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Policy Tools for Youth Development in African American Communities

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Adedapo Adeyanju

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Policy Tools for Youth Development in African American Communities

by

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MA, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2012

BS, University of Lagos, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

Many African American adolescents live in disadvantaged neighborhoods due to decades-long segregationist housing policies. Living in these settings have isolated them from mainstream society and put them at risk for developmental issues and engagement in risky behaviors and violent crime as young adults. The purpose of this study was to examine past experiences of public housing beneficiaries exposed to concentrated poverty and their perceptions of how their neighborhood characteristics affect adolescent development. Research questions examined how housing policies have inhibited development or isolated Black youths to specific housing programs, affecting their opportunities to be better citizens. The theoretical framework for this study was the social isolation theory. A qualitative method of inquiry was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon from 12 participants who were at least 18 years old. A semi-structured interview protocol was conducted, and the collected data were analyzed using NVivo computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. Findings showed that participants believed the housing policy caused an increased deteriorating neighborhood, leading to poor living conditions, increased juvenile crime and delinquency, and lack of career motivation. The study may contribute to positive social change by informing policymakers about the need for adequate public housing for youth development.

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Dedication

To God Almighty, who is the maker of all things, and to humanity, especially the youths in disadvantaged neighborhoods, many of whom have been victims of segregation policies and parental neglect. Also, to my aged father, Ephraim Babatunde Adeyanju, whose fatherly advice throughout my youthful years strengthened me to keep up with my academic pursuits up to this point, and finally, to my late mother, Esther Adunni Adeyanju, who departed this world at a time when I was too young to know her. They both played immeasurable roles in laying a solid foundation for my academic achievements, and my profound understanding of parental support during transitions to adulthood is credited to them.

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The entire faculty, administration, and support staff at Walden University have all contributed to this effort, either directly or indirectly. Dr. La Toya Johnson, who was my student success advisor, did a marvelous job in ensuring that I successfully completed the program. God bless you all.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Past public housing policies in the United States were designed to concentrate African Americans in inner-city areas, creating neighborhoods believed to be segregated from mainstream society (Rothstein, 2017, 2018, 2020), and recent studies have confirmed that due to lack of exposure youths of color face higher risks of being negatively stereotyped by adults working with them (Priest et al., 2018). Harpal ani (2017) stressed that stereotypes have long affected the Black community, making it perhaps the most visibly stereotyped group in the United States. He argued that stereotyping is not divorced from the poor living conditions and standards that have been the status quo in many African American neighborhoods. Discerning how the affected people, particularly youth who are at risk for adverse developmental outcomes, feel about housing opportunities and established government programs was crucial to the investigation.

A serious discussion involving public housing policies and youth development among African Americans should begin by addressing the issue of stereotypes and promoting government policies aimed at desegregating Black neighborhoods in order to open up wealth building housing options historically closed to the Black community (Rothstein, 2017). Larnell et al. (2014, 2017) argued that stereotypes are linked to biases, prejudice, and systematic discrimination. The problem with stereotypes is that they limit opportunities for specific groups (Taylor et al., 2019). It is against this backdrop that scholars are increasingly examining the relationship between African Americans and

social issues like housing. Knowledge is needed regarding what programs are workable or practicable, what is not working, and improvements that need to be made.

Like many of the social sciences, the field of professional evaluation where the impact of many housing programs is judged was founded in a historical global context of racism (Caldwell & Bledsoe, 2019; Stanfield, 1999) and the illusion of White supremacy (Caldwell & Bledsoe, 2019; Hilliard, 1989). Today, social workers in the United States have a professional commitment to support the elimination of oppression, discrimination, poverty, social injustices, and human rights violations (National Association of Social Work, 2017). In this investigation, I examined African Americans' satisfaction with public housing programs. The background of the study explicitly focused on how such assistance from the government is interpreted or perceived in the Black community. Citizens rely on effective performance and accountability from their government (Kelly, 2005; Salim et al., 2017). In line with this view, Taylor et al. (2019) pointed out that it is imperative that social workers seek to understand the experiences of marginalized groups that are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty from a human rights perspective. The responsibility is on social workers to understand the client despite differences in beliefs, values, or choices and to enable them make the best decisions for themselves (Wahler, 2012).

However, as Wahler (2012) noted, social workers may not heed profession values when engaging with marginalized groups due to personal biases. Although he reiterated that traditional cultural diversity courses often address racial/ethnic or sexual minorities, social work curricula does not address every marginalized group, which may result in

students not having an opportunity to address potential bias or prejudice against other groups. Wahler described a four-step teaching method designed to provide students individualized assistance with self-identifying and challenging prejudicial beliefs and value systems: consciousness raising and identification of the targeted group, education, exposure, and self-reflection (Wahler, 2012). Wahler's study may provide a foundation for future social workers, especially those who engage in public housing and related government services.

Furthermore, African American adolescent males are one of the United States' most vulnerable populations and are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system (Griffith et al., 2019; Kruger & De Loney, 2009). Recent statistics published by the U.S. Department of Education (2017) show institutional or structural inequality in educational access and outcomes. This may play a role in the level of satisfaction and self-efficacy of African Americans living in public housing. Bandura (1997, 2012) described self-efficacy as an important linkage between possessing knowledge or skills and engaging in relevant behavior to appropriately accomplish desired goals. Many living in public housing have major concerns regarding not only their livelihood but how government-assisted housing programs can address their personal needs, which is why residential satisfaction has been key to assessing and improving the performance of housing developers and key government policies related to housing. Perceptions of the community and the environment have also been linked to satisfaction in urban areas (Amerigo & Aragonés, 1997; Valenzuela-LeviaL et al., 2022). Risky behavior among youths in public housing poses a significant threat to neighborhood peace and stability.

The focus of this study was on examining effective policy interventions related to the development of African American youth living public housing.

Background

Communities fulfill a variety of important psychological needs. The more that people feel part of a community, the greater the impact on their mental or physical health (Kitchen et al., 2012), and the lower their feelings of loneliness (Cicognani et al., 2014). In an effort to address issues related to urban congestion, the U.S. Congress passed The Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, which provided federal funds to local authorities so that city governments could acquire and redevelop properties as part of an urban renewal plan—a move that eventually led to the creation of public housing. This creation of public housing further led to more segregation issues confronting Black neighborhoods. Residential segregation of African Americans is not something that evolved informally as many believe but rather was a direct result of explicit government policies (Institute of Research on Poverty, 2019). Public housing policies were designed to disconnect African Americans from integrated neighborhoods while facilitating the purchase of single-family homes in suburban areas by Whites leading to inequalities in key policy areas affecting education, health care, job opportunities and the criminal justice system (Institute of Research on Poverty, 2019)

At the inception of the public housing program during the Second World War, African Americans were employed downtown to work in the major factories as baggage handlers or porters and were required to live in the area (Institute of Research on Poverty, 2019). However, housing policies separated this class of workers from the White

populace eventually creating the image of concentrated poverty in the urban areas (Institute of Research on Poverty, 2019). The Roosevelt administration introduced public housing to accommodate working-class families who could not find housing because of the Great Depression. The Public Works Administration, the first federal agency to address the housing crisis, was commissioned to provide housing units to both Whites and Blacks but in clearly segregated neighborhoods. New housing projects were built even in previously integrated neighborhoods thereby creating a new pattern of residential segregation (Institute of Research on Poverty, 2019).

U.S. lawmakers passed the Housing Act of 1949 to erect large high-rise public housing projects across the country with the goal of segregating occupants. But the postwar era would trigger an exit of factories from the downtown areas to the suburban areas. This was a move that would further accentuate the exodus of White workers from urban settlements to all-White suburban neighborhoods and open up public housing in downtown cities overwhelmingly to African Americans. This left African Americans in these neighborhoods stranded in poverty and segregated from neighborhoods with greater economic prosperity while being prevented from suburban homeownership (Institute of Research on Poverty, 2019). Home values in the suburbs gained equity, and the acquired wealth allowed residents to afford good schools and quality health care and to experience reduced unemployment, paving the way for segregated poverty in the urban areas.

Suburban homeownership not only widened the wealth and inequality gap, but provided opportunities for youth development through good schools in neighborhoods. However, in segregated Black neighborhoods, youths and adolescents are confronted

with developmental issues that plague a successful transition to adulthood (Adams et al., 2021). Negative environmental factors and stressors make this period particularly risky for many inner-city Black males (Karl et al., 2018). High-risk behaviors during adolescent years can be traced to biological, cognitive, and social changes during developmental years with social determinants playing a crucial role during transitions from adolescence to adulthood thereby paving the way to the many trajectories of Black youth (Mustanski, 2014). To improve the health and well-being of Black male adolescents living in public housing, the support of peers, families, schools, and communities is needed. In this study, I explored how African Americans experience public housing during their adolescent years and how this ultimately shaped their adulthood. I examined their perception of the program, particularly in the area of mental health development and other resources needed for career progression. This is a research gap that calls for increased attention from scholars and underscores the importance of exploring innovative ways to advance youth development among African Americans in public housing. The Denver Bridge Project which addresses developmental issues in youths provides evidence that supports this need (Jenson et al., 2013)

Problem Statement

Living conditions in disadvantaged neighborhoods and their impact on African Americans' transition to adulthood have recently gained more attention from scholars and policy makers in the United States. Decades of segregation policies leading to poverty concentration in Black communities are not unconnected with the emergence of what is popularly called the “urban ghetto” (Rothstein, 2017). While this and many more may

contribute significantly to mental health problems in adolescents, an evolving society that craves for social change has recognized the need to bring the matter under the spotlight. Specifically, young adults in communities of color are found with problems associated with risky behaviors and violent crimes because of disparities in public housing policies and distribution, thereby hindering their development into adulthood. The social environment in which people are raised plays a crucial role in a child's development (Trent et al., 2019). This is linked to social determinants, which the World Health Organization described as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, and age; economic, political, and social factors shape the human experience and responsible for health inequalities (World Health Organization, 2023). Children raised in African American neighborhoods, including overcrowded public housing projects, face higher risks of parental unemployment and the likelihood of residing in significantly lower income households, posing a barrier to equal opportunities that optimize health outcomes (Trent et al., 2019).

The perspectives of the different racial groups have prompted the initiation of race-neutral social policies and programs. According to some experts, these policies and programs could be described as racist unless they produce racially disparate outcomes (Thomas et al., 2018). Public housing in the United States was believed to be failing in the early 1990s. A federal report found severely distressed public housing projects in many cities; evidence of distress included children falling out of windows, a rise in gang violence, and the public perception of such housing as toxic warehouses for the poor (Kotlowitz, 1991). Steele (2011) affirmed that these internalized negative stereotypes

related to race may unconsciously erode self-perception and undermine academic and vocational attainment. In the early 1990s, a national commission recommended major improvements to several housing projects (National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, 1992). In response to these demands, Congressional leaders decided to adopt the mixed-income approach to public housing reform (Kost, 2012). Public housing projects focusing on residents in low and middle-income categories from diverse backgrounds were given the opportunity to live together in the same neighborhood to foster a healthier community.

The findings of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing showed that 6% of U.S. public housing projects had conditions that had deteriorated significantly, and the neighborhood residents were paralyzed by fear of widespread crime, experienced high levels of unemployment, were confined to unsafe and unsanitary units, and were unable to secure access to much-needed self-sufficiency programs (Kost, 2012). Local governments and public housing authorities concentrated their efforts on promoting the concentration and isolation of poor households in public housing through their siting policies, changing the physical configuration of public housing and management practices, while de-emphasizing racial integration or underscoring the need to redefine their roles in public housing and neighborhood development (Kost, 2012). This practice further contributed to significant inequality and double standards because racial segregation and poverty, which is widely believed to be the primary cause of the wealth gap, was not addressed by the commission (Institute of Research on Poverty, 2019)

Also, previous research has suggested that people of color especially African Americans are faced with adverse living conditions that impact their mental and behavioral attitudes often leading to depression and hostility (Stoloff, 2004; Chambers et al. 2015). According to Kost (2012), several decades of housing policy upheavals reflect the legacy of racial discrimination in urban public housing projects. Racial disparities still exist in how public housing and other housing opportunities are distributed in the United States which leaves the general American public with racialized communities of color with devastating consequences of risky behaviors and violent crime especially among youths and adolescents (Thomas et al, 2018). For instance, redlining is still a common practice among mortgage institutions today that indirectly attempt to restrict lending to particular communities of color. Such neighborhoods were termed risky with fewer opportunities existing. The resultant effect in such neighborhoods is a rise in street gangs, drug cartels, and armed robbery (Rothstein, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was centered around evidence that the past experiences of public housing beneficiaries who have been exposed to concentrated poverty reflect their perceptions of their neighborhood characteristics. Youths and communities of color are found with risky behaviors and violent crimes because of disparities in public housing policies and distribution, thereby hindering youth development. I used a strength-based perspective where the strengths of African American adolescents in disadvantaged neighborhoods were recognized contrary to the risk factors inherent in such communities. There is a fundamental shift away from the historical perception of youths as problematic

possessing negative or risk behaviors to a resourceful and talented individual with potentials (Catalano et al., 2002, 2012; J. S. Lerner et al., 2015; R. F. Lerner et al., 2003). I examined useful pathways that allow African American adolescents and young adults in public housing to discover their strengths and effectively contribute to their communities. The research was intended to inform policy interventions, and the development of public housing programs grounded in positive youth development (PYD) constructs that emphasize building competencies and assets in adolescents as well as making effective contributions to their community (Jenson et al., 2013). This focus was appropriate because research on PYD suggests that more assets lead to fewer risk behaviors and additional positive outcomes even in historically segregated communities or disadvantaged neighborhoods (Catalano et al., 2004; Jenson et al., 2013) Researchers and policy makers are drawn to refocus their attention to this strength-based perspective of prioritizing the assets in youths over any behavioral issues or problems they may have.

Research Questions

The central research question (RQ) for this study was, In what ways can public housing programs be designed to reduce infractions among adolescents in Black neighborhoods? I also sought to answer these sub-research questions:

Sub-RQ1. How have public housing policies inhibited the development of youths living in the Black neighborhoods?

Sub-RQ2. How has the isolation of Black youth to a specific housing program affected their opportunities to become better citizens?

Theoretical Foundation

Sabatier and Weible (2014) noted the importance of a theoretical foundation as a guide for research. The Social Isolation Theory formed the bedrock for the entire exercise. The theory offers a sound foundation to the problem this study was designed to investigate. Segregation policies which resulted in the isolation of African Americans to neighborhoods of concentrated poverty establish the root cause of the problem plaguing the Black community to this day (Institute of Research on Poverty, 2019). Wilson (1987, 2012) propounded the theory of social isolation to explain how the concentration of poverty in Black neighborhoods was created through segregation. He argues that urban communities today are suffering from concentration effects as a result of concentrating poverty in neighborhoods and individual residents (Wilson, 1987, 2012). Many scholars have also pointed out the effects of discrimination and segregation in limiting employment, educational and housing opportunities for poor, urban, minority families (Massey & Denton, 1993; Quillian, 2014)

The housing policies created the Black ghetto and the confinement of African Americans to disadvantaged neighborhoods (Curley, 2005; Rothstein, 2018). Following the isolation of the Black community from mainstream society, adolescents faced developmental issues as a result of growing up in high-risk conditions (McArdle & Acevedo-Garcia, 2017). This theoretical foundation that explains poverty due to isolation of African Americans to segregated neighborhoods also has an essential link with the developmental issues confronting adolescents living in such communities. A crucially important theory that guides the development of youths in this context is the development

systems theory which explains that development occurs due to the plasticity of humans or their ability to grow, change and adapt to their environment (Lerner et al., 2005). While the social isolation theory explains the origins of the problem in a theoretical context, the relational development systems theory establishes the constructs through which youths in segregated Black communities can develop effectively.

The research questions that center on addressing the problem of risky behaviors, created among Black youths living in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty and efforts to launch them on concrete career paths may be investigated in a conceptual context. This stems from the fact that the reasons behind African Americans being confined to the less privileged “Black spaces” irrespective of Social Economic Status may be mirrored through the segregation concept (Thomas, et al. 2018). Housing authorities need to combat segregation policies, promote racial integration, and develop innovative ways to reintegrate housing policies in ways that foster youth development (US Department of Education, 2017)

Conceptual Framework

This study examined positive youth development in Black neighborhoods and how policy interventions especially in public housing can help navigate the pathway to adult competency. While the concept is rooted in the relational developmental systems theories of positive youth development, this research took a critical look at a relational development systems model of youth development that efficiently guided in addressing the research questions raised. The conceptualization embraces the experiences of African American adolescents in public housing and how the positive youth developmental model

can shape or influence such perceptions or perspectives in effective or innovative ways that career potentials of vulnerable or at-risk youths are achieved. The relational development systems model supports the fact that youth cannot be understood outside of their context but rather understood within transactional relationships between them and their social or physical environments (Overton, 2010). PYD advocates also believe that child and adolescent development occurs as a result of interactive processes between an individual and the broader environment (Lerner et al., 2015). The model used an ecological perspective that is centered on developing the strengths of an individual within a community (Shek et al., 2019). In this way, Black youths living experiences in public housing was effectively studied within their neighborhoods under the model.

“The conceptual framework adopted positive youth models (PYD) which are strength-based as youth are viewed as partners and resources to be developed” (Lerner, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003, 2016). The primary emphasis here was on harnessing youth resilience, positive energy, and initiative rather than focusing on their problems and perceived deficiencies (Deschenes et al., 2004; Lerner et al., 2005). According to research on positive youth development, young people are healthy, have a sense of urgency, belonging, competence, and power (National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, 2007).

PYD offers existing risk-based explanations of childhood and adolescent behavior by focusing on the positive traits and resources in a person’s life (Forrest-Bank et al., 2015). This shift in emphasis from the deficit models to the positive youth development model is explained by the possibility of causing more problems in youth by neglecting

the positive strengths that can protect against mental illness and unintentionally label the person as problematic or incapable (Shek et al., 2019). Models of the Positive Youth Development approach using the ecological perspective where developmental systems are studied in an environmental context have been identified to include Benson's 40 developmental assets, Lerner's 5Cs/6Cs model and Catalano's 15 PYD Constructs (Shek et al., 2019). Existing literature also supports the fact that the Five Cs Model has been is the most empirically supported PYD framework to date (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009 ; Conway et al., 2015). In the next chapter, the African American adolescent living in public housing and the perspectives or perceptions emerging from such experiences have been studied in more detail within the context of the PYD framework including its relevance to improving public housing policies in Black communities.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative approach was considered appropriate and suitable in addressing the research questions raised in this study. Qualitative research seeks to explore personal and social experiences, meanings, and practices as well as the context in which they are shaped (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). "The use of qualitative studies has also been known to give voice to people who are ordinarily silent or whose perceptions are rarely considered, and it is particularly good at investigating sensitive topics" (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). In this study, such sensitivity was masked in the living experiences of Black youths in segregated neighborhoods. The nature of the research pointed to a study of how adolescent perception is influenced by deteriorating public housing conditions and neighborhood victimization that drives fear in residents

Definitions

Adolescents: “Individuals experiencing a complex, multi-system transitional process involving progression from the immaturity and social dependency of childhood into adult life with the goal and expectation of fulfilled developmental potential, personal agency, and social accountability” (Greenfield et al., 2003, 2009; Graber & Brookes-Gunn, 1996).

Black communities: “Communities whose members have origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa” (United States Census Bureau, 1997).

Disadvantaged neighborhoods: “Places with conditions or circumstances unfavorable to success to the extent that disadvantaged individuals are concentrated in geographically defined areas and disadvantage becomes characteristic of the environment” (Massey, 1996). These neighborhoods also feature limited opportunities (Wilson, 1987, 1996), lack of social integration and cohesion (Sampson & Groves, 1989), and climates conducive to disorderly behavior (Brewster et al., 1993; Elliot et al., 1996).

Public housing policy: “Strategies through which the government intervenes in the housing market by providing housing for all its constituents most especially to those in dire need” (Martin, 2009).

Policy intervention: “The act of interfering with the outcome or course especially of a condition or process as to prevent harm or improve functioning” (Barker, 2020).

Positive youth development (PYD): “Voluntary educational activities outside school hours aiming to promote generalized (not just health) and positive (not just avoiding risk) development of assets such as bonding, resilience, social, emotional,

cognitive, behavior or moral competence, self-determination, spirituality, self-efficacy, clear and positive identity, belief in the future, recognition for positive behavior, opportunities for pro-social involvement and/or pro-social norms” (National Youth Agency, 2007; Roth et al., 1998).

Public housing authority: “Quasi-government agency charged with the responsibility of managing public housing operations at the local level including making decisions affecting the design of properties, location and who could live in it” (McCarty, 2014).

Redlining: Restrictions imposed by mortgage lenders based on the racial composition of a neighborhood

Relational development systems model: “A model of the developmental process used to frame descriptive or explanatory research across the adolescent period” (Lerner et al., 2012).

Residential segregation: “The concentration of ethnic, national-origin, or socio-economic groups in particular neighborhoods of a city or metropolitan area” (Iceland, 2014).

Self-efficacy: “The belief of the individual in his ability to organize and carry out the course of action required in order to generate the desired result” (Bandura, 2003).

Segregated communities: “Neighborhoods experiencing segregated living that result in conditions of social isolation among low-income families in urban cores, cutting them off from educational, economic, and interpersonal opportunities that could help them build wealth” (Turner & Rawlings, 2005).

Social determinants: “Characteristics that describe how people grow, work and live and what their sense of control may be of their environment” (Lorch & Enlow, 2015).

Assumptions

This study was rooted in the underlying assumption that all of our knowledge and understanding of the world comes from our experiences (Hein & Austin, 2001). The focus was not on the events themselves but rather on the ways in which we experience things and the meanings these experiences create for us (Pryce et al., 2014)

In this study, I have assumed that the interview questions adequately capture the true experiences and perceptions of African Americans while living as adolescents in public housing and how housing policies have shaped their development during those years. To this end, in-depth interviewing is being employed as an essential tool for exploring the experiences of people and encouraging them to talk about their perspectives on the subject or phenomenon under study (Minikel-Lacocque, 2019)

Scope and Delimitations

The primary focus of this research has been confined not only to African Americans but people of other races that have lived in public housing developments as youths or at least possess a wealth of experience considered useful to the study. Participants in the research were experienced adults believed to be familiar with predominantly Black neighborhoods of Northern California. The study also encompassed how housing policies can be improved to better serve these marginalized communities. This particular group of individuals was chosen because of their wealth of experience and

ability to reflect on the past with innovative ideas on how public housing policies can be better shaped and more effective programs developed to serve their community. In other words, the participants included adults willing to share their experiences as youths living in public housing with disadvantaged conditions, policy advocates, schoolteachers, church leaders and representatives of active youth organizations or groups interested in pursuing social change in such neighborhoods.

The research did not include participants living in public housing that cannot be categorized as adults who have experienced living in public housing during their youth regardless of their race. Focus was exclusively reserved for adult individuals who are willing to share their lived experiences or that of friends or relatives as youths or adolescents in public housing developments and how these have influenced their development. Participants did not include youths or adolescents presently living in public housing. Rather, their adult counterparts with in-depth descriptions of their own experiences during their adolescent or youthful years were actively engaged. This boundary was important to narrow the scope of our research within the Black community especially regarding the phenomenon under study. Any widely held opinions or preconceptions about risky behaviors cultivated in neighborhoods were not allowed to influence the outcome of the study.

Limitations

A crucial barrier was identified as African Americans distrust of scientific research which has its roots in past research related to negative historical events and present-day cultural racism that have plagued the society (Prather, et al., 2018) . This lack

of research participation includes issues related to trust, experimentation, communication, and logistics of the research process (Brown et al., 2013;Owens, et al., 2014). Hence, a limitation was the difficulty of having participants volunteer for the study. Such perceived barriers to the study were addressed by educating participants about the research process (Dunlop et al, 2011) as well as building a register of volunteer recruits that are African Americans (Chadiha, et al., 2011). Participants were also drawn into the study regardless of their color or race as long as they possessed the wealth of experience needed to facilitate the study.

