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Poverty Redemption: Why Those Affected Stay Affected



Honors Thesis

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April 2019

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Abstract

This paper looks at why those in poverty have not taken advantage of self-sufficiency programs that are offered through Miami Valley Works along with other self-sufficiency programs offered. This paper looks at the general reasons why those in poverty do not go through self-sufficiency programs, whether they chose not to participate or leave a program prior to completion. This paper delves into multiple factors that could contribute to why an individual would forgo to participate in the program or would choose to leave the program before completing it. The study examines how governmental policies, the culture of poverty, race, housing, education, and stigma affect the individuals choosing to, or not to, participate in the programs offered, specifically through Miami Valley Works. The question arises as to how organizations can keep their retention rate higher in order to increase the number of people in poverty that have the means to achieve self-sufficiency. Those in poverty in the community have expressed interest in involvement in self-sufficiency programs, however enrollment rates decrease considerably throughout the stages of the process, including inquiry, orientation, and the program itself. This study will ideally shed light on how organizations can better reach out to those suffering with poverty in the Dayton community and make sure to achieve high rates of program participation. The ultimate goal is to achieve a better understanding of the barriers that those in poverty face when trying to achieve self-sufficiency.



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Introduction

The research problem being studied involves potential reasons why someone in poverty cannot achieve self-sufficiency. Poverty is not a problem that is caused by one aspect of a person's life, but rather can be caused by different aspects of someone's life. For example, governmental welfare and policies, race, housing, education, and stigma, each play a role in someone's experiences with poverty.

The specific question that the research will address is: what are the reasons why people in poverty do not take advantage of self-sufficiency programs. This question delves into the reasons why someone is in poverty and the various factors or barriers that cause someone to stay in poverty rather than achieving self-sufficiency. These barriers are looked at through self-sufficiency programs that are offered through different agencies. Specifically, this project worked with Miami Valley Works program in conjunction with Goodwill Easter Seals.

This project is a worthy project because it delves into the reasons why someone stays in poverty rather than just looking at how they got there. The project examines how different structures in our society have shaped poverty and self-sufficiency while interviewing community leaders who are trying to promote self-sufficiency and decrease poverty. This project allows future researchers to understand the variety of reasons why someone is experiencing poverty and to be able to take this research to develop potential solutions. The topics discussed in this project are by no means the only barriers to achieving self-sufficiency, but rather are barriers that have repeatedly come up in research and subsequent interviews.

Literature Review

Self-sufficiency is a concept that does not have a definitive definition, nor does it have an easy way of obtaining, but rather it is something that one needs to work towards. The literature reviewed in this section provides context on the scholarly work of self-sufficiency, how it is defined, and the connections it shares with other variables. The ideas explored in this literature review will be devoted to explaining self-sufficiency including how it came about historically and its definition, how the culture of poverty shapes self-sufficiency, how welfare and governmental programs play into self-sufficiency, housings association with self-sufficiency, educational connections with self-sufficiency and the stigmas associated with poverty and self-sufficiency.

Self-sufficiency is a term that has been oversimplified in recent history (Daugherty, 2001). Self-sufficiency is seen as the ultimate goal of any person during their life; it is seen as an attainable goal to become free from those who would support you, in most cases governmental welfare programs and family members (Daugherty, 2001). Others define self-sufficiency as, “(a) being able to supply one’s own needs without external assistance and (b) having extreme confidence in one’s own resources or powers,” (Hong, 2013, p. 358). Most people view those who do not achieve self-sufficiency as lazy and undeserving and view them as less than those who are capable of achieving self-sufficiency (Daugherty, 2001). Self-sufficiency is highly respected and wanted in order for those in poverty to match the cultural norms associated with achieving independence and freedom (Daugherty, 2001). The idea of being self-sufficient can be an illusion for some because it is based on the idea that one is free from the help of their parents or guardians, but also free from government welfare (Daugherty, 2001, p. 669).

