocean View restricted access to criminal individuals and unwanted strangers. Bill shared that Ocean View was “safe on top of it. Really safe. Because of the gate, the concierge service. It’s difficult for someone to come in here who doesn’t belong”. Bill added that “every vehicle has to enter through that gate, which eliminates people driving around”. Jim commented on the restricted access by noting “It’s controlled access, it’s controlled from a standpoint of entry other than the main gates, fencing and privacy, river and whatever”. Jim added that “almost without exception, no one can come in and out of here without being monitored”.

Residents identified criminals as individuals who “drive up at 11 o’clock at night demanding to see someone” (Diane) and individuals who did not have a reason for being present in the community. For instance, “workmen ‘working’ in a house where nothing needs to be done or where there’s no work” (Jim) caused suspicion. Criminals were also identified as individuals who were parked in front of homes for extended periods of time without a purpose as “you don’t know if it’s somebody visiting your neighbor unless you sit there and watch them and then you start getting antsy” (Diane).

Interestingly, two of the interviewees had an experience with crime such as a break and enter in their previous neighborhood while two did not. Diane shared that she “had an experience before living in a condo, where somebody tried to jimmy the window at 4 o’clock in the afternoon. I used to walk around the boardwalk on the beaches and there are episodes of people being attacked, somebody got acid thrown in their face, there’s just some seedy stuff out there”. Jim described his experience with a break and enter: “In our old neighborhood I certainly debated getting a security system after kids broke into the place next door. And I did have a security system when I lived in the country when I was broken into”. Knowing that only two of the participants experienced a violation of their personal safety, one can understand their concerns with safety and how a gated community can fit into their understanding of a safe community. However, two of the participants did not experience such events, but expressed the same opinions about safety playing an important role in their decision to move to Ocean View.

Worries about safety and protection from criminals were even more important to the residents of Ocean View because the members of the community are older. Bill noted that “because we’re all in our 50s, 60s, and 70s, so we’re all getting older...there’s three single ladies on our street and I’ve talked to them about how comfortable they feel and they’re exceptionally comfortable to the point where security is never, ever an issue that crosses their mind”. Restricting access to criminal individuals helps residents feel safe. This is consistent with the findings of several studies that suggest that people perceive living in gated communities to be a strategy to protect oneself from crime (Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Durlington, 2006; Halberg, 2001; Kim 2006; LaCour-Little & Malpezzi, 2001; Leisch, 2002; Sanchez, Lang & Dhavale, 2005). However, the fact residents perceived themselves to be vulnerable because of their age

provides another window into the web of assumptions and attitudes that are brought into play when members discuss the advantages of living behind gates. It is worthy of further study, particularly because the residents also voluntarily separate themselves from the dangers posed by children.

Outsiders

Prior to the gates and fences being erected, residents were concerned with the number of people from neighboring communities who were gaining access to the property when “they’re not supposed to be in here. They live outside the gates and for those residents this property is closed to them” (Jim). Trespassers, it seemed, were one of the priority groups that the residents wanted to exclude as “a few people have come in walking their dogs on the golf course, tearing things up” (Bill).

Outsiders were identified primarily through their appearance and their manner of dress. They described outsiders as individuals sporting “worn out clothes, used clothing that probably came from a welfare system or whatever, workmen’s clothes” (Jim). Residents also felt they could identify outsiders by intuitively knowing if “someone is here for a good reason”. Participants also felt that they knew who was part of their community by recognizing their faces:

You might not know each other’s names but you know each other’s face. You see each other around all the time, you’re in here for dinner, you see each other. You might be in the gym and again you might not know everybody’s name, but generally you’d know if someone doesn’t live here. Period (Bill).

Stereotypes involving other cultures, such as Native cultures and youth, were also drawn upon to identify outsiders. One interviewee added: "I say this without prejudice, we were within a mile of an Indian reserve, which as you know can create some issues". Jim added, "I don't think too many people are interested in [vandalism], but their kids might be".

Strangers also include those who can be seen as "bad neighbors". Individuals who exhibit or are perceived to exhibit behaviours that do not comply with the norms and values of Ocean View are filtered out of the neighborhood. Residents felt that living in a gated community allowed them to avoid situations where "anybody can move in". The community is marketed to a particular demographic which encourages a natural triage and filtering system. This helps prevent situations where "you don't know who will move in, they could be unemployed or doing drugs and you don't know what goes on all day because you're at work. It's just nicer to get away from all that and preserve the best parts of Canada" (Diane). A second level of filtering for "bad neighbors" and "outsiders" lies with the property developer. According to residents, individuals cannot purchase or sell a home without the developer approving the sale. They also added that "I don't know how they would refuse somebody, but there is some sense of not wanting certain people in here" (Diane). The community's rules and regulations also provide a way to avoid "the risk of bad neighbors or loud neighbors" (Diane).

A safe community, according to interviewees, is one that does not have any strangers as strangers pose a risk or danger to residents. Knowing who is part of your group also means

knowing who isn't. Indeed, "othering" is central to a resident's ability to identify individuals who pose a perceived risk and prevent negative elements from entering the community. For members of Ocean View, outsiders include individuals of a different economic or social standing and those that "look" different.

