Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Educational Practice

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The Influence of Social Capital on Community Sustainability in Meacham Park, Missouri During 1996 - 1999

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Time: 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Place: TLC Bayer Lab

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to explore the significance of Robert Putnam's social capital theory – relative to collective activism – on the phenomenon of community sustainability of Meacham Park Missouri, a Black neighborhood located in south St. Louis county. The core idea of Putnam’s theory is there is value in social networks. His theory is that the ability to sustain an urban community in ways that ensure economic prosperity for its people is through the existence of social capital that is significantly linked to community activism (Putnam, 2000, 1993). It is believed that social capital influences the collective action needed to create structures which will lead to economic growth essential to the sustainability of Black communities (Farrell, 2007, Ginwright, 2015; Putnam, 1993). This study examined the experiences of current and past residents of Meacham Park using Putnam's social capital theory to analyze the meaning and significance of collective activism on the sustainability of the community. Also, included was an examination of Putnam's bridging and bonding social capital framework. This study used the qualitative research approach to examine the influence of collective activism on policy decisions relating to the 1992 annexation of Meacham Park. The data from interviews, based on Putnam's Social Capital Instrument (SCI); videotapes/pictures and document analysis (Berg, 2009), were triangulated to validate conclusions. The relationship between social capital domains within Putnam's framework of community activism and sustainability was examined through four major constructs of SCI: (1) civic engagement; (2) interpersonal trust; (3) economic security and welfare; and (4) confidence in government. The SCI is a comprehensive tool that is used to measure social capital in small and medium-size communities (van Kemenade, 2003). An examination of data revealed Kirkwood’s strategic approach to dismantle economic and social structures by implementing public policies that weakened bridging and bonding social capital within Meacham Park. These tactics significantly impacted the ability of the Meacham Park residents to sustain a substantial portion of the community (Putnam, 1993; Berg, 2009).

Keywords: Community Sustainability; Social Capital; Collective Activism

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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