University of Cincinnati

Date: 7/11/2017

I, Amaha Sellassie, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.

It is entitled:

The Land That They Forgot: Testimonies of a Community's Lived Experience within Hypersegregation

Student's name: **Amaha Sellassie**

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Jennifer Malat, Ph.D.

Committee member: Earl Wright II, Ph.D.

UNIVERSITY OF Cincinnati

27943

The Land That They Forgot

Testimonies of a Community's Lived Experience within Hypersegregation

June 2017

A thesis submitted to the
Graduate School
of the University of Cincinnati
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In the Department of Sociology
of the College of Arts and Sciences

By

Amaha Sellassie
B.A., Wright State University
2014

Committee:
Jennifer Malat, Ph.D. (Chair)
Earl Wright II, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

In 1903 W.E.B Du Bois identified that the greatest challenge of the 21 century would be the problem of the color line. Over 100 years later this color line continues to be structured as the opportunity line, creating areas of concentrated disadvantage for predominantly Black communities and concentrated advantage for majority White communities. Hypersegregation, and the ensuing disparity have been extensively documented quantitatively, but little is known about the day to day lived experience from the perspective of those living in isolation. It is only from hearing the voices at the margins that the inner workings of the structure of hypersegregation can be known. To lift up the voice of the Black residents living in hypersegregation three focus groups were conducted in Dayton, Ohio. Four central themes emerged: lack of opportunity for the youth, struggles living in a food deserts, the dangers of excessive access to alcohol, and the living environment is designed for them to fail. Taken altogether, research participants concluded that their environment was intentionally designed highlighting the apparatus of hypersegregation as structural violence.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my committee Dr. Jennifer Malat and Dr. Earl Wright II for believing in the validity and worth of this endeavor. I truly appreciate your constant patience and guidance that has enabled me to build a solid foundation for future research in support of marginalized communities. I also want to thank the research participants whose voice and poignant insights provided light for my path. I want to say I see you, I hear you and honored to walk with you. May this thesis honor your voice.

I want to thank my colleague Reece Freeman along with my future colleague Cierra Henderson for helping me conduct my research and data collection. Y'all helped the entire process to go so smoothly. I also want to thank Robbie Brandon and Sunlight Village for helping me with recruitment and food during the focus groups, your selflessness is greatly appreciated (WestDaytonStrong!). Thank you Claire Preston for your countless hours reading over drafts and listening while I tried to flesh out my ideas, your constant encouragement was strength in the midst of the storm. I sincerely want to say thank you to my department at Sinclair Community College, I truly have felt a level of love and support I never knew was possible in a work environment. It would have been impossible to complete my thesis without your constant support, presence, and feedback.

Thank you to all my friends, family, and community organizations who constantly checked on me, brought by food when it was crazy, helped edit and genuinely showed interest in my research and in my growth! I want to give a special shout out to my parents, who supported me and believed in me regardless of what it looked like on the surface, I truly would not have the

heart and passion I have today without your upbringing. In closing I want to give a special special shout out to my daughter Hone Sellassie, who not only was a source of inspiration, constant encouragement and support but also has sacrificed much for me to be able to work in the community as I have, and also have the time to finish this thesis. Hone this work is truly both of our labors!!!

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Over a century ago W.E.B. Du Bois conducted a landmark study on the African American community of Philadelphia. This study, the first urban sociological study in America, combined urban ethnography, social history and descriptive statistics (Du Bois[1899] 1999) in order to understand the social conditions and living conditions of the Black community. This was necessary because during the time of slavery science was used to validate that Blacks were subhuman and, therefore, could be treated as animals. This narrative persisted after enslavement. Upon the abolishment of slavery, Blacks suffering from years of generational trauma and internalized racism struggled to find their place in society. Blacks were no longer enslaved but the majority of Whites did not accept Blacks as equal human beings with inalienable rights. This struggle for meaning, value, and place for Blacks in America became known as the Negro problem. James Baldwin (1984:172) explains "at the root of the Negro problem is the necessity of the white man to find a way of living with the Negro in order to live with himself." America had labeled Black as an enigmatic without having an understanding of the root causes of the term "Negro problem" was their inability to acknowledge the humanity of Blacks. Du Bois sought to use scientific investigation to provide clarity and dispel misinformation concocted to support the narrative of Black inferiority. Du Bois's research revealed "the Negro group as a symptom, not a cause; as a striving, palpitating group, and not an inert, sick body of crime; as a long historic development and not a transient occurrence" (Du Bois 1940:59). Du Bois emerged in an era when racial categories were increasingly being created, assigned meanings to the categories and justified these by purported biological/genetic differences. According to ethnographer Elijah

Anderson, Du Bois refuted this notion and asserted that "the Negro's problems were not rooted in their heredity but rather in their environment and social conditions that confronted them" (Du Bois [1899]1999: xvii.). He poignantly identified what Blacks in America were experiencing was not a result of some biologic or genetic deficiency but rather the result of historical dehumanizing decisions imposed on them, essentially the structural violence of the color line.

Over 150 years after their enslavement, one durable feature of the Black experience in America has been generational trauma, shame, and limited access to opportunity. Du Bois ([1903] 1907:13) first recognized this as the color line when he stated "the problem of the twentieth century is the problems of the color –line – the relations of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea." The color line Du Bois identified has become, in effect, an opportunity line that structures communities of people into regions of concentrated advantage and disadvantage based upon race. Volumes of research document how the color line segregates populations, resulting in ecologically distinct communities inhabited by Blacks and Whites. Such cases of segregation often lead to extreme circumstances of hypersegregation. The following thesis seeks to build upon this topic of research while simultaneously looking beyond the veil to explore how Black residents living under hypsergregation describe and understand their lived experience in Dayton, Ohio.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Color Line and Hypersegregation

In the 1900s Du Bois described the color line as a peculiar state and a problem plaguing America, which it urgently needed to address. He asked the nation to consider "the problem of

the color line, not simply as a national and personal question but rather in its larger world aspect in time and space"(Du Bois 1900:47.). Du Bois recognized there were insufficient opportunities for the development of people of color. A century later, this peculiar phenomenon has been structured as the opportunity line. In this present context, spaces of both opportunity and access to resources are demarcated by the notion of race, with high density African American communities living in areas defined by low quality schools, concentrated poverty, mass incarceration and lacking access to quality food, healthcare and jobs (Massey and Denton 1993; Sampson 2012).

The color fault line that Du Bois proclaimed continues to express itself through residential segregation with Blacks overwhelmingly living in communities of low opportunity. Massey and Denton (1993:8) depict how residential segregation plays a role in enabling all other forms of racial oppression, stating that "residential segregation is the institutional apparatus that supports other racial discriminatory processes and binds them together into a coherent and uniquely effective system of racial subordination." Segregation is the framework that enables a multiplex of oppression grounded in the social construction of race.

Massey and Denton (1988) describe residential segregation as a global construct characterized by five attributes: exposure, evenness, clustering, centralization, and concentration. The first attribute is exposure. *Exposure* measures the probability that minorities have often been in contact with the majority group. Or, in other words, how likely they are to have minority neighbors. *Evenness* is the extent to which the percentage of minorities living in a neighborhood equals the proportions of minority and majority groups living within the city. As this number

becomes more uneven, segregation increases. For example, if Asians comprise 10% of the population in a city, then 10% of each neighborhood should be Asian in order for segregation to not exist. *Clustering* describes the extent to which minority neighborhoods are joined to each other creating one large area. *Centralization* means the degree to which minority groups are centered in and around the urban core. And lastly, *concentration* describes the amount of physical space occupied by minority groups; as population density increases so does segregation. If four out of five of these dynamics are present, the area is determined to be hypersegregated. Recent research by Johnston, Poulsen and Forrest (2007) recognizes that these five measures can be grouped into two superdimensions of segregation separation (unevenness, exposure and clustering) and location (concentration and centralization). Hypersegregation occurs "when a group is so segregated that its members have little chance of contact with outsiders" (Parillo 2008:463). Within the framework of residential location, hypersegregation indicates an extreme improbability that members of different groups live next to each other (Parillo 2008).

