

Sandra Steiber

MAT 115H

September 11, 2015

In class we have the question of just exactly *how* is the West Side of Newport hurting or healthy? This issue is complex because it makes us actually define specific issues that are causing the “hurt” or are contributing to the “health” of the neighborhood. Some concrete examples of the hurt would be the high levels of lead in the area as a result of prior industry. If lead is so prevalent in a community, it is incredibly challenging for there to be high standards of health. This has a trickle-down effect: the high levels of lead prevent gardening unless raised beds are used, and subsequently, limits people’s access to fresh produce. Health is further harmed because the West Side is not located near a grocery store that offers fresh produce. Thus, if people are unable to purchase fresh produce nor are they able to easily grow it themselves, the area begins to suffer secondary effects of the lead issue, such as vitamin deficiencies and lack of available healthy foods. Monica also mentioned that nearly 1/3 of the students at the Newport schools live in a “transient” state, meaning they are homeless or do not have a stable home life. This is another major issue that causes “hurt” for the community.

Despite this “hurt”, we cannot overlook the positive aspects of the West Side of Newport. This area could be considered “healthy” because of the diversity of culture. There are theaters and attractions that other parts of Northern Kentucky lack, like historic infrastructure. This lends a sense of allure and uniqueness to the area. But the question is whether or not the hurts are balanced out with the healthy aspects of the community? In many ways, a solution to one thing brings new issues to the foreground. For example, is it

reasonable to preserve a historic building when money could be channeled to alleviating the lead pollution? Or is the community remiss by ignoring and possibly even destroying an old building for the sake of modernization?

Measurements of the hurting and health of the West Side of Newport must be based on numerical data. For example, we could measure how much lead is actually in the area. Perhaps we could find data from previous scientific studies of the water or paint on houses to determine how bad the lead pollution is in the area. We could also measure the number of gardens within a certain section of the town to really understand how many people are actively accessing healthy foods. If we are looking at one healthy aspect of the West Side, such as the plethora of historic buildings, we could compare the number of actively preserved buildings with those that are falling into disrepair.

We can compare the West Side with other areas by using raw numbers from the census. But we could also take a more artistic or creative approach, using comparative photography, comparative oral testimony, or other means of displaying the community. However, for the purpose of mathematics, it might be best to stick strictly to the numbers to avoid exploiting the West Side for the sake of a false sense of progress or a “do-good” feeling. Maybe we should compare Newport to another comparable city, like Covington, that way our results are not completely skewed. For example, it would not make sense to compare Newport with a budding city like Burlington or with a very rural area like southern Kenton or Campbell County simply because people live in very different circumstances and have different experiences.