Culture of Poverty

A concept that connects with self-sufficiency and accounts for the cause of poverty is the culture of poverty theory. The theory of culture of poverty originated in Oscar Lewis’ work during the 1960s and was based off his research with the urban poor (Bourgeois, 2015). Culture of

poverty suggests that even when an opportunity is offered to the poor, there is an embedded culture that almost encourages them to not take those opportunities because they are comfortable where they are (El-Burki et. al., 2016), but also that the poor have been adapted to stay in the economic situation that they find themselves in (Rogalsky, 2009). In Lewis' work, he mentioned around 50 different traits that could be associated with the poor including "'orality,' 'strong present-time orientation,' and a 'high tolerance for psychological pathology,'" (Bourgois, 2015). Lewis described this culture of poverty as a never-ending cyclical event that was continued by the individual that would cause them to adopt various dysfunctional behaviors (Bourgois, 2015). In Lewis' work, he claimed that continual poverty generated certain beliefs for those in poverty and caused them to develop different values and practices that perpetually kept them in poverty (Small, 2010). The culture of poverty poses as a major problem for those in poverty because of the lack of resources that are available to those suffering (Hill, 2002). Although some resources are available to those in poverty, those resources seldom elicit a permanent change in the community (Hill, 2002). The concept that the poor would not take advantage of opportunities stems off the system of poverty that people have continued to endure, specifically those who are African American (El-Burki et. al., 2016).

The culture of poverty encourages the concepts of a common culture of low expectations mixed with negative attitudes regarding poverty (Rogalsky, 2009). It is suggested that the culture of poverty is a coping mechanism for those in poverty (Hill, 2002). This meaning that those who experience poverty and the culture of poverty try to make the best of the situations around them. Those in poverty use those negative aspects to the best of their ability by developing techniques that allow them to deal with the variety of restraints that they are under because of the poverty they face (Hill, 2002). Sociologists, in some regards, associate the continuation of poor individuals in families, or generational poverty, as a cultural phenomenon, but they articulate that there is no definitive evidence to prove this, but the concept is resurging as poverty has continued to rise (El-Burki et. al., 2016). Interestingly, some researchers believe that stopping the culture of

poverty phenomenon might be more difficult that solving poverty itself because the concept is so embedded into our society (Bourgois, 2015).

The problem that arises when discussing the culture of poverty is that it has no set meaning or definition (Small, 2010). It is important to note that the study of culture and poverty together has changed over the years. Originally, scholars blamed the victims that they studied, claiming that they put themselves in the situation they were in based on the culture that they currently had. Currently, scholars cannot agree that culture plays a part in continual poverty because culture can be conceived in different ways. Due to this disagreement in how to study culture and a lack of a concrete definition, it is more difficult for scholars to study the relationship between poverty and culture because there are no questions that can be agreed upon, nor is there a set of vocabulary that can be used to foster a research study (Small et. al., 2010).

Government Policies and Welfare

Welfare was not established until the depression era of the 1930s (Daugherty, 2001). Before the 1930s, welfare was rarely provided to those who needed it. It was not a federally controlled entity, but rather local governments were in charge of deciding what a deserving circumstance was and how much, if any, was to be given out (Daugherty, 2001). Rather than the federal government having control, powerful businesses along with state and local governments had control over what welfare someone would receive (Hacker et. al., 2012). Even though welfare was not something that was given out freely prior to the Depression era, the federal government did take over government welfare after that time period (Daugherty, 2001). Before the Great Depression hit the United States, the federal government had minimal control over welfare policies (Hacker et. al., 2002). Interestingly, the federal government added bills that disproportionately helped the white Americans but did nothing for other groups in the country.

After World War II, trade unions that ran the corporate world made it more accessible for mostly white workers to receive medical insurance, pensions, along with job security (Lipsitz,