Identifying outsiders also allows residents to protect their resources and property. People are sorted into groups and those who appear to pose no risk will be the least watched, while those who possess certain traits or social markers will be the target of surveillance. Mike noted that "[neighbors] don't proactively drive by our house to see if everything's ok, but they would notice if something was amiss like an open garage door". Bill added that "it's almost as if the place is policed within itself to some degree".

Security

"I used to investigate things with a .36 in my arms!" (Jim)

Individuals are "[conscious] of the risks that are present [in their community]... and [their intense occupation] with the goals of measuring and managing these risks" (Garland, 2003: 49; see also Beck, 1993 and Pratt, 2001 for similar notions). Indeed, "safety seems to have been progressively elevated over the past generation, to a desirable condition of numerous situations, institutions, and organizations. It motivates decision making in a wide range of domains" (Lyon, 2006: 405). This decision-making has transferred to the domain of housing and safe

communities. Indeed, the literature on gated communities notes that safety and security are the most common reasons given by people interested in living in a gated community.

The participants in my study noted that a safe community must contain two types of security measures: physical and social (Diane, Mike, Jim, Bill). From a physical standpoint, my interviewees felt that some form of physical infrastructure was needed in order to ensure safety. This is in keeping with Blakely and Snyder's (1999) finding that residents feel safer in proportion to the level of security presented in gated communities. Physical structures allowed individuals to separate themselves from strangers and contain the "good people" inside. According to my interviewees, Ocean View had never had an incident with any type of crime such as theft, break and enter or vandalism. Participants felt that the gates helped prevent criminals from gaining access to their properties as "vandals are lazy. They look for something easy. It's too much work...[as they must] jump the fence [to] get in" (Mike). The gatehouse and related staff also prevent strangers from entering. Mike notes that the staff "check[s] everybody that comes in, they make notes of license plates so there's a record. They're deterrents of crime". Diane adds that the security personnel will refuse entry to individuals who do not live in the community or have a valid purpose for entering. She adds that it's "encouraging as a resident that there is a little bit of scrutiny and that they will say no".

By restricting access through physical security features, residents are drawing upon evaluative beliefs that those inside the gates are good people, with similar reasons for living in the community and that they can feel safe among these people. Conversely, those outside the gates are dangerous and pose a threat to the well-being of their community. Mike explained that

“you can look through different areas in the city and in your own mind you know what’s safe and what’s not. And it’s normally related to class and class structure. But I think if you were to drive by [Ocean View] compared to comparable housing, you’d feel it was safe just because of the gate”. However, some participants were conscious that physical structures have limits: “The gate coming in is the most visual [marker of safety]. Once you’re inside the gate, there’s no noticeable difference [in visual safety]” (Mike). Mike went on to add that he believed that in the next 20 years, a break in would occur in Ocean View “because of its exclusive nature and the demographics of the people living there in terms of income”. Still, “having a gate that you have to come through to gain access, to me that’s an important factor. A very important factor” (Bill).

Throughout their discourse, participants often alluded to the notion that a safe community is one that allows you to control the outcome of situations. Having a gatehouse and security personnel allowed them to control unpredictable situations: “If somebody’s going to break in, they’ll do a couple of houses in a row. There are gangs. There have been swarms. If they wanted to come through your neighborhood, you’d have no protection from it”(Diane). Residents felt that placing a call to the security personnel could help them exercise control over situations as it allowed them to report situations or individuals that appeared to be suspicious. Diane also shared an anecdote of how the gatehouse helps to dissipate and prevent potentially suspicious situations:

She got a phone call from Sears saying ‘Oh it’s the free cleaning service.’ Didn’t get the phone number and didn’t know if someone is coming. So we just called

the gatehouse and said 'Look, I don't know if Sears is coming, but it's not who we use and I don't care if it's free so I don't want them in.

The need for physical security structures is traditionally based on the belief that its increased use will help to free and protect residents from threats such as crime, danger and strangers. Several authors (Atlas & LeBlanc, 1994; Blakely & Snyder, 1999; Blandy & Lister, 2005; Atkinson & Flint, 2003; Fowler & Mangione, 1986; Lang & Danielson, 1997; Mittelstadt, 2003) have found that residents report feeling safer with the presence of walls and gates.

However, in spite of the stated desire to watch and report, participants felt safe to relax their vigilance because a safe community with only "good" people inside means that behaviours of self-protection can be abandoned. Participants mentioned changes in their behaviour since moving into the gated community from their former communities which were not gated. Changes in behaviour included not locking their doors, not using alarm systems and leaving the garage door open. They felt comfortable with these changes because they believed that "good" people do not do bad things and only "good" people live in the community. One resident mentioned that "if someone did something bad, it'd be a shock. You wouldn't expect that at [Ocean View]". Indeed, residents tend to use these positive evaluative beliefs about their neighbors and do not locate risk within themselves. Neighbors are perceived to follow the group's values and norms and therefore are not identified as potential problems.