Qualitative research design was employed as the instrumentation for the study and this could have been subjected to researcher's bias traceable to the unique and characteristic trait of the researcher (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). The prejudice could occur at every stage of research including the research design, data collection, literature analysis or review (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). Roulston and Shelton (2015) argued that personal qualification, research experience or the lack of certain skills in performing data collection in vulnerable cultures was also a source of bias that could have resulted. Data collection and tools such as interview forms, question order bias, vocabulary bias and translation bias may have inherently presented limitations to the study as well (Sarniak, 2015). In order to mitigate such bias, transparency and reflection throughout the research process was practiced, openness to specific and non-standard ways of communicating encouraged, triangulation of researchers and data sources ensured, used bracketing techniques during field work and frequent or as needed recurrences in the field after the data collection (Borowska-Beszta, 2017)

Significance

The perception of the African American community regarding the administration of public housing policies in Northern California could be a clear indication of public policy effectiveness regionally and across the entire nation (Aitalieva & Morelock, 2019). Past experiences of public housing beneficiaries in segregated Black neighborhoods where poverty concentration plagues youth development is a significant issue that requires scholarly attention in order to foster the much-needed positive change in the society (Hurd et al., 2013, 2014; Jargowsky, 2015)

Findings have shown how family and peer processes shape the mental health outcomes of adolescents but less is known about how the community or neighborhood affects social processes related to the psychological well-being of youths (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Scholars have also confirmed the significance of assessing the impact of neighborhood characteristics on adolescents' mental health outcomes by shaping adolescents' perceptions of their neighborhoods (Hurd et al., 2013, 2014). The subjective perceptions of their neighborhoods have been argued to mediate the effects of neighborhood demographics on adolescents internalizing and externalizing behavior (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1996; Latkin & Curry, 2003; Ross & Mirowsky, 2009; Amerigo & Aragonés, 1997) As a result of this, the significance of this investigation was closely tied to better understanding how neighborhood characteristics affect adolescent development (Hurd et al., 2013, 2014) and ultimately influence policy interventions particularly in Black communities with a history of segregated neighborhoods and poverty concentration.

In the past, studies have revealed how racism, housing discrimination, redlining, labor market shifts, employment discrimination, and a variety of institutional practices and policies have created highly segregated and impoverished urban communities (Wilson, 2009) . Besides, “more scholarly work is needed in investigating the mechanisms through which living in predominantly African American neighborhoods may translate into more positive youth outcomes” (Hurd et., 2013, 2014). A mechanism that has been found useful by researchers and practitioners is providing higher levels of social support and sense of belonging among residents in the neighborhood (Boykin et al., 1997) through effective housing policy interventions. Additional inquiry into ways in which neighborhoods shape adolescent perceptions was useful in furthering the understanding of effective pathways (Hurd et al. 2013, 2014) Hence, programs and policies are needed to address such neighborhood factors that contribute to behavioral risk and improve the quality of life of residents (Hurd et al., 2014)

Furthermore, research findings have revealed that residence in predominantly African American communities characterized by neighborhood poverty and high unemployment rates produced symptoms of depression and anxiety in adolescents’ mental health (Hurd et al., 2013, 2014). Wilson (1987, 2009) points out that “the concentration of African Americans in poor, urban neighborhoods has resulted in a lack of sustained interaction with mainstream society”. Parents may feel less equipped to support their own children prompting adolescents to seek out and receive support from important others in their lives (Hurd et al., 2014). Unfortunately, this has resulted in adolescents having to develop negative relationships outside the home. In order for

individuals to feel supported through the appropriate channels in the community and not resort to violent or unruly behavior, drastic efforts are needed on the part of the government in ensuring that positive youth development is fostered at the local or community level. Research work has indicated the importance of government programs in helping young people meet their essential needs for housing, food, healthcare, and other resources some of which have included the development of skills while providing a sense of belonging to a community of practice (Pavlakis, 2019). This underscores the importance of launching an investigation into revamping public housing policies particularly in communities of color and fostering positive youth development in adolescents

Summary

Public housing developments in the last few decades have shaped the perceptions of individuals in diverse communities. But with the racial past the United States has endured and the levels of distrust created in communities of color (Wells & Gowda, 2020) especially in the areas of healthcare, education, housing, and employment it is absolutely critical that different perspectives are carefully explored. The research questions that guided this study have their theoretical foundations rooted in the social isolation theory and the concepts of positive youth development which has vital constructs established by the relational developmental systems theories.

While the segregation pattern that has plagued the Black communities over the years provides clear explanations regarding the origins of the problems among affected adolescents as demonstrated in the social isolation theory, a relational development

systems model of youth development helps guide the study in answering the research questions raised. The next chapter, literature review provides a detailed coverage and extensive discussion on this theoretical model

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

African American communities in public housing have been adversely affected by segregation policies that have created adverse living conditions for residents. Youths and adolescents in such neighborhoods have struggled with negative environmental forces and stressors (e.g., deprived neighborhood conditions, family discordance, and violence) that challenge their transition into adulthood (Phillips et al., 2018). “Social inequalities have hindered the development of African American youths as they have been overrepresented in poor communities with greater exposure to concentrated poverty in comparison with their White counterparts” (Murry et al., 2011). This problem is further exacerbated by a lack of evidence-based prevention programs executed widely across urban, Black communities (Phillips et al., 2018).

The purpose of this study was to examine the past experiences of African Americans in public housing and how the perceptions of their neighborhood characteristics shaped their adolescent development. This could help provide insights into how public housing policies, especially in communities of color, can be effectively revamped to foster youth development. In the past, institutional practices and policies resulted in highly segregated and impoverished urban communities in the United States (Hurd et al., 2013). African Americans remain the largest racial or ethnic group overly represented in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty (Jargowsky, 2005). This poverty concentration in Black neighborhoods spurred the need to reexamine housing policies through an innovative lens. Such a reexamination may provide insight that stakeholders

can use to develop policies and implement programs to provide social support to help reduce Black adolescents' risk of mental illness.

An in-depth examination of scholarly work on public housing's role in disadvantaged Black communities, especially in the context of youth development and the prevention of problem behaviors among adolescents, provided the essential foundation for this study. As part of the literature search strategy, I explored literary databases to find earlier research by notable experts in the field. To address the research problem and questions, I used the social isolation theory. The theory explains the undesirable impact of segregation policies on African American neighborhoods. I also used a conceptual framework rooted in PYD theory.

Literature Search Strategy

Scholars have written extensively about public policies, affordable housing, youth development, and other issues confronting adolescents in African American communities. To locate notable findings, I used essential databases and search engines, primarily Google Scholar, Sage Journals, and the Walden University Library. The key search terms I used included *positive youth development*, *public housing policies in Black communities*, *affordable housing*, *poverty in African American neighborhoods*, *residential segregation*, *Black communities*, *self-efficacy*, *housing discrimination*, *vulnerable populations*, *stereotypes*, *structural inequality*, and *social isolation*, among others.

I used important databases like Sage Journals and Public Administration Abstracts from Walden University Library as part of an iterative process that involved fact-finding

in full-text journals and periodicals published by scholars in the field. Articles from Google Scholar discussing salient issues relevant to the study were researched with a special focus on the writer's earlier contributions to the discipline. Research on public housing policies and PYD in African American communities is still lacking. While several evidence-based programs are in existence, only a few have been executed widely across urban, Black communities (Phillips et al., 2018). To address this issue, I consulted recent scholarly works published in Sage Journals or Google Scholar to obtain insights on the latest developments.

Theoretical Foundation

The social isolation and PYD theories provided the essential building blocks and theoretical underpinnings for the study. Social isolation theory was relevant because the social problems facing youth development in Black communities have been commonly identified as having their origins in social isolation (Wilson, 1987). Young adults in many of the communities of color were confronted with negative and environmental stressors that stifled adolescent development.

Social Isolation Theory

Social isolation has been described as “a deprivation of social connectedness” (Zavaleta et al., 2014). In the social isolation theory, Wilson (1987, 2012) argues that social isolation occurs in concentrated areas of poverty where the needed social connectedness and human interaction needed for paramount social and economic progress is visibly lacking. Wilson added that social isolation deprives individuals living in locations with concentrated poverty not only of social and economic resources but the

existence of conventional role models that help foster a successful lifestyle. This hinders an atmosphere where valid social networks can thrive and subsequently thwarting economic or social mobility (Wilson, 2012).

Residents of inner-city Black neighborhoods living in public housing are confronted with the risk of social isolation from middle class segment of the population, a lack of institutional resources and connections to job networks, and youth often lack prosocial role models (Rhodes & Schechter, 2014). Furthermore, the neighborhood is exposed to the risk of oppression and discrimination because most residents are ethnic or racial minorities which can cause significant stress and hinder healthy development (Rhodes & Schechter, 2014).

Wilson (1987, 1996, 2003) argues that inner-city neighborhoods are characterized by rising joblessness and social isolation. In his groundbreaking studies of urban poverty, Wilson (1987, 1996) described the widening gap between the rich and poor that has resulted in the creation of the urban ghettos populated mostly by low-income African Americans. Wilson explained with the social isolation theory how these individuals are more likely to be engaged in street crime and other forms of aberrant behavior with families experiencing high poverty levels and/or welfare dependency (Wilson 1987).

According to Wilson, the concentration effects generated by the social isolation of African Americans to poverty neighborhoods are reflected in the self-limiting social dispositions of inner-city residents. This has resulted in lack of access to jobs or formal job networks and low-quality schools. Also, there is a decreasing availability of suitable

marriage partners, lack of role models and limited contact with mainstream social institutions (Wilson, 2003)

Members of the urban underclass are socially isolated because they lack social ties to individuals in mainstream American society. Distinctive cultural norms are formed in the inner city which establishes the basis for the behaviors used by Wilson to define the underclass such as welfare dependency, criminality, drug abuse, having children outside marriage and long-term joblessness (Wilson, 1987, 2012). Wilson pointed out that the disadvantage facing poor African Americans comes from the social structure of high-poverty neighborhoods where job holders are few and middle-class institutions absent. In a clear sense, poor Blacks tend to live among other poor people. However, despite the disadvantaged conditions in which youth in inner-city neighborhoods have grown up, studies indicate that many individuals still demonstrate exceptional resilience in the face of these chronic stressors and risks (Elliot et al., 2006; Jessor, 1993). With this, developmental researchers now increasingly view youth not through the absence of problems as they did in the past but by the presence of character virtues and other attributes reflected in the adolescent in what is now popularly known as positive youth development (Lerner, 1995, 2004)

Positive Youth Development Theory

There is no comprehensive definition of positive youth development. However, scholars have attempted to uncover its major constructs that allows it to be defined as a strength-based approach to identifying positive attitudes and competencies that energize healthy developmental trajectories including values, moral perspectives, or religious

worldviews which manifest potentialities rather than the supposed incapacities of young people (Damon,2004). The field of positive youth development covers vital areas including interdisciplinary research, policy approach, philosophy, program description and professional identity using a set of conceptual models and framework that emerge from the research (Benson et al., 2007)

Positive youth development takes a strength-based approach in defining and understanding the development process. In other words, it emphasizes the manifest potentialities rather than the supposed incapacities of young people. As a result, it presents a situation within which young people can inform their settings, places, people, and policies that in turn impact their development (Damon, 2004). “In recent decades, government interventions with youth have always adopted a dominant framework that deals with risk behaviors including alcohol use, drug use, nonmarital pregnancy, suicide, antisocial behavior, violence, and school dropout” (Benson, 1997; Hein, 2003; National Research Council & Institute of Medicine [NRCIM], 2002; Takanishi, 1993). Based on this, positive youth development may simply be defined as a framework or model that encompasses the attributes, skills, competencies, and potential needed to succeed in the spheres of work, family, and civic life (Benson et al., 2007). This makes positive youth development a conceptualization that not only promotes individual well-being but the social good (Benson & Leffert, 2001; Benson et al., 2004; Damon, 1997; Lerner, 2004).

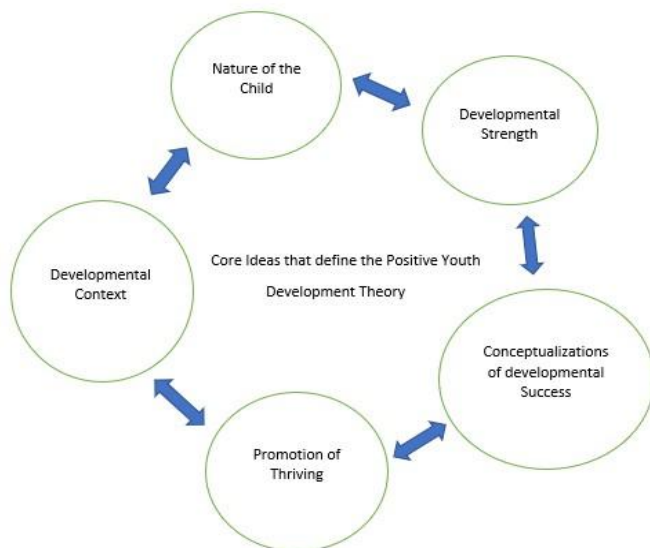
The core ideas that define the theory of positive development may be seen in five major areas which include a developmental context (i.e., places, settings, ecologies, and relationships with the potential to generate supports, opportunities, and resources), the

nature of the child with accents on inherent capacity to grow and thrive (actively engaging with supportive contexts), developmental strengths (attributes of the person, including skills, competencies, values, and dispositions necessary for successful engagement in the world) and conceptualizations of developmental success, reduction of high-risk behavior and the promotion of thriving (Lerner, 2003, 2004). The interaction of these basic constructs of the PYD theory is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Core Ideas of Positive Youth Development

Five core ideas that define the theory of positive youth development



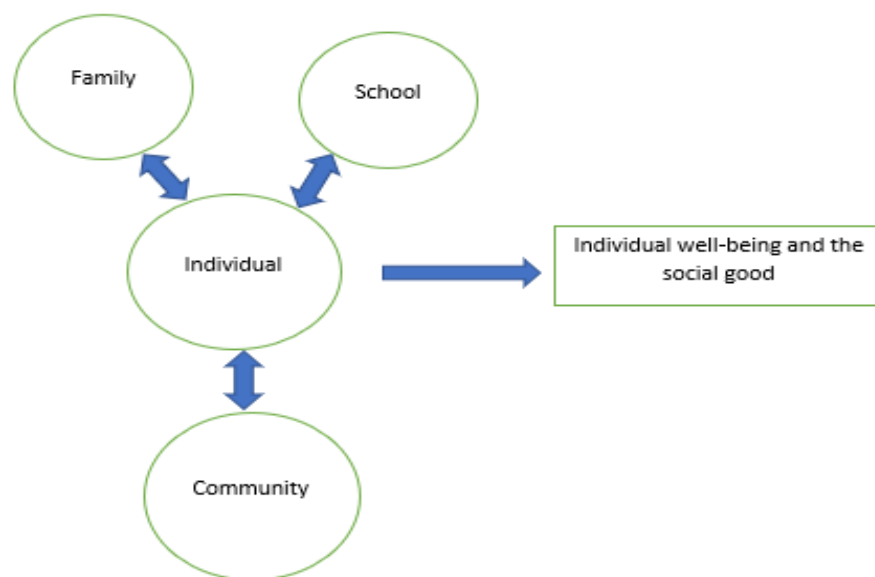
Note: Adapted from “Positive Youth Development: Theory, Research, and Application” By P.L. Benson, P.C. Scales, S.F. Hamilton, and A. Sesma Jr. *Theoretical Models of Human Development*. (Vol 1, page 894). 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470147658.chpsy0116>

Theoretical Roots of Positive Youth Development

The approach is described to have theoretical roots in character, humanistic and spirituality perspectives that focus on the strengths of an individual rather than incapacities, problems to be managed or deficits to be corrected (Shek et al., 2019). In the past, numerous deficit views ignored human strengths and labeled youths in society as problematic or incapable. Much emphasis on individual deficits often limited the capacity to acknowledge the strengths and assets in a young person's life (Forrest-bank et al., 2015). The theoretical basis for youth competency has its origins in the developmental systems theory which Lerner describes as recognition of an integration of all levels of an ecology that involves the individual in a bidirectional interaction with family, school, and community (Lerner et al., 2013; see Figure 2).

Figure 2*Model of Individual, Family, School and Community Relationships and Impacts*

How relational development between the individual, the family, school and community impacts well-being and contribution to social good



Note: Figure 2 shows the interrelationship between the individual and the school, family, and community that impact their adolescent development (Benson et al., 2007)

The theory of positive youth development requires the integration of multiple theoretical orientations because of its multidisciplinary nature and central to the theory are questions rooted in developmental psychology (Benson et al., 2007). The primary goal of the theory is to explain the capacity of youth to change and to change in a direction that fosters individual well-being and the social good. Positive youth development theory emerges from a generous view of human capacity and potential grounded in the views of professionals and practitioners working with youth that human nature should be identified as a constructive contribution to the development of self, community, and society (Benson et al., 2007).

Positive youth development theory seeks to explain how the potentiality in adolescents expresses itself by examining the dynamic interactions between person and context which categorizes it as a theoretical approach under the larger umbrella of the developmental systems theory. Central to the positive youth development theory are conceptions of the developing person, the contexts in which the person belongs and the dynamic interaction between the two. The theory argues that adolescents bring particular energy to their relational and social world while requiring that youth select from a range of developmental supports and opportunities that include advantages leading to prioritized personal goals. Positive youth development theory also posits that adolescents will strive to find or create optimizing settings even when their degrees of freedom is limited (Benson et al., 2007).

In a historical context, youth development was originally generated following reports of collapse in the running of schools for delinquent kids in the juvenile justice system (Benson et al., 2007). The need to develop youth policy to promote development based on the resources available to families, schools and communities became a focal point (Lerner et al., 2008). Following this development federal agencies handling youth delinquency developed a youth delinquency prevention program based on what keeps good kids on track rather than the more prevalent question on why kids get into trouble. The federal answer to this question is that youths succeed because of their sense of competence, sense of usefulness, sense of belonging and a sense of power (Lerner, 2003, 2004). This led to an influx of prominent scholars and researchers including Peter Benson who proposed the 40 developmental assets, Richard and Jacqueline Lerner the originators

of the 5C/6C Model, the Catalano's 15 PYD Constructs, and other propositions linked to character and spirituality. For the purpose of this study, the conceptual framework will be guided by the underlying concepts and principles adapted from the 15 PYD constructs developed by Catalano and colleagues (Catalano et al., 2014). This is because of the theoretical base offered in guiding public housing program development in at-risk neighborhoods predominantly inhabited by Black youths (Jensen et al., 2013) and the model's suitability in addressing the important issues or concerns raised in the research questions.

Catalano's 15 PYD Constructs

After consulting with leading researchers and evaluation staff of PYD programs, Catalano and his colleagues proposed an operational definition of the PYD. "The definition introduces 15 developmental constructs of the PYD to include bonding, resilience, social competence, emotional competence, cognitive competence, behavioral competence, moral competence, self-determination, spirituality, self-efficacy, clear and positive identity, belief in the future, recognition for positive behavior, opportunities for prosocial involvement and fostering prosocial norms" (Shek et al., 2019). In defining each of the 15 constructs, Shek et al (2019) outlined that bonding represents a child's emotional attachment and relationships with peers, family, community, or culture. Resilience is the ability to adapt healthily and flexibly to life changes or stressful events. Social competence represents a set of interpersonal skills that facilitate adolescents to achieve social and interpersonal goals. Emotional competence refers to the ability to recognize the emotions of self and others including ways to respond.

The Social Development Group at the University of Washington conducted one of the most extensive reviews of positive youth development programs (Catalano et al., 2014). Out of 161 programs reviewed, 25 were specifically identified to show significant effects on behavioral outcomes. The programs possessed developmental assets or nutrients that promote bonding; foster resilience; promote social competence; promote emotional competence; promote cognitive competence; promote behavioral competence; promote moral competence; foster self-determination; foster spirituality; foster self-efficacy; foster clear and positive identity; foster belief in the future; provide recognition for positive behavior; provide opportunities for prosocial involvement; and foster social norms (Benson et al., 2007). Competence, self-efficacy, and prosocial norms were addressed in all 25 programs (Benson et al., 2007). Similar to this research, the programs selected by Catalano and colleagues in their study were equally community-based programs targeting at-risk youths living in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Jensen et al., 2013).

In a review of more than 1,200 studies, eight common protective factors were identified across programs successful in preventing behavior problems, school failure, poor physical health and pregnancy among young people. These are social support; personal and social skills; self-efficacy; good parent-child relationships; positive peer-modeling; high quality schools; effective social policies; and positive social norms (Durlak, 1998). PYD constructs known to have sufficient evidence of promotive or protective effects include family connectedness and parent adolescent communication, parental monitoring, school connectedness, cognitive and social competence, prosocial

norms, spirituality, belief in the future, self-determination, and self-efficacy (Catalano et al., 2009).

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC's) Division of Reproductive Health (DRH) has developed a conceptual framework that guides its work on the effects of PYD programs on adolescent sexual reproductive health (ASRH). The model classified PYD constructs into connectedness, competence, confidence, and character. Connectedness is associated with bonding, competence identified with social, cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and moral qualities while character signifies prosocial norms and spirituality. A panel of experts has been involved in developing this conceptual framework for PYD programs as a strategy for promoting ASRH utilizing basically the PYD constructs (Catalano et al., 2009). Catalano and his colleagues identified 77 PYD programs designed scientifically with outcome measures and evaluation effects and 25 effectively promoted positive youth development particularly utilizing constructs like skill-training and mentoring (Shek et al., 2019).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework this study utilized is the 15 PYD constructs developed by Catalano and colleagues (Catalano et al., 2004). The effectiveness of the model in this study which spotlights the revamping of public housing policies in an effort to improve the condition of living experienced by Black youths is supported by the argument that the participation of government agencies in reform efforts inevitably leads to a significant improvement in the quality of services provided (Gilbody et al., 2006; Ouwens et al., 2005; Zetlin et al., 1996). Also, while comprehensive reforms may be difficult to achieve

at the federal level, history suggests that remarkable success has been made at the community level (Alter & Hage, 1993).

The central research question raised in this paper attempted to uncover the possible ways public housing programs can be designed with objectives to reduce infractions among adolescents in Black neighborhoods with sub questions addressing how such policies have inhibited the development of those youths and the overall impact of isolating and denying such young individuals the valuable opportunities to become better citizens. The 15 PYD constructs was originated from a study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the 1990s to examine the state of PYD programming and research (Catalano et al., 2004). The outcome of the study was a list of objectives shared by successful PYD programs that may be implemented as a guiding framework or intervention components in a youth service program targeting at-risk Black youths in public housing communities (Catalano et al., 2004).

In the model, policy interventions that will empower at-risk youths against negative neighborhood impacts are generated (Jenson et al., 2013). In addition, interventions that allow children and youth to identify their own interests and talents which would help persevere and prevail over time in the face of risk and adversity are also encouraged (Jenson et al., 2013). These may come as after-school programs that integrate child and youth interventions with well-designed collaboration principles and practices that must be monitored consistently by administrative and evaluation staff (Jenson et al., 2013). The components of the program should focus on social and cultural activities such as tutoring, homework help, life skills training, sports, arts activities, and

technology training (Jenson et al., 2013). However, few programs still integrate social and academic program elements in a systematic and theoretically informed manner (Durlak et al., 2010). Also, many community-based after-school programs for children and youth lack a theoretical base to guide program development, implementation, and evaluation activities (Anthony et al., 2009; Gottfredson et al., 2007). As a result, this study attempted to theoretically examine policy issues in public housing developments with research questions that will help foster youth development in Black communities. The set of interventions outlined by Catalano and colleagues in their study (Catalano et al., 2004) should be a guiding framework for developing public housing program objectives including intervention components which have been adapted in the Bridge Project After-School Program in Denver, Colorado (Jenson et al., 2013).

Research has also shown that many adolescents lack the support systems needed to transition successfully into adulthood (Adams et al, 2021). Negative environmental factors and stressors also make the period of adolescence particularly risky for many inner-city Black males (Karl, et al., 2018). In another study, researchers also revealed that the social environment in which children are raised shapes child and adolescent development (Trent et al., 2019). Racial disparities in how public housing policies are developed leave the racialized communities of color with devastating consequences of risky behaviors and violent crime especially among youths and adolescents (Thomas et al, 2018). Black youths continue to be disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system (Griffith et al., 2019).