1995). Another law put into place following World War II to provide more help to white individuals were housing loans that disproportionately helped whites move into segregated suburbs while not allowing black individuals to do the same. The segregated suburbs exclusively had other amenities that were hard to come by, including water supplies and sewage (Lipsitz, 1995). Racial impact was exasperated again the 1980s and 1990s when the Reagan and Bush administrations continued to allow whiteness to grow. They did not challenge the segregation that had been taking place in education, housing, and more importantly hiring (Lipsitz, 1995). As welfare continued to increase over the years, the racism surrounding the term continued to expand as well. 'Welfare queens' became a synonymous symbol that was associated with welfare, and they were commonly exploited by politicians as a form of a racist remark (Neubeck et. al., 2001). Government representatives constantly stated that these African American women were purposefully ripping off the system by having more children, so they could receive more benefits from the government. Public survey data supports the belief that race matters when discussing welfare. It is pointed out that when a person hears that a white family is on welfare they are compassionate towards the individual, however, that changes when a mostly black individual is seen as a welfare recipient. When a mostly black individual is seen as a welfare recipient, they are viewed with disapproval by the general public. Although the stigma surrounding welfare involves the African American population, African American females receive more criticism than the males (Neubeck et. al., 2001).

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) coincides with misuse problems that are still happening today through welfare programs. This act shaped and has continued to influence how agencies and the government deal with welfare. PRWORA was an act that specifically detailed self-sufficiency as one of its underlining goals (Daugherty, 2001). The government wanted the public to know that in helping their citizens, the main reason the act was developed was to help those in poverty achieve a level of self-sufficiency. However, the subtle message that was conveyed was that the American public

should be working if they are capable of working to support themselves and potentially a family (Daugherty, 2001). This law gave states more freedom to control their welfare programs while also establishing requirements for how to receive welfare assistance that include a work requirement and a time line requirement (Taylor et. al., 2016). This law came about because the stereotypes of people in poverty, or what was explained previously as the “culture of poverty,” increased drastically because those not on welfare did not agree that those receiving welfare needed to receive it (Taylor et. al., 2016). This became a stereotypical view of those in poverty made by those who are not, so in turn the government produced this law to counteract the problem that was slowly arising because of the “culture of poverty,” all the while subtly punishing poor people who cannot live on their own (Taylor et. al., 2016, p. 1126).

Ever since PRWORA was put into place, the concept that an individual is responsible for their economic situation has been placed at the forefront due to the concept that they are the only ones responsible for their situation and that the government does not play a role in their abilities to get themselves and their families above the poverty line into self-sufficiency (Taylor et. al., 2016). The concept that the economic situation is more important has caused a lot of welfare programs to adopt the concept of encouraging an economic achievement over helping the client actually achieve self-sufficiency (Hong, 2013). The individual mindset is seen as more important now than it was before. Now some welfare programs require attendees to sign an agreement stating that they are equally responsible for gaining assistance from the government if necessary; the program is supposed to allow them to rid themselves of the government’s welfare programs (Taylor et. al., 2016). Organizations do this because they do not believe that the people affected by poverty know how to make well-informed decisions and that as managers, or caseworkers, it is their job to guide their clients into a better direction (Taylor et. al., 2016). A lack of jobs that pay well pose many problems in the success of self-sufficiency programs. With a lack of well-paying jobs and an overabundance of minimum wage jobs, some families that need more financial support struggle to achieve self-sufficiency (Taylor et. al., 2016).

Some programs that the government developed, such as Medicaid and the earned income tax credit, have been reduced, however, there are consequences for this action that only those disadvantaged groups experience (Wilson, 1996). There are a variety of different options that the government could implement that would alleviate some of the problems that people in poverty face. Improving family support programs is a way to help those in poverty achieve self-sufficiency. Since the United States is the only country that does not offer “universal preschool, child-support, or parental leave programs,” (Wilson, 1996, p. 336) it places some of the country’s children at a disadvantage because they did not have access to preschool programs due to their family’s economic situation. Since these children are already at a disadvantage, they are more likely to end up in the same poverty as their parents, but this disadvantage also places a strain on their parents and guardians because they cannot provide their children with a learning environment that will help them succeed in life (Wilson, 1996). A potential solution that the government could implement would be expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) (Wilson, 1996). Most inner-city residents have to take minimum wage jobs in order to put food on the table and care for their family, so with an increase in the EITC, this will allow the burden to lessen a little to allow these families to get themselves closer to living at or only a little below the poverty line (Wilson, 1996). Improving EITC would make minimum wage jobs more attractive to those searching for one, and by them taking one of those jobs, it would improve the current employment rate (Wilson, 1996). EITC is granted after someone who has a low income files a tax return to the IRS and is eligible to receive that financial assistance (IRS, 2019). The refund one would receive is decided after the IRS looks over someone’s tax return and is distributed before mid-February (IRS, 2019).