But, at the same time, interviewees felt that they were safer because their neighbors were vigilant. For them, a safe neighborhood incorporates the social aspect of security. All participants drew upon the model that a safe neighborhood included residents who were caring, vigilant and concerned about other neighbors. Indeed, “if there was any unusual activity, our neighbors would likely report it or do something or try to investigate what was going on” (Jim). Bill felt that “it’s almost as if the place is policed within itself to some degree”. Mike described a situation where the social aspect of security took place:

And because of the close knit social structure there’s an added level of security that people don’t think about. We had an instance at our place where our garage door was open a couple times and three neighbors called. That doesn’t happen in a lot of social structures.

Indeed, residents felt that their neighbors looked out for them when they were away. Mike expressed that he has “always felt safer because there’s more interaction with [his] neighbors. People notice things that are out of place or you tell people that you know that are friends that you’re going away”.

Community Life

“It’s like summer camp!” (Diane)

The second main theme in the existing literature on gated communities reflects the idea of community. The literature often describes gated communities as a nostalgic neighborhood and notes that marketing materials for these communities draw upon this idealized neighborhood

of the past (Maxwell, 2004; Salcedo, 2004; Wilson-Doenges, 2000). This perception of the gated community was present in my study as residents of Ocean View felt that the community offered all of the elements that constituted the image of the nostalgic small town, which ideally does not have any crime.

For instance, the gated community offered several opportunities for individuals to socialize and get to know each other such as barbecues, pot lucks, rounds of golf and social activities held at the club house. Indeed, Mike acknowledges that “it’s much more interactive. We’re very busy socially. [My wife] sits on the golf committee and I sit on the owner’s council, so we’re very much involved in the community aspect of it”. Participants felt that without common spaces such as the clubhouse and golf course, it would be much more difficult to build relationships with neighbors. One resident noted that in a community without such amenities, “you can go a long time without running into your neighbor and it’s not appropriate to go knock on the door and say ‘Hi, I’m your neighbor...Once in a while you get to know people but there’s nothing really driving a common goal...There’s no opportunity to break down the barrier”. All participants mentioned that the community was very close and that Ocean View offered them the opportunity of “knowing your neighbors, knowing their life, being there for them, them being there for you. It’s just a much richer experience”. This notion of having more contact with neighbors is often cited in the literature. Although some authors theorize that gated residents have less interaction with their neighbors than non-gated residents (Low, 2003), the residents in this study described a vibrant community life which allowed them to get to know several people, more so than in their previous non-gated communities. This dichotomy has not been deeply explored in the existing literature. Further study would be needed to learn what

elements contribute or are conducive to (or not, as the case may be) levels of interaction amongst neighbors in gated communities.

Participants also felt that the residents held attitudes and spirit similar to those held by residents of a small town:

People are here to have fun...People are just coming here and tending to be friendly, tending to be nice and tending to be relaxed and laid back (Diane)

And more importantly it's walking down the street, everyone says hi, how are you doing, what are you doing tonight, let's play golf, let's play cards. (Mike)

It's not the New York where people just walk by. (Diane)

Because we have a lot of interest and a lot of social activities occur here at the club, we've gotten to meet an awful lot more people. And we continue to meet more people all the time. It's a very friendly, sociable place as opposed to any subdivision that you look at. (Jim)

It's becoming an open and friendly environment, all of us are much more comfortable letting our neighbors know that we're going to be gone, just having part of that group sense of knowing a little bit about you and we can look out for each other. (Diane)

Participants also felt that their neighbors were caring and would help if needed: “if anybody fell on the street, there’d be a flood out to help you” (Diane).

All participants shared the belief that the gated community presented an image of the nostalgic small town. In fact, each participant alluded to it “feeling like a small town” (Diane) or “it’s like living in a little village” (Jim). The concept of community that emerged throughout their discourse includes three factors: (1) everyone knows everyone else in the community; (2) the neighborhood is quiet and peaceful; and (3) neighbors socialize extensively. This idealized notion of their community is based on the social belief that those living in the small town are “good” people who are friendly, caring and incapable of harm; it is therefore a “safe” place. The small town model also tends to have green spaces, a rural feel, and norms and values particular to the town.

Rules and Regulations

*“Of course, if you’re continually breaking the rules,
you can be asked to leave.” (Diane)*

The theme of rules and regulations was not discussed in any detail in the literature. Scholars have reported factual information such as what rules are present in which communities as well the course of lawsuits that challenge the enforcement of certain rules. However, to date, no one has addressed the links between rules and the social interactions of residents of gated communities. My research indicates that this may be an area worthy of further research and, in

doing so, both contribute to the empirical evidence related to the assumptions on rules and regulations within the gated communities.

Gated communities tend to have a number of regulations, generally listed in the CC&Rs, as well as procedures for dealing with rule violations. Ocean View is no exception; the builder requires that no more than two individuals be named as leasers on the home lease and that only the titleholders may occupy the dwelling. As such, this prevents families with children from living in the community. According to Bill, “it’s safer because of the restrictions”.