African American youths have been subjected to public housing policies designed to concentrate them in inner-city areas and creating neighborhoods isolated from mainstream society (Rothstein 2017, 2018, 2020). Further studies also confirm that youths of color face a higher risk of being negatively stereotyped by adults working with them (Priest et al., 2018). Harpal ani (2017) noted that stereotypes have long impacted this community of Black youths making it perhaps the most visibly stereotyped group in the United States.

Richard Catalano and colleagues created a definition that named the objectives of positive youth development approaches. They highlighted that positive youth development seeks to promote one or more of the following: bonding, resilience, social competence, emotional competence, cognitive competence, behavioral competence, moral competence, self-determination, spirituality, self-efficacy, positive identity, belief in the future, recognition for positive behavior, opportunities for prosocial involvement, and prosocial norms (Catalano et al., 1999). This definition emphasizes the core areas of developmental strengths, and the promotion of individual well-being as illustrated in the literature review.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

The Catalano Positive Youth Development Framework

Bonding

To reduce infractions among Black youth living in public housing communities, youth programs need to be integrated with housing programs with the primary objective of facilitating bonding relationships with local schools in the community through after-

school activities such as supervised homework help as demonstrated in the Denver Bridge Project (Jenson et al., 2013). The public housing program should be integrated with a local after-school program to allow youths to bond with the school system.

Resilience

Public housing programs should have the objective of promoting resilience by improving protective traits that enhance youth ability to adapt to change and stress through prosocial activities including reading and literacy, life skills training, sports and art in after-school programs as portrayed in the Denver Bridge project (Jenson et al., 2013). Public housing programs should include prosocial activities that foster resilience.

Social Competence

Policy interventions should be introduced to promote social competence by encouraging youths and adolescents to develop interests and competencies in things they like to do so as to enhance their social, cognitive, and behavioral skills thereby identifying strengths, skills, or preferences (Jenson et al., 2013).

Emotional Competence

Policy objectives in designing effective public housing programs should emphasize the development of social, cognitive, and behavioral skills that empower youth to respond to feelings appropriately through after-school programs such as the Denver project that involves cultural activities like dance or music, art activities such as fine art or sporting activities (Jenson et al., 2013).

Cognitive Competence

Cognitive skills that promote academic and intellectual achievement is encouraged through policy interventions that introduce youth to making effective decisions that prevent school failure, dropouts and the loss of opportunities created by the isolation of Black adolescents to public housing programs in poor neighborhoods (Jenson et al., 2013). In 2002, an arts-based program Authoring Action (A2) was founded to provide youth with tools to enhance personal success in their career, calling and life path by developing artistic skills which involved thinking analytically about issues in their communities through self-reflection, critical thinking and self-expression and then using analytical skills to foster positive changes in their communities (Mohammed, 2019).

Behavioral Competence

Developing a positive attitude toward school through career counselling, reading, or writing instruction and other structured tutoring as a key objective for policy intervention should be considered in shaping the behavior of youth and reducing infractions as displayed in the Denver project (Jenson et al., 2013).

Moral Competence

Provide access to institutional resources, connections to job networks and prosocial role models which can help increase school participation, build higher self-esteem, stay off drugs and out of gangs and reduce delinquent behavior (Davis et al., 2021). In this way moral development is promoted.

Self-Determination

The ability of youth and adolescents to think for themselves and avoid developmental setbacks may be fostered through key initiatives introduced in after-school programs like technology training which empowers them to perform better in school activities (Jenson et al., 2013). Youths set goals, make choices, and take action according to their own thinking. Also, connection established by A2 program participants with trainers or tutors during after-school hours via the internet or social media provides the needed platform for technological advancement (Ballard et al., 2021).

Spirituality

Spirituality and religiosity have been known to be two essential characteristics distinctly associated with humans (Kalton 2000; Lerner et al., 2004). Developmental systems models of adolescent development suggest that spirituality is important for the healthy, positive development of an adolescent's sense of self and personal identity as well as how a life path that encourages mutually beneficial and socially positive relations with the world can be framed (Lerner et al., 2004). Religious youth are more apt to participate in various forms of civic engagement than their less-religious peers and are often embedded in a social context that is characterized by interactive, trustworthy relationships in which common goals, beliefs, and values lead to prosocial behaviors and actions (Lerner et al., 2004). For some individuals, religious identity is tightly bound to their ethnic identity (Bankston, 2000) pointing out the place of the African American church.

Similarly, researchers suggest that relationships developed through church involvement provide African American youth with positive role models that function to deter deviant behaviors (Cook, 2000). A study that has examined the role of mentoring Black boys' racial identity is the BEMI mentoring program which helps African American boys develop a positive identity about themselves (Hurd et al., 2012). Spirituality may foster an integrated moral and civic identity within a young person that may lead the individual along a path to becoming an adult who contributes to self, family, community, and civil society (Lerner et al., 2004). Policy interventions by housing authorities in African American neighborhoods should focus on incorporating the roles of the Black church to help foster youth development through effective mentoring programs. Local Black churches or fellowship gatherings should be routinely permitted in the public housing community to allow children and young adults in the neighborhood to develop spirituality and religious values.

Self-Efficacy

The experiences of Black youth should warrant interventions such as mentoring programs designed to assist them in developing high aspirations and not being impacted by negative stressors from an oppressive law enforcement or criminal justice system that has the potential of limiting their opportunities and dehumanizing them. According to a study, mentors of African American or African-Caribbean descent suggest that cultural similarities would help yield greater understanding along racial lines, higher quality relationships and enhance positive outcomes (Garraway & Pistrang, 2010) . Policy interventions should incorporate Black youths being mentored to set inspiring personal

goals and provide necessary assistance in the accomplishment of such targets within a policy framework.

Clear and Positive Identity

A clear and positive identity that allows youth in public housing may be cultivated through leadership training as reflected in the Denver Bridge study where intervention strategies seek to develop a sense of personal responsibility that reduce or eliminate infractions in adolescents (Jenson et al., 2013).

Belief in the Future

Infractions in Black youth living in public housing communities may be curbed through policy interventions in youth programs that involve prosocial or caring adults in the community who are attached as mentors to youth through designated activities such as sporting events, educational, extracurricular, or other activities that promote positive behavior and encourage adolescents to develop a sense of belief in living a successful life in future (Jenson et al., 2013).

Recognition for Positive Behavior

Programs should be drafted to reward community youth for a change of heart through a top-down policy that recognizes adolescents for high school completion or graduation from college, allowing participants to be better citizens (Jenson et al., 2013).

Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement

Intervention components should be woven into the policy objective of public housing programs in Black neighborhoods such as opportunities for the active involvement of young adults in employment, education, or other prosocial activities to

ensure youth development in such communities is not inhibited or hindered (Jenson et al., 2013).

Prosocial Norms

Healthy behaviors can be developed through policy initiatives that promote societal norms that enable Black youths to contribute largely to the welfare of their cities through volunteering, community involvement and other prosocial activities. Scholarship initiatives that alleviate the effects of poverty in disadvantaged neighborhoods are also encouraged as reflected in the Denver project (Jenson et al., 2013)

The implementation of the PYD as a guiding framework in community-based youth programs has grown significantly in recent years. While earlier models were plagued with poor operational definitions and vague conceptual frameworks, these problems have been known to decline with the adoption of evidence-based studies utilizing PYD components as interventions in a variety of youth service programs (Catalano et al., 2004). In a study carried out by Catalano and associates that systematically reviews PYD programs that exhibit the above 15 objectives, the criteria used included the PYD constructs, age of participants, and evaluation methodology (Catalano et al., 1998; Catalano et al., 2004). The study identified twenty-five programs that met the team's criteria regarding adequate evaluation design and operational definitions of PYD components. The programs ranged from the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program (Tierney et al., 1995) to comprehensive programs such as the Adolescent Transitions Project (Andrews et al., 1995) where youth and parent

components were used as part of an overall strategy to promote healthy youth development (Jenson et al., 2013).

Studies Featuring the Catalano Developmental Constructs

Descriptions of the programs utilizing the 15 PYD constructs have targeted youth mainly in three different settings including family, school, or community domains (Catalano et al., 2002). In single domains or settings where eight programs were studied, programs utilizing single interventions (community or school only) include the Big Brothers Big Sisters, Bicultural Competence Skills, Growing Healthy, Know Your Body, Children of Divorce, Life Skills Training, The PATHS Project, and Project ALERT” (Catalano et al., 2002). While Big Brothers Big Sisters and Bicultural Competence Skills are community-based the other six were implemented in school settings (Catalano et al., 2002). Researchers while studying the two community-based programs used experimental research designs and random assignment of children to intervention and control groups. The two programs sought to promote constructs such as bonding, competence and positive identity though in different ways. While the Big Brothers Big Sisters project encouraged bonding with adults, the Bicultural Competence Skills strengthened bonds between bicultural children by associations with majority and subgroup cultures (Catalano et al., 2002).

Competence is addressed under Bicultural Competence Skills directly through a skills training curriculum while the Big Brothers Big Sisters took the approach that social, emotional and behavioral competence are based on developing a consistent adult-child mentoring relationship (Catalano et al., 2002). Other studies have adopted the

underlying principles of Catalano 15 PYD constructs that resulted in positive behavioral outcomes in youth in the areas of social, emotional, cognitive competence, self-efficacy, and prosocial norms. These include Growing Healthy (better personal health management attitudes and knowledge); Know Your Body (better health practices); Children of Divorce (greater assertiveness, sociability, problem-solving, and frustration tolerance); Life Skills Training and Project ALERT (increased acceptance of prosocial norms having to do with substance use); Life Skills Training (increased interpersonal skills and decision making), the PATHS - a higher capacity for managing one's reactions and behavior in social and emotional situations, greater self-efficacy with creating solutions to problems, and increased empathy (Catalano et al., 2002).

Specific programs in two social domains that study interventions in schools and families include the Child Development Project, Fast Track, Metropolitan Area Child Study, Reducing the Risk, the Seattle Social Development Project, the Social Competence Promotion Program for Young Adolescents, and Success for All (Catalano et al., 2002). These programs successfully promoted positive youth development constructs and strategies in school settings and incorporated elements of parental or family involvement. Teen Outreach is a program that effectively combined school and community settings (Catalano et al., 2002). The Fast Track and Metropolitan Area Child Study adopted an experimental design approach while the remaining five used quasi-experimental research designs. These positive youth development programs that are carried out in school and family domains include direct parent training or education strategies conducted at the school or in a home setting to enhance the child's acquisition

of new skills such as parent involvement in homework assignments (Catalano et al., 2002).

In three social domains nine programs were identified to utilize the family, school, and community settings (Catalano et al., 2002). Seven programs conducted in combined family, school and community settings include Across Ages, Adolescent Transitions Project, Midwestern Prevention Project, Project Northland, Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways, Valued Youth Partnership, and Woodrock Youth (Catalano et al., 2002). The Adolescent Development Project is another study where parents were the focus of efforts to boost family competence, parent self-efficacy, bonding, and alignment with prosocial norms while local communities were the focus of efforts to use community assets, resources, or partnerships (Catalano et al., 2002). The Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs have reported positive outcomes for children and youth in several studies (Herrera, et al., 2007) Mentoring interventions have resulted in increased levels of positive social and emotional bonds that serve as protective factors for children and youth (Rhodes 2002). These mentoring programs have also demonstrated a decrease in risk factors such as school dropout, academic failure, delinquency, and drug use (Dubois et al., 2002).

Study evaluators observed fourteen of the PYD constructs in the Creating Lasting Connections program which used interventions in the family, church, and the community. The development constructs include social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and moral competencies; bonding, resiliency, self-efficacy, spirituality, recognition of positive behavior, positive identity, prosocial norms, opportunities for prosocial involvement, and

self-determination (Catalano et al., 2002). Another program Quantum Opportunities Program conducted in the school, workplace and community domains addressed thirteen constructs including social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive competencies; bonding, resiliency, self-efficacy, recognition for positive behaviors, positive identity, opportunities for prosocial involvement, prosocial norms, self-determination, and belief in the future (Catalano et al., 2002).

Overall, three constructs identified in 25 well-evaluated programs include competence, self-efficacy, and prosocial norms. Evaluations typically measured reductions in problem behaviors or increases in positive behavior. Roughly seventy-five percent of the programs covered African American youths (Catalano et al., 2002). The Colorado Bridge Project (discussed later in the chapter) is undertaken by scholars at the University of Denver and the Denver Housing Authority. Researchers in this study focused on public housing communities in Colorado using the PYD constructs and adopting qualitative research tools similar to the approach taken in this study.

On the global scene, the 15 PYD constructs described above have been adopted in a project titled Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social Programs (Project P.A.T.H.S.) initiated by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (Shek et al., 2012). Theoretically, Daniel Shek a leading scholar from the Department of Applied Social Sciences in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University attempted to integrate the character strengths of positive youth development (PYD) with Confucian virtues and to help foster positive development of adolescents in Hong Kong, along with scholars from five local

universities they developed a multi-year PYD program called project P.A.T.H.S. based on the concepts and principles of Catalano's PYD constructs (Shek et al., 2019).

The models emerged from an interdisciplinary collaboration among practitioners and scholars who were interested in improving interventions for children and youth. Many of the proponents of this PYD model are social workers and other individuals advocating for policy change and funding for interventions in community-based services that promote healthy youth development (Anyon & Jenson, 2015). Scholars in the discipline have agreed that implementing and sustaining effective programs for at-risk youth requires strategic collaboration among community-based child and youth organizations (Jenson et al., 2013). However, building a community-based program for at-risk children and youth faces a huge challenge. Community-centered organizations from different fields have to be clearly understood to interact with one another to provide the resources needed by the youth. Some of these organizations are funded by federal or state programs with different objectives and operating rules which makes the entire process more complex (Jenson et al., 2013).

Inter-organizational relationships including administrative coordination, staff coordination and client flows need to be effectively addressed. The challenge inherent in applying theoretical ideas to prevention and treatment modalities remains a significant barrier to improving programs for at-risk youth (Jenson, 2006). This gap which exists in most literature on the subject was addressed in this study which focuses on adopting an integrated approach that enables public housing authorities to employ different constructs rooted in the principles of PYD such as school bonding, parental involvement,

assignment to mentors or church participation in the design of a comprehensive and all-inclusive housing program specifically for Black youths in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Studies on the Bridge Public Housing Project

The Bridge Project was developed to combat the escalating negative conditions of Colorado's public housing developments which many claimed was limiting the futures of children growing up in the neighborhoods and exposed to gangs, violence, drugs, unstable families, adolescent pregnancy which prevented learning and school achievement (Jenson et al., 2013). Researchers at the University of Denver realized the importance of forging an alliance with the Denver Housing Authority to build a housing project with an effective method of community organizing and models rooted in the community. Following this an after-school program was developed and the elements needed to be functional include a clearly articulated need, political action and prestige, resources from committed volunteers, altruism, effective program models, neighborhood support, a method of organizing, and institutional partners (Jenson et al., 2013).

The Bridge Project is a perfect example of how a school in the community can partner with the housing authority to deliver community-based programs that impact the lives of youth and their families. The students, faculty, and administrative staff at the Denver Bridge Project and the University of Denver have formed a unique partnership to help at-risk children and youth in Denver's public housing communities (Jenson et al., 2013). Today, the major challenge facing the Bridge Project include finding ways to sustain program efforts and financial budgets in the face of tight economic conditions (Jenson et al., 2013).

Components of the Denver Bridge Project include academic support, technology training, mentoring, social and emotional learning, leadership training, parent involvement, smart planning, shared values, learning communities, and community collaboration (Denver Bridge Project, 2011). Amidst the increasing competition for public funds due to a decline in national and state funding options for community-based agencies, the importance of program evaluation has soared over the years. Unfortunately, while this may be clear to researchers and evaluation experts, many program administrators and practitioners still lack the requisite training or skills needed to implement and evaluate activities. Planning and budgeting activities often ignore the needed evaluation to be successful. Without the appropriate evaluation competitive grant proposals to public entities and foundations cannot be submitted. Community-based agencies that lack an evaluation plan will find themselves at a disadvantage (Jenson et al., 2013).

In this study, more attention was given to the qualitative evaluation methods adopted in the Bridge Project, a methodology in alignment with addressing the research questions raised earlier in this paper. In the Denver Bridge Project, a qualitative study was conducted using semi structured protocol with participants in one-on-one settings or focus groups with 10 or fewer participants. Other qualitative methods include client journals and observational strategies (Denver Bridge Project, 2011). The method involved two focus groups with 12 parents on topics associated with their involvement in their child's education. Semi structured protocol questions were prepared on their current involvement in their children's academic life, identify barriers to involvement, and

speculate on services that might help them become more involved in their children's education. The focus groups lasted about 90 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed (Denver Bridge Project, 2011). Two cycles of coding were later carried using descriptive coding followed by theoretical coding (Saldana, 2009) to identify themes in the qualitative data.

The findings on the Denver Bridge Project study reveal that parents identified tangible barriers that prevented them from participating in school-related activities to include time availability, lack of finances and transportation, cultural and language barriers, and limited access to technology used in communicating with teachers (Denver Bridge Project, 2011). Some parents alleged being marginalized in their interactions with school officials due to living in low-income communities. Prior studies have indicated that parents who live in poor, urban communities such as a public housing setting often feel marginalized and stigmatized in the context of their children's academic experiences (Faber & Azar, 1999; Kelly et al., 2010). However, parents interviewed in the Denver Project have expressed strong interest in their children's academic performance though they face individual and social barriers (Jenson et al., 2013). The qualitative study led to key initiatives at the Bridge Project such as bridging the gap between parents and school officials, attending parent-teacher conferences and equipping parents in technology skills necessary to participate fully in their children's education. A sizeable number of programs that adopted the 15 PYD constructs recorded a noticeable change in behavior of participants. For instance, the Big Brother Big Sister project reported a measurable impact like improved school attendance, parental relations, academic performance, and

peer emotional support. Similarly, problem behaviors including substance use, hitting, lying and truancy were significantly reduced or prevented.

Summary and Conclusions

Policy makers and program implementers need to critically review the related constructs closely to have a better understanding of the conceptual foundations of positive youth development programs (Shek et al., 2012). This will help foster the development of a public housing program with integrated PYD constructs that promotes bonding, builds resilience, strengthens moral, emotional, and cognitive competence, encourage prosocial norms and forges the individual's belief in the future. Also, the development of a positive identity and strength through spirituality or religious values have also been the foundational platforms on which many PYD programs have been constructed.

A major concern is that most evaluative studies of interventions based on PYD have included very few follow-up phases. Additionally, a set of common outcomes to assess the impact of PYD on behavior is still lacking and critical questions still need to be addressed about the precise measurement of the indicators used to assess the PYD constructs (Catalano et al., 2002; Theokas et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2005). Standardized PYD measures should be developed to address these challenges (Catalano et al., 2010). Also, fewer studies still exist on PYD interventions targeting racially and ethnically diverse youth but regardless, the PYD model still remains an effective organizing framework for community-based youth programs (Jenson et al., 2013).

According to an earlier work by Jenson and Fraser, policymakers are afforded models for developing and implementing policies for children and youth. This includes evaluating the prevalence of risk and protective traits in a given geographical area, assuming policy and practice needs to responsive care systems, using evidence to create policy responses, determining the course of specific individual and social interventions, and implementing and monitoring risk and protective-based policies (Jenson & Fraser, 2011).

Evaluation findings have shown that studies such as the project P.A.T.H.S. discussed earlier adopt a methodology that effectively promotes the development of adolescents after selecting multiple evaluation strategies, designing an objective outcome evaluation that uses randomized group trials, subjective outcome evaluation based on students and program implementers, a process evaluation, interim evaluation, qualitative evaluation based on students and program implementers, student products such as weekly diaries or drawings, and evaluation based on personal construct psychology (Shek et al., 2012). Also, the findings from the Denver Bridge Project, a community-based program focusing on youths in public housing utilizes the methods and methodology applicable to the constructs in this study and provides useful insights that inform the research design needed to address the research questions. As pointed out by Jefferey Jenson and colleagues, the results from qualitative interviews and focus groups with Bridge Project participants provide important insights about the presence and scope of risk and protection in the lives of children and youth living in public housing communities

(Jenson et al., 2013) The qualitative indicators highlighted and how they are embedded in this literature are covered in more detail in the next chapter on Methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the past experiences of public housing residents and how the neighborhood characteristics shaped their adolescent development. It established the foundation that youths in communities of color have a disproportionate level of risky behaviors and violent crimes. Some of the disparities in public housing policies and distribution may have some connection with youth development (Rothstein, 2017). I used a strength-based perspective to spotlight the strengths of African American adolescents in disadvantaged neighborhoods contrary to the emphasis on the risk factors confronting such communities.

Scholars have been drawn to the conceptualizations of young adults from a positive youth development perspective with results showing less risky behaviors or positive outcomes (Catalano et al., 2004; Lerner et al., 2013). Past segregation policies that led to isolation of African Americans in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty (Institute of Research on Poverty, 2019) have spurred intense research on social isolation. The basis for this research is Wilson's social isolation theory

The creation of the Black ghetto and subsequent confinement of African Americans to disadvantaged neighborhoods have been the brain work of housing policies (Curley, 2005; Rothstein, 2018). The implications of these policies include the isolation of the Black community from mainstream society with adolescents facing developmental issues as a result of growing up in high-risk conditions (McArdle & Acevedo-Garcia, 2017). Lerner (2005) made a theoretical connection between social isolation and PYD.

Lerner argued that development in youths, even in high-risk conditions, still occurs due to plasticity of humans and their ability to grow, change, and adapt to their environment. Scholars of PYD have proposed several frameworks as guidelines for promoting protective factors or curbing risk factors (Jenson et al., 2013). In this study, I adopted Catalano's 15 PYD constructs as the model for contextualizing the research problem and addressing the RQs.

Research Design and Rationale

The central RQ for this study was, In what ways can public housing programs be designed to reduce infractions among adolescents in Black neighborhoods? I also sought to answer following secondary RQs:

Sub-RQ1: How have housing policies inhibited the development of youths living in the Black neighborhoods?

Sub-RQ2: How has the isolation of Black youth to a specific housing program affected their opportunities to become better citizens?

The study's central focus revolved around public housing policies and youth development among African Americans. I particularly focused on the need to promote youth development and the desegregation of Black neighborhoods (Rothstein, 2017). In the past, public housing policy has been engineered to concentrate people of color in poor and deteriorating neighborhoods where youth and adolescents face developmental challenges. Siting policies were developed to isolate African Americans to public housing projects in segregated locations in urban areas lacking social ties to individuals in mainstream American society, thereby creating the urban ghettos (Ware, 2021). Policy

makers at the federal, state, and local levels pursued developmental strategies that had a devastating effect on African American families. Some of these policies include redlining, restrictive covenants, the formation of the interstate highway system, urban renewal, and exclusionary zoning (Ware, 2021). Young adults in these Black communities engage in risky behaviors and violent crimes because of disparities in public housing policies and distribution thereby hindering youth development (Rothstein, 2017). To answer the study's RQs, I discuss the underlying concepts and principles of PYD in the literature review from a policy perspective.

The goal of this study was to elicit valuable information from those living in public housing about how public policy can be shaped to help communities reduce antisocial behavior among African American adolescents. I used tools of PYD. The qualitative approach I used consisted of a case study of prominent public housing projects. The qualitative approach is considered most appropriate in examining the actions of participants and gaining an in-depth understanding of their past experiences in public housing (Duram, 2010; Patton, 2014). Five main qualitative approaches common in research include narrative study, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2014). Other qualitative approaches that have become increasingly common over the years are historical research and pragmatic action research (Haradhan, 2018).

Researchers who conduct narrative studies focus on people's narratives either about themselves or a set of events. Rather than study the emerging themes it concentrates on the sequential unfolding of someone's story and places a lot of emphasis

on the characters involved. It is time-consuming and usually involves a small number of participants (Hancock et al., 2009). Phenomenology is used to describe how people experienced a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). It attempts to understand how participants make sense of their experiences and describes the world from their unique perspective. Unless the researcher has a strong background in philosophy this approach may pose unexpected challenges (Mariano, 1990) . Another common approach in qualitative research is the use of grounded theory. Grounded theory is an approach to theory development that is grounded / rooted in data collected and analyzed. The main idea is to generate theory from the field using observations (Glaser & Staruss, 2017; Walia, 2015). In ethnography, the researcher engages in prolonged observations of a group's everyday life studying behaviors, values, or interactions among them (Creswell, 2014). Case studies are in-depth examinations of people or groups of people within a bounded setting or context and may be conducted using multiple sources like questionnaires, interviews, observations, written accounts, and audio-visual materials (Creswell, 2009) . The tradition of the study was rooted in the use of case studies applicable to public housing units located in northern California. Based on the research questions that needed to be addressed, the case study approach was adopted.