Race

Race is a factor in examining the connection between a lack of jobs for those in poverty, particularly for those who are Latino or Black who are trying to find work (Wilson, 1996).

Problems of poverty have systematically been seen on communities predominately consisting of African Americans, and to an extent Latino and some Asian-American groups (Adeola, 1999). The media has only encouraged this racial idea of poverty and since, the public has supported the claims that those in poverty are disproportionately minorities (El-Burki et. al., 2016). Since white supremacy is embedded in United States policies, practices, laws and customs, African Americans specifically are tangled in a concept that they continue to remain in poverty even if an opportunity arises that would get them out of poverty and into self-sufficiency. The idea of African Americans being more entangled in poverty was also supported through the fine print of PRWORA, which implied that the law was really only concerned with young single mothers living in urban areas (Neubeck et. al., 2001). This concept of African Americans being unable to untangle themselves from poverty directly connects to other literature because researchers found that when there are not enough jobs to support a family, it makes it difficult for those in poverty to reach self-sufficiency. In some locations, black communities struggle to find work because of a lack of industry and a lack of available jobs (Adeola, 1999). If there are not any jobs or businesses coming into predominately black areas, then it becomes more difficult for those people to find employment and move themselves into self-sufficiency (Adeola, 1999).

It is important to note when looking at the connections between poverty and race to establish how the legacy of whiteness has shaped the treatment of African Americans. Whites in power explicitly made laws to not allow African Americans to achieve citizenship, but also making it easier to institutionalize the practice against African Americans. However, this practice has been seen on Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans (Lipsitz, 1995). The effects of slavery and “Jim Crow” laws have continued to have an effect on how individuals perceive racism through experiences and different opportunities which could include work and education (Lipsitz, 1995).

Advances in the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s meant it was one of the first times in our nation’s history that people of color had access to benefits and resources that were

previously only available to whites. This marked a cultural shift where racism protruded into the idea of poverty and changed the way that people viewed poverty because they saw that those receiving most of the benefits were those they deemed as not worthy of receiving aid because they were African American (Daugherty, 2001). The argument that ensued was that the African American culture encouraged them to stop wanting to take advantage of programs because they did not believe in taking those kinds of handouts (Daugherty, 2001). From this point forward, the idea of “victim blaming” arose as a way to be okay with not helping those who are affected by poverty (Daugherty, 2001). This term allowed people to believe that it was the person’s lack of capability to get a job and stick with it as the reason why they were not self-sufficient. Those in charge then felt able to blame poverty on those in it, instead of understanding that a government organization could help alleviate the problem. This was because blaming the individual was easier than finding a solution to the problem, an idea commonly referred to as “victimization” (Goffman, 1963, p. 9). A lot of problems associated with the inner-cities are based on conceptions about the poor, instead of being based on reality about those living in the inner-city (Crump, 2002). People often try to avoid being seen as victim, whether that is going through a surgery to get rid of an abnormality, trying to escape the situation, or changing how you act (Goffman, 1963).

The concentrated poverty population are predominately people of color, and in some ways are a legacy of changing policies that have landed them in areas with no work after the white flight movement (Goetz, 2000). Concentrated poverty is an area in a city where a substantial percent of the population is below the poverty line (Goetz, 2000). This leads people “to the misguided conclusion that urban ghettos are caused by the presence of poor people,” (Crump, 2002, p. 584). People living in poverty, in what is commonly referred to as ghettos, “are not only concentrated, they are said to be isolated from other social classes,” (Crump, 2002, p. 584). People living in these conditions do not have the opportunity to move into an area that has

more wealth but are forced to stay in an area of poverty. Therefore, they do not have an opportunity to better their lives and get out of poverty into self-sufficiency (Crump, 2002).