When neighbors are in violation of a regulation, residents have the option of filing a complaint with the community manager who would then contact the “offender” to discuss the violation with him or her. According to Diane, “we don’t have a police force here, but we’re trying to watch things”. By going through a third party, residents can avoid face-to-face confrontations. Bill noted that he “like[s] the rules because the rules protect you from the things that I don’t want to be involved with. I don’t want to fight with the neighbors and argue with the neighbors about anything”. Although the context of this statement is more aligned with wanting to avoid a confrontation, Bill used the expression “protect you” with respect to the rules. This use of synonyms implies that rules and regulations play a role in the way Bill constructs the meaning of a safe community.

If a serious rule violation occurs, the property developer may intervene and ask the resident(s) to leave. In gated communities such as Ocean View, the property developer owns the land and leases it to the resident, while the resident owns the home. As such, the property

developer may terminate the lease at any time should the residents be in breach of any conditions. For example, all four residents discussed an incident where another resident was asked to leave the community by the developer:

We had a situation within this community where two college students moved home...and decided one weekend while mom and dad were away to have a big party. Got the golf cart out and destroyed the green behind their house, tore it all up. So the important factor here is that [the property developer] owns the property and is willing to protect its residents by taking appropriate steps to eliminate people who don't conform to the rules of the place.

As previously mentioned, the lease states that only two individuals may sign the lease and that these individuals are the only ones who can be permanent residents of the community. Children are permitted to live with their parents for no more than four months (e.g.: the summer break during university or college). A family in the community had two children who stayed with them for longer than the permitted four months. The children were college/university aged and decided not to return to school in the fall. The family did not seek permission to extend the time allowance for their children to stay with them and did not inform anyone that their children were still living at home. One weekend, the parents went out of town and left their children unsupervised. The children decided to host a party with their friends. By the time the guards at the gatehouse realized that a party was being thrown, the children and their friends caused several thousands of dollars in damage. For instance, residents noted that the youth had taken golf carts and driven them on the private golf course and damaged the course by "doing donuts" (Jim). The youth also strung toilet paper on trees, cars and homes, played loud music, screamed

in the streets and littered the streets and common grounds with numerous food wrappers and beer bottles. The guards at the gatehouse stopped the party and requested that all visitors leave. The residents complained of the damage to the HOA who brought the concerns to the developer. The developer took steps to evict the residents of the home based on a breach of a lease agreement (number of individuals who can live in the home on a permanent basis). The knowledge that the property developer was willing to evict serious rule breakers has made the residents feel safer as the rules provide a certain level of protection from things or situations that they do not wish to be involved with.

According to participants, a safe community includes rules and regulations. Rules are intrinsically part of community life; a good neighbor follows the rules and therefore there are no conflicts between neighbors. When rules are followed, the risk of conflict between neighbors is significantly reduced.

Literary Assumptions and Findings

This research study set out to explore the beliefs, opinions and experiences used by four HOA members in a Lifestyle gated community to describe their understanding of a safe community. This data was collected with the purpose of comparing the assumptions found in the literature on American gated communities with the experiences of residents in Canadian gated communities. As we have seen, the data provide support for an underlying consensus among all four participants regarding their definition of a safe community: a safe community consists of people who are similar, who follow established rules, who socialize with one another and who

exclude strangers. This is consistent with themes found in the current literature base; however, it does not come without exception.

Crime, fear, and rule breaking are undesirable and are the motivating forces for individuals seeking a safe community. Participants in this study described their gated community, Ocean View, as a safe place to live as it had:

- Community members that are good people and follow the rules of the community.
- Community members who are similar to them.
- Strong positive relationships with other residents.
- Shared common values, interests and goals among residents.
- Few conflicts.
- No strangers, youth, criminals or outsiders.

Consistent to what was presented in the literature review, the study participants expressed that they were a homogenous group and that they shared several similarities among, as demonstrated in the data. For example, participants believed that individuals that were similar to them did not pose a risk to the safety of the community. This idea of sameness stems from several commonalities between residents: age group, life stage, and social and economic status. The residents also use these factors in order to distinguish between community members and strangers. Of note, my study expanded on the literary assumptions regarding homogeneity as the participants specified what characteristics made them homogenous. Interestingly, despite defining themselves as homogenous, participants also highlighted several dissimilarities among themselves. Specifically, all four interviewees worried that the divide between golfers and non-

golfers could become problematic over the long run, as it would shift the already precarious balance of power between the two groups to define what the community is and how its funds are to be used.

Strangers were a strong theme in the literature but were defined primarily as working-class immigrants and service workers. In contrast, participants in this study shared the understanding that “youth, strangers and outsiders were bad and dangerous”. Residents discussed how youth were engaged in antisocial behaviours and thus did not belong in a safe community. Participants also referred to strangers and outsiders as being “dangerous”, “druggies”, “unemployed” and “of a different class”. These descriptions characterize non-residents as dangerous and posing a safety risk to a community. My data broadens the definition of strangers to include individuals other than service workers and working-class immigrants. Of special note, the literature based on American gated communities often discusses racial and ethnic cues as a manner of identifying strangers where as the participants in my study identified strangers by age and class.