Effects of Hypersegregation

In America, hypersegregation is more common among Blacks compared to other racial groups (Massey and Denton 1988; Wilkes and Iceland 2004). During the year 2000, Parillo (2008) found that 38.5% of the Black community (which equates to approximately 13.3 million) lived in hypersegregation. What is most alarming about this statistic is the way in which persistent racial segregation couples with durability of concentrated poverty. Massey (1990:5) found that "rising rates of black poverty interact with high levels of black segregation to

concentrate poverty in black neighborhoods." Subsequently, Charles (2003) implicates hypersegregation as a key factor in the concentration of poverty within Black communities. Not only does hypersegregation lead to poverty, it also creates an opportunity line clustering advantage in some neighborhoods and disadvantage in others (Sampson 2012). Sampson (2012:100) explains, "There is a deep and divided structure in the concentration of wellbeing across multiple dimensions" within segregated communities. The pockets of concentrated disadvantage are frequently Black or nonWhite spaces, making the opportunity line the durable manifestation of Du Bois's color line. As a result, the stability of hypersegregation sustains generational poverty in the Black community (Sampson 2012).

The concentrated disadvantage stemming from hypersegregation emerges as an interdependent and interconnected web of concentrated poverty, crime, incarceration, unemployment, infant mortality, violence, hopelessness and declining financial investment in the neighborhoods, which can drastically limit the residents' choices of escaping poverty (Massey and Denton 1993; Sampson 2012; Desmond 2016). Sampson (2012:46) explains,

> Crime and health-related problems tend to come bundled together at the neighborhood level are predicted by neighborhood characteristics such as concentration of poverty, racial isolation, single parent families, and to a lesser extent rates of residential and housing instability.

Not only are these factors bundled together, but they are also interdependent. For example, Eitle (2009:35) found that "hypersegregation was a significant, independent predictor of Black

homicide rates." Black homicide rates, in turn, are also a predictor of infant mortality rates (Sampson 2012). To take it one step further, a strong positive correlation exists between infant mortality rates and the presence of food deserts (Broad 2016). All of these factors, or strings of the web, may appear independent on the surface but underneath are all a byproduct of the concentrated deprivation created by hypersegregation (Massey and Denton 1993; Sampson 2012).

The interdependent factors generated within areas of hypersegregation work together as an interlocking structure which facilitates resources and opportunity to some and acts as a barrier to others on the basis of race. This structure acts as a resistance to minority groups while simultaneously functioning as a catalyst for majority groups. "Neighborhoods that are both Black and poor, and that are characterized by high unemployment and female-headed families, are ecologically distinct, a characteristic that is not simply the same thing as low economic status" (Sampson 2012:101). Hypersegregation creates communities of not just disadvantage but of ecological distinctions, whose underpinnings are different. Massey (1990) elaborates on this when he references how segregation builds deprivation into the socioeconomic environment.

The interlocking structure of segregation impacts the design of the neighborhood and level of resources which are social determinants of health (NACCHO 2014). Segregation is a social determinant of health implicated as the root cause of racial health disparities (Osypuk 2008). Williams (2005:1) concludes

> the residential concentration of African Americans is high and distinctive, and the related inequities in neighborhood environments, socioeconomic circumstances, and medical

care are important factors in initiating and maintaining racial disparities in health. African Americans are more prone to cancer, diabetes, hypertension, preterm births and other chronic disease than any other population in the United States (Landrine and Corral 2009). These disparities, which hold true historically across socioeconomic lines, contribute to a higher death rate for Blacks (Sampson 2012)

Oftentimes, highly segregated communities are characterized by lack of supermarkets, a condition known as food deserts. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service defines a food desert as an area where more than 40% of the population has an income less than or equal to 200% of the Federal Poverty Threshold and lives more than a mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (USDA 2015). Within the Black community, there are two to three times fewer grocery stores than in White communities with similar SES (Landrine and Corral 2009). This is significant because Cheadle (1991:257) found "several statistically significant relationships between measures of the availability of healthful products in grocery stores and the reported consumption of healthful products by individuals living near those stores." The correlation between access to healthy foods, fresh fruits and vegetables and their consumption demonstrates the impact the location of grocery stores has on the health of the local community (Cheadle 1991). With no alternative, the community is forced to eat more canned and/or processed foods and faces limited and lower quality of fresh produce. Interestingly, while supermarkets are scarce, fast food restaurants are prevalent. "Segregated black neighborhoods contain 2–3 times more fast food outlets than do white neighborhoods of comparable SES. This contributes to Blacks consuming more fast food than Whites, which in turn contributes to Black

disparities in obesity and diabetes" (Landrine and Corral 2009:3). This high level of access to fast food combined with low level access to quality fresh food has a direct impact on obesity caused by increased consumption of less favorable food (Landrine and Corral 2009).

Another social determinant of health is the lack of recreational facilities which in turn leads to lack of physical activity for children, as well as adults. Black neighborhoods contain fewer parks and recreation facilities compared to White neighborhoods (Center of Disease Control and Prevention 1999). This lack of facilities provides less opportunity to exercise, which directly relates to quality of health. Landrine and Corral (2009:4) state

> "Given the increased access to fast food and lower access to supermarkets and recreational facilities in segregated Black neighborhoods, it is not surprising that BMI increases with segregation; every 1 SD increase in Black segregation is associated with a 0.423 increase in Black body mass index and a 14% increase in Blacks' odds of being overweight"

Bridging the Knowledge Gap through Qualitative Methods

When researchers attempt to understand what is happening in the world, oftentimes there is value in using a mixed methods approach. A plethora of quantitative data defining hypersegregation and its macro effects exists. In contrast, fewer studies utilize qualitative or mixed methods, which is surprising because segregation is common amongst Blacks in America (Massey and Denton 1988). Research on poverty in the Black community, such as ethnographer Elijah Anderson's groundbreaking book, *Code of the Street* (1999) and sociologist William

Julious Wilson (2009) *More Than Just Race,* offer insightful observations of the Black experience. While these qualitative studies provide valuable information on how people navigate their lives living in poverty and theorize why they are poor, they primarily focus on the role of culture as an outside observer. To add to this knowledge what is needed is a broader based approach rooted in the words and perspectives of those living in hypersegregation (Eitzen and Smith 2009). C. Wright Mills (1959) in his groundbreaking book *Sociological Imagination* explains that one of the undertakings of sociology is to realize that the individual experience is inextricably interconnected to social forces. Therefore by hearing and understanding the lived experience, knowledge of structure emanates.

Qualitative research, and interviewing in particular, is a method to gain access to how others observe their experience and the world in which they live (Weiss 1994). Weiss (1994:1) states that through interviewing "We can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions." This provides a window into the past, their interior experiences along with how they perceive the future. According to Gilkes (1984:4) "an oppressed group's experiences may put its members in a position to see things differently and therefore develop an alternate way of knowing and acting in the world." Key strategist of the modern Civil Rights movement, Ella Baker corroborates this by stating "oppressed people whatever their level of formal education have the ability to understand and interpret the world around them, to see the world for what it is and move to transform it" (Ransby 2003:139). It is the experience of those at the margins that reveal the inner workings of structure. The marginalized experience of marginalization provides insight into structure and how it operates in their lives (Freire 1968;

Mills 1997). There is knowledge that only experience can offer (Collins 1989; Minkler and Wallerstein 2008). Due to the alternative experience of the oppressed, they have their own perspective, interpretation and understanding of oppression which is independent and outside of the realm of the understanding of people in power (Collins 1989). Patricia Hill Collins (1989) explains how "A subordinate group not only experiences a different reality than a group that rules, but a subordinate group may interpret reality differently than a dominant group." Without this alternative interpretation of reality being readily available, we can never know the full effect of policy decisions made by those in power. This understanding has led to growing momentum to "put the less powerful in the center of the knowledge creation process" (Hall 1992:1), a process which has subsequently grown to be been called centering at the margins (Gilkes 1984).