The case study approach has been particularly useful in fields such as management, public administration, psychology, history, education, and medicine (Haradhan, 2018). As a methodological approach, the case study is considered appropriate for addressing the research questions raised because of the insights gained from the experiences of the participants in public housing in their own words. Case

studies are particularly useful for describing events and exploring experiences (Yin, 2013). In this study, participants were encouraged to share important artifacts such as documents, reports, letters, photos, or items related to their experiences.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in a qualitative study is crucial because of the importance of developing a detailed understanding of the events (Patton, 2014). While the researcher ensures that the study is not influenced by personal bias (Maxwell, 2012; Miles et al., 2013) detailed data on the phenomenon being studied must be gathered (Miles et al., 2013). Participants in the study were presented with questions during interviews and relevant documents useful in addressing the research questions examined in the public domain. Field notes or handwritten notes were also taken to complement the audio recordings during the interviews. Audio recordings taken were transcribed verbatim using Zoom before data analysis began (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

In order to mitigate personal bias, interviews were held to accurately reflect the participant's perspectives. Also, participants were presented with the opportunity to review their responses to ensure an accurate representation (Maxwell, 2012). However, a potential bias was identified to be linked to past understanding of public housing residents especially in locations with persistent waves of crime. While being a person of color with deep-rooted concerns about the ills ravaging public housing communities with predominantly Black people, not having a lived experience in public housing did not result in personal bias or prejudgments on research findings. This may be associated with data results that are inconsistent with my personal beliefs that moral standards are low

(Smith & Noble, 2014). In mitigating this bias, the participants were mostly adults with past experiences on living as youths in public housing developments found in deteriorating Black neighborhoods regardless of their race or color and how this has shaped or influenced the development of the youth over the years. No personal or professional relationships exist between me and the participants.

A clear articulation of the rationale for the approach and selection of the design that meets the study objectives helped to reduce common pitfalls in relation to any perceived bias (Smith & Noble, 2014). In addition, being transparent and reflexive about the processes by which data was collected, analyzed, and presented helped reduce researcher bias (Galdas, 2017). The initial interview questions are shown in Appendix A. I used a semi structured protocol for the interviews to answer the research questions.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The study's goal was to identify feasible and practical solutions making use of the tools of positive youth development that can be geared toward revamping public housing policy in Black communities. As a result, participants involved in the study included present and past residents of public housing developments in predominantly Black neighborhoods as well as adults with a wealth of experience to share about living conditions in those areas. Information relating to the history of policy development in public housing, segregation policies, the emergence of the urban ghetto, and the evolution of crime in African American communities were reviewed in the public domain as supporting documents. Accessed documents serve as valid confirmations or supporting

evidence to accounts obtained from residents. For accurate descriptions to be obtained in the interviews, the study sample consisted of respondents in the neighborhoods who provided rich descriptions of their experiences or those of others. Attempts were also made to reach out to participants online through social media.

Public housing residents and adults with enough familiarity with such neighborhoods made up the bulk of respondents in this study because of their social ties to such communities and their ability to provide valuable information. Many of the public housing projects were selected for their historical impact in shaping the lives of Americans most especially the African American population. Individuals who have lived and experienced their adolescent years in the neighborhood or possess a wealth of information on what it is like growing up into adulthood in the area were suitable candidates for the study.

Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling was the ideal sampling strategy for the study. This is because of the tools and functionalities offered in selecting the appropriate individuals considered suitable for the study's objectives. In purposeful sampling, the researcher intentionally selects participants who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied (Gill, 2020). Also, while studying people, events and places careful selection is made by researchers (Patton, 2014; Maxwell, 2012). Information from participants with detailed knowledge about the purpose of inquiry as reflected in the study was gathered using the key participant sample strategy (Maxwell, 2012; Patton, 2014). Since a policy intervention that revamps or improves public housing conditions is advocated a new

situation emerges. This requires a positive deviance strategy to be employed in comparing both situations in which the problem is resolved in one but not in the other (Patton, 2014).

The participants in the study were residents, regular visitors, and neighbors of the historical public housing projects in northern California. These are complexes considered to be the largest, oldest, and most concentrated public housing sites in northern California. Also, they are believed to historically represent the diverse experiences of Black youth in America's poor and segregated neighborhoods. Policy advocates, church leaders, schoolteachers, community-centered organizations or members, and other interested parties that are willing to share their experiences regarding the adverse living conditions in the Black neighborhoods were allowed to participate.

The individuals selected for the study have been considered primarily because of their wealth of information and different perspectives on public housing policies, impact on the Black community and suggestions that will likely inform policy makers in ensuring that youth development is fostered. The key facts needed to answer the research questions raised were obtained from the sources.

In a qualitative study, the quality of information received from participants influences the sample size selection as a deep exploration of the topic that provides rich descriptive data is the primary focus (Patton, 2014). The number of participants was restricted to a reasonable size of 16 individuals capable of generating adequate information needed for the purpose of the study (Maxwell, 2012; Patton, 2014). However, following the responses obtained from interested participants, saturation was

reached with 12 participants (Guest et al., 2006). The goal of qualitative sampling was to choose enough participants that provide rich data needed to understand the phenomenon being studied (Hennink et al., 2019). The demographics consisted of adults above 18 years believed to have the right to legally express their views or opinions about their community and possess the experience that guide the study. Most especially the perceptions formed, or perspectives developed were needed in making informed decisions and introducing policy interventions that met the purpose of this study.

Procedure for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I followed several steps in recruiting participants to the study. I created social media accounts to reach interested parties and provide them with rich descriptions about their experiences in such neighborhoods. This included Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts that allow for opinions to be shared or exchanged on their living experiences or those of others they know. Public housing community centers on Facebook were useful in navigating the individual experiences of participants. Flyers were posted on Facebook and consent forms emailed to interested participants. Participants provided their consent by replying “I Consent” by email. Twelve candidates familiar with public housing, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods were identified through their network.

Participants were primarily located on social media and related platforms. Some of the candidates were family members or friends (not including coworkers or businesses that may necessitate the involvement of partnership organizations in the study). Particular attention was paid to those individuals interested in discussing the living conditions in

such places. More participants were also invited to participate as long as saturation was not reached.

Candidates were invited to participate in an audio-recorded interview on Zoom that lasted between 25 and 40 minutes (see the invitation letter in Appendix B). Rewards for participation included a \$10 e-gift card emailed to each participant for their time. Planned for interview protocols by sending interview questions as text messages asking about their experiences and what needs to be done in terms of policy interventions to improve the situation and foster youth development.

The basis for sample size determination rested on the unique perspective of each participant in reducing risky behaviors among adolescents living in public housing residences. When the sample size was sufficient or adequate to provide the needed information for the study, saturation was achieved (Patton, 2014). The data collected was subsequently reviewed for accuracy and completeness.

Instrumentation

The study has been designed to capture rich descriptions of the phenomenon surrounding the lived experience of Black youth in public housing communities and how their condition could be improved through a revamp of existing policies or effective policy interventions. The qualitative approach was adopted for the study and pragmatic interviews decided with key participants to collect data (Miles et al., 2013; Patton, 2014). Semi structured protocols is considered suitable when researchers attempt to study how participants describe a phenomenon from their own perspective (Brinkmann & Kvale,

2008). In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of inquiry (Patton, 2002).

While interviews are more appropriately conducted in-person, telephone interviews supported by text messages, zoom meetings or Webex can also be used to collect useful information (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2014). This allowed for greater flexibility in contacting participants that are not easily accessible. Before the interview sessions, participants were notified and presented with the questions, so they were better prepared (Creswell, 2012). Before the interview, participants were directed to visit a Facebook page that displayed an invite to participate in a brief interview. When participants were ready and convinced it was an exercise, they felt comfortable with, a convenient time was agreed, and questions forwarded as text messages. A consent form explaining the purpose of the study and rights to withdraw anytime was emailed to participants for signing.

Data collected was verified with participants to ensure validity (Patton, 2014). Interview questions were open-ended to deeply explore participants' perspectives and ensure the same questions were presented for consistency. This was also crucial for data to be gathered and analyzed to attain efficient results (Patton, 2014). Qualitative research requires that the researcher talks to people, observes them, and capture their behaviors or experiences accurately (Lub, 2015). Also interview questions were constructed around eliciting responses from participants that will help revamp public housing policies, introduce policy interventions that foster youth development and reduce infractions among adolescents in the Black community. To this end, the interview questions were

designed to address the research questions raised (Maxwell, 2012). Interview participants were encouraged to respond to the open-ended questions from their unique perspectives. Earlier research work conducted by scholars on the issue, especially crucial information in the public library archives or the Walden library were also consulted as supporting documents to support the analysis.

Data Analysis Plan

The interview questions were developed from the research questions. A clear and logical connection between the interview questions, the research question and the methodology adopted is crucial for a successful study (Maxwell, 2012). Developing a theme that connects the research questions, interview questions and the data analysis is critically important (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008).

Data collected was pre-coded and organized for effective management. Developing an analytical strategy that is clear and effective before the start of the data collection process is recommended (Miles et al., 2013). Pre-coded data is easily identified and managed by researchers during data collection (Patton, 2014). The study's theoretical framework and research questions guided and informed the data collected (Miles et al., 2013). Policies of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) along with the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency (SHRA), the local housing authority administering the public housing program for the HUD have been important elements and major drivers in the crafting of the interview questions.

During the pre-coding, interview responses obtained were assigned or matched with the relevant research question. This is useful in summarizing the important points in

each interview session for easy documentation (Miles et al., 2013). This process also facilitates an effective analysis of the data because researchers may include pre-codes in contact forms making it immediately available for analysis. Field notes were converted into electronic form for more effective data security and management (Miles et al., 2013). This helped lay an essential foundation for the data analysis. The data analysis software must be appropriate for the study (Miles et al., 2013; Patton, 2014). The NVivo Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis software has been considered suitable for the exercise because of its simplicity and familiarity.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I used appropriate strategies to establish credibility. Triangulation involves using multiple methods to seek information (Maxwell, 2012; Miles et al., 2013). Data collection and researcher triangulation is crucial which may involve prolonged engagement or persistent observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data collected in the study include interview scripts, official records and information found in public domains or archives of local libraries. Filed notes were also used to support data collected. During triangulation, the researcher might look and see whether conclusions from interviews are consistent with findings from the document analysis (Lub, 2015). In addition to triangulation, member checking, which allows participants to check their interview responses for accuracy is encouraged. Member checking was not used in this study. Qualitative evaluations that focus primarily on the instrumental effectiveness of policies or programs can help provide meaning of the policy or program for clients, target groups

or practitioners (Lub, 2015). Transcripts of the interview sessions were sent out to each person interviewed for review. This is to ensure they accurately reflect their opinions (Miles et al., 2013; Patton, 2014).

Transferability

Transferability is fostered by ensuring a thick description of the study, comparability, applicability, and adaptability to other situations (Patton, 2014). Most of the key participants in the interview were individuals or groups capable of providing rich descriptions or residents from public housing communities. Official records, whether stored publicly or privately that is considered useful for the study were accessed to verify the data collected during the interviews. Compliance of the study with established theoretical frameworks is critical for transferability to be maintained (Miles et al., 2013). The impact of public housing policies in Black communities particularly how it has shaped the development of youths into adulthood and suggestions for improvement in the context of this study will be made readily accessible to readers. Also, thick descriptions are ensured to enable others seeking to transfer the findings to their own site to make judgments about transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

The researcher must conduct a qualitative study thoroughly and rigorously for it to be dependable (Miles et al., 2013). The study is validated when the research questions, methodology, and theoretical framework are in alignment with the study's purpose (Maxwell, 2012; Patton, 2014). The purpose of the study is to uncover innovative ways of fostering the development of Black youths living in public housing through effective

policy interventions. As a result, a case study approach has been adopted to research the needed societal change. It is crucial that the appropriate data collection process has been followed to mitigate the possibilities of bias (Miles et al., 2013). Data collected will be stored electronically and in hard copies. For the entire process to be dependable, collection and analysis of data has been performed in the NVivo software where an audit trail is available for review.

Confirmability

Confirmability is established when the findings from a study and its interpretations can be related to the data collection (Patton, 2014) and when credibility, transferability or dependability are secured (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Interview questions were based on the research questions and responses from participants quoted verbatim for accuracy. Any prejudice or biased feelings conflicting with objectivity must be disclosed by the researcher (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008). Public housing and persistent waves of crime may have contributed to a predisposition to offer prejudgments about these neighborhoods including their impact on producing youth with behavioral problems.

Ethical Procedures

In order to gain access to a research site, the willingness of participants or necessary agreements must be secured (Laureate Education Inc, 2013). A letter of consent was presented to participants before the commencement of the interview. The letter expressed the participant's willingness to participate in the study without incurring damages or suffering adverse consequences for their personal involvement. The Walden

University Institutional Review Board approval number was included in the consent letter.

The consent of individuals willing to voluntarily participate in the interviews was obtained (O’Sullivan et al., 2007; Klykken, 2021). Participants were also informed about their right to withdraw their consent at any time including any effects on their personal or professional status (Rudestam & Newton, 2014; Klykken, 2021). Participants in the study were reminded about the purpose of the study which is to uncover innovative ways of fostering the development of Black youths living in public housing through policy interventions at public housing residences. The requested consent was communicated in writing via email and text messaging.

The confidentiality of participants was protected by ensuring answers to interview questions were treated with privacy. Identifying information has been protected to ensure the confidentiality of participants (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). Participants were informed that their identities have been kept private and confidential. The answers obtained during interview sessions including their identities will be maintained with absolute confidentiality.

To prevent loss of data from unexpected events or circumstances beyond control, consent forms, interview notes and scripts are stored in a safe location protected from natural disasters such as fire, storm, or wind damage. Electronic copies have also been uploaded to cloud storage and passworded to restrict unauthorized access. All records obtained will be kept for a period of five years and destroyed afterward.

Summary

The study employed the case study approach which is in alignment with the purpose of the study, to uncover innovative ways of fostering the development of Black youths living in public housing through effective policy interventions. Responses obtained from participants interviewed are supported and examined in the light of residential policies in the public housing locations, applicable documents, and official records available. Data collected was appropriately analyzed in the NVivo qualitative software and recommendations for feasible solutions made. In the next chapter, an in-depth analysis of data is discussed with appropriate details.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

I conducted this study to explore the perspectives or perceptions of individuals with experience of living in predominantly Black neighborhoods where public assistance is received for housing. The purpose of this qualitative study was to capture the unique perspectives of interview participants on the experiences of African American youths living in public housing communities characterized by deteriorating living conditions. I sought to answer the central RQ to gain deep insights into the experiences of young adults during their adolescent years.

Using a qualitative study approach, I gathered data from participants from diverse backgrounds who shared their perspectives regarding public housing projects in Black neighborhoods, particularly in regard to growing up in such communities. Participants provided insights on the different situations confronting many African American youths. The central RQ for this study was, In what ways can public housing programs be designed to reduce infractions among adolescents in Black neighborhoods? The study had two sub-RQs:

Sub-RQ1. How have public housing policies inhibited the development of youths living in Black neighborhoods?

Sub-RQ2. How has the isolation of Black youth to a specific housing program affected their opportunities to become better citizens?

I recruited 12 participants with individual experiences pertaining to the disadvantaged conditions of their neighborhoods. Although some referred to situations

they personally encountered while living in Black communities, others provided vivid descriptions about their visits to such areas. Participants interviewed were asked about their perceptions on living in the public housing projects and what policy measures the government can undertake to remedy the situation. The projected number of participants for the study, which was determined at 12, was successfully reached. I begin this chapter by discussing the setting in which the study was conducted and changes in the study conditions from that described in Chapter 3. I also provide participant demographics, discuss data collection and changes made to the research plan, the data analysis plan, and evidence of trustworthiness. Then, I present the results obtained from the study.

Setting

I posted a flyer on Facebook to recruit participants. Data were collected entirely via social media and through the Zoom videoconferencing platform. The criteria for participating were clearly specified, and all respondents interviewed were at least 18 years of age. At the time of the interview, there were no personal conditions experienced by participants that had the potential of influencing the interpretation of the results. The online platform and social media provided the appropriate setting for the exercise. An approval letter to collect data was issued by the Walden University Institutional Review Board on August 8, 2022, with an approval number of 08-08-22-0483552.

Demographics

Participants were experienced individuals who voluntarily shared their perspectives. The majority of the participants were willing to offer suggestions on specific questions they believed would be most appropriate for youths in any community

regardless of race, family background, or cultural orientation. Videos were turned off to conceal the identity of participants as some preferred not to speak on camera. Participants were assigned numbers and instructed to log into Zoom not with their personal names but as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so forth to conceal their identity. This further provided participants with the assurance that their identity would be protected, and information shared would be treated with confidentiality.

Three of the 12 interviewed declined to provide demographic information. Four participants self-identified as Black with one describing herself as a Black girl. Two participants said they are Whites, and another two disclosed their ages as 22 and 40, respectively. One participant responded that they were non-Black without specifically identifying with any racial group. All participants said they were adult individuals with experience on neighborhood conditions in African American communities. Table 1 shows the demographics of the remaining nine participants.

Table 1*Demographics of Participants*

Variable	<i>F</i>
Age	
20–30	2
31–40	5
41–50	2
Did not answer	3
Gender	
Female	4
Male	5
Did not answer	3
Race/ethnicity	
Black	4
White	2
Asian	–
Hispanic/Latino	2
Did not answer	4
Education	
High school	3
Some college	3
Bachelor's degree	2
Master's degree	1
Doctorate	–
Did not answer	3
Nationality	
American	6
Haitian	1
Mexican	1
El Salvador	1
Did not answer	3

Data Collection

Following institutional review board approval, a flyer was uploaded to Facebook to recruit participants. The plan was to recruit up to 16 participants that are above 18 with knowledge or experience of living conditions in predominantly Black neighborhoods, especially as it affects young adults. A total of 12 participants were eventually recruited for the exercise as saturation was reached. Qualitative studies using purposeful sampling as it was the situation in this study should achieve data saturation with 12 participants (Guest et al., 2006). The criteria for recruiting participants was (a) Must be at least 18 years of age (b) must possess knowledge of living conditions of youths in predominantly Black public housing communities (c) may not necessarily be a public housing resident

Participants responded to the recruitment flyer by sending text messages indicating their interest in participating. Interviews were consequently arranged by emailing the consent form which the participant responds to with the words "I Consent". The interview dates were scheduled on dates and time considered convenient for the participants on Zoom with clear messages of their rights to withdraw from the interview or refuse to answer any question without any consequences. The privacy of participants was reassured, and all the 12 individuals interviewed were identified as participants 1 to 12.

Interviews were conducted between September 2022 and October 2022. Digital recordings of each meeting ranged from 25 mins to 40 mins with adequate time for participants to adjust and reflect on their thoughts or responses. The recorded materials were later transcribed in Zoom and imported into NVivo qualitative software for

subsequent analysis. The audio transcriptions were carried out in zoom, reviewed for accuracy and formatted after listening to each participant's recording. Transcriptions were also verified by participants for inaccuracies or misinterpretations. Interviews were accompanied by note takings that document important thoughts that may be needed in the final analysis

A personal introduction, the purpose of the study and a brief reminder that participants are being recorded marked the beginning of each interview. Efforts were made to gather demographic information related to age, gender, ethnicity, and education. Interview questions focused on whether participant experienced living in poor African American neighborhoods. Furthermore, participants were allowed to share valuable experiences about friends, neighbors and family members that have faced similar situations either presently or in the past. These preparations allowed the needed rapport to be established, and a solid foundation laid for the entire interview process.

To ensure that ideas obtained were clearly understood, reflective listening was employed. Reflective listening is a tool that allows listeners to confirm that ideas from speakers have been clearly understood and quoted in the right context by presenting such ideas back to the speaker as understood (Arnold, 2014). This step allowed participants to know that they are being clearly understood and not quoted out of context, a necessary requirement in communicating effectively (Arnold, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were conducted for all participants with close attention to ensuring they did not get uncomfortable.

While interviewing the participants, the focus was on ensuring an enabling atmosphere where questions are answered without any reservations. Responses to questions were almost instantaneous and participants did not have to question their own opinions as the interview progressed. I maintained a professional attitude throughout the entire process and overall, participants were eager to discuss their feelings or experiences. Where responses lacked clarity, participants were given adequate time to elaborate. No letters, pictures or supporting documents were presented by respondents to substantiate their claims even though they were encouraged to do so.

Data Analysis

Data has been explored through a cognitive process that allows appropriate integration with the QSR International's computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The NVivo qualitative software provided an effective way of analyzing the data by identifying codes, themes, patterns and meanings.

A first-cycle coding was performed using In Vivo and values coding methods. In Vivo coding uses the words or phrases from the participants themselves (Saldana, 2021). Responses to interview questions contained valuable words and phrases that have allowed an effective first cycle coding process to be established. Participants beliefs, opinions or perspectives of the social world are also captured using values coding. Values coding reflects the experiences, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of participants that have been learned over the years (Saldana, 2021). It is also considered useful in coding the interview data because it helped in identifying what participants think or feel is important as far as youth development is concerned in Black neighborhoods.

The second-cycle coding was performed using process coding which is a way of grouping summaries into smaller and more condensed categories, themes or concepts (Saldana, 2021). With pattern coding, important explanations and valuable themes were able to be developed for meaningful and effective analysis. The first cycle codes were reviewed for commonality and later assigned pattern codes which helped develop statements describing major themes or patterns from the interview data (Saldana, 2021). These coding methods were useful in sorting and categorizing the data. They were accompanied by notes on particular insights gained while interviewing each participant. The notes undoubtedly proved very helpful in the development of codes.

The central research question that guides the study was instrumental in the development of codes into categories and themes. In Vivo coding utilized the words and phrases of participants which helped me in identifying what codes to be developed. Values coding was also helpful in capturing the beliefs, opinions, feelings, and experiences of participants. The codes and their co-occurrences in NVivo paved the way to emerging relationships among the codes and subsequently the logical determination of themes. Once the co-occurrences in the codes were identified, the data was grouped into categories with the use of top-level and second-level coding in NVivo.

A word cloud that identifies the top 100 most frequently used words with a minimum of four letters was created as shown in Figure 3. The word cloud is representative of the words frequently used by participants during the interview. The outcome was the emerging theme that addresses the central research question on the ways

under words or codes that are representative of that group. The data was coded into the aforementioned categories based on content (Saldana, 2016).