Residents were also of the opinion that a safe community had a small town feel where everyone knew each other, which was one of the main themes in the literature. This type of community would allow residents to get to know each other and build strong relationships. They also equated that “small town feel” with residents who were “good” people, friendly, caring and incapable of harm. “Good” people, or “us”, follow rules and thus, there should be no conflicts between neighbors. However “bad” people do not follow rules. Since a safe neighborhood is

one that is free of conflict, there must be mechanisms to expel rule breakers in order to maintain community cohesiveness.

The previous paragraphs discuss my data, in an exploratory manner, within the context of the present literature base. It explores whether the assumptions in the present literature on American gated communities can be empirically corroborated among gated communities in Canada. My data demonstrates preliminary empirical support for some of the assumptions in the literature. Additionally, my study expands and broadens certain assumptions such as the identification of strangers and dissimilarities among homogeneous groups

The following chapter presents concluding remarks on the analysis and study as a whole.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

"To me, this is a safe community without being a prison." (Jim)

This study involved a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with four individuals who are members of a Home Owner's Association at Ocean View, a Lifestyle gated community in southern Ontario. It examined the ways in which the interviewees described their understanding of a safe community. It also looked at the similarities and differences between the literature base on American gated communities and those in Canada.

Summary of Findings

My study sought to explore whether or not the assumptions found in the literature rang true for residents of gated communities in Canada. My data demonstrates that the most commonly expressed themes during the interviews were: Homogeneity, Strangers and Others; Security; Community Life; and Rules and Regulations.

All four interview participants touched upon the homogeneous characteristics of their community members as well as how they would identify those who were not residents and therefore strangers. As stated by the participants, the residents of Ocean View form a homogeneous group, as they are within a similar age group, with the same social standing, similar children and grandchildren issues, and similar interests. The explicit references to

homogeneity by all four participants support the understanding from the literature review that an important function of a gated residence is to keep “others” out.

This theme of homogeneity calls for further analysis. Politically, Canada has sought to equalize all members of society. For instance, we seek to protect individuals from discrimination based on race and class. However, the trend towards gated communities is leading us down the opposite path. Rather than being inclusive, the very nature of gated communities is to wall some in and others out. The social sorting that occurs when walling in/out is often based on race and class cues. As such, gated communities can be exclusive and foster segregation. According to Blakely, "as more private communities provide their own security, maintenance, parks, recreation, and other services, the poor and less well-to-do are left more dependent on the ever reduced services of the city and county governments" (Tucker, 1998: 2). Indeed, a study of gated communities in San Antonio, Texas notes "such economic segregation could divide the community in ways similar to the divisions caused by racial segregation in the past years" (Diamond, 1997: 4). This being said, further analysis is required as my study was based on the attitudes, opinions and beliefs of four members of an HOA in one gated community in Canada. Further research should explore whether the majority of residents in a number of gated communities in Canada feel that their groups are homogeneous and should examine the characteristics and traits that make the members of this social group similar.

According to the participants in this study, youth, criminals, and those who are not of a similar class and age are considered “strangers” and therefore are not welcome inside the gates.

As stated by Diane, “I don’t know how they [developers] would refuse somebody, but there is some sense of not wanting certain people in here”.

The participants also described two types of security: physical and social. Physical security referred to visible and tangible structural features of the community such as the gatehouse and fencing. Social security referred to the relationship between the residents and the knowledge that a neighbor would investigate a situation that was out of the ordinary such as an open garage door. Participants felt that physical structures were necessary to ensure the safety of a community as they allow individuals to separate themselves from strangers. By restricting access through physical security features, residents are drawing upon the belief that those inside the gates are good people, with similar reasons for living in the community and that they can feel safe among these people. Conversely, those outside the gates are dangerous and posed a threat to the well being of their community. Indeed, the presence of the gates meant that residents could relax their own security habits and practices because the social aspect of security – their watchful and present neighbors – would keep them safe. This social aspect of security has not been explored in the literature and also warrants further investigation.

Community life was an important element for the participants. All participants drew upon the notion that the gated community was like a small town or village. This representation included elements such as knowing everyone in the community, that the neighborhood is quiet and peaceful and that neighbors socialize extensively. The representation is also based on the social belief that those living in the small town are “good” people who are friendly, caring and incapable of harm. Accordingly, a happy community life is also a marker of safety.

According to participants, a safe community included rules and regulations. Rules are intrinsically part of community life and a good neighbor follows the rules. Gated communities tend to have a number of regulations, generally listed in the CC&Rs, as well as processes for dealing with rule violations. Rules and regulations ensure that residents can protect their resources, social standing and quality of life, and provide a mechanism for ejecting members who do not conform to the shared values upon which safety is based. It is important to note that the HOA in my study was not fully operational at the time of the interviews. Since the community had not reached full capacity (approximately half of the planned homes had been built and occupied), the developer did not transfer regulatory rights to the HOA. As such, the HOA acted as a liaison between the residents and the developer. The HOA was unable to make rules or enforce rules without obtaining the permission or consent of the developer. As a result, the HOA's decisions must be approved by the developer before action can be taken. This presents a limitation for my study as members of an HOA with additional regulatory powers may have discussed "safe community" in a different manner. For instance, the discussion of rules and regulations by the participants may have gone to a deeper level. Alternatively, the participants could have viewed the role of rules and regulations as a stronger element in making a community safe.