Housing

“Stereotypical images of a city as a place where the socially pathological and underserving poor live in lawless zones of concentrated poverty,” (Crump, 2002, p. 581) have emerged more in recent history, however cities are trying to change that image by promoting new growth in a variety of urban populations. A problem arises when suburbanites try and imagine what concentrated poverty looks like in cities, because they, in some ways, cannot imagine that being a reality that people have to face. Housing plays a role in achieving self-sufficiency while it also plays a role in setting the stage for one’s ability to get out of poverty. Housing assistance measures help or hinder an individual or family’s upward mobility. Currently the United States uses three types of housing assistance. These three measures are through vouchers, public housing, and public subsidized projects (Shroder, 2002). The hope of these projects is that they help families get out of shelters and into a house, but the goal is to also help the families who are affected, because they will be able to be a part of the community and allow their children to engage in the world around them to better their situation (Shroder, 2002).

Conversations about housing and poverty routinely lead to discussions about redlining. Redlining is a phenomenon where banks and various insurance company’s withdrawal their services from areas with high amounts of concentrated poverty (Margulius, 1997). The process of redlining began soon after the GI Bill was announced after World War II (California Newsreel, 2003). Realtors and city governments would rate different neighborhoods within a city and based those ratings on the populations that lived within them. The areas with the most whites and the farthest away from minorities would receive a green rating, while areas that were flooded with minorities and little to no white residents would receive the worst rating, red (California Newsreel, 2003). This phenomenon allows banks and insurance companies to neglect people in

those neighborhoods and promote other companies to do the same (Margulius, 1997). Banks and insurance companies would also explain to white homeowners the potential risk of living in an integrated neighborhood. They would explain that keeping the house is socially and economically unstable, therefore, subtly encouraging white families to move out quickly and selling their house at an inflated price to African American families that were looking to move in (California Newsreel, 2003).

A factor that can lead to more redlining is people holding beliefs and misconceptions about the population in low-income areas. If a company holds these beliefs and misconceptions, they tend to deny low-income populations loans and other financial assistance (Margulius, 1997). Homeownership is also used in some cases to look at wealth inequality as housing is a large asset that one can have (Krivo, 2004). In most circumstances, whites own their home more than 50% of the time while African American household own their homes less frequently. The difference in mortgage value percentages seems small, however, this small percentage can equate to thousands of more dollars that African Americans have to pay in their mortgages versus whites (Krivo, 2004). Homeownership, or the lack thereof, can contribute to how a family will go through daily expenses (Bobo, 2013). Whether an individual owns a home dictates whether or not they have a cushion to fall back on if they lose a job or need money for other activities (Bobo, 2013).

Housing projects began initially through the development of vertical ghettos that were built soon after World War II. They were built as a way to put a large amount of poor people, primarily minorities, into one large building (California Newsreel, 2003). HUD (Housing and Urban Development) benefits could actually deter someone from wanting to use those services; HUD benefits could be a deterrent because one has to pay an additional tax through income to supply part of the rent (2002). "Public housing concentrates the very poor...and is itself concentrated in high poverty neighborhoods" (Crump, 2002, p. 586). Housing vouchers are also being used as a way to try to encourage the poor to take advantage of the vouchers (Crump, 2002, p. 586). Even though some housing projects exist, and seem to be good ideas, the units are

unattractive to those that need them, and those who are taking advantage of the housing projects might be able to get a better unit somewhere else with the budget they have (Shroder, 2002). Interestingly, adult mental health, in anxiety and depression, improved when one did not have to worry as much about housing stability. Other consequences include children's health (in anxiety, fear, injuries, and asthma) improved, juvenile criminal activity decreased, and adolescent school performance improved due to their families being placed into housing development projects (Shroder, 2002, p. 406).

However, problems occur when housing projects are torn down, families are relocated and the implications that arise from this (Crump, 2002). There are social implications for those people that are relocated and the feelings of those individuals (Crump 2002). There are many problems associated with governments going into concentrated areas of poverty and tearing down the housing and relocating the people that live there. The tearing down of public housing developments has occurred because more affluent people, typically, had preconceived ideas of these housing projects and could not see them as potential for low-income individuals to have a home, but rather saw the area as an opportunity to add more homes for higher-income individuals (Goetz, 2000).