Common themes or ideas were uncovered by identifying key words or terms used as the basis for assigning data to codes. The words or responses from interview participants were suitably classified based on the codes created in NVivo. The result of this was a clear identification of themes and subthemes representing the experiences of participants. Three themes became prominent during the data analysis, and these include (a) disadvantaged neighborhoods and poor living conditions (b) neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency (c) academic deficiency and lack of career planning. Disadvantaged neighborhoods and poor living conditions referred to neighborhood poverty in African American communities most especially among adolescents. Neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency offered deep insights into illegal activities in the areas and confrontation with law enforcement officers. The third theme, academic deficiency and lack of career planning referred to worthwhile investments in neighborhood schools and the creation of jobs. The three major themes were further broken down into 19 subthemes as reflected in the categorization shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes and Corresponding Codes

Theme	Code	No. of references
Theme 1: Disadvantaged Neighborhoods and Poor Living Conditions	Living in poverty and impoverished conditions	114
	Illegal drug dealings and Addiction	33
	Alcohol and substance abuse among adolescents	34
	Exposure to homelessness and overcrowded housing	6
Theme 2: Neighborhood Crime and Juvenile Delinquency	Involvement in violent gangs and street life	100

	Heavy policing and police brutality in the neighborhood	37
	Illegal activities and the lack of public safety	59
	Civil rights and discrimination	23
	Higher rates of incarceration among young Black adults	46
	Violent neighborhood with robberies and teenage pregnancy	67
Theme 3: Academic Deficiency and Lack of Career Motivation	Decline in college enrollment and school activities	71
	Poor job networking and weak social ties	91
	Attendance in school and active participation in classwork	42
	Poor grading, and the need for scholarships	17
	Looking up to role models to build self-esteem and positive values	35
	Mentoring and motivating young people for success	37
	Funding schools including developing career plans for students	63
	Lack of good teachers and counsellors	20
	Shortages in job and creativity training	18

The process was iterative, prompting the need to review data that is coded as the themes emerged. From the table the three major themes were identified as

- Theme 1: Disadvantaged Neighborhood and Poor Living Conditions
- Theme 2: Neighborhood Crime and Juvenile Delinquency
- Theme 3 Academic Deficiency and Lack of Career Motivation

Nineteen subthemes also emerged in total from the major themes. Four out of these subthemes emerged from the first major theme disadvantaged neighborhood and poor living conditions. These include

- Theme 1(a) Living in poverty and impoverished conditions. This further created three subthemes: (a) financial lack, (b) poor healthcare, and (c) living conditions.
- Theme 1(b) Illegal drug dealings and Addiction

- Theme 1(c) Alcohol and substance abuse among adolescents
- Theme 1(d) Exposure to homelessness and overcrowded housing

Another six subthemes were produced by the second major theme neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency. These are

- Theme 2(a) Involvement in violent gangs and street life
- Theme 2(b) Heavy policing and police brutality in the neighborhood
- Theme 2(c) Illegal activities and the lack of public safety
- Theme 2(d) Civil rights and discrimination in public places
- Theme 2(e) Higher rates of incarceration among young Black adults
- Theme 2(f) Violent neighborhood with robberies and teenage pregnancy

The third major theme is academic deficiency and lack of career motivation, and this generates the nine subthemes listed below

- Theme 3(a) Decline in college enrollment and school activities
- Theme 3(b) Poor job networking and weak social ties
- Theme 3(c) Attendance in school and active participation in classwork
- Theme 3(d) Poor grading, and the need for scholarships
- Theme 3(e) Looking up to role models to build self-esteem and positive values
- Theme 3(f) Mentoring, and motivating young people for success
- Theme 3(g) Funding schools including developing career plans for students
- Theme 3(h) Lack of good teachers and counsellors
- Theme 3(i) Shortages in job and creativity training

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The study has adopted the necessary steps in ensuring the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of all information collected. Details on these have been provided in Chapter 3.

Credibility

The interview process was monitored and controlled by conducting a reflective paraphrasing of the responses, allowing each participant to agree to their responses or make corrections if needed. Participants responded to questions with little or no probing. I carried out transcriptions in Zoom and later imported transcribed data into NVivo 12, qualitative research software with features for coding data from participants. Objectivity and reflexivity were crucially adopted during the entire process.

Note taking formed an essentially important part of the whole exercise. From the moment participants responses were captured to making notes in NVivo on coded data, vital points were noted down for review at a later date. The whole process also involved assurances made to participants that their confidentiality will not be compromised.

In addition, my personal thoughts, feelings, emotions, and opinions about how each interview was conducted were also noted. This allowed me to reflect on the success of the entire process and what could have been better handled. Such information is undoubtedly useful in writing up the final report.

Transferability

Purposeful sampling was adopted as the sampling strategy for the study and its usefulness in research cannot be overemphasized where resources are limited.

Transferability was fostered by gathering rich, thick descriptions from the participants making it possible to provide detailed and vivid descriptions of the population and sample. This makes it easy for further research to be performed in future using the study.

Dependability

The data obtained was stable and aligned with the research plan which helped to reduce or minimize errors, bias, ambiguities, and deficiencies in the information collected. A clear and accurate representation of facts gathered was successfully established. This provides a clear indication that participants were able to confirm, omit, or add to their own contributions before the interview ended.

Confirmability

Credibility, transferability, dependability are components of trustworthiness that have been instrumental in ensuring the confirmability of the study. Furthermore, participants' experiences were captured with a high degree of confirmability and no influences or interferences whatsoever from me. This has led to establishing the needed support or grounds for the study's confirmability.

Results

Participants willfully shared their knowledge and experiences about living in public housing, especially Black neighborhoods from diverse perspectives. Fourteen interview questions were designed and presented to twelve participants in all. The design of the interview questions was based on the central research question, which was, In what ways can public housing programs be designed to reduce infractions among adolescents in Black neighborhoods? Two sub research questions were also developed. The first sub-

RQ was, How have the housing policies inhibited the development of youths living in Black neighborhoods? The second sub-RQ was, How has the isolation of Black youth to a specific housing program impacted opportunities to become better citizens?

The information obtained was insightful and provided the needed guidance in generating the themes underlying the entire investigation. The interview scripts were coded in NVivo, and themes extracted from the codes. Themes that emerged from the analysis are representative of the key facts participants identified as the driving factors for positive youth development in African American communities. The themes identified have been categorized and subcategorized as reflected in table 2. Three major themes emerged which include disadvantaged neighborhood and poor living conditions, neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency and lastly academic deficiency and lack of career motivation. The major themes and the research questions that generated them are discussed in this section.

Sub-Research Question 1

The first sub-RQ was, How have public housing policies inhibited the development of youths living in Black neighborhoods? This research question created the theme “disadvantaged neighborhoods and poor living conditions”. The neighborhoods created by decades of segregated housing policies have created adverse living conditions and significantly impacted the development of Black youths living in the area as pointed out by participants interviewed. Participants’ responses to interview questions were coded and the four subthemes that emerged into this theme were developed. The subthemes are living in poverty and impoverished conditions, illegal drug dealings and

addiction, alcohol and substance abuse among adolescents and exposure to homelessness and overcrowded housing.

The disadvantaged neighborhoods also became breeding grounds for crime leading to the second theme “neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency” as noted by many of the participants. Widespread criminal acts were attributed to poverty and the disadvantaged conditions that prevailed in the neighborhoods. This impacted the development of youths who were inadvertently drawn into criminal activities. These were captured under codes that created the subthemes as involvement in violent gangs and street life, heavy policing and police brutality, illegal activities and the lack of public safety, civil rights and discrimination in public places (including the criminal justice system), higher rates of incarceration among young Black adults, and violent neighborhood with robberies and teenage pregnancy.

Sub-Research Question 2

The second sub-RQ was, How has the isolation of Black youths to a specific housing program impacted opportunities to become better citizens? This research question generated the theme “academic deficiency and lack of career motivation”. The isolation of Black youths led to moral and academic decadence as pointed out by the participants. Subthemes that emerged from their responses include decline in college enrollment and school activities, poor job networking and weak social ties, attendance in school and active participation in classwork, poor grading and the need for scholarships, looking up to role models to build self-esteem and positive values, mentoring and motivating young people for success, funding schools including developing career plans

for students, lack of good teachers and counsellors, and shortages in job and creativity training.

Central Research Question

Themes and subthemes generated from interviews with participants were created from the two sub research questions. The study's central research question was, In what ways can public housing programs be designed to reduce infractions among adolescents in Black neighborhoods? This is addressed from the themes generated by the sub research questions which include investing in the neighborhoods by establishing good schools, creating job or training opportunities and providing needed assistance through policy interventions that will help to improve living conditions that support young people growing up in neighborhoods that allow them to avoid trouble and find success in school (see Table 3).

Table 3*Themes and Subthemes*

Theme	Primary subtheme	Secondary subtheme
Theme 1: Disadvantaged Neighborhoods and Poor Living Conditions	Theme 1a: Living in Poverty and Impoverished Conditions	Theme 1a (i): Financial Lack
		Theme 1a (ii): Poor Health Care
		Theme 1a (iii): Living Conditions
	Theme 1b: Illegal Drug Dealings and Addiction	
Theme 2: Neighborhood Crime and Juvenile Delinquency	Theme 1c: Alcohol and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents	
	Theme 1d: Exposure to Homelessness and Overcrowded Housing	
	Theme 2a: Involvement in Violent Gangs and Street Life	
	Theme 2b: Heavy Policing and Police Brutality in the Neighborhood	
	Theme 2 c: Illegal Activities and the Lack of Public Safety	
	Theme 2d: Civil Rights and Discrimination in Public Places	
	Theme 2e: Higher Rates of Incarceration Among Young Black Adults	
Theme 3: Academic Deficiency and Lack of Career Motivation	Theme 2f: Violent Neighborhood With Robberies and Teenage Pregnancy	
	Theme 3a: Decline in College Enrollment and School Activities	
	Theme 3b: Poor Job Networking and Weak Social Ties	
	Theme 3c: Attendance in School and Active Participation in Classwork	
	Theme 3d: Poor Grading and the Need for Scholarships	
	Theme 3e: Looking Up to Role Models to Build Self-Esteem and Positive Values	
	Theme 3f: Mentoring and Motivating Young People for Success	
	Theme 3g: Funding Schools Including Developing Career Plans for Students	
	Theme 3h: Lack of Good Teachers and Counsellors	

Theme 1: Disadvantaged Neighborhood and Poor Living Conditions

Participants in the study were presented with questions that focused on the conditions of living in Black neighborhoods and how this has impacted adolescents in the area. Data was collected on their lived experiences as young adults and notable infractions that are prevalent among youths. Disadvantaged neighborhood and poor living conditions is the umbrella term used to describe codes. This theme represents the poor living standards and disadvantaged conditions in African American communities. Sub themes include poverty and impoverished lifestyles, alcohol and substance abuse, drug dealings and addiction, and homelessness and overcrowding.

Theme 1a: Living in Poverty and Impoverished Conditions. Living in poverty and impoverished conditions refer to not being able to afford the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter on a daily basis. Situations in the neighborhood reflect poor living conditions and poverty on a daily basis in the lives of the people according to interviewees. For a detailed analysis, vivid descriptions of the different ways participants experienced poverty in their neighborhood prompted the need to create three different sub codes financial lack, poor healthcare, and living conditions. Financial lack refers to the state of not having the needed finances for daily living. The twelve participants responded with 64 references in this sub code. Poor healthcare is another sub code, and it means the lack of basic healthcare resources needed for healthy living. Ten participants out of the twelve participants interviewed made comments with 25 references. The third sub code living conditions describes the well-being of the people and the circumstances

under which they lived. Also 25 references were obtained from ten out of the twelve participants that responded.

Financial Lack. Financial lack describes the inability to have access to financial resources needed for everyday living or survival.

- I think the poverty experience makes it very clear. If unemployment is high people end up not having well-paying jobs. This means that there will be a hard time making a living and people go out to the streets for support and end up going after drugs, and the next thing they get locked up. This is common among the young guys who have no guidance (participant 12).
- Well, you see, we come from a low-income family. That did everything possible to provide for the kids. The food security was there. My mom enrolled in some nutritional programs with the county but later, because of changes in our income it was discontinued. This did not stop her. She went out working 2 jobs just to make sure we have something to eat, at least something to pay the bills (participant 11).
- The neighborhood was a very poor one. You see a lot of people tried to make ends meet (participant 1).
- Everyone is just managing trying to make ends meet (participant 2).
- There are not enough jobs paying good wages in this neighborhood, especially in this neighborhood (participant 1).

- Not making enough but this should not stop you from motivating your kids to work hard and stay away from the streets. It's the only way to stay out of trouble (participant 3).
- A lot of Black folks didn't have the jobs that should make them live good lives and support their families (participant 5).
- Always wished I was born into a family that could afford to train and send children to school. But you see, there is so much poverty out there, especially among the Black folks I know (participant 6).
- Childcare was not so common in our neighborhood and at some point, my mom and aunt had to switch between their jobs, watching us the little kids back in the days it was really tough for them because they were not making enough for a living (participant 6).
- Black neighborhoods with public housing have been known as disadvantaged neighborhoods. This is because they have low quality schools, poorer residents who may be unemployed, a high crime rate, very few homeowners, and so on (participant 9).

Poor Healthcare. Poor healthcare is defined by the lack of basic healthcare facilities, practices or attention needed to maintain a healthy living or lifestyle.

- Most people are just low-income workers without insurance (participant 1).
- I think mentoring is a good way for you to deal with challenging life transitions and stressful changes going on in their lives as they transition

to adulthood. Healthy supportive relationships can provide good advice to help prepare them mentally (participant 10).

- Eat healthy and stay away from drugs. All these things are important for mental health development (participant 11).
- The state of mental health of a child is important. More needs to be done to improve the mental well-being of Black lives in disadvantaged neighborhoods especially. First, their feeling from the past about being marginalized has to be removed to help them build their creative potential. If a child is talented but is still traumatized by a negative consequence in the past something must be done for the healing process to begin. So, the child does not feel isolated or not belonging and expects to do well and apply self totally in what they do. While some kids are able to get through their difficulties in life not many of them are able to do it without help. This is where the government comes in (participant 11).
- Talk about the health care system to Black people with the history of mistrust or lack of confidence in the nation's health care system. Yes. The importance of taking their kids health seriously and also helps in regaining the people's trust in the health care system. A church-based health program that targets children will be quite helpful. Black people who don't want to go to the hospital may find some encouragement or advice on how to live healthy with their families. This can be done when you are talking

to leaders in the Black Church. The Church can convince them to take their health more seriously (participant 12).

- I think there is a need to regain the trust of African Americans in the health care system. A talented kid with behavioral or mental health issues must be helped to know how to use their potentials. More help needs to be created to help these kids. There will not be a lot of behavioral or health issues if kids have the necessary health care facilities to help them (participant 12).
- If the Government can introduce a program that will help people with having the right nutrition, I think this will go a long way. This will help low-income families and help bring kids to school. This school should also create a community that is welcoming to all (participant 12).
- Black women have one of the highest rates in pregnancy related deaths. Maternal health care and the mental wellbeing of young Black women is still one area to work on (participant 4).
- The environment does not look very healthy in some Black neighborhoods too. You find your rats and rodents everywhere. There is dirty drinking water and mold. Secondhand smoke in virtually every street corner (participant 4).
- Let me say, a lot of pregnancies are not planned in many of the low-income Black neighborhoods, and this leaves the infant child, with

behavioral and developmental issues which often affect the child's mental wellbeing (participant 5).

- Love being who they are, and never let anyone put them down because of the color of your skin. So, they need to have that healthy mental development (participant 9).
- A lot of people are getting sick and dying for lack of access to good health care. Many people are uninsured losing their jobs and suffering from food and housing insecurity (participant 5).

Living Conditions. These are the daily circumstances that describe the well-being of people in a particular area.

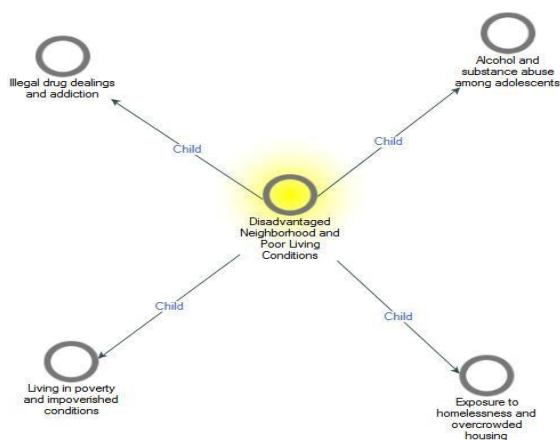
- In many of the residencies there has been more focus on the physical development of the buildings than the human conditions though the buildings are beginning to look more attractive than it was in the 1960s and 1970s. The condition of living is still poor and children have to be raised in neighborhoods without good schools and good jobs. This affects the child's development (participant 11).
- I have to live with the harsh reality of not having the good life I have always dreamed of (participant 2).
- growing up in a predominantly Black neighborhood only allowed me to be exposed to limited opportunities (participant 3).
- Living conditions are still not good enough (participant 4).

- I actually grew up in public housing and noticed that there was more poverty in neighborhoods with mostly Black people in the area (participant 5).
- Reduce the number of Black men behind bars. Some of these people may be highly talented people, with their creativity locked up with them. This needs to change. Conditions have to be improved to allow more creative youths re-enter (participant 5).
- Living in such areas did not provide the needed opportunities to say you are successful (participant 6).
- Children had to live in a poor neighborhood with a lot of poverty and crime in the area. Sometimes it was just too hard to sleep at night (participant 7).

Figure 4 illustrates the subthemes associated with the theme of disadvantaged neighborhood and poor living conditions.

Figure 4

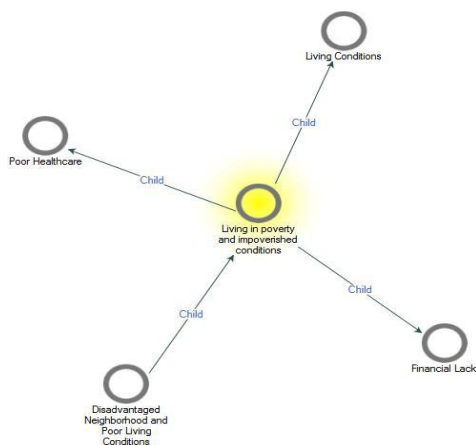
Different Aspects of Disadvantaged Neighborhood and Poor Living Conditions



The subtheme of living in poverty and impoverished conditions includes further subthemes (financial lack, poor health care, and living conditions), as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Different Aspects of Living in Poverty and Impoverished Conditions



Theme 1b: Illegal Drug Dealings and Addiction. Drug addiction refers to the uncontrollable use of prescribed or non-medical drugs with harmful consequences. Participants responses to past experiences or individuals involved in drug activities shed some insights on the problems of addiction common in the neighborhood. Eleven participants discussed their perspectives in 33 references. Some of the experiences shared are included below.

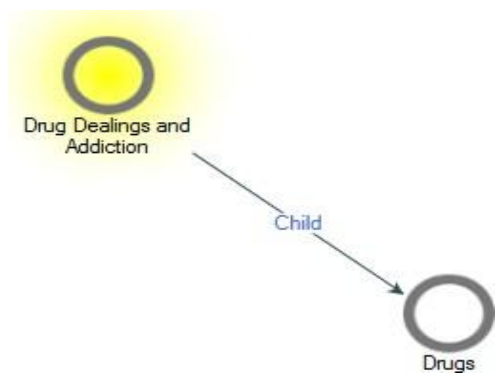
- Where I come from there is a lot of poverty in the neighborhood. Violence, crime, and drug deals in some areas force people to stay indoors at night and sometimes during the day. Many of these guys are gangsters without jobs and run a criminal network (participant 10).
- Lesser violence and a drug-free community can be built by assigning mentors to youths. They learn how to stay off illegal drugs and alcohol use which benefits the community (participant 11).
- They just can't stop committing the crime because they return to selling drugs once they are released from prison there is peer pressure from the street and sometimes no support from family. All this is because they grew up in the neighborhood with so much crime. I never thought of becoming somebody later in life. People like that just can't make any carrier choices (participant 11)
- The kids begin to follow the wrong people (participant 2).
- A lot of these boys and girls get into smoking all sorts of things that get them into trouble. Drugs and violence everywhere. There is still a lot to be done by families and the Government to keep these folks out of the streets (participant 2).

- A lot of these boys and girls get into smoking all sorts of things that get them into trouble. Drugs and violence everywhere. There is still a lot to be done by families and the Government to keep these folks out of the streets (participant 5).
- Got some counseling from the older adults, especially with the grandparents on staying away from drugs, going to school finding a job and staying away from trouble (participant 7).
- I think getting rid of street violence and drugs. That will prevent kids from feeling unsafe when they go to school. Gang activities can make the neighborhood unsafe and scare kids and parents from the schools (participant 9).

Figure 6 illustrates the pathway to drug addiction for children in Black neighborhoods.

Figure 6

Addiction to Drugs Among Youths in Black Neighborhoods



Theme 1c: Alcohol and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents. Alcohol and substance abuse refers to the excessive use of illegal, over the counter or prescription drugs leading to behavioral, emotional, physical or social problems. Ten participants

shared their experiences on substance abuse providing data in 24 references while eight participants have something to say about their experiences with alcohol in 10 references.

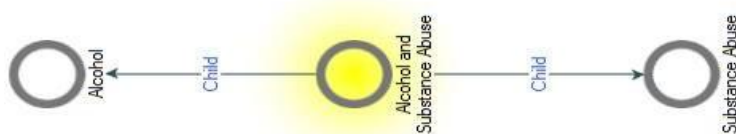
- A lot of these boys and girls get into smoking all sorts of things that get them into trouble. Drugs and violence everywhere. There is still a lot to be done by families and the Government to keep these folks out of the streets (participant 2).
- For instance, if you happen to live in one of the dangerous neighborhoods. Teach them to mind their business and tell them not to make friends with too many people they don't really know. Tell them not to stay out too late (participant 6).
- keep kids away from the streets so they stay out of trouble (participant 6).
- Well, I remember a lot of people in the streets are just in and out of jail. Many of them have witnessed stressful situations involving violent crimes such as homicides. This has affected their mental health, and now has behavioral problems preventing them from living successful lives (participant 11).
- I believe the neighborhood you grew up in somewhat connects you with a social network. The people you have around you or come in contact with every day have a role to play. The only reason why people growing up in low poverty neighborhoods become successful more easily is because they already have social connections. They need the social capital that makes

them successful. Residents of Black neighborhoods with high-poverty rates don't have that and this slows down their success (participant 11).

Figure 7 illustrates alcohol and substance use among young people.

Figure 7

Addiction to Drugs Among Youths in Black Neighborhoods



Theme 1d: Exposure to Homelessness and Overcrowded Housing.

Homelessness refers to residing in places not designated for habitation or living in housing that is considered to be below the minimum standard. Overcrowding is the presence of more people residing in a place such that there is congestion and other unpleasant situations that making living difficult (see Figure 8). Words of five participants were captured in 6 references. Some of these are shared below.

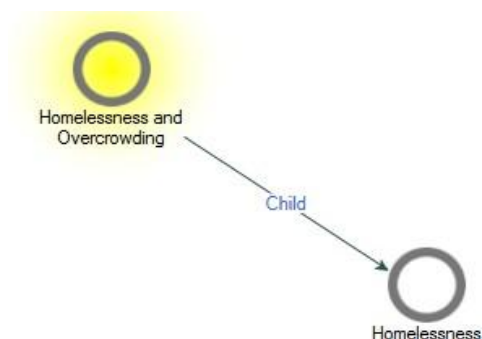
- With increasing violence, homelessness, and unemployment in the communities the Black church needs to take the lead in solving the problems. Pastors are community leaders and should take up the responsibility to help out their church members (participant 10).
- I once lived with my family and friends in an overcrowded place. At night, when it was time to sleep, the whole house was crowded and sometimes I was

unable to have the comfort to do my homework after school hours (participant 6).

- poorer people become homeless (participant 8).

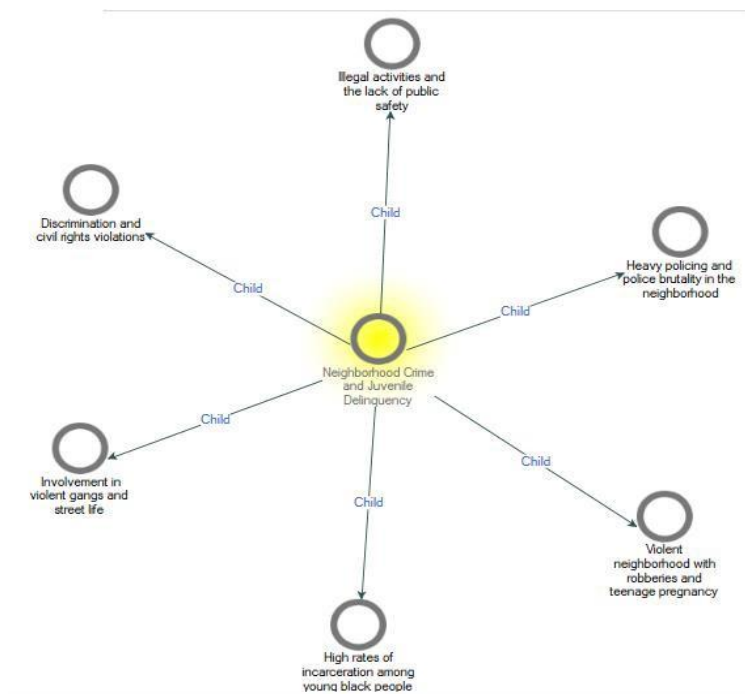
Figure 8

Homelessness and Overcrowding Among Adolescents in Black Neighborhoods.