This research is exploratory and discussed how a safe community as understood by four individuals living in a gated community. It allows us to identify and begin to examine the general components that form the basis for people's notions of safety within the gated community. These representations help us understand how people think about both safety and

community behind gates. Understanding the way people perceive and think about safety helps us identify what is needed for individuals to feel safe. This has important implications for policy makers and urban planners as understanding how individuals think about and perceive safety can potentially alter the way communities are designed and can influence the decision-making processes and assumptions about what increases or enhances the perceptions and feelings of safety in a community.

For instance, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) has been a prominent theme in the criminological discourse on prevention. One of the main tenets of CPTED is that crime rates can be reduced by “designing out” opportunities for crimes to occur. For example, ensuring that parking lots are well lit in the evenings or eliminating structural design features that provide access to roofs or windows may help reduce the number of opportunities conducive to crime. Often, CPTED is an easy, tangible and visible response to a perceived lack of safety. My study partially supports this aspect as participants felt that the security features present in their community such as a wall and gate provided safety. However, participants also discussed homogeneity as being an important contributor to their feelings of safety. It was perceived that strangers and outsiders were of concern and threatened their safety. They also noted that the interactions among neighbors and the vibrant community life added an additional layer of “safety”. These areas of my data underline the importance of the social aspect of security but also highlight the potential for discrimination against marginalized groups of people who do not “look like” safe residents.

If we accept that all groups share social representations, this study has presented some evidence which allows us to move forward in confirming the assumptions presented in the literature on gated communities. For instance, Blakely & Snyder (1999) assumed that people feel safer when they are with others who are like them but they did not provide empirical data to support this theory. The authors suggested that people fear strangers and view strangers as a threat to their safety and that these fears motivate them to live in a gated community. My study contributes to the validity of this link as my participants often cited their similarities as being an important contributor to safety and to identifying strangers.

My study also contributes to confirming other assumptions found in the literature such as restricting access helps residents feel safe, physical infrastructure is needed in order to feel safe, the ability to recognize who is a member of the community makes residents feel safe, and that gated communities are viewed by their residents as nostalgic neighborhoods. My study also broadened some of the assumptions in the literature. For instance, the literature assumed that gated residents view strangers as service workers or working-class immigrants. In my study, participants identified strangers based on characteristics or traits that were different from themselves. In this study, participants knew that someone under the age of 40 was a stranger as being aged 50 or over was something the residents had in common. As such, this study broadens the definitions and criteria used to sort and identify strangers than what has been suggested in the literature.

Conversely, the study has also contributed to themes that have yet to be fully explored in the literature on gated communities, including the social importance of rules and regulations and

the social nature of security. This, in turn, allows us to pursue more focused lines of inquiry to further explore the link between rules and regulations and various social aspects of gated communities, how residents in a gated community define strangers and those beliefs and stereotypes that residents of a gated community rely on to identify strangers.

Areas of Future Research

As we continue to construct gated communities across the country, more and more research will emerge. A further line of inquiry would be to determine if the views of the participants in this study are shared with other members of their community, with members of other Lifestyle communities and with residents of Lifestyle communities across Canada. A second line of inquiry would be to determine if these views are representative of gated residents in general of any type and regardless of whether they are located in Canada or abroad. In addition to determining the generalizability of these views, there are several questions that can be explored. For instance, do residents of non-gated communities share similar representations of a safe community? If so, how do they seek to make their communities safe? Which factors beyond those suggested in this thesis influence an individual's decision to purchase or not purchase a residence in a gated community? Do marketing materials draw upon these types of social representations in an effort to sell the gated community to prospective homeowners? All of these questions could be approached comparatively to allow us to contrast the views of residents of gated and non-gated communities.

It would also be interesting to return to Ocean View in several years and explore the dichotomy between golfers and non-golfers and how this distinction in a homogeneous population has influenced the community. Would golfers consider non-golfers to be strangers as they do not share an interest in golf which would make them “different”? Would the community see itself as less homogeneous than my interviewees do now? Would their representations of strangers or sameness be different based on this dichotomy? Or, perhaps, would the composition of the residents change as non-golfers or golfers leave the community, enabling other socially shared representations to emerge?

Another area of inquiry would be to investigate the importance of social values in residents’ choice of a gated community. Table 2 presents a list of social values for each type of gated community. Under the Lifestyle community, Blakely and Snyder have ranked sense of community as a tertiary consideration. My study indicates that sense of community may be more important to residents than previously thought as residents view it as a necessity in accompanying physical security features. It should be noted that my study did not set out to test and rank the importance of social values to gated community residents. Nevertheless, it would be an interesting line of inquiry for future study.

Finally, as this phenomenon continues to grow in Canada, research specifically pertaining to gated communities in the Canadian context will be needed. Currently, the bulk of research on the gated phenomenon is based on the United States and Latin American countries. As is well documented, the social, political and economic contexts in the United States and Latin American countries can be drastically different from the Canadian context. As a result, the Canadian gated

phenomenon is growing without investigation, and the context and knowledge used to understand the phenomenon are based on potentially differing experiences. For example, some studies (Maher 2003; 2004) have demonstrated that residents in an American gated community define strangers as immigrants or minorities while the participants in my study defined strangers based on factors such as age, socio-economic status and clothing.