According to Eitzen and Smith (2009: viii) "without hearing the voices of the impoverished, our understanding of their social life is incomplete. Analyses from the top down miss the insights that only those experiencing poverty can articulate." The objective of this investigation is to gather information about the experience of marginalization within a hypersegregated space. What are the issues of hypersegregation? What needs to be addressed? Without qualitative data one cannot ascertain the complexities of the situation nor gain a comprehensive understanding to these questions. These data are crucial to understanding marginalized communities such that public policy can be developed which includes the voice and/or input of people experiencing marginalization.

METHODS

The Case of Dayton

Dayton is a small, postindustrial city located in southwest Ohio with a population of approximately 141,003 (U.S. Census Data 2010). Dayton's racial composition is primarily Black and White comprising about 95% of the total population, with 51.7% of the population being White and 42.9% being Black. Dayton is an interesting city because the Miami River runs through the center. This has acted as a natural barrier separating Blacks from Whites with 96% of Blacks living on the west side of Dayton and 94% of Whites living on the east side of Dayton (Public Health 2015).

According to data from the 2000 census analyzed by Wilkes and Iceland (2004:1), "Twenty nine metropolitan areas could be classified as having Black-White hypersegregation." Among the 29, Wilkes and Iceland (2004) found Dayton Ohio to be hypersegregated due to being segregated in 4 out of the 5 areas. This condition has developed within the last 15 years. A recent study (Massey and Tannen 2015) drawing on 2010 data found that Dayton still persists as an area of hypersegration with high levels of segregation in four dimensions: unevenness, clustering, concentration, and centralization.

To understand the effects that hypersegregation has had on the social determinants of health and the resulting disparate access to opportunity in Dayton, the "Opportunity Map" developed by the Kirwan Institute was used to measure and visualize a community's access to opportunity. The Kirwan Institute (2013:5) defines opportunity as "a situation or condition favorable for attainment of a goal. Opportunity is also a good position, chance, or prospect for

advancement or success." They created an opportunity framework which proposes "there are complex and interconnected opportunity structures that have a significant role in shaping an individual's quality of life." They have identified five key structures that work in conjunction with each other to either support access to opportunity or act as a barrier to opportunity. These structures are healthcare, education, employment, housing, and civic engagement. Furthermore, they categorized opportunity into five categories: very high, high, moderate, low, and very low. For example, communities that are designated as high opportunity have quality education, affordable housing, low crime, and access to fresh, healthy food and parks/recreation.

In 2014 Montgomery County Public Health conducted a study to measure and map how opportunity is distributed in Dayton (see figure 1). They then proceeded to sort the neighborhoods in Dayton according to their opportunity scores. The results confirmed the research of Massey and Denton (1993) that hypersegregation creates structural inequality based on race. According to Montgomery County Public Health (2015), 58% of the total Black population in Dayton lives in areas deemed low or very low opportunity. Conversely, this same report (2015:6) states "almost two-thirds (64%) of the total White population live in communities of high or very high opportunity." Almost the entire west side of Dayton, whose residents are primarily Black, is deemed very low or low opportunity. On the other hand, the entire east side except for one section is categorized as high or very high opportunity.

When narrowing the focus to the amount of access to opportunity at the neighborhood level, the results are even more startling with 77% of Blacks residing in very low opportunity

areas compared to just 19% of Whites. This pattern is maintained in the low opportunity area as well, with a mixture of 68% Black and 29% White. While looking at the two highest opportunity categories, the pattern is reversed. In the communities with very high opportunity, the population is 85% White and 10% Black. This is consistent in the community's labeled high opportunity with a population of 74% White and 20% Black. In the neighborhoods which scored a moderate opportunity score, the racial makeup is closer to even with 55% of the population White and 40% Black. This appears to be where the color line emerges, forming a middle ground. When the opportunity is average, the racial makeup is the most balanced. When there is a divergence from this middle ground, the disparity and subsequent clustering of advantage and/disadvantage emerges. This is made clear when analyzing the low opportunity category: immediately the percentage of White drops by half to 29% in comparison the Black population significantly increases to a total 68%. The fault line in Dayton therefore exists in the "moderate range."

As previously mentioned, a great deal of research connects concentrated poverty and segregation (Massey and Denton 1993). The median income for Dayton is $28,456 (US Census 2010). The public health report found that the median income is approximately $8,700 greater in the high and very high opportunity communities compared to the lower opportunity communities (Public Health 2015). The report (Public Health 2015:20) states "the percent of people living in poverty is twice as high in low and very low opportunity communities then it is in communities with high and very high opportunity." This directly relates to concentrated poverty, with the majority of Blacks in Dayton clustered in neighborhoods of poverty.

Data

To understand the life experiences of those living in a low opportunity hypersegregated Black community, I conducted focus group interviews. According to Morgan (1998:11), focus groups "use guided group discussions to generate a rich understanding of the participants' experiences and beliefs." A qualitative method was chosen because a great deal of quantitative data has been generated in this community. However, as of yet, there is very little understanding of how the data actually translates into the life experiences of the residents. Focus groups enable a natural flow of conversation as participants relate their personal and shared experiences opening the possibility of developing a shared meaning. In this way focus groups can help develop a collective voice. As Gamson (2002:17) suggests, the focus group method "allows us to observe the process of people constructing and negotiating shared meaning, using their natural vocabulary." I am committed to the possibility of the participants gaining understanding of their own experiences through their sharing and getting to know each other. My intention is to follow a practice of humanizing research (Paris and Winn 2014) which positions participants as subjects instead of objects to be studied. Lastly, I decided to utilize focus groups in order to center at the margins (Gilkes 1984). The focus group participants are residents of West Dayton who are normally ignored by policy makers. Historically, they experience the results of policy decisions determined by others instead of being co-creators of their environment. This group deserves to have their voice heard because their knowledge gained from the direct experience of public policy being implemented matters.

The focus groups were conducted in areas of West Dayton that previous research designated as low and very low opportunity (Public Health 2015). Because Dayton is

hypersegregated, the majority of these residents were Black. I intentionally limited the recruitment boundary to low opportunity areas. The rationale for this was I wanted the voices that are least likely heard to speak so that the rest of the Black community, along with Dayton in general, can hear what they are experiencing and saying. I decided to truly center my work in a marginalized community, a community that is most often on the receiving end, even from decisions and input from other Black folk.

One concern with utilizing focus groups is being able to obtain valid and reliable information. Trust is often a major factor determining the comfort level of participants to share their experiences. Du Bois helped pioneer the utilization of insider researchers as a means to acquire accurate knowledge about the experience of the Black community because he realized that White researchers would be unable to galvanize the necessary level of trust (Wright 2002; Wright 2012). I am Black and to help mitigate any trust issues, I conducted the focus groups with the assistance of two note takers who were also Black. The focus groups were conducted with a loose interview guide (see appendix) as a means to open up the conversation and provide some basic guidance, but respondents were given opportunities to allow the conversation to develop naturally. Follow up questions were given in response to the emergent dialogue, and if topics of interest were not discussed within the natural flow, specific questions about these topics were asked.