Theme 2: Neighborhood Crime and Juvenile Delinquency

This theme represents the antisocial and criminal behavior committed by adolescents in a particular area. The experiences of participants were captured describing the prevalence of crime among young adults in the neighborhood (see Figure 9). The participants shared their perceptions, and the umbrella term neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency is assigned. Sub themes also emerged under the descriptions Involvement in violent gangs and street life, heavy policing and police brutality in the neighborhood, illegal activities and the lack of public safety, discrimination and civil rights violations. Subthemes also include higher rates of incarceration among young Black adults as well as violent neighborhood with robberies and teenage pregnancies.

Figure 9*Crime and Juvenile Delinquency in Black Neighborhoods*

Theme 2a: Involvement in Violent Gangs and Street Life. Gangs and street life or “street gangs” refer to an organized group of people, usually youths that share a common identity and often indulge in criminal behavior. Out of twelve participants interviewed, eleven responded with a total of 100 references i.e. 44 references to gangs and 56 references to street life. Some of the participant responses are included below.

- The streets are run by gangs and sometimes you feel very unsafe. These gangs often clash making it even worse (participant 1).
- Streets life and gang activities in Black neighborhoods will continue to thrive unfortunately unless something is done to help (participant 1).

- Where I come from there is a lot of poverty in the neighborhood. Violence, crime, and drug dealing in some areas force people to stay indoors at night and sometimes during the day. Many of these guys are gangsters without jobs and run a criminal network (participant 10).
- Not making enough but this should not stop you from motivating your kids to work hard and stay away from the streets. It's the only way to stay out of trouble (participant 3).
- The child should not feel marginalized for any reason and very few social events are being organized to keep youths away from gangs and violence in the streets (participant 3).
- There are gangs out there in the streets. They kind of make it hard for young people who want to be somebody in life (participant 5).
- Without the cops flushing out the gangs, it will be almost impossible for opportunities to thrive in Black neighborhoods. It is so bad that a lot of kids admit they are likely to end up being incarcerated or losing their lives to gang violence at some point (participant 5).
- The career choices were not there because we did not have the jobs in the area. Many of the adults were unemployed and had trouble supporting their younger ones who later depended on peers in the streets. They eventually get drawn into gangs and went into crime (participant 7).
- Crime and the safety of the people. I always wanted a quiet neighborhood away from gangs and violence. Where I lived gangs often terrorized the streets at night

and sold drugs very often. I think this affected me as a child because at night I heard gunshots and sometimes would stay up late and be tired the following day at School for not getting a good night's sleep (participant 8).

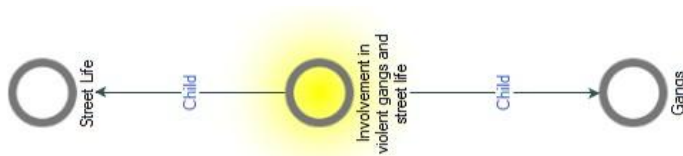
- I think getting rid of street violence and drugs. That will prevent kids from feeling unsafe when they go to school. Gang activities can make the neighborhood unsafe and scare kids and parents from the schools (participant 9).
- I didn't go to a good school. and a lot of times I will stay at home scared of being bullied out there in the streets (participant 1).
- I think the poverty experience makes it very clear. If unemployment is high people end up not having well-paying jobs. This means that there will be a hard time making a living and people go out to the streets for support and end up going after drugs, and the next thing they get locked up. This is common among the young guys who have no guidance (participant 12).
- I think the poverty experience makes it very clear. If unemployment is high people end up not having well-paying jobs. This means that there will be a hard time making a living and people go out to the streets for support and end up going after drugs, and the next thing they get locked up. This is common among the young guys who have no guidance (participant 2).
- I think getting rid of street violence and drugs. That will prevent kids from feeling unsafe when they go to school. Gang activities can make the neighborhood unsafe and scare kids and parents from the schools (participant 9).

- The people in my community live as one family, and that's like really a good thing to do. However, there's a lot of gang involvement in that connectivity which makes the neighborhood unsafe (participant 9).
- keep kids away from the streets so they stay out of trouble (participant 8).

Figure 10 illustrates the involvement of young people in gangs and street life activities.

Figure 10

Involvement of Young People in Gangs and Street Life Activities



Theme 2b: Heavy Policing and Police Brutality in the Neighborhood. Heavy policing and police brutality refers to the excessive use of force by police officers or law enforcement in violation of fundamental human rights. Nine participants shared their experiences in 37 references some of which are included here.

- One of the worst things about growing up in a Black neighborhood is not having access to good jobs and the heavy policing that goes on 24, 7 (participant 1).
- The only thing I don't like to see is crime and violence. I don't like to see crime and violence. I like a safe community. But you see, when there is a lot of crime the police presence increases and this later leads to higher arrests or incarceration rates. More people are going to jail for crimes they did not commit. Sometimes there is a mistaken identity. I wish these neighborhoods can be made safer without police brutality (participant 12).

- Love the entertainment in the Black culture, the hip, hop, and our creativity shows the world. We are really talented, but the community has so much to worry about when it comes to police brutality and racial discrimination in public places (participant 11).
- In my neighborhood we have a very strong relationship. Everyone knows each other very well. This prevented me from leaving, because I know everybody interacts here. I like everyone. I will describe it as a loving and caring neighborhood. The bad things actually destroying the neighborhood are the drugs and violence in the streets which invites heavy police presence (participant 12).
- You see, so much money is being spent on physical stuff and fighting crime. The government is spending money more. They are introducing more police presence, which only leads to more police brutality and unnecessary arrests of innocent Black men (participant 12).
- The unfair police treatment I believe is the worst thing about growing up in a Black neighborhood (participant 2).
- Black neighborhoods with a lot of policing need to understand there are certain things they have to say to their kids like learning to stay calm always (participant 6).
- Black people getting locked up at very high rates are not good for sure. For me I always wanted everyone to be free in their own neighborhoods and among their own people. So, the heavy policing of Black neighborhoods and police brutality

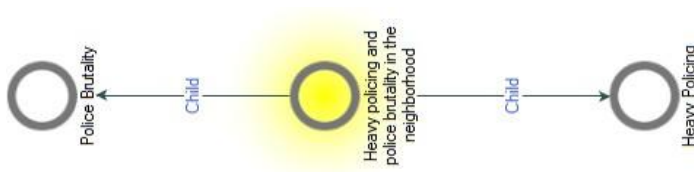
made things kind of worse in the area because you never know if you're next (participant 9).

- We have nobody to tell them to do the right things especially when there is peer pressure once they get locked up. The police presence only increases as more people are going to get arrested. When they are released from prison, they are unable to get a good job and end up going back to the streets. This is just one way the prospects of many Black kids get destroyed (participant 12).
- The only thing I don't like to see is crime and violence. I don't like to see crime and violence. I like a safe community. But you see, when there is a lot of crime the police presence increases and this later leads to higher arrests or incarceration rates. More people are going to jail for crimes they did not commit. Sometimes there is a mistaken identity. I wish these neighborhoods can be made safer without police brutality (participant 12).

Figure 11 illustrates policing in African American neighborhoods.

Figure 11

Heavy Policing and Police Brutality in African American Neighborhoods



Theme 2c: Illegal Activities and the Lack of Public Safety. This refers to unlimited exposure to events that could endanger the safety and security of the public. It

represents the well-being and presence of the necessary infrastructure to support daily living. Two codes were assigned: safety and illegal activities. Eleven participants responded with 39 references under illegal activities while ten participants talked about their perspectives with 20 references under the safety code. These are the participants' responses.

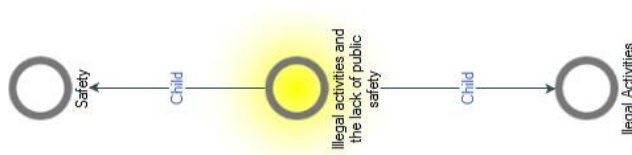
- Lesser violence and a drug-free community can be built by assigning mentors to youths. They learn how to stay off illegal drugs and alcohol use which benefits the community (participant 11).
- reduce the number of people getting arrested and getting sent to prison for getting involved in illegal activities (participant 2).
- Let me say as a person, I don't really feel safe walking alone in my neighborhood when it is dark. When it is nighttime it's always safe to be indoors. It's never safe to go around when it is too dark in this neighborhood (participant 12).
- Gang activities will always keep the opportunities away from the neighborhood. Imagine what a company thinks about the safety of its workers any time after a certain time of the night (participant 5).
- Crime and the safety of the people. I always wanted a quiet neighborhood away from gangs and violence. Where I lived gangs often terrorized the streets at night and sold drugs very often. I think this affected me as a child because at night I heard gunshots and sometimes would stay up late and be tired the following day at School for not getting a good night's sleep (participant 8).

- I think getting rid of street violence and drugs. That will prevent kids from feeling unsafe when they go to school. Gang activities can make the neighborhood unsafe and scare kids and parents from the schools (participant 9).
- Some places are not very safe sometimes (participant 2).
- People are now beginning to talk about stuff that will benefit everyone. How to stay safe (participant 3).
- I will say some places are safe. Some places are not. You can get attacked if you are at the wrong place at the wrong time (participant 6).

Figure 12 illustrates the relationship between the lack of public safety and the presence of illegal activities in communities of color.

Figure 12

The Lack of Public Safety and Illegal Activities in Communities of Color



Theme 2d: Civil Rights and Discrimination in Public Places. This represents the personal rights guaranteed and protected under the U.S. constitution against any unfair treatment based on personal characteristics such as race, gender, age, or social functions including but not limited to employment, education, housing or other public facility. The two codes used are civil rights and discrimination in public places. Nine participants responded with 18 references in the discrimination in public places code while the civil rights code captured four participants with 5 references. Some of the responses are included below.

- Black children do not have the same opportunities as White kids when it comes to getting good quality, education (participant 10).
- There is a higher rate of arrest, and incarceration of Black people than you find in White communities. Poverty and unemployment are also common (participant 10).
- Love the entertainment in the Black culture, the hip, hop, and our creativity shows the world. We are really talented, but the community has so much to worry about when it comes to police brutality and racial discrimination in public places (participant 11).
- Most of the time I try to let my kids know they need to have a sense of belonging being part of a family of people you can call family, because out there someone is going to try making judgments based on the color of your skin. There are good people out there. It doesn't matter whether you are White or whether you are Black but always it is cool to have people you can call family, people who will accept you for who you are (participant 12).
- there have been protests against police brutality and discrimination in public places (participant 4).
- We have a racial profiling problem (participant 5).
- If you live in public housing, most likely you will have a low income or be unemployed at some point without enough to secure a mortgage to buy a house. They even deny mortgage applications to Black people in some White or sell

Black people's properties at lower values compared to the White people (participant 6).

- Someone may still want to have a negative reaction against them in future regardless. This could lead to behavioral issues in the child They respond angrily because they think somebody is picking on them, discriminating against them (participant 7).
- A friend of mine was home schooled after his parents began to suspect issues related to the child left isolated and bullied (participant 9).
- take time preparing my kids on how to handle bias messages or stereotyping because of the color of their skin (participant 11).
- You see, so much money is being spent on physical stuff and fighting crime. The government is spending money more. They are introducing more police presence, which only leads to more police brutality and unnecessary arrests of innocent Black men (participant 12).
- It can be you or another brother. The police are still all over the place 24/7, and I hope, Black people can enjoy the same freedom as White neighborhoods. But the situation doesn't seem to be changing in my own opinion (participant 9).

Figure 13 illustrates the relationships between civil rights violations and discrimination in public places.

Figure 13*Civil Rights Violations and Discrimination in Public Places*

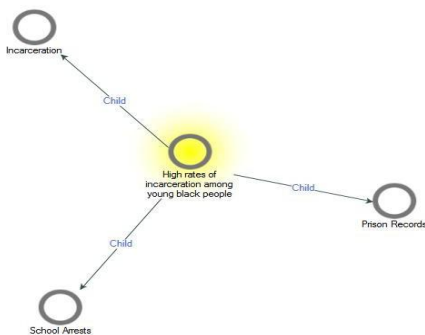
Theme 2e: Higher Rates of Incarceration Among Young Black People. This refers to the state of being confined or restrained by the authority of the government in punishment for criminal offences. Three codes used here include incarceration, school arrests and prison records. There were nine participants that discussed experiences with incarceration in 21 references under the incarceration code. Eight participants talked about prison records in 21 references. Three participants had something to say about school arrests in 4 references. Some of their responses are included below.

- The only thing I don't like to see is crime and violence. I don't like to see crime and violence. I like a safe community. But you see, when there is a lot of crime the police presence increases and this later leads to higher arrests or incarceration rates. More people are going to jail for crimes they did not commit. Sometimes there is a mistaken identity. I wish these neighborhoods can be made safer without police brutality (participant 12).
- We have nobody to tell them to do the right things especially when there is peer pressure once they get locked up. The police presence only increases as more people are going to get arrested. When they are released from the prison, they are

unable to get a good job and end up going back to the streets. This is just one way the prospects of many Black kids get destroyed (participant 12).

- A lot of adults in Black neighborhoods have been in contact with the criminal justice system. Where I live more Black people have records of people innocent or guilty (participant 5).
- Reduce the number of Black men behind bars. Some of these people may be highly talented people, with their creativity locked up with them. This needs to change. Conditions have to be improved to allow more creative youths re-enter (participant 5).
- A lot of people just getting back from prison are unable to pursue a good education or find a well-paying employment which implies that creative potentials are hardly realized (participant 6).
- Black people getting locked up at very high rates are not good for sure. For me I always wanted everyone to be free in their own neighborhoods and among their own people. So, the heavy policing of Black neighborhoods and police brutality made things kind of worse in the area because you never know if you're next (participant 9).

Figure 14 illustrates the relationship between school arrests and subsequent incarceration of young adults in Black neighborhoods.

Figure 14*Arrest and Incarceration of Young Adults in Black Neighborhoods***Theme 2f: Violent Neighborhood With Robberies and Teenage Pregnancies.**

This describes the intended use of force to commit an unlawful act that may result in mental or physical harm as well as behavioral issues in a person. Codes were created as violence, robberies and teen pregnancy to capture participant data. There were eleven participants out of the twelve participants who shared their experiences about violence in 43 references. Eight participants spoke about robberies in 11 references. Teenage pregnancies were also discussed in 11 references by eight participants.

- One of my major concerns is violence. There is a lot of violence (participant 1).
- With increasing violence, homelessness, and unemployment in the communities the Black church needs to take the lead in solving the problems. Pastors are community leaders and should take up the responsibility to help out their church members (participant 10).

- The state of mental health of a child is important. More needs to be done to improve the mental well-being of Black lives in disadvantaged neighborhoods especially. First, their feeling from the past about being marginalized has to be removed to help them build their creative potential. If a child is talented but is still traumatized by a negative consequence in the past something must be done for the healing process to begin. So, the child does not feel isolated or not belonging and expects to do well and apply self totally in what they do. While some kids are able to get through their difficulties in life not many of them are able to do it without help. This is where the government comes in (participant 11).
- A mentoring program is excellent for developing a positive attitude, either at school or at home. This helps to reduce negative behaviors in youths and also increase school attendance. If kids have mentors, they have somebody to look up to.... someone to guide them.... someone to motivate them.... someone to be a good example. I think this will help the community if the community can provide mentors for Black youth (participant 12).
- A lot of these boys and girls get into smoking all sorts of things that get them into trouble. Drugs and violence everywhere. There is still a lot to be done by families and the Government to keep these folks out of the streets (participant 2).
- You can't even walk late at night without getting robbed (participant 3).
- Growing up in a predominantly Black neighborhood only allowed me to be exposed to limited opportunities (participant 3).

- The child should not feel marginalized for any reason and very few social events are being organized to keep youths away from gangs and violence in the streets (participant 3).
- if not for the violence and crime I love the Black neighborhood where I live (participant 5).
- Mentors can help prevent youth from engaging in drugs and gang activities. Since young adults have a responsible person to look up to, the community is able to reduce the level of violence (participant 5).
- if you happen to live in one of the dangerous neighborhoods. Teach them to mind their business and tell them not to make friends with too many people they don't really know. Tell them not to stay out too late (participant 6).
- Black neighborhoods with a lot of policing need to understand there are certain things they have to say to their kids like learning to stay calm always (participant 6).
- The good schools were not there, and you don't find employment easily. The neighborhood is poor, and the crime rate is high (participant 6).
- They respond angrily because they think somebody is picking on them, discriminating against them. They become angry and violent (participant 7).
- Children had to live in a poor neighborhood with a lot of poverty and crime in the area. Sometimes it was just too hard to sleep at night (participant 7).
- The career choices were not there because we did not have the jobs in the area. Many of the adults were unemployed and had trouble supporting their younger

ones who later depended on peers in the streets. They eventually get drawn into gangs and went into crime (participant 7).

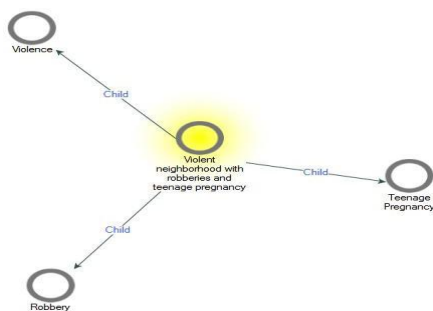
- Crime and the safety of the people. I always wanted a quiet neighborhood away from gangs and violence. Where I lived gangs often terrorized the streets at night and sold drugs very often. I think this affected me as a child because at night I heard gunshots and sometimes would stay up late and be tired the following day at School for not getting a good night's sleep (participant 8).
- Grandparents always like to advise you. You know they talk to you about avoiding teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and the rest (participant 8).
- The streets of the neighborhood had a lot of crime and violence. I constantly feared for my children's safety (participant 8).
- While it is a good thing for churches to like uplift the spirit of their members, pastors should be reminded of the violence in the streets and other problems in the community. Their teachings and preaching must not only be on the pulpit but to the community and creating positive change. I attend church regularly, and I think our local pastors need to be informed on what needs to be done to help the community, not only as pastors on the pulpit, but also leaders in the community (participant 9).
- I think getting rid of street violence and drugs. That will prevent kids from feeling unsafe when they go to school. Gang activities can make the neighborhood unsafe and scare kids and parents from the schools (participant 9).

- Let me say, a lot of pregnancies are not planned in many of the low-income Black neighborhoods, and this leaves the infant child with behavioral and developmental issues which often affect the child's mental wellbeing (participant 5).
- Children had to live in a poor neighborhood with a lot of poverty and crime in the area. Sometimes it was just too hard to sleep at night (participant 7).
- Let me say as a person, I don't really feel safe walking alone in my neighborhood when it is dark. When it is nighttime it's always safe to be indoors. It's never safe to go around when it is too dark in this neighborhood (participant 12).
- Some places are not very safe sometimes (participant 2).
- You can't even walk late at night without getting robbed (participant 3).
- I will say some places are safe. Some places are not. You can get attacked if you are at the wrong place at the wrong time (participant 3).

Figure 15 illustrates the relationship between crime and teen pregnancy rates in Black neighborhoods.

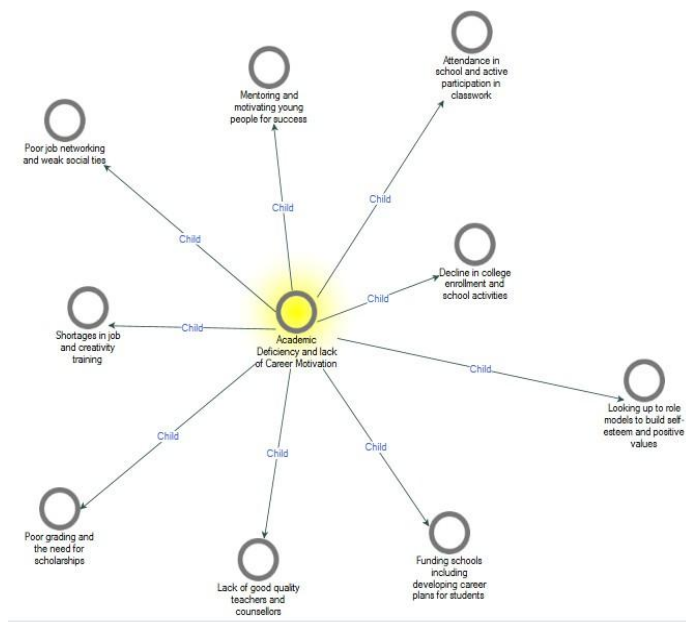
Figure 15

Violence in Black Neighborhoods Including Robberies and Teenage Pregnancies



Theme 3: Academic Deficiency and Lack of Career Motivation

This theme represents the perspectives of participants as they recount their individual experiences in a neighborhood destitute of good quality education and hindered by inadequate job or employment opportunities. Participants' descriptions led to the umbrella term academic deficiency and lack of career motivation. I identified subthemes as decline in college enrollment and school activities, lack of good quality teachers and counsellors, poor grading and the need for scholarships, shortages in job and creativity training , poor job networking and weak social ties, mentoring and motivating young people for success, looking up to role models to build self-esteem and positive values, attendance in school and active participation in classwork and funding schools including developing career plans for students. Figure 16 illustrates academic deficiencies in Black communities and lack of career motivation among youths.

Figure 16*Academic Deficiencies in Black Communities and Lack of Career Motivation Among Youths*

Theme 3a: Decline in College Enrollment and School Activities. College enrollment refers to the process of arranging to attend an institution of learning or get involved in its activities. The umbrella term given to this subtheme is decline in college enrollment and school activities. The two codes created to capture data from participants are college enrollment and school activities. All twelve participants responded in 41 references under the college enrollment code while ten participants provided 30 references about experiences with school activities in the school activity code. Participants' responses are provided below.

- My school experience back in the days did not focus on giving the best. Some kids in White neighborhoods with the best schools were better prepared for

college. More needs to be done in Black communities preparing kids for college (participant 5).

- No one ever encouraged me to apply to college (participant 1).
- the public schools are not providing good education (participant 1).
- A mentor who is a successful woman can help motivate a young girl to apply to college and pursue a successful career (participant 1).
- I didn't go to a good school. and a lot of times I will stay at home scared of being bullied out there in the streets (participant 1).
- School attendance declines because many of these kids don't want to go to school unless motivated by parents or guardians (participant 2).
- I didn't really see more Black adults in my neighborhood becoming college graduates, teachers or some educated professionals (participant 3).
- We were sent to school, but the schools are not really the best we had around (participant 4).
- My school experience back in the days did not focus on giving the best. Some kids in White neighborhoods with the best schools were better prepared for college. More needs to be done in Black communities preparing kids for college (participant 5).
- It affected my performance in school and educational achievements in a lot of ways that I can't describe. I could not get into my dream college (participant 6).

- A lot of people just getting back from prison are unable to pursue a good education or find well-paying employment which implies that creative potential is hardly realized (participant 6).
- able to develop better attitudes about school. This helps increase school enrollments in that community because of the motivation from mentors (participant 7).
- When you live in public housing, most likely you will not have access to high performance schools. This is why it's important for a lot of Black people who live in public housing are unable to attend the best schools that will prepare them for rewarding careers. Attending a public school in a Black neighborhood probably did not prepare me well enough for the job market (participant 9).
- Schools should share their experiences with parents and try to get them involved. There should be school events and services that will bring parents to the school. Create an opportunity for everyone to come together as a community (participant 3).
- I don't really remember much. But know some things are still not right with the way kids from low-income families are treated in underfunded schools. Teachers with poor skills only made it more difficult for kids to learn. They just did not have the experience the child needs to have good grades. At some point I wanted to stop going to school. Many of my colleagues at the same time dropped out and did not make it to college (participant 10).