Theoretically, the research on gated communities might benefit from a study that employs van Dijk's Theory of Ideology as an analytical framework. Such a study would encourage the use of Critical Discourse Analysis as a method to understand gated communities and how residents construct the meaning of a safe community. His theory would contribute to concretely linking the ideologies (or cognitive models) of gated community residents to social practices such as the decision to move to a gated community or the criteria used to define strangers. His theory would also academics to explore the socially evaluative beliefs and common cultural understanding among residents. This potential line of inquiry would contribute to validating the practical application of van Dijk's theory to a new subject of study as well as to confirm or discount some of the assumptions in the literature.

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Appendix A – Generic Recruitment E-mail to Potential Participants

Dear (Participant's name):

My name is Christina Strasbourg and I am a Master's student in Criminology at the University of Ottawa, working under the supervision of Professor Valerie Steeves. I am writing to ask you to participate in a research study about the types of things you consider important when you think of community safety in your neighborhood. (Name of Gated Community to be inserted).

The purpose of the study is to identify the concepts, ideas and perceptions that are used by individuals participating in the Home Owners Association of a security-zone gated community to describe a safe community. Given the little research that is available on this topic, your participation will greatly help this study to provide exploratory information that may help to contribute to the gaps in knowledge as well as open new areas of research regarding gated communities.

If you agree to participate in this research project, you will attend one interview session lasting a maximum of 60 minutes. The interview session will be scheduled for a time and at a place of your choice. Please note that in order for the research to portray the common perceptions and concepts of safety in your community as accurately as possible, a majority (50% plus 1) of Home Owners Association (HOA) participants is needed. If an insufficient number of individuals from the HOA are not able to participate, the study may be cancelled, and your participation will no longer be required. If this does happen, you will be contacted by phone or e-mail in order to inform you that the project has been cancelled.

If you are interested in participating in this study or have additional questions, please contact me by replying to this e-mail or using the contact information provided below. An information package containing details regarding your participation, preserving your anonymity, and a consent form will be sent to you once a majority of participants in your HOA have agreed to participate.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Christina Strasbourg

Prof. Valerie Steeves

Appendix B – Letter of Information

Letter of Information for Prospective Participants Semi-Structured Interview

Title: Cognitive Models of Community Safety Behind Gates

Investigators: Christina Strasbourg (Student investigator, M.A. Candidate, Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa) and Valerie Steeves (Thesis supervisor, Professor, Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa)

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a semi-structured interview on your perceptions and concepts of community safety in your neighborhood conducted by Christina Strasbourg (Master's student) and Valerie Steeves (Master's thesis supervisor). This project is part of a Master's of Arts thesis in Criminology from the University of Ottawa.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the concepts, ideas and perceptions that are used by individuals participating in the Home Owners Association of a security-zone gated community to describe a safe community. This will give us a better understanding of the types of things people think are important when they think of community safety in a gated community. Given that there is little research available on gated communities, this study will provide exploratory information that may help to contribute to the gaps in knowledge as well as open new areas of research regarding this emerging phenomenon. Further, this study will theoretically advance the criminological understanding of the way individuals conceive of and define a safe community and how those conceptions effect the ways we talk about safety and the actions we take to obtain safety in a given situation.

Participation

Should you agree to participate in this research study, your participation will consist of attending one semi-structured interview with the student investigator, Christina Strasbourg, for a maximum of 60 minutes. During this time, you will be asked questions that explore your perceptions and concepts of community safety in your neighborhood. The interview session will be scheduled for a time and place of your choice, and the interview will be electronically recorded only with your consent and transcribed into written format.

Please note that in order for the research to explore the common perceptions and concepts of safety in your community as accurately as possible, a simple majority (50% plus one) of Home Owners Association (HOA) participants is needed. If an insufficient number of individuals from your HOA are not able to participate, the study may be cancelled, and your participation will no longer be required. If this should occur, you will be contacted by phone or e-mail to inform you that the project has been cancelled.

Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks of harm or inconveniences associated with participation in this study. However, should a question make you feel uncomfortable, please note that you are not obligated to answer it. This risk is seen as minimal. The interviews will provide information of an exploratory nature regarding the perception of safety in a gated community. Furthermore, this understanding can be used in a broader context to further inform community safety at the policy development level.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

All information exchanged in this interview will remain strictly confidential. The results of the study will be reported in a way that protects the anonymity of participants by identifying them by a randomly assigned number and pseudonym and removing all personally identifying information. Your comments expressed during the interview may be anonymously quoted in the final written research report.

Conservation of Data

Notes, audio recordings and transcripts of the interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the thesis supervisor's University of Ottawa office. Copies of this data will also be kept by the student investigator in a locked cabinet and password enabled computer located in the student's home. Please note that the thesis supervisor and student investigator are the only individuals who will have access to the data. All data will be destroyed by the student investigator and thesis supervisor 5 years after the results of the study are published or presented.

