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Math 115

It has been my impression since really beginning to study tract 505, and even the entire West side of Newport, that it is not so much “hurt” or “hopeless” as much as it is just impoverished. Like Monica Remmy said at our meeting at Sis’s, “it’s not a bad neighborhood, just a poor neighborhood.” When we use words like “hurt” and “hopeless” we attach to the area the connotation that everyone is broken, bedraggled, and desperately seeking some sort of savior. When we went to Newport as a class, and from what I know of it for living here for almost 2 years, I never saw Newport, or even its West side to be particularly poor places, though I admittedly have limited experience with urban areas.

I think that they might be hurting financially, and possibly educationally. These two things are easily measured, by census data and a few other resources available. The psychology department’s idea of measuring their hope as a level of impoverishment was unique, but I’m not sure that if even if it is able to be measured by various surveys, people will think of hope in different terms than other people would, as we’ve discussed. Even if we did find a metric for hope, how could we translate hope into the same units as household income or education? For that matter, how could we translate culture or social networks into those same units of measure for some sort of comparison? And to measure 505 or the West side’s hope, wouldn’t we need to know the national average? Are we able to have a large enough sample size to know with any certainty if 505’s hope metric is low, or to know how far it deviates?

As Gracie, Robin, and Melody's group also discussed, intervention from a class of beginners not invested in the project might not be the best way to go. Would we then only be collecting data? I think we might be of some use if we were to analyze the data, and see if we could find some sort of correlation between the poverty, low education, and some other outside factor to see what we actually needed to change, or see why the area was pointed out as a problem census block in the first place.

I like how as a class we have steered away from the hope metric and away from a grand intervention into something more attainable, but what good would we be doing if we did find a correlation between the poverty and some other factor, or if we found an infection model? Would anyone be able or willing to act on our data, and if the data suggested a need for intervention, would the West side be willing to accept outside help?

I'm not sure what I would like focus on, but if I were to pick a focus, it would be centered on data collection and presentation rather than intervention, as we've discussed in class. I feel that as an amateur math class, we would be better off doing the things that we know how to do, and then passing the data on to those who know what to do with it. In this regard I am glad that we have made connections with Ms. Remmy and Mr. Neikirk, as we may be able to have a hand in some sort of change for the better, if it is decided that the West side needs outside intervention.

Overall, I am glad to be involved with this project, and I am enthusiastic about making a change for the better in a place that I think is unique and worth our time to help.