- You don't expect to find opportunities for good schools and good jobs in those neighborhoods. This prevented a lot of people like me from having that education to plan a good carrier. People who come from places like this hardly make it to a certain level in life because only very few have been there. No one to look up to as a mentor (participant 10).
- Only very few people have made it to college in my neighborhood, because it's just not what most of our colleagues talked about or dreamed about. We did not have access to the best schools or have that education to help make the best career choices. Sometimes you know it's like a competition you know. If you live in a neighborhood, somebody encourages the other. If you see somebody getting into college, you also want to get into college. All these things will help you. You know we can motivate each other. Motivate one another to get into college. The public schools in the area did not really have a lot of educational materials as the best quality schools at the time. We didn't have most of all these things that are important to help kids get into college (participant 12).

Figure 17 illustrates declining college enrollment and school attendance among Black youths.

Figure 17

Declining College Enrollment and School Attendance Among Black Youths



Theme 3b: Poor Job Networking and Weak Social Ties. Job networking is the exchange of information and ideas that could lead to valuable job opportunities among people with a common interest in an informal or social setting. Three codes assigned to this subtheme are job availability, social ties, and belonging to a community. Ten participants provided 40 references in the job availability code. Nine participants discussed social ties in 27 references. Seven participants discussed their experiences of belonging to a community in 24 references.

- I believe the neighborhood you grew up in somewhat connects you with a social network. The people you have around you or come in contact with every day have a role to play. The only reason why people growing up in low poverty neighborhoods become successful more easily is because they already have social connections. They need the social capital that makes them successful. Residents of Black neighborhoods with high-poverty rates don't have that and this slows down their success (participant 11).
- In my neighborhood we have a very strong relationship. Everyone knows each other very well. This prevented me from leaving, because I know everybody interacts here. I like everyone. I will describe it as a loving and caring neighborhood. The bad things actually destroying the neighborhood are the drugs and violence in the streets which invites heavy police presence (participant 12).
- Everyone is somewhat isolated from the successful people who have contacts. The powerful guys living in rich neighborhoods. Yeah. You need to connect with

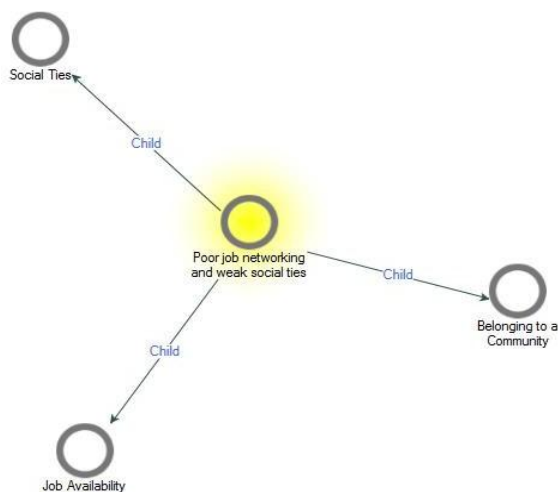
the right people if you need to build a career. Connect with the right people. A lot of poor neighborhoods don't have that (participant 7).

- Black neighborhoods with public housing have been known as disadvantaged neighborhoods. This is because they have low quality schools, poorer residents who may be unemployed, a high crime rate, very few homeowners, and so on (participant 9).
- there are not enough jobs paying good wages in this neighborhood, especially in this neighborhood (participant 1).
- The most rewarding careers are just not there. A friend of mine from the same neighborhood couldn't get his dream job (participant 3).
- more needs to be done in helping Black people find employment especially in the neighborhoods where there is poverty or teach Job or life skills to teenagers and young adults (participant 5).
- At some point as a minority, you may find yourself isolated in school or at work (participant 8).
- The good schools were not there, and you don't find employment easily. The neighborhood is poor, and the crime rate is high (participant 6).
- A lot of people just getting back from prison are unable to pursue a good education or find a well-paying employment which implies that creative potential is hardly realized (participant 6).
- You don't find jobs, and many people are still unemployed. This is why so many people abandon their career prospects (participant 8).

Figure 18 illustrates job networking and social ties in Black communities.

Figure 18

Job Networking and Social Ties in Black Communities



Theme 3c: Attendance in School and Active Participation in Classwork.

School attendance and class participation refers to the active involvement of students in an institution's academic practices. Class participation and school attendance are the two codes that capture data from participants. Ten participants provided data in 27 references under class participation while 15 references from nine participants were coded under school attendance.

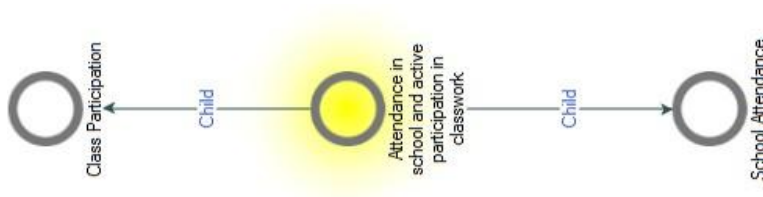
- When you live in public housing, most likely you will not have access to high performance schools. This is why it's important for a lot of Black people who live in public housing are unable to attend the best schools that will prepare them for rewarding careers. Attending a public school in a Black neighborhood probably did not prepare me well enough for the job market (participant 9).

- I didn't go to a good school. and a lot of times I will stay at home scared of being bullied out there in the streets (participant 1).
- School attendance declines because many of these kids don't want to go to school unless motivated by parents or guardians (participant 2).
- Black kids in many of these neighborhoods sometimes get together when they should be in school. Many turn out to love being out there than going to school. The government needs to make schools a place everyone likes to go (participant 7).
- He was made to believe that he was not participating well in the classroom (participant 3).
- The best teachers that will motivate kids to love coming to school are not many in poorer schools. The teachers are just not motivated (participant 5).

Figure 19 illustrates school attendance and participation in classwork in Black neighborhoods.

Figure 19

School Attendance and Participation in Classwork

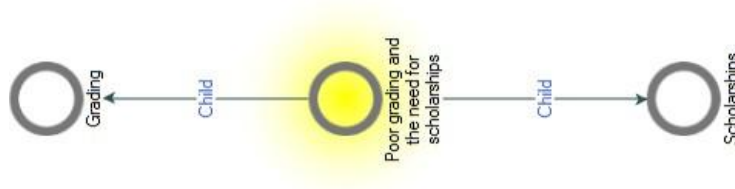


Theme 3d: Poor Grading and the Need for Scholarships. Poor grading reflects the substandard performance in academic activities and indicates that the quality of work provided by the student is below the school or college expectation. Scholarships are

awarded as financial support of a student's work based on need or academic achievement. The umbrella term is poor grading and the need for scholarships and data is gathered using two codes grading and scholarships. Eight participants responded with 14 references in the grading code while three provided 3 references under scholarships. The participants' responses are included below.

- Well, let me say Black kids should be allowed to participate actively in classrooms. I can recall a friend of mine when I was in high school. He was made to believe that he was not participating well in the classroom even though he raised his hands regularly. Sometimes he is told he is not listening and this almost made him lose interest in coming to the classroom (participant 3).
- I was unable to have the comfort to do my homework after school hours. This affected my performance in school and educational achievements in a lot of ways that I can't describe. I could not get into my dream college (participant 6).
- The school system must address issues such as grading biases, suspension of kids from school or higher rates of arrests targeting Black kids (participant 7).
- Higher grades and self-esteem can be developed by learning from the right mentors (participant 8).

Figure 20 illustrates grading of students and scholarship awards in schools.

Figure 20*Grading of Students and Scholarship Awards in Schools***Theme 3e: Looking Up to Role Models to Build Self-Esteem and Positive**

Values. This involves learning from an individual whose behavior or life accomplishments can be emulated and aspiring to be that person. This subtheme has role models and self-esteem as the two codes. All the twelve participants discussed role modeling in 21 references and seven participants talked about self-esteem in 14 references. Some of these include.

- More Black role models should be encouraged. This will provide the kids with the opportunity to further their careers and realize their creative or academic potential (participant 8).
- Talented kids, the child may think of becoming that person someday especially because they have the same skin color. Unfortunately, there's a fundamental lack of arts, culture, or job training centers with the works of accomplished African Americans displayed to inspire Black youths across all disciplines (participant 9).
- I can't remember having anyone I can call a role model (participant 1).
- Fathers who have been successful can show their sons how to climb the ladder as a Black male. I would like to call my dad my role model. But you know I live

with my mom, and sometimes my stepdad comes around. I haven't seen my dad since I turned eighteen (participant 10).

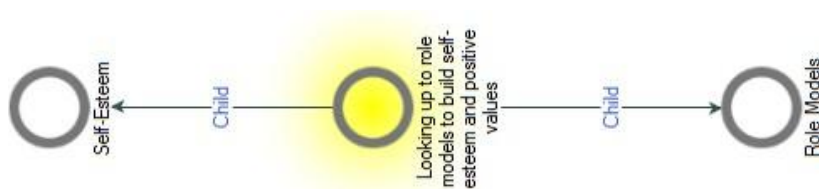
- There are not enough good models for the young folks to look up to in my neighborhood (participant 2).
- I had fewer people the color of my skin to look up to growing up (participant 3).
- As a Black kid, I tried to find someone like me with the same skin color to look up to. This means someday this can be me. But in my neighborhood only few people can be described as successful enough to be called role models (participant 4)
- hard for many to be good role models to young folks (participant 5).
- I work 3 jobs to make ends meet. My mom was a very hard-working person and looked up to her. She worked night and day to provide for the family. This is where I got my inspiration from. My mom was my role model (participant 6).
- Better to have a role model I can touch or interact with personally. This will be a good thing if I can have someone I say physically as a role model (participant 7).
- There are not really enough role models in my neighborhood today. I didn't have people to call role models. I wish there were more people with educational attainment or professional success (participant 8).
- More Black role models should be encouraged. This will provide the kids with the opportunity to further their careers and realize their creative or academic potential (participant 8).

- I don't think having a role model really mattered. Whoever you want to become is a decision you have to make but my mom was everything to me and she always taught me everything I needed to grow up one day and be successful. She told me to believe in myself and work hard (participant 9).
- Talented kids, the child may think of becoming that person someday especially because they have the same skin color. Unfortunately, there's a fundamental lack of arts, culture, or job training centers with the works of accomplished African Americans displayed to inspire Black youths across all disciplines (participant 9).

Figure 21 illustrates role models and self-esteem in the lives of African American youths.

Figure 21

Role Models and Self-Esteem in the Lives of African American Youths



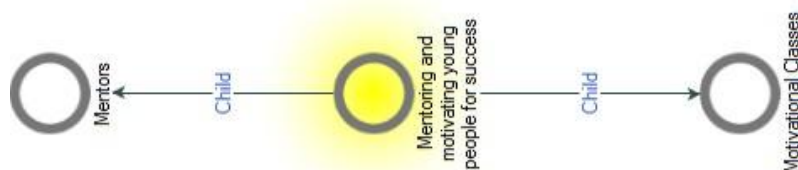
Theme 3f: Mentoring and Motivating Young People for Success. This refers to advising, motivating, or training younger or less experienced people on important life or job skills necessary for success. This umbrella term has two codes mentors and motivational classes. In the case of mentors, all twelve participants discussed mentoring in 26 references. Six participants talked about motivational classes in 11 references.

- A mentoring program is excellent for developing a positive attitude, either at school or at home. This helps to reduce negative behaviors in youths and also increase school attendance. If kids have mentors, they have somebody to look up

to.... someone to guide them.... someone to motivate them....someone to be a good example. I think this will help the community if the community can provide mentors for Black youth (participant 12).

- The community can help assign youth to mentors or encouraging parents to be present in their kids' lives (participant 2).
- Mentors can help prevent youth from engaging in drugs and gang activities. Since young adults have a responsible person to look up to, the community is able to reduce the level of violence (participant 5).
- You don't expect to find opportunities for good schools and good jobs in those neighborhoods. This prevented a lot of people like me from having that education to plan a good carrier. People who come from places like this hardly make it to a certain level in life because only very few have been there. No one to look up to as a mentor (participant 10).
- able to develop better attitudes about school this helps increase school enrollments in that community because of the motivation from mentors (participant 7),

Figure 22 illustrates mentoring and motivational classes for youths in Black neighborhoods.

Figure 22*Mentoring and Motivational Classes for Youths in Black Neighborhoods***Theme 3g: Funding Schools Including Developing Career Plans for Students.**

This refers to appropriately sourcing financial resources to meet a school's particular purpose including working with students to ensure their skills or talents can be transformed into worthwhile achievements. Funding schools including developing career plans for students is the umbrella term for this subtheme that has two codes career planning and school funding. Eleven participants responded with 43 references describing their experiences with career planning. Eleven participants also provided data in 20 references under the school funding code.

- I have not been able to set the carrier goals I want for myself because of limited opportunities in terms of education and employment (participant 6).
- Something has to be done in the funding of the schools, so the teachers can help the kids become better people academically (participant 9).
- Poor performing schools. The government pays more attention to housing and ignores the education of the kids. Instead, more is now being spent on fighting crime. More is being spent on physically developing the buildings. So, the neighborhood looks beautiful (participant 12).

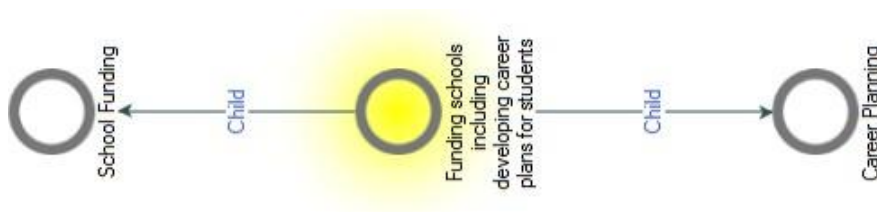
- We have nobody to tell them to do the right things especially when there is peer pressure once they get locked up. The police presence only increases as more people are going to get arrested. When they are released from prison, they are unable to get a good job and end up going back to the streets. This is just one way the prospects of many Black kids get destroyed (participant 12).
- how living in my neighborhood has affected. My career is lacking the college education which I should have to get the best jobs (participant 5).
- The career choices were not there because we did not have the jobs in the area. Many of the adults were unemployed and had trouble supporting their younger ones who later depended on peers in the streets. They eventually get drawn into gangs and went into crime (participant 7).
- I don't really remember much. But know some things are still not right with the way kids from low-income families are treated in underfunded schools. Teachers with poor skills only made it more difficult for kids to learn. They just did not have the experience the child needs to have good grades. At some point I wanted to stop going to school. Many of my colleagues at the same time dropped out and did not make it to college (participant 10).
- If we are to think about being successful first of all, you've got to be looking for well-paying jobs, and you will need a good education to have that. The schools in the Black neighborhood are not just up to that level yet. Many of them are not funded well, so the classrooms are not functioning well (participant 10).

- In many of the residencies there has been more focus on the physical development of the buildings than the human conditions though the buildings are beginning to look more attractive than it was in the 1960s and 1970s. The condition of living is still poor and children have to be raised in neighborhoods without good schools and good jobs. This affects the child's development (participant 11).
- Everyone is somewhat isolated from the successful people who have contacts. The powerful guys living in rich neighborhoods. Yeah. You need have to connect with the right people if you need to build a career connect with the right people. A lot of poor neighborhoods don't have that (participant 7).

Figure 23 illustrates school funding and career planning in Black neighborhoods.

Figure 23

School Funding and Career Planning in Black Neighborhoods



Theme 3h: Lack of Good Quality Teachers and Counsellors. Good quality teaching involves using communication, listening and empathy, collaboration, and adaptability skills in the classroom or during a learning exercise with a student. Lack of good quality teachers and counsellors is the umbrella term and data has been gathered from participants in the code assigned as teachers. Nine participants provided 20 references. Some of these are included here.

- the public schools are not providing good education (participant 1).

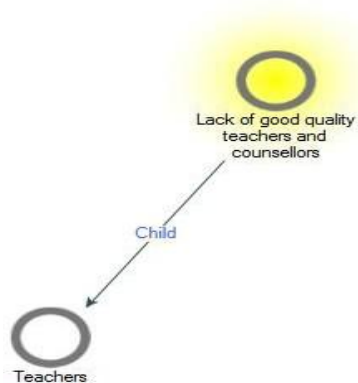
- A good school with good quality teachers and resources can help turn things around for creative and talented young people (participant 1).
- Had the opportunity to have a Black teacher who taught me in first grade. He was really talented and hoped to be a teacher like him some day. Being a Black kid, I sometimes saw myself in him. Teachers who look like you or have been in the same situation as you can be very motivating (participant 11).
- Find the schools and have more guidance counselors that will help advise young folks to come to the school regularly (participant 10).
- poverty prevents parents from sending their children to the best schools which you don't find in Black communities (participant 3).
- The attitude of the teachers, that's something I like to talk about. Teachers must have a good attitude, so parents like to get involved. The school environment has to be sensitive and welcoming to everyone as well (participant 12).
- I didn't really see more Black adults in my neighborhood becoming college graduates, teachers or some educated professionals (participant 3).
- The best teachers that will motivate kids to love coming to school are not many in poorer schools. The teachers are just not motivated (participant 5).
- The most experienced teachers who understand how to connect with kids, avoid segregated neighborhoods with lower funding (participant 5).
- Something has to be done in the funding of the schools, so the teachers can help the kids become better people academically (participant 9).

- My school experience back in the days did not focus on giving the best. Some kids in White neighborhoods with the best schools were better prepared for college. More needs to be done in Black communities preparing kids for college (participant 5).

Figure 24 illustrates the lack of good quality teachers in Black neighborhood schools.

Figure 24

Dearth of Good Quality Teachers in Black Neighborhood Schools



Theme 3i: Shortages in Job and Creativity Training. A job shortage refers to the difficulty of locating or recruiting capable workers for open job positions. It is the inability to support creativity skills in schools or attract teaching talent. The umbrella theme for this subtheme is shortages in job and creativity training. The two codes assigned are creativity and job training. Ten participants discussed their experiences in 16 references under creativity while two participants provided data in 2 references under job training. These responses include

- A good school with good quality teachers and resources can help turn things around for creative and talented young people (participant 1).

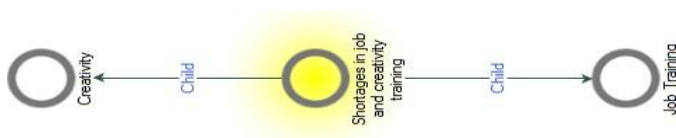
- Love the entertainment in the Black culture, the hip, hop, and our creativity shows the world. We are really talented, but the community has so much to worry about when it comes to police brutality and racial discrimination in public places (participant 11).
- I think there is a need to regain the trust of African Americans in the health care system. A talented kid with behavioral or mental health issues must be helped to know how to use their potential. More help needs to be created to help these kids. There will not be a lot of behavioral or health issues if kids have the necessary health care facilities to help them (participant 12).
- The creative potential of the child must not be discouraged in any form (participant 3).
- This is a good way to get the kids engaged and release their creative potentials (participant 3).
- After school programs. I think will make a difference. When the kids get off school, local libraries or arts centers in the neighborhood may help introduce kids to music or visual art lessons. This will help realize the potential of children with art or musical talent (participant 4).
- Reduce the number of Black men behind bars. Some of these people may be highly talented people, with their creativity locked up with them. This needs to change. Conditions have to be improved to allow more creative youths re-enter (participant 5).

- A lot of people just getting back from prison are unable to pursue a good education or find well-paying employment which implies that creative potential is hardly realized (participant 6).
- Better employment opportunities are needed. A creative and talented individual will be highly motivated to find employment opportunities in a field or discipline they find themselves highly talented if the child is creative (participant 9).
- Already there is a lack of hands-on training jobs in the neighborhoods. A program that will give young adults the opportunity to put their hands to work will be great. An idle mind, they say, is the devil's workshop. If kids must stay away from the streets (participant 2).

Figure 25 illustrates creativity and job training among young adults in Black neighborhoods.

Figure 25

Creativity and Job Training Among Young Adults in Black Neighborhoods



Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore pathways for developing public housing policies and programs that recognize the strengths and competencies of youths and adolescents in Black neighborhoods with less emphasis on the risk factors inherent in such communities. This is rooted in the fact that the Black neighborhood or ghetto was created by decades of disparities in public housing policies that target and segregate the

African American community into poor and disadvantaged neighborhoods. The living experiences of participants were captured with emphasis on a strength-based perspective that allows the assets or competences of adolescents to be prioritized over the risk factors inherent in those communities.

Data was collected and analyzed. Twelve participants were interviewed with semi-structured and open-ended questions to encourage them to share their unique perspectives on living experiences in the disadvantaged neighborhoods. Purposeful sampling was used to find participants for the interview. While some participants declined to provide demographic data, those interviewed included not only Black people or African Americans and their ages ranged between 20 and 50 years, with either experiences of personally living in Black neighborhoods or willingly sharing the experiences of a close friend or relative. During the interview the participants disclosed their feelings and shared varying perspectives on their experiences in the neighborhoods. Three major themes emerged which include deteriorating neighborhoods and poor living conditions, neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency, and academic deficiency and lack of career motivation. Nineteen subthemes also emerged during the analysis.

The first major theme was deteriorating neighborhoods and poor living conditions which generated further subthemes like living in poverty and impoverished conditions that also generated financial lack, poor healthcare, and living conditions. Other subthemes from deteriorating neighborhoods and poor living conditions include illegal drug dealings and addiction, alcohol and substance abuse, exposure to homelessness and

overcrowded housing. The second major theme was neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency. Subthemes generated from this theme include involvement in violent gangs and street life, heavy policing and police brutality in the neighborhood, illegal activities and lack of public safety, civil rights and discrimination in public places, higher rates of incarceration among young Black adults, violent neighborhood with robberies and teenage pregnancies. Lastly, the third major theme academic deficiency and lack of career motivation include subthemes decline in college enrollment and school activities, poor job networking and weak social ties, attendance in school and active participation in classwork, poor grading and the need for scholarships, looking up to role models to build self-esteem and positive values, mentoring and motivating young people for success, funding schools and developing career plans for students, lack of good teachers and counsellors, shortages in job and creativity training. A brief summary of the themes and subthemes answers the central research question.

This study is completed in Chapter 5 with vital links with all the previous chapters. In chapter 5, an interpretation of the findings, practical recommendations for future researchers and implications for social change are discussed. The chapter covers how the study extends the literature on public housing and policy interventions in a positive youth development context

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

I conducted this qualitative study to explore the experiences of African American youths living in public housing neighborhoods characterized by concentrated poverty and how these experiences had shaped their transitions into adulthood. Adult participants above 18 years of age were interviewed to capture a thick description of their perspectives on living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The motivation for the study was research showing that youths in communities of color develop risky behaviors due to their impoverished conditions of living, engage in violent crimes, and experience academic deficiencies and problems with career advancement as a result of policy disparities in the public housing system (Jenson et al., 2013). A research gap in existing literature reveals a dearth of scholarly works that reflect the perceptions of African Americans and other people who have lived in public housing and experienced adverse living conditions. Literature is also lacking on how public housing policies and programs can be developed to improve the situation. to

I was particularly motivated to undertake the study because it provided an opportunity to promote policy interventions that emphasize the strength-based perspectives of PYD over the historical deficit view that sees youths as problematic (Jenson et al., 2013). In this study, I probed the living experiences of participants who reported living in deteriorating neighborhoods. The findings may offer different perspectives that pave the way to more effective policy interventions that feature a PYD framework. The deficit model neglects the human strengths that protect youths against

mental illness while unintentionally creating more problems by seeing young adults as problematic and incapable (Shek et al., 2019).

The key findings from participants, which were interpreted through the lens of the PYD framework, provide a potential basis for the development of public housing policies that have beneficial impacts on the communities of color. The results may also beneficially affect youth development by providing stakeholders with insights on how improve living conditions in neighborhood, provide an enabling environment with fewer stressors or crime-related activities, and foster career success through improved academic standards. In this chapter, I interpret the findings, discuss the study's limitations, offer recommendations, and consider the study's implications for positive social change. I also provide a conclusion to the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The interviews conducted with the 12 participants yielded three major themes, 19 subthemes, and three further subthemes that emerged from one of the subthemes. The participants shared their experiences and perspectives on African American youths in public housing communities and how transitions into adulthood are affected by the adverse living conditions in deteriorating neighborhoods. A description of the themes and how they relate to the works of earlier scholars is crucial for an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the findings in the context of the conceptual model of Catalano's 15 PYD constructs.