Three focus groups were held with a total of 26 participants. 18 of the participants were women and 8 men. Twenty-five of the residents self-identified as Black and one as White. The majority of the participants either attended or graduated from local primarily Black high schools.

Seven identified as having some college, two had Associate degree and two had Baccalaureate degrees. There were two primary means of recruitment. The first was the utilization of Sunlight Village which is a non-profit organization offering comprehensive mental health services and holistic wellness programs that are rooted and invested in the low opportunity areas of West Dayton. Representatives of Sunlight Village went door-to-door inviting local residents to participate. I also utilized my local networks, commonly known as snowball sampling, to recruit participants. Two of the focus groups were in the community room of a local housing complex and one was conducted at Sunlight Village.

The overall orientation for this research is a social justice framework utilizing a Black sociological perspective. Watson (1976) explains that mainstream sociology implies, among other things, the assumption of value free analysis. It is because of the assumption of value free analysis, which often masks underlying assumptions and power, I chose to use the perspective of Black sociology in this present research to help facilitate understandings of the Black experience in West Dayton, Ohio. As defined by Wright and Calhoun (2006:16) Black sociology is:

> An area of research, which may be performed by Black or White scholars, that is focused on eliminating Blacks from social oppression through objective scientific investigations into their social, economic, and physical condition for the express purpose of obtaining data aimed at understanding, explaining, and ameliorating the problems discovered in the Black American community in a manner that could have social policy implications.

Black sociology primarily explores inequality in the distribution of economic and political

privilege, social conflict, and race-related social identities within the carrying out of sociological inquiry from the context of a society deeply impacted by institutional racism (Watson 1976).

Key to the lens of Black sociology is having the

> source of their perspective on society the "Black experience" of physical and mental abuse based on racial membership and/or a sense of social and psychological degradation that may develop through direct and indirect experiences of racially discriminatory treatment (Watson 1976:116).

This is important because

> with few exceptions, white sociology has not given to black people any systematic theory concerning the nature of their oppressed status, its historical antecedents, nor the process by which their deprivation has been stabilized in the social structure (Staples 1973:395).

This present study seeks to understand what the collective experience of residents in low opportunity areas is in order to be utilized by the community as a tool for their own self-determination.

Analysis

To enable the data to guide the process I utilized grounded theory. According to Charmaz (2006:2), the key to grounded theory is "data forms the foundation of our theory and our analysis of these data generates the concepts we construct." Over the years some of the basic principles of

grounded methodology approach include: “1. simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis, 2.constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses, 3.using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis, 4.advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis” (Charmaz 2006:20). During the entire process of conducting the focus groups and coding, I utilized an analysis of what was surfacing to discern the direction and emphasis of the research. Preliminary coding and analytical memos in-between the focus groups was done along with grounded theory being employed because of its flexibility and responsiveness to the data that emerged during my research (Charmaz 2006). According to grounded theory, the data drives the research process instead of having a predetermined closed process testing hypothesis (Glauser and Straus 1967). As a result, my third focus group was most informed through the utilization of knowledge revealed during the first two focus groups. In this way I utilized a process that “puts Black at the center of analysis” (Wright and Calhoun 2006:2) as I deciphered what is happening in the low and very low opportunity areas of West Dayton.

FINDINGS

Youth

A primary theme throughout the focus groups interviews was a deep concern for the youth and their future. Residents acknowledged that the youth are the future, but for most participants there was an overriding concern for what their future actually holds. The basic sentiment was a remembrance of the activities, programs, opportunities and recreation centers that were readily available when the participants were growing up along with how these things had a powerful positive impact on their lives. They communicated overwhelming unease that youth today do not have access to these same opportunities and expressed deep worry for how the absence could affect the present lives of youth, as well as their futures.

> We had plenty of opportunities when we were young. Roosevelt was free. We had Mallory for swimming. Other stuff to do, you know the Linden Center, Roosevelt Center. All the centers. But now they gone, I don't understand why. (50 yr old female)

Many participants reminisced on the activities of their childhood. There was the Roosevelt Center where youth could attend for free. There was the Mallory pool where youth could hang out and swim in the summer. Most of the places that operated by the city were closed down a few years ago, or they now charge prices that serve as a barrier to participation, especially if youth come from larger families.

> You never had to pay for these things. Something for the kids to do after school. And you had a lot of kids even then that were raising themselves. At least they can go to the center and learn things. If their parents are not home they can go to the center and be safe. They don't even have a safe haven. If their parents are not home and they go to Roosevelt or somewhere, "Oh you're hanging out. Did you pay to come in here today?" You know, "I need a place to get warm right now until my parents get home." But "no you can't stay

> here". And you know, it's the way they're treating people and talk to people. It's- they're not doing it nowadays. It's all about that dollar now. It's all about that. If you don't have that dollar, you're just not accepted.(50 yr old Women)

If the youth do not have money they can be stigmatized and pushed out of spaces that can provide them with adult supervision, attention and role models (Ridge 2011).

Even the parks, which historically were places with playground equipment where youth could hang out, are now barren. One grandmother explains her experience this way:

> I have lots of grandsons, five of them, and when they want to play, you know, I tell them, ride by the park, Berkam Park. We used to have stuff there to play with**,** but now you just got green grass and two things, some kind of swing something. You know, it's just nowhere to really relax, nowhere to just go sit and chill at. You're always constantly just trying to make it work, and it's a constant struggle. (60 yr old female)

The lack of places to go or free activities to keep youth occupied after school and on the weekends creates a constant struggle for them to find things to do. Some common questions posed by participants are: "What are the youth to do?" and "What do they expect?" The fee barrier coupled with the closing of community centers, public pools and canceled youth programs leave youth today with very limited options while simultaneously potentially exposing them to deviance via their neighborhood environment, the internet, and daily life. A recurring narrative is that youth are left with few opportunities or pastimes, creating a situation where they have all this time on their hands and then expecting them to thrive and do well.

> So once again I just feel like the social piece for young people was very important. There is nothing, and if you take away everything from those that need to be active, you're going to get a lot of violence or baby making. You're just going to get this. There's nothing else to do, and like everyone was saying this feeling trapped, and I was like well I really have to deal with this, but every time I get in that mode I'm reminded why I'm here, and I keep trying a little bit harder. (35 yr old male)

Given this knowledge that youth must be engaged in order to thrive, some question whether the abandonment of recreational opportunities for adolescents has been intentional. Data proves that youth involvement in after school activities reduces the risk of being involved in serious delinquent behavior including fights, violence or carrying a weapon (Booth et el 2008). This has proven to be true on the west side of Dayton, as one resident expressed:

> My concern about this neighborhood is they took so much away kids don't have no activities or anything to do so that cause them to get into trouble because if you got nothing but time on your hands and you're bored, you're going to be hanging with the wrong crowd or whatever the case may be, but you know when you have the centers, the park, Triangle park, holidays used to go to the park and every family barbecue this that and the other. We don't have that anymore. (40 yr old female)

If opportunities that support success and wellbeing are not made available youth will find other ways to occupy their time that, at best, are less productive and, at worst, detrimental to their lives.

> They're not getting no attention. They going to get it from somebody. So they see somebody. I'm going to hang with him. He gave me a couple dollars. You know, he talks to me. So I'm going to be like him. That's my role model. Give me something better. I ain't no angel or nothing but I ain't no fool either. I'm pro kids. (35 yr old male)

One main concern about getting the "wrong" type of attention is what type of knowledge they are learning. The minds of youth are like sponges that will take in and normalize the knowledge given to them. If there are no outlets created for the youth to express themselves, such as arts, sports leagues, community gardens etc., they will find others ways to do it through the limited pathways available, even to their own detriment. One grandmother put it this way:

> If we can give them music, the things that they relate to, then I think that that would in a way also present itself in a positive way. Give them, they have to have a way to express themselves, and the only way that they're expressing themselves is through the violence.