Compensation

Participants will be not be compensated.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time by simply informing the student investigator. You are also entitled to refuse to respond to any questions throughout the interview without suffering any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

Further Information

For further information on this study you can contact Christina Strasbourg
by e-mail or Valerie Steeves by e-mail or by
phone at _____ If you have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of
this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa,

Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6N5, Tel.: (613) 562-5841, e-mail: ethics@uottawa.ca.

Next Step

If you agree to participate in an interview for this research study, please sign the enclosed consent form stating that you have read this Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to you, all questions have been answered to your satisfaction, and you consent to participating in the study.

Please return one copy of the signed consent form in the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided, Keep the other copy of the consent form and this letter for future reference.

Appendix C – Consent Form

**Consent Form for Prospective Participants
Semi-Structured Interview**

Title: Cognitive Models of Community Safety Behind Gates

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate in an interview for the above research study conducted by Christina Strasbourg (M.A. Candidate) of the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa, whose research is under the supervision of Professor Valerie Steeves of the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Name of Participant

Participant's Signature

Date

I also give my permission for the interview to be recorded electronically and understand that access to the recordings is strictly limited to the student investigator and the thesis supervisor.

Participant's Signature

Date

Contact Information:

Student Investigator
Christina Strasbourg

Thesis Supervisor
Valerie Steeves

Appendix D – Interview Guide

Cognitive Models of Community Safety Behind Gates

Questions are only a guide to an open-ended conversation

Gated Communities in General

Participant's Gated Community

1. How long have you been living here at (community name)?
 - a. Did you live in a non-gated community prior to moving to this gated community?
 - i. If so, how is the gated community different from your previous neighborhood in terms of safety?
 - b. Where did you live before moving here?
 - i. Can you describe that community/neighborhood?
 - ii. What were your previous neighbors?
 - iii. Who lived in that community? (types of groups of people, age, etc.)
 - c. How does your current neighborhood compare to where you lived before?
 - d. What was community life like in your previous community?
 - i. In this community?
 - e. Is there anything you particularly liked about your old community?
 - i. Why did you like that aspect?
 - ii. Is there anything you disliked about your old community?
 1. Why did you dislike that aspect?
 - iii. Is there anything you particularly like about your present community?
 1. Why do you like that aspect?
 - iv. Is there anything you particularly dislike about your present community?
 1. Why do you dislike that aspect?
 - f. Why did you choose this community rather than another?
 - i. Did you specifically set out to live in a gated community?
 - ii. What safety features attracted you to this particular community?
 - g. What did you know (or hear) about gated communities prior to moving into one?
 - i. How did this information influence your decision to move to this community?
 - h. If you were to move again, would you live in a gated community again?
 - i. If so, why?
 - ii. If not, why not?
 - i. How important do you think the issue of security/safety has been in the ultimate decision of residents to live in your community?

HOA Related Questions

1. What role do you have in your HOA?
 - a. How long have you had this role?
 - b. How are HOA members selected?
 - c. What are your responsibilities as an HOA member?

2. Does the HOA have sub-committees?
 - a. If so, what are they?
 - b. Is there a committee concerned with resident's safety?
 - i. If so, what do they do to ensure the safety of residents?
 1. What type of security/safety issues are raised at this committee?
 2. What security/safety changes has this committee (or the HOA) been involved in?
 - ii. If not, is this something the HOA has thought of implementing?

Conceptualization of Safety

2. Would you consider this a safe community?
 - a. If yes, why?
 - b. If not, why not?
 - c. How is this community safer than a non-gated community?
3. What is it about your community that makes you think/feel that it is safe?
 - a. What would you like to change in your neighborhood in order to make it safer?
 - b. Who contributes to the safety of your community?
 - c. Do you believe that your neighbors help make your community safe?
 - i. How so?
4. Does your community *look* safe?
 - a. How so?
5. What does a safe community 'look' like?
6. What belongs in a community in order to make it safe?

Appendix E – Checklist A

Name of Theme	
Group Structure	
Who is the group? (Who is “us”?)	
Who are its members? (Who belongs to “us”?)	
What are its activities? (What are “our” activities?)	
What are its goals? (What are “our” goals?)	
What are its values and norms? (What are “our” values and norms?)	
What is the group’s social position? (What is “our” social position?)	
What are the group’s resources? (What are “our” resources?)	
What is the group’s relation to other groups in the matter of polarization? (What is “our” relation to other groups in the matter of polarization?)	
Attitudes, Opinions and Beliefs	
What are the group’s values and norms?	
What are the group’s social evaluative beliefs?	
What are the group’s base ideas and beliefs taken from the cultural common ground?	

Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa

HEALTH SCIENCES AND SCIENCE RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This is to certify that the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee has examined the application for ethical approval of the research project entitled **Cognitive Models of Community Safety Behind Gates (File # 10-07-07)** submitted by Christina Strasbourg and supervised by Valerie Steeves from the Department of Criminology of the University of Ottawa. The Board found that this research project met appropriate ethical standards as outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement and in the Procedures of the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Boards, and accordingly gave it a Category 1a (approval). This certification is valid one year from the date indicated below.

Leslie-Anne Barber
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Peter Beyer, Chair of the Social
Sciences and Humanities REB

November 23, 2007

Date