Gentrification is another topic that affects people striving to achieve self-sufficiency. Gentrification bases around the notion that as an area is further developed, wealthier individuals tend to move into those areas, thus increasing the wealth in the area while also forcing those who cannot afford to live there out. This process displaces those individuals that are in poverty and harms their way of life (Brueckner et. al., 2009). Another form of gentrification occurs when housing developers go into an area with public housing and demolish it, thus displacing those individuals that are taking advantage of that housing (Goetz, 2010). This process then allows million-dollar investors to come in and attract wealthier individuals into that same area. A point to keep in mind is that gentrification is not only made through racial distinctions but can also be made based on class distinctions. Gentrification takes place on racial lines as well as economic,

there is not just white gentrification but also black gentrification that is taking place (Goetz, 2010). White gentrification is defined as whites overpopulating an area, which minimal minorities present. Black gentrification takes place more on economical lines through the middle class. If the middle class is unable to live in a whiter area, the phenomena is that they would try and gentrify an area containing a majority of middle-class African Americans (Goetz, 2010).

Education

In order to create more jobs to help those in need, improvements in education are needed so those coming out of school have the ability to get jobs that require skills (Wilson, 1996). With a better education, students could have the opportunity to learn the skills they would need to know to get jobs that pay better (Wilson, 1996). The creation of a National Performance Standard is a way to improve school systems to promote self-sufficiency (Wilson, 1996). These performance standards could train students in skills that are needed in jobs, thus creating a workforce that can perform that job without much more training (Wilson, 1996). However, too many districts would not be able to keep up with the standards because they might lack resources that other areas have an abundance of (Wilson, 1996). This lack of resources could include a lack of qualified teachers, less material, fewer activities that engage students in learning and school environments that do not condone good learning for students (Wilson, 1996). State governments, with help from the federal government, could implement equality in their local schools through scholarships for teachers to receive adequate training, and this government funding could also provide an opportunity for the state to look into which districts need the most help in regard to their teachers (Wilson, 1996).

Education is an important component for kids achieving the American dream of succeeding and becoming more financially independent than their parents (Putnam, 2015). A key in achieving a better education lies in the teachers (Putnam, 2015). A way to improve teacher quality, and an overall improvement of high-poverty schools, is hiring better teachers while also

paying them at a competitive rate. The act of doing this would decrease the class differences that are currently being experienced in our schools (Putnam, 2015). These other factors include whether a student's parents encourage the academic success of their child and whether the area in which the school is located maintains an atmosphere that encourages drug use and crime (Putnam, 2015).

Bluntly, "whom you go to school with matters a lot," (Putnam, 2015, p. 166). The social networks that are created through education help individuals to finding a job after they finish their education. Connections have become so important in finding a job, without connections it can be very difficult to secure employment in any field (Lipsitz, 1995). Systematically, whites have been given more opportunities to make those connections over other races because of the historical advantages that they have had. Affirmative action from the government helps guarantee those advantages to the whites through the labor market and their connections that they develop (Lipsitz, 1995).

Stigma

With poverty comes the stigma that people receive based on the situation that they find themselves in. Stigmas play into how people view poverty from the outside, but also how people in poverty view their situation. Stigmas, in general, can arise anywhere, but that they are most likely to form upon your first meeting with someone (Goffman, 1963).

The Ohio Works First (OWF) program effects manager perceptions of welfare and the people receiving it. A study interviewed program managers from 69 out of Ohio's 88 counties to get their opinions about self-sufficiency, their program and how welfare plays into their opinions (Taylor et. al., 2016). Three types of managers emerged through this study, those include: social work, efficiency engineers and conflicted (Taylor et. al., 2016). Social work managers are managers that see this opportunity as a way to connect with their clients and try and support them through problems they face while working towards self-sufficiency (Taylor et. al., 2016).

Efficiency engineers, rather, see their clients as the problems and want to help their clients through the way that their program dictates instead of offering the client their personal help (Taylor et. al., 2016). Conflicted managers see problems in their clients, but also problems in the program itself; similar to efficiency