When speaking about the youth and their access to opportunity there is a sense of despair and anger as if a generation is slipping away and they don't know how to stop it. Furthermore, amongst the focus groups participants an underlying sentiment exists that not only do youth options no longer exist, but that "they" (local Whites) deliberately took the potential for youth to flourish away.

> Need stuff like that; they took all that away. I remember they used to have lunches at parks. They don't have that no more. They used to have places that kids can go play games. They had the game room. They don't have that no more, so it's a lot of things that we can bring back. I think it would be better because that, they don't have nothing to do. I'm going to put it like that, or you got kids, babies having babies. They like, they alone, they just need someone to talk to, some place to go to, just have a chat room or a place where they can watch, you know we used to go to Sunset or Sharenwood. (50yr old woman)

Whether deliberate or not, there is a real sense that opportunities have been taken from the youngest residents of west Dayton.

The community has many innovative ideas on how to create space for the youth to be engaged in productive ways. They speak of possibilities such as chess, computer coding, sports leagues and sewing. Residents also expressed their willingness to help in the development and implementation of youth programs, which would be a good way to promote local leadership as well as trust between the young and old. Furthermore, participants referenced some of the vacant buildings and an empty field that could be repurposed as spaces for youth and adult activities. The residents see so much potential in the youth and acknowledge their brilliance.

> They love computers. You can have them building their own software. In this community, that would be great. You'd be surprised how smart some of these kids are. But they don't have opportunities. Because they can't afford a computer. They can't afford the classes. They don't have the classes at their school. I mean, I got a lot of nephews and stuff now that's real at the computer but like you said, what kind of opportunity or places can they go to get that knowledge? Information or whatever. (40yr old male)

However if there are no computer coding classes, for example, the corner is a readily available substitute educational and socialization system which can impart knowledge of the streets as explained by differential association theory (Sutherland 1939). This theory, which describes how through association, individuals can adopt the values and methods of criminal behavior was further remarked upon by another participant in response to the preceding quote.

> Half of the kids will fix your phones. But you see, since we don't get it like that we got a lot of kids that can tell you how much a dope bag costs. Or how to rob a car. How to do things like that. (35yr old male)

Youth conform to and normalize what they are exposed to, which explains why their healthy development is contingent upon both access to opportunity and support systems that can walk alongside and guide them. Focus group participants acknowledged the necessity of exposure to positive outlets and asserted the need for youth energy and potential to be directed into productive avenues that benefit the community.

"*Everything is a Travel*"

Dayton, the 6th largest city in Ohio, lacks grocery stores and provides limited means of transportation to residents, further restricting their access to fresh fruits and vegetables. When it comes to food access, the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC 2015) most recent Food Hardship studies found that Dayton ranks as the second worst city in the nation for food hardship

in households with children. The study scored Dayton's "food hardship rate" as 29.4, meaning that 29.4 percent of households with children surveyed by Gallup reported difficulties obtaining enough healthy food. This is exacerbated on the Black side of hypersegregated Dayton which is almost entirely a food desert (Public Health 2015). For the entire west side of Dayton, which is approximately 26.15 square miles with a population of approximately 56,065, there is only one full service grocery store, Kroger, with a few smaller grocery stores, corner stores, and dollar stores that are used as grocery stores (Census 2015). The lack of supermarkets is a common frustration in west Dayton. The following exchange is a good example of residents' common sentiments:

> Sellassie: How would you describe your access to quality food?
>
> 28yr old male 1: (laughing) Where's the quality food?
>
> Sellassie: You said where's the quality food?
>
> 28yr old male 1: Yeah, because you ain't gonna get it at them Arab stores, there or down here.
>
> 42yr old female 1 "You can't get nothing fresh down there. You get it. You come home, and the meat already brown, and they still selling it to you. The only thing I buy is cigarettes."
>
> Sellassie: So if I understand what you're saying, you're saying that there is no access to quality food?
>
> 42yr old female 1: Uh-huh.
>
> 28yr old male 1: See what I'm saying, if you want vegetables, you ain't getting it. You have to accept what they giving you
>
> Sellassie: You said you gotta accept what they give you?
>
> 28yr old male 1: You get what they give you because basically if you don't have transportation to go to a quality market, then you have to accept what they give you, and then they tax you so much. I'll tell you what you do, go to any of these grocery stores that

> they own, and when you go to look at a thing of pickle relish, and they sitting up here talking about a dollar something, you get it for $0.65 when you go to a quality grocery store. It's just the little stuff, you know. They just keep raising prices on whatever they want to cuz they want to, from a quarter to a dollar more. So you just pick what you got to, what you have to have. Other than that, you really don't want to go there, but you basically don't have no choice if you don't"

This dialogue highlights a dilemma faced by many residents; not only is there very little opportunity to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, but due to their lack of options and alternative stores, residents are trapped in a situation where they can only readily obtain whatever the store chooses to sell, often at marked up prices. Not having options is very frustrating for residents because it implies that decisions about the foods they eat are being made for them. In other words, if residents do not have the extra time needed to shop in other parts of the city, they are left to choose from what is sold close their homes.

What makes this food desert more challenging is a lot of the residents do not have access to private vehicles and therefore rely on public transportation. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC 2015:3) found that "households with fewer resources are considerably less likely to have and use their own vehicle for their regular food shopping." For those without transportation on the west side, residents have to choose between taking a 3-4 hour bus trip to get a better variety of higher quality food or just accepting what is offered to them locally.

> I have to go outside of the community, and it's sad because I went to, even if you want to get up and get a cup of coffee. a decent cup of coffee, I hate McDonald's coffee, but if I want a decent cup of coffee, I have to go somewhere down on Brown Street or somewhere else….If I want, you know I shop at Aldi's and Estridge, but if I'm making something, or I need something special, you know I usually have to go farther out to get it. You know, if I want some fresh shrimp or something like that, or some fresh fish, I

gotta go somewhere else to get it, but you know everything is a travel. (60 yr old woman)

"Everything is a travel." If residents want decent and affordable products, they have to both travel long distances and have enough time to dedicate to the long journey. This characterizes the common dilemma that many on the west side face: Do I pay more for inferior products that are not even what I actually want or do I take the bus ride? One person can only carry a certain amount, so often multiple people have to make this trip together in order to bring home enough groceries for the week. This puts extra stress on the family and costs hours of time that could be used elsewhere. In order to better understand how residents cope with their food options, they were asked whether they have a strategy. One resident responded:

> There is no real strategy. You can do this or you can do that. I mean you don't have options where I can go to two or three different grocery stores, where I know that they have bean sprouts over there, or you know if, you know we don't have that option. (65 yr old female)

Without multiple grocery stores there are very limited options. This dynamic dictates a strategy that instead of being based upon which store has what products to a more based upon access to transportation and value of time needed to travel. Access to quality food is essential for healthy youth and family development. It impacts the child's ability to learn and retain information and factors into both the quality and quantity of life. Therefore lack of access to food is an indicator of larger structural issues.