Theme 1: Disadvantaged Neighborhoods and Poor Living Conditions

The first major theme that emerged was disadvantaged neighborhoods and poor living conditions. Participants recalled memories of living in disadvantaged neighborhoods under impoverished conditions in different ways. Out of the 12 participants interviewed, 10 (83%) agreed that the living conditions and poor health care in the neighborhood had hindered their development while all 12 (100%) participants shared that financial lack has a significant role to play. Regarding illegal drug dealings and addiction, 11 (92%) of the 12 participants viewed this as negatively affecting the lives of youths in deteriorating neighborhoods. Eight participants (67%) also shared their perspectives of the bad influences of alcohol while 10 participants (83%) agreed that substance use has devastating consequences.

Researchers have found that in segregated neighborhoods, youths and adolescents are confronted with developmental issues that adversely affect their transitions to adulthood (see Adams et al., 2021). Other research has shown a strong link between stereotypes, which have long affected the Black community in the United States, and the poor living conditions and standards that have been the status quo in many African American neighborhoods (Harpalani, 2017). Furthermore, negative environmental factors and stressors make the adolescent period particularly risky for many inner-city Black males (Karl et al., 2018). Scholars have asserted that environmental forces and stressors (e.g., deprived neighborhood conditions, family discordance, and violence) make it particularly risky for many inner-city Black individuals who are in the process of

transitioning into adulthood (Phillips et al., 2018). These conditions contribute significantly to risky behaviors in youths and adversely impacts adolescent development.

Experts reiterated that the social environment in which children are raised shapes child and adolescent development (Trent et al., 2019). These are the social determinants that describe the conditions in which people are born, grow, live and age (Trent et al., 2019). Thousands of disadvantaged children are known to be living in housing communities with potentials of becoming poets, artists, pharmacists, doctors, nurses, engineers and business owners (Jenson et al., 2013).

Current literature points out African American communities have been impacted by decades of segregation policies that created adverse living conditions for residents. As a result, youths and adolescents in the neighborhoods have been confronted with negative environmental stressors that inhibit youth development or make it particularly risky to transition to adulthood due to deprived conditions of living, family discordance, or violence (Phillips et al., 2018). Public housing policies have created segregated and impoverished urban communities (Hurd et al., 2013) and African American youths have been overrepresented in poor communities with greater exposure to concentrated poverty compared to their White counterparts (Murry et al., 2011). The problem is further complicated by a lack of evidence-based prevention programs executed across Black communities (Phillips et al., 2018). This spurred a need for a more detailed examination of participants' perspectives on the issue.

When analyzed in the context of the theoretical framework presented by the social isolation theory, it can be argued that the problems engulfing communities of color are

linked to their isolation from mainstream society which prompting deteriorating living conditions in the neighborhoods (Wilson, 2012). This impacts youth development negatively.

The findings of the study in the Catalano 15 PYD conceptual framework indicate the need for bonding which involves developing relationships with schools, family or community (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 11 expressed the need for this by sharing that youths need to connect with a social network. The model utilizes resilience which is the ability to cope with stressful situations or negative changes (Shek et al., 2019) while getting involved in stressful activities. Participant 3 noted the need for resilience by expressing the toughness of having to live in such neighborhood trying to make ends meet.

Emotional competence in the model is the ability to recognize self-emotions (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 11 agreed that the emotional feelings of a child relating to being marginalized needs to be addressed. Another component of the model that applies to this study is behavioral competence, the ability to act properly and maintain a positive attitude (Shek et al.2019). Participant 14 shared that there will not be a lot of behavioral or health issues if kids have the necessary healthcare facilities to help them. Self-determination in the model is the ability of youths to think about themselves and avoid developmental setbacks (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 12 talked that youths should be able to think for themselves and avoid peer pressure, joining gangs or getting into drugs. Belief in the Future is the need to learn to be optimistic about possible results (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 4 shared this optimism by admitting to love the neighborhood

regardless. Opportunities for prosocial activities emphasize involving youths in prosocial activities (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 8 also talked about the idea of getting involved in prosocial activities that will allow youths to be career focused.

Theme 2: Neighborhood Crime and Juvenile Delinquency

The second major theme that emerged was neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency. When interviewed, 11 (92%) of the 12 participants shared their experience on the involvement of youths in gangs and street life as major hindrances to development. Robberies and teenage pregnancies were shared as negative experiences contributing to rising crime in the neighborhood by 8 (67%) of the participants while 11 (92%) out of the 12 interviewed experienced violence in numerous ways. Illegal activities were pinpointed by 11 (92%) of the participants as negative factors impacting youths and 10 (83%) discussed their perspectives on feelings of being unsafe in the neighborhood. The high rates of incarceration among Black adolescents was shared by 9 (75%) of the 12 participants while 8 (67%) of the participants shared their experiences on Black youths getting prison records at alarming rates compared to their counterparts in other races. School arrests were noted by 3 (25%) of the 12 participants as a contributing factor to what hinders development. Among the 12 participants interviewed, 9 (75%) shared their experiences on heavy policing and police brutality and the negative toll it takes on the neighborhood. The participants interviewed did not fail to discuss the effects of discrimination in public places as 9 (75%) also agreed to this negatively impacting youth development while 4(33%) talked about civil rights violations.

Scholarly work also highlighted the existence of racial disparities in how public housing and housing opportunities are distributed in racialized communities of color with devastating consequences of risky behaviors and violent crimes among youths and adolescents (Thomas et al., 2018). Earlier research also noted that African American adolescent males are one of the nation's most vulnerable populations adding that they are more likely to be arrested, adjudicated and detained than their White and Latino counterparts (Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center, 2014; Nellis, 2016). Further research confirms that they continue to be disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system (Griffith et al., 2019).

The findings in this study when analyzed in the context of the social isolation theory reflect that the problems confronting communities of color are traceable to their isolation from mainstream society, eventually leading to escalation of crime rates in the neighborhoods and problems with the criminal justice system (Wilson, 2012). This negatively hinders positive youth development in such communities.

The study's findings in the context of the Catalano 15 PYD construct indicate the need for bonding, the ability to form healthy relationships with family, home and the community (Shek et al., 2012). Participant 8 called this the golden rule when kids bond with families who help keep them out of trouble. Participant 8 also added that bonding with the school or community also helps kids stay away from the streets. Resilience defines the importance of adapting to life changes and stressful events (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 9 shared that youths need to learn to adapt to the stressful events and other stressors created by heavy police presence and brutality. The model also uses social

competence, the need to cultivate interpersonal skills to achieve social goals (Shek et al., 2012). Participant 5 described how creative youths may need to cultivate social skills to succeed socially. Emotional competence is described in the model as developing the right feelings and emotions (Shek et al., 2012). Participant 3 describes the need to learn to have the right feelings or emotions when necessary. The appropriate thing to do in a situation to avoid delinquent behaviors in the model is moral competence (Shek et al., 2012). Participant 1 agreed that youths need to know street life and gang activities are morally wrong. Self-Efficacy in the model refers to developing high aspirations or setting inspirational goals for self (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 6 stated the need for the youths in Black neighborhoods to set inspirational goals for school or finding well-paid employment so as to avoid crime.

Theme 3: Academic Deficiency and Lack of Career Motivation

The third major theme was academic deficiency and lack of career motivation. When 12 participants were interviewed, 9 (75%) agreed that school attendance was not given priority it deserves and 10 (83%) shared their negative experiences on class participation. All the 12 participants (100%) discussed their perspectives on decline in school enrollment as more Black kids in the neighborhood feel less attracted to school. 10 (83%) of the 12 participants are of the opinion that school activities are not prioritized or given due attention in the neighborhoods. Career planning and school funding was agreed to be uncommon or unavailable to youths in Black neighborhoods as shared by 11 (92%) of the 12 participants. The lack of good teachers and counsellors was identified by 9 (75%) of the 12 participants interviewed. All participants (100%) admitted that not

having role models significantly limited their opportunities. Out of the 12 participants 7 accounted for the absence of self-esteem needed for academic success as not being prevalent in the neighborhood. Also 12 (100%) participants shared their experiences on the importance of mentoring and how the absence of mentors negates opportunities available to youths. The findings also show that 6 (50%) of the 12 participants see motivational classes relevant in pursuing opportunities but significantly lacking in their experience. With regard to grading, 8 (67%) shared past experiences of poor grading systems and 3(25%) noted the lack of scholarship opportunities for youths in Black neighborhoods. Participants recognized job availability as important to youth success. Out of the 12 participants 10 (83%) described their experiences relating to the lack of jobs in the area. Social ties were noted as absent according to 9 (75%) of the 12 participants interviewed while 7 (58%) shared their views on the need to belong to a community as helpful. Participants also shared their experiences about creativity as 10 (83%) highlighted not being exposed to creative opportunities in the neighborhood while 2 (17%) of participants see how the lack of job training has prevented them from accessing opportunities in the neighborhood.

Past literature on academic deficiency and lack of career motivation among adolescents in Black neighborhoods reveal in the works of Wilson how the concentration effects generated by the social isolation of African Americans to poverty neighborhoods have resulted in lack of social ties to individuals in mainstream American society (Wilson, 1987, 2012). Residents of isolated or degenerating neighborhoods are confronted with lack of access to formal job networks, low-quality schools, and absence

of role models (Wilson, 2003). Wilson explained that distinctive cultural norms are formed among inner-city residents that enable them to establish the basis for behaviors that qualify them as members of the underclass known for welfare dependency, criminality, drug abuse, having children outside marriage, and long-term joblessness. This subsequently hinders an atmosphere where valid social networks can thrive (Wilson, 2012). However, the existence of conventional role models in these areas of concentrated poverty can help foster a successful lifestyle (Wilson, 2012).

Existing literature also details that public housing policies have been designed to concentrate African Americans in inner-city areas and segregated from mainstream society (Rothstein, 2018, 2020). This social isolation is described as a deprivation of social connectedness (Zavaleta et al., 2014). The social environment in which children are raised shapes child and adolescent development (Trent et al., 2019). The lack of prosocial role models is attributed to the lack of institutional resources and connections to job networks (Rhodes & Schechter, 2014). The risk of oppression and discrimination is also high because most residents are ethnic or racial minorities causing significant stress which hinder healthy development (Rhodes & Schechter, 2014).

When analyzed in the context of the social isolation theory, it can be argued that the occurrence of social isolation in concentrated areas of poverty where social connectedness or human interaction needed for social or economic progress is lacking deprives youths or adolescents living in such locations of the existence of conventional role models that help foster a successful lifestyle. This thwarts economic or social

mobility and negatively impacts the opportunities to be responsible citizens (Wilson, 2012).

The words of participants also reveal that if public housing communities that are predominantly Black neighborhoods had programs that allow the strengths or competences of youths to be recognized, the risky behaviors which many identified will be minimized or possibly eliminated. Policy interventions that focus on the strengths and competences of adolescents are crucial. The use of a positive youth development framework such as Richard Catalano's 15 PYD constructs may be a useful guide in improving the situations identified by participants.

In the context of Catalano 15 PYD construct, the study's findings indicate the need for youths in Black neighborhoods to bond with schools, families or the community (Shek et al., 2019) to promote academic excellence. Participant 7 shared the need for young adults to be encouraged to develop social networks with the right people so as to build their careers and stay motivated. Self-Efficacy in the model represents the ability of young people to achieve their own goals through their personal efforts (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 4 shared experiences on academic goals and going to schools they could afford at the time. Resilience represents adapting to stressful situations and life changes in a healthy way (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 3 confirmed that poorer families in Black communities need to adapt to stressful situations found in poorly funded schools. Cognitive competence involves adolescents being encouraged to make appropriate and effective decisions to prevent school failure or dropouts (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 10 shared the experience of nearly dropping out of school because of the lack of good

teachers while so many colleagues dropped out. Behavioral competence in the model refers to encouraging youths to learn to communicate effectively, develop a positive attitude and take appropriate actions (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 7 expressed the need for young adults in the Black communities to develop better attitudes about school.

Self-determination is the ability to think for oneself and avoid developmental setbacks (Shek et al., 2019). Participant 6 shares the experience of having a hard time thinking and setting career goals because of limited opportunities in the neighborhood. A clear and positive identity in the model refers to encouraging youths to develop a sense of personal responsibility and cultivating leadership traits (Jenson et al., 2013). Participant 5 shared that more needs to be done in Black communities to prepare kids for college and get them started on a career. Catalano's model also includes the recognition for positive behavior which represents personal accomplishments or other desired behaviors in youth (Shek et al., 2019; Jenson et al., 2013). Participant 9 shared the experience of encouraging public housing residents who are ill-prepared for college because of poor conditions in their neighborhood. Opportunities for prosocial involvement refers to encouraging youths to perform prosocial activities such as sports, music, dance (Shek et al., 2019). This is in line with what participant 6 shared that living in Black neighborhoods where there are no good schools did not provide access to the needed opportunities or activities to be successful.

Limitations of the Study

A major limitation to the current study is that the findings are confined to the experiences of the twelve individuals interviewed. Participants' perspectives could span a

wider range of experiences beyond the scope of this study. Further research on the subject matter may uncover more details considered useful to interested researchers.

Some of those interviewed were not residents of public housing communities though they possessed adequate experience of the living conditions in the neighborhoods and the likely impact on Black youths. Not being a current resident of public housing projects in predominantly Black neighborhoods where the issues are experienced may have limited the study findings. Another limitation to the study may be traced to African American's historical perception about research. The negative historical events and present-day cultural racism (Prather, et al., 2018) may have complicated the process for recruiting participants as some individuals declined to disclose demographic information. Some of the issues identified were related to trust, experimentation, communication, and logistics of the research process (Owens et al., 2014) despite information contained in the consent letter of their rights to refuse to participate, refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study without any consequences.

Another barrier to the study was the limited time available for participants to respond to questions. Many participants were given adequate time to reflect accurately on their opinions. Even though many of the answers were brief, participants still gave calculated responses. Given more time to conduct the exercise would probably have enriched the findings further.

Recommendations

Further research is needed in deeply exploring the perceptions of African American youths living in public housing and how such experiences may be used to

reshape the community from a strength-based perspective. Past studies have focused on the creation of segregated and impoverished communities by discriminatory policies

More scholarly work is needed in researching how living conditions in predominantly African American neighborhoods may translate into positive youth outcomes (Hurd, 2014). The public housing authority which is charged with the administration of public housing policies in the neighborhoods should be actively involved in research activities that are focused on improving the living conditions in the areas. If possible, active partnerships should be formed between local schools, prosocial groups or organisations and the public housing authority to benefit the community. Additional inquiry should also be launched into exploring innovative ways appropriate mechanisms may be developed to help in shaping adolescent perceptions which lead to effective pathways (Hurd, 2014). Further research that will address the distrust of African Americans in research is also necessary to better serve the community (Owens et al., 2014).

Implications

The findings from this study provide deep insights into policy initiatives that address social inequalities, behavioral problems or developmental challenges in disadvantaged neighborhoods with predominantly Black residents. The overrepresentation of African Americans in poor and segregated neighborhoods was identified by participants as a major deterrent to positive youth development. Participants suggested renewed efforts to desegregate neighborhoods through more active government participation in the form of school or community programs that integrate a more

diversified community. This according to them will help curb risky behaviors and shape adolescent development among youths living in overcrowded slums or what is termed the urban ghetto. To ensure success, diverse groups and collaborative organizations will need to work with staff members in public housing to deliver educational and other support services.

More policies and programs are needed to address neighborhood factors that contribute to behavioral risk and foster youth development or the quality of life among African Americans. Popular themes that emerged from this study include deteriorating neighborhoods and poor living conditions, neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency, and academic deficiencies and lack of career motivation. These themes emerged because of decades of disparities in public housing policies created the segregated African American neighborhood. This led to disadvantaged living conditions that inhibited the development of youths in Black neighborhoods. The deteriorating public housing conditions paved the way to concentrated poverty and adverse living conditions that challenged adolescent development in numerous ways. Youths are unable to realize their full potential and natural talents as a result of involvement in criminal acts and illegal activities.

The findings from this study indicate that positive social change can be achieved by improving the conditions of living in the neighborhoods, keeping young adults focused on school and away from the streets to reduce crime levels, and promoting career achievements through excellent performance in academics, job training, and enhancement of creativity or talent potentials. While African American youths endure

poverty and overrepresentation in poor communities, their isolation from mainstream society created negative stressors that result in antisocial or risky behaviors that negate their opportunities to be better citizens. The lack of investments in Black neighborhoods and absence of good schools have been key reasons for violent crimes, poverty and inability to pursue worthwhile careers. The risks and burdens that youths in disadvantaged communities carry are often so overwhelming that they lack the desired energy needed for desired academic performance (Jenson et al., 2013). Participants in this study shared their various perspectives which led to the development of the themes that answered the research questions. Positive social change is expected from improving the deteriorating neighborhoods and poor living conditions, reducing neighborhood crime and investing in neighborhood schools.

The theoretical implications of promoting a social change from the themes generated in this study throws more light on the social isolation theory. Findings further confirm that deteriorating neighborhoods and poor living conditions, neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquency, and academic deficiency and lack of career motivation have been rooted as impediments to development in African American neighborhoods strictly because of social isolation explained by the social isolation theory.

Policy makers at federal, state, or local levels especially in public housing developments should pursue policy initiatives and interventions that will promote a positive social change with recommendations in the following key areas:

- Increase investments in neighborhoods to create jobs and reduce poverty levels. Deteriorating neighborhoods should introduce cleaning projects and

hire jobless residents. More skilled jobs should be relocated from mainstream society to the neighborhoods to attract diverse talent.

- Improve access to healthcare institutions and wellness centers with no restrictions.
- Monitor the conditions of living in the neighborhood and ensure persons capable of working have jobs and provide necessary support to retired persons or those with disabilities.
- Educate the public about dangers of illegal drugs and substance abuse.
- Introduce homelessness prevention programs for low-income individuals.
- Introduce programs to support homeless individuals.
- Encourage parents and guardians to begin protecting youths at a young age from peer pressure, wrong associations or gang involvement. Parents and teachers should promote prosocial associations in schools that utilize the child's talent such as the Science club, basketball club etc.
- Educate youths to display maturity in exercising their rights and avoid unnecessary conflicts with law enforcement where possible.
- Ensure public safety guidelines are constantly followed and stay away from dangerous spots at odd hours of the night.
- Invest in neighborhood schools and promote career achievement among young adults.
- Hire good teachers or counsellors and increase funding to local schools in Black neighborhoods.

- Create programs that enable youths to build on their competences and develop career plans.
- Increase college enrollment and participation in school activities by involving parents or guardians.
- Improve sanitation standards and living conditions in the neighborhood for healthy lifestyles among young adults.
- Promote healthcare evaluation or rehabilitation centers to address mental health or behavioral issues in young adults.
- Provide after-school or homework support to avoid poor grades.
- Invest in art, musical, sports or creativity centers that focus on the assets or talents of youths.
- Introduce scholarship schemes to help with tuition assistance.
- Support job networking and social ties with employers in mainstream society.
- Create mentoring and motivational programs to build self-esteem and other positive values.
- Develop public safety programs without compromising individual rights.

These recommendations are rooted in the constructs of PYD. Effective partnerships between the public housing authority and local schools will be needed to establish programs that utilize the above tools and resources. Policy makers should work directly with youth organizations to build on the strengths, competencies, creativity and resilience of adolescents in the neighborhood. However, it should be noted that in practice the above recommendations may be subject to budget restrictions, administrative

pressures, or political maneuvering which could complicate the implementation process. Appropriate steps should be taken to address these practical challenges whenever they arise.

Conclusion

Policy intervention in fostering youth development in segregated neighborhoods with poverty concentration continues to attract the attention of scholars with interest in positive social change (Jargowsky, 2015). There is an urgent need to understand how neighborhood characteristics affect adolescent development and ultimately influence policy interventions in Black communities where poverty is concentrated (Hurd, 2014). Historically, segregative policies have concentrated African Americans in poor, urban neighborhoods with high unemployment and a lack of sustained interaction with mainstream society. Furthermore, there has been a dearth of parental support in these communities resulting in adolescents having to develop negative relationships outside the home (Hurd, 2014). In this study, participants reiterated the crucial importance of providing the necessary support to parents by getting them actively engaged in school activities, building on competencies that promote career advancements, and creating job or training opportunities that foster positive social change.

In order to curb risky or unruly behavior that is often the result of parental neglect and other environmental stressors, calls should be made for effective policy interventions that will engage and reward committed parenting efforts in school and job training activities. While some participants in this study have the perspective that government involvement will be insignificant if African American parents do not take the initial steps

to address the issue as a community, policy tools and interventions are needed from government agencies in removing environmental stressors and promoting positive social change. Research work has indicated the importance of such government programs in helping young people meet their essential needs for housing, food, healthcare, and other resources including but not limited to the development of skills and providing a sense of belonging to a community afterward (Pavlakis, 2019).

This study recommends suitable partnerships with housing authorities located in African American communities to engage in community-based programs supported by an effective model as described in this study, a clearly articulated need, political action and prestige, resources from committed volunteers, neighborhood involvement, a reliable method of organizing, and institutional support for the program's success. These moves will significantly help to reduce infractions among youths in deteriorating African American neighborhoods, address the impact of public housing policies that inhibit youth development and refocus the attention of new or existing programs to helping adolescents in such communities become better citizens.

The themes developed in this study critically suggest the practical need for policy interventions to address deteriorating neighborhoods and living conditions, neighborhood crime and juvenile delinquencies, and academic deficiency and lack of career motivation. The codes that led to the emergence of the themes were drawn from participants with lived experiences in the neighborhood and deep insights on what can be done in the form of policy interventions to improve the situation in a positive youth development context.

Public housing policies and programs that will help reduce infractions among adolescents living in Black neighborhoods will need to take these emerging themes and subthemes into consideration through effective policy interventions that emphasize the strengths and competencies of young adults rather than their risky behaviors in contributing positively to their communities. An effective way to reduce infractions among adolescents living in Black neighborhoods will be to design public housing policies and programs that are rooted in the constructs of positive youth development that will improve deteriorating neighborhoods and poor living conditions, address crime and juvenile delinquency, and forestall academic deficiencies and lack of career motivation. Further research is needed in eradicating the historical lack of trust that African Americans have developed for research and exploring more innovative ways for uncovering the perspectives of African Americans on developing public housing policies and programs which take into consideration the constructs of positive youth development that emphasize the assets, strengths and competences of youths and not perceiving them as problems to be fixed, a deficit view historically held in the criminal justice system.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Tell me what it is like to live in this community as a young adult?
2. Please describe your experience living in this neighborhood and raising children?
3. What can be done to get parents in the neighborhood more involved in their children's lives?
4. Growing up in this neighborhood, what did you want to be in your youth and how is that different today?
5. When you were growing up, who were your role models?
6. Black churches play a dominant role in Black communities. Is there anything these local churches can do to make the lives of children better in Black neighborhoods?
7. Is there anything that the government should do to increase school attendance in Black neighborhoods?
8. How can assigning youths to mentors benefit the community?
9. What are the best and worst things about growing up in your neighborhood?
10. What did older adults in your family or neighborhood do to support you during your school-age years?
11. In what ways has the public housing program supported you in raising your children or younger relatives to be healthy and successful adults?
12. How has your experience living in public housing affected your career choices in life?

13. Tell me how living in public housing has impeded your chances to be successful or that of anyone you know?
14. How can public housing policies assist in building the creative potentials of youth living in public housing?

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

June 6, 2022

Dear _____,

My name is Adedapo Adeyanju, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University's School of Public Policy and Administration. I am conducting my dissertation study titled "Policy Tools for Youth Development in African American Communities". I have been inspired to select you for participation in this study which explores useful and innovative ways to develop policy tools that will help curb violence and crime in public housing neighborhoods while reducing risky behaviors among young adults. Interviews will be conducted to examine participants' perspectives regarding policy development in deteriorating neighborhoods and therefore experienced residents who are living or have lived in the area will be recruited to examine their valuable perceptions. Your privacy will be respected, and feedback provided will be treated with absolute confidentiality. The information gathered will provide essential or practical solutions to the problems confronting African Americans through policy interventions that help to shape the condition of living in such communities. A participant agreement form is attached with the interview questions which may last between 30 to 45 minutes over the phone, through text messaging, in person or through the social media. It is strongly believed that your participation will help open a healthier environment where everyone can call home. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at [email address redacted]. Thank you for your interest and participation.