"*Never no lack of liquor***"**

An interesting paradox often exists in food deserts. While there is a lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables, there is an abundance of alcohol providers (LaVeist and Wallace 2000). Dayton is no exception with liquor stores scattered throughout the west side, often two or

three found on one corner. The frustration of this dynamic is described in the following ways:

> But you can get liquor. The stuff you need you can't get. We have to go out of the neighborhood to get the stuff that we really want to have around the house, for the kids, whatever. But there's never no lack of liquor. (55 yr old female)
>
> It's the same old thing. You can find liquor, you can find other things, but you can't find nothing to do. You can't find real food. You can't find vegetables. You know, you don't have a garden. Like you see some neighborhoods, they plant their own gardens now. Do something like that over here. (65 yr old female)

There is a feeling amongst residents that there is never a lack of what can be detrimental to the community, but scarcity of what can uplift and sustain the community. What is needed to help raise a healthy family is far less accessible to the residents of west Dayton than alcohol. Not only is liquor more readily available in food deserts than the staple items families want access to, but a destructive cocktail of excessive access to alcohol, high density stressful neighborhoods, and few options for activities or things to do can lead to violence and suicide.

Serious concern has been expressed by multiple participants regarding the consequences of having an influx of alcohol in an environment with limited upward social mobility and opportunity. Residents identify this as a dangerous combustion which they attribute to the excessive violence within pockets of the west side. One resident shared from her own experience how this combination is highly destructive:

> You know, so you really have to have something to do, because if not, liquor and beer – you're going to be fighting. Because there's nothing for them over here to do. When I used to drink I was a beast. I don't drink any more, thank God. But when I used to drink I got violent. So with me drinking over here every day, it's going to be on. You have to find something different to do. (55 yr old female)

Alcohol ignites and can exacerbate an already bad situation. When there is little to do combined

with high accessibility to alcohol in a stressful environment of concentrated poverty, tempers flare, people's patience runs thin, and violence erupts. Alcohol in areas of concentrated deprivation can serve as fuel to a fire of self destruction. For the participants, this dynamic is not by chance.

Designed To Fail

When analyzing their overall living conditions and the multiple factors to which they are exposed including extreme poverty, mass incarceration, underperforming schools, very low opportunity, lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and high rates of infant mortality, a consistent sentiment emerged in all the focus groups that their side of town was intentionally "designed to fail." One participant explained it this way:

> I don't know. I think it's designed for people to fail around here. I feel like it's not enough opportunity. Like he said, it's easy to go get liquor. But to get food, if you want to catch a bus or if you don't have a car. If you do have a car you've still got to go about ten miles to go to Walmart, or four or five miles to Kroger or Dixie. And then the food stores, they don't have good quality food for us really. That's why I said that it is designed for us to fail, to be honest. We're put in this whole one section. It's like a prison. It's like putting us all in one section. (30 yr old male)

By *design*, residents are referring to the purposeful organization of their neighborhoods that has imbedded struggle into the structure, hindering access to opportunity. Without access to quality education, transportation, good paying jobs, fresh food, and youth opportunity, the necessity for grit in order to survive and thrive is built into the environment. They feel the structure of the community is designed to inhibit opportunity and confine agency.

> Everybody wants to blame the people, like we don't care, we don't want to work, we don't want to do this, we don't want to do that, but that's not the case. I mean even the elders that live on my

> street, they have to go like three blocks to get the bus, you know, it's not like it's close or you know since we don't have a lot of transportation or even the stores or the companies that are over here, you know, they're not paying a living wage. You know, so it's like, the jobs, a real job that can help you keep your family alive, they aren't over here and transportation is bad, and then you know, the resources are leaving. You know, it's like this whole this place is in like a state of fight or flight. We're in survival mode. I love West Dayton and the people, you know, but it's like they just change so much for the negative, it doesn't leave anything positive to look forward to when you come home or when you come in the neighborhood (60 yr old female)

Another reason residents who are most directly impacted by the lack of opportunity associated with hypersegregation feel their living environment exists by design is because of the high accessibility of items which can be detrimental to their advancement, such as liquor, coupled with the lack of what people actually need to thrive. Among residents of west Dayton there is a salient narrative that this design is intentional, part of a larger construct to keep the poor Black communities in a marginalized position and killing themselves.

> Like the young man said over here. It's a lot of liquor stores over here. The more liquor, the more drinking, the more violence. And that's what it's designed to be…. I've been here all my life. I'm fifty-something. It's like it's designed, like he said, to fail. It's designed for us to kill each other. It's designed for us to not progress. It's like the same old day thing. Ok, you go across the street to get some liquor, get beer, and that's it. Go across get liquor, get beer, and that's it. There should be more than that to do. And there's nothing for the kids to do but fight each other. What else can they do? (60 yr old female)

She feels that more liquor leads to more violence. Part of the reason for this correlation is that nothing meaningful exists to keep residents occupied and active. Residents describe their environment as being structured to both inhibit their progress and to break them. This design described by the participants can engender a sense of hopelessness which leads to alcohol and drug use, violence, suicide, or acting out. There was a real sense within the focus groups that the toxic mix of underdevelopment, concentrated poverty, lack of access to either job training or opportunities to keep one active and productive, along with disproportionate access to alcohol

and excessive advertising in underdeveloped pockets of the hypersegregated city are designed to elicit black genocide and perpetual marginalization of the west side. The historic durability of the present structure fuels this sentiment, because the realities of the situation are widely known, yet there is little action to address the deep underlying issues.

A great sense that the larger community has decided to look the other way instead of addressing the issues of west Dayton has led to a growing feeling of being overlooked and forgotten. One participant in her early 50's summarized this sentiment by saying "This neighborhood is like the land that they forgot." Participants feel they live in the land that has been forgotten. Part of this sense of being forgotten is the perceived blatant denial of structure and its role in distributing opportunity. Instead of addressing the policies, practices and procedures that imbed the necessity of grit into the structure, many policy makers solely blame the people for their circumstances. Upon being asked to explain what participants meant by their use of phrase designed to fail, a 63 yr old woman responds

> So, it's like they know, I've never been one to say blame it on the system, but the more I learn and dig deeper, the more I realize, it is the system. It's a system. It's a plan, and they don't want our kids, you know there's no reason for 80% of the third graders that's Black not to be able to read. That doesn't make sense to me. So, if you can't read, you can't even fill out an application to go to our school, or you can sing, but you're not going to go any farther because you don't know how to get any farther. You know, so it's like they plan to break whatever we have, and we have so much power and talent that came out of here

Instead of believing the narrative of victim blaming and the culture of poverty, residents are questioning the structures that form their experiences and applying their sociological imagination to ask why. Their conscientization has led them to ponder their lived environment that produces

underdeveloped youth from a substandard educational system and lack of youth programming, poverty created by lack of jobs and investment, poor health due to lack of access of quality foods and living in a stressful environment. Their conclusion is their ecosystem is intentionally designed, constructed, and sustained for their failure and perpetual marginalization.

DISCUSSION

The power of story, of voice, reveals the people behind statistics (Paris and Winn 2014). Statistics detached from context can dehumanize, because numbers cannot possibly tell the whole story. The challenge for researchers is to maintain the humanity of the people they are studying. Humanizing research honors and acknowledges the people behind the data. Instead of stating that "1 out of 20 mother's babies will die within one year," humanizing research explores how the death of that infant impacts both the mother and the life of her family. Without hearing their story and voice, our understanding of events and why they happen is incomplete, hidden behind a veil because an interpretation of an experience is left unknown to the masses. Therefore to hear the story you need the people who make the story in the room. Otherwise, we risk misinterpreting the underlying causes of the data. Policy makers and researchers sitting in a room interpreting data, although they have not had direct experience within the context of the data, can easily misinterpret the figures and reports and may even develop stigma. On the other hand, personal stories create context for the data and can challenge stigmas. Without having the voices of people whose lives policy decisions most directly impact at the table, we cannot create good policy. People living in poor hypersegregated neighborhoods understand their own experience, and that experience helps to explain how the structure actually works (Eitzen and

Smith 2009).

Upon hearing from local participants residing in the low opportunity side of hypersegregation, their experiences support the national quantitative research on hypersegregation (Massey and Denton 1993; Sampson 2012). Research states the Black side of hypersegregation would have the presence of food deserts (Landrine and Corral 2009). However, speaking to residents about the issue enriches the conversation by providing context. Instead of just saying "this is a food desert," residents help you understand what it means to actually live in a food desert. Their testimonies imply that not having easy access to food means you cannot just plan a meal an hour before you eat. You have to plan meals ahead if you do not want to be constrained with the food available at the corner store, or calculate whether you have three hours to take a bus ride. Residents also described how frustrating it was to not be able to get the foods they wanted, and having to pay extra for the food that is available, which ultimately constrained their agency because their food intake became contingent on access to transportation. This highlights the role that access to transportation plays in a food desert. When you are both poor and in a food desert there is constant tension with travel being a factor in the equation of how to get food. Participants characterized this scenario as "everything is a travel." Their comments are consistent with the research of the Food Research Action Center which states most residents did not have access to transportation and therefore relied upon public transportation. While public transportation can be a real benefit to communities, especially for those of lower income, the participants lived experience also illuminated some of the pitfalls of public transportation in regards to food access such as the time it takes to travel to grocery stores, advance preparation

required to cook healthy meals, the limitation to the amount of goods one can carry and the concern for safety while waiting for or exiting the bus.

Participants also expressed a deep concern for the youth. They described the struggles of not having access to opportunities, programs and safe spaces to productively occupy their time which leaves the youth open to the streets or getting in trouble. They noted that access declined over time due to policy decisions to close recreation centers and pools. They described how the closings eliminated places to go for free which subsequently established a fee barrier for those programs still open therefore inhibiting access. The result is that many youth have nowhere to go and nothing to do for free; their recourse is "hanging out" on the streets which increases their chances of getting into trouble and having an encounter with the police. The lack of youth activities affects opportunities for the future growth of not only the youth, but Dayton, Ohio and the nation as a whole. This is because without given the chance to discover or develop their raw gifts of abilities the youth which are our future will not be able to develop and contribute their full capacity. This in turn can curtail their development of hope and positive self-esteem (Ginwright 2016) and can ultimately lead to a great burden on society later on due to our lack of investment in our youth.

Residents who are most directly impacted by the lack of opportunity associated with hypersegregation feel their living environment is design to fail because their ecosystem lacks the social determinants known to support a healthy thriving life. One example of this is the high level of accessibility of items such as liquor but the lack of what people actually need to thrive. People in the community understand that liquor and violence are highly related, and that due to

the density of the neighborhood, the more people drink, the higher the likelihood of violence. Subsequently, they consider the stress of living in a high density area a powder keg, which the alcohol exacerbates, leading to violence. In this way, small things can escalate quickly. For example, individuals can be murdered over a dice game. Given the overtness of scenarios such as this one some people feel that the west side is designed to keep people down and for them to kill themselves. The evidence of this is the abundance of liquor stores in impoverished neighborhoods compared to this type of establishments in more elite neighborhoods.

By *design*, they are referring to the purposeful organization of their neighborhoods that has imbedded struggle into the structure hindering access to opportunity. Inherent in hypersegregation is not just the stratification of opportunity and hierarchy of resources but the underlying inequality of power. Paul Farmer (2005: xvi) explains "inequalities of power in general prevent the sharing of different opportunities. They can devastate the lives of those who are far removed from the levers of control." Thus, social organization of opportunity leads me to conclude, where there is hypersegregation, there is structural violence.

John Galtung (1969) describes structural violence as an invisible violence manifesting itself as unequal access to opportunities and service including education, health and employment, inaccessible built environment and poverty. "Structural violence is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way… The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people" (Farmer et al 2006:1). It is the structural design of hypersegregation resulting in neighborhoods of heterogeneous opportunity

and concentrated advantage that designates hypersegregation as structural violence. Often when one thinks of violence we think of a fistfight, shooting or some overt act that happens in one moment of time that we can observe. Most people do not often think of poverty or systematic social deprivation as violence as well. Farmer (2005:8) explains "since the misery in question need not involve bullets, knives or implements of torture, this misery has often eluded those seeking to identify violence and its victims." Instead of just looking at overt acts, the term structural violence brings to awareness the social conditions which inflict harm on its inhabitants.

Structural violence is the avoidable gap between what can be done and what is being done. This human agency constructs inequality. As Thomas Gieryn (2000:465) explains "social processes (difference, power, inequality, collective action) happen through the material forms that we build, use and protest." Hypersegregation is structural violence because it is a social process that puts some populations at risk of sustaining undue and sometimes permanent harm. For instance, in Dayton Black males have consistently been at the bottom of every ranking of education for years (Learn to Earn Dayton 2016). This low level of education makes it harder for them to collectively escape from the clutches of poverty. Hypersegregation is a harbinger of infant mortality, mass incarceration, premature death, Black homicide, lower quality schools and lack of food access therefore it is an agent of structural violence due to the suffering and constraint of agency (Massey and Denton 1993; Sampson 2012). What makes it structural violence is that the stratification and conditions are either directly or indirectly a result of human agency and not a natural occurrence (Farmer 2008; Sampson 2012). The conditions that characterize hypersegregation do not happen overnight; rather, they are allowed to emerge

slowly over time often as a result of years of disinvestment. Structural violence is slow and incremental in nature having repercussions that can be postponed for years or decades yet still have disastrous effects on the recipients (Nixon 2011).

The end result of decades of neglect has systematically resulted in high numbers of African Americans living on islands of concentrated poverty without accessible opportunities to escape. The results of this study are explained by Marilyn Frye's (1983) analogy about the birdcage. When examined up close looking at just one wire of the birdcage, we have to wonder why the bird does not escape. One wire of the birdcage cannot by itself contain the bird from flying around it. But when we take a step back and notice the multiple network of barriers that surround the bird simultaneously working in conjunction together, it is at this point that we understand what keeps the bird in the cage. When youth and residents in the community face low opportunity in health, housing, business and transportation at the same time, these individual forces systematically work together as a strong barrier or hurdle which must be overcome if someone is to advance and to unbind the shackles of poverty.

If we are to remove the barriers resulting from lack of opportunity, we as a community will have to explore what conditions need to exist in order to birth a healthy sustainable community with expanded opportunity for all. Instead of focusing on surface issues, we will have to summon the courage and good will to have the honest conversation about the underlying historical and social forces that have created this situation along with the institutional forces that have perpetuated it indirectly to the present day.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Baldwin, James. 1984. *Notes of a Native Son*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Booth, Jeb, Amy Farrell, and Sean P. Varano. 2008. "Social Control, Serious Delinquency, and Risky Behavior: A Gendered Analysis." *Crime & Delinquency* 54 (3):423-456.

Broad. Garrett. 2016. *More Than Just Food*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Charles, Camille. 2003. "The Dynamics of Racial Residential Segregation." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:167−207.

Cheadle, Allen, Bruce Psaty , Susan Currey, Edward Wagner, Paula Diehr , Thomas Koepsell and Alan Kristal. 1991. "Community-Level Comparisons between the Grocery Store Environment and Individual Dietary Practices." *Preventive Medicine* 20:50-261.

Collins, Patricia. 1989. "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought." *Signs* 14(4):745-773.

Desmond. Matthew. 2016. *Evicted*. New York: Crowne Publishing.

Du Bois, W.E.B. [1899] 1999. *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study.* University of Pennsylvania Press.
1900. "*The Present Outlook for the Darker Races of Mankind*." *Sundquist* : 47-54.
[1903] 1907 "*Souls of Black Folk*" A.C. McClurg & Company.

1940 "*Dusk to Dawn: An Essay Towards An Autobiography of a Race Concept*" Oxford Press

Eitle, David. 2009. "*Dimensions of Racial Segregation, Hypersegregation, and Black Homicide Rates*." Journal of Criminal Justice *37 (1):28-36.*

Eitzen, D. Stanley and Kelly Eitzen Smith. 2009. *Experiencing Poverty: Voices from the Bottom*. New York: Pearson Publications.

Farmer, Paul. 2005. *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Farmer, PE. Nizeye, B. Stulac, S.Keshavjee, S. 2006. "Structural Violence and Clinical Medicine".PLoS Med 3(10): e449. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.0030449.

Food Research and Action Center. 2015 "*Understanding the Connections: Food Insecurity and Obesity*" Retrieved Jun. 19, 2017 (http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/frac_brief_understanding_the_connections.pdf)

Freire, Paulo. [1970] 2000. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Publishing Group.

Frye, Marilyn. 1983. *The Politics of Reality*. Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press.

Gamson, William. 2002. *Talking Politics*. Boston, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Gaultung, Johan. 1969. "*Violence,* Peace, and Peace Research*." Journal of Peace Research* 6 (3):167-191.

Gieryn, Thomas. 2000. "A Space for Place in Sociology."*Annual Review of Sociology* 26:463-96.

Gilkes, Cheryl. 1984. *The Margin as the Center of a Theory of History: African-American Women, Social Change, and the Sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois*. New York: Routledge Press.

Ginwright, Shawn. 2016. *Hope and Healing in Urban Education*. New York: Routledge Taylor and France Group.

Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss.1969. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies For Qualitative Research*. Chicago, Aldine Publishing Company.

Hall, Budd. 1992. "From Margins to Center? The Development and Purpose of Participatory Research." *The American Sociologist* Winter:15-28.

Johnston, R., M. Poulsen and J. Forrest. 2007. "Ethnic and Racial Segregation in US Metropolitan Areas, 1980-2000 the Dimensions of Segregation Revisited." *Urban Affairs Review* 42 (4):479-504.

Kirwain Institute. 2013 "Place Matters: Using Mapping to Plan for Opportunity, Equity, and Sustainability." Retrieved Nov. 18, 2016 (http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FINAL_OM_9-5.pdf).

Landrine, H. and I. Corral.2009. "Separate and Unequal: Residential Segregation and Black

Health Disparities." *Ethnicity and Disease*. 19(Spring):179-184.

LaVeista, Thomas and John Wallace. 2000. "Health Risk and Inequitable Distribution of Liquor Stores in African American Neighborhoods." *Social Science and Medicine* 51(4):613-617.

Learn To Earn Dayton. 2016. "Know the Gap, Close the Gap." Retrieved May. 6, 2017 (http://learntoearndayton.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/L2ED17_equity-report_1-27-17_web_spreads.pdf).

Massey, Douglas. 1990. "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass." *American Journal of Sociology* 95:1153-88.

Massey, Douglas and Nancy Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
1988. "The Dimensions of Racial Segregation." *Social Forces* 67:281-315.

Massey, Douglas and Jonathan Tannen. 2015 "A Research Note on Trends in Black Hypersegregation*." Demography* 52:1025–1034.

Mills, Charles. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
1997. *The Racial Contract*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Montgomery County Public Health. 2015. "Opportunity Mapping: The Geography of Opportunity in Dayton Ohio." Jan. 16, 2016 (http://www.mcohio.org/departments/human_services_planning_and_development/MC_Opportunity_Map.pdf).

Morgan, David. 1998. *The Focus Group Guidebook: Focus Group Kit 1*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

National Association of County and City Health Officials. 2014. "Expanding the Boundaries: Health Equity and Public Health Practice." Retrieved Jun. 8, 2017 (https://nnphi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Expanding-the-Boundaries-Final_508-091814.pdf)

Nixon, Rob. 2011. "*Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor."* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.UP ISBN 978-0-674-04930-7 paper.

Osypuk, T. and D. Acevedo-Garcia. 2008. "Are Racial Disparities in Pre-Term Birth Larger in

Hypersegregated Areas?" *American Journal of Epidemiology* 167(11):1295-12304.

Paris, Django and Maisha Winn. 2014. *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry With Youth and Communities.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Parrillo, Vincent. 2008. *Encyclopedia of Social Problems*. Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage Publications.

Ransby, Barbara. 2003. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. Chapel Hill, NC. The University of North Carolina Press.

Ridge, Tesss. 2011 "The Everyday Costs of Poverty in Childhood: A Review of Qualitative Research Exploring the Lives and Experiences of Low-Income Children in the United Kingdom." *Children and Society*. 25:73-84.

Sampson, Robert. 2012. *Great American City*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Sutherland. Edwin 1939. *Principles of Criminology*. 3d. ed. Lippincott

United States Census Data. 2010. Retrieved1/25/17 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/3921000.html).

Watson, Wilbur. 1976. "The Idea of Black Sociology: Its' Cultural and Political Significance." *American Sociologist* 11:115-123.

Weiss, Robert. 1994. "Learning From Strangers: The Art and Methods of Qualitative Interview Studies." New York: The Free Press.

Wilkes, Rim*a and John Iceland. 2004. "Hypersegregation in the Twenty-First Century."* Demography 41(1): 23-36.

Williams D. and C. Collins. 2001. "Racial Residential Segregation: A Fundamental Cause of Racial Disparities in Health." *Public Health* 116:404–16.

Williams, D. and Pamela Jackson. 2005 "Social Sources of Racial Disparities in Health." *Health Affairs* 24(2):325-34.

Wilson, William. 2009. *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

World Health Organization. 2003. "Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts." Retrieved 2/17/17 (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/3921000.html).

Wright II, Earl. 2002. "Why Black People Tend To Shout!: An Earnest Attempt to Explain the Sociological Negation of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory Despite Its Possible Unpleasantness." *Sociological Spectrum* 22(3): 325-361.

2012. "Why, Where and How to Infuse the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory into the Sociology Curriculum." *Teaching Sociology* 40: 257-270.

Wright II, Earl and Thomas C. Calhoun. 2006. "Jim Crow Sociology: Toward An Understanding of the Origin and Principles of Black SociologyVia the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory." *Sociological Focus* 39(1):1-18.

APPENDIX: Interview Guide

Below is the loose script that was used to guide the conversation during the focus group. It was used more as a prompt to start conversations around specific topics. The actual dialogs emerged from what the participants wanted to share

1. Can you share a story about an event in your neighborhood that you will always remember?

2. Can you describe your day to day experience living on the West Side?

    a. What is life like?

    b. how would you describe life on the west side?

    c. What is happening in your community?

3. How do you access the things you need for you and your family –food, medicine, entertainment /recreation?

4. If I could walk in your shoes, what would I see, what would I know?

5. What does it mean to you to live on the west side of Dayton?

6. Does living on the west side affect your life chances either positively or negatively?

    a. If so how?

7. Are there any barriers on your life living on the west side?

8. Is there anything stressful or that causes stress living on the west side?

9. What can we do to minimize these barriers?

10. How would you define opportunity? Or when you think of opportunity what comes to mind?

11 Can you give me some examples that you would consider opportunity on the west side?

12. Can you give me some examples of barriers of opportunity on west side?

13. Please take a look at the opportunity maps, what if anything is your reaction to the maps? Do you learn anything about your community through observing these maps?

14. What knowledge and insights about life does the west side have to share with Dayton and the world?

15. Anything you wish I would have asked or touched on that you want to talk about now?

Figure 1. Overall Opportunity in Dayton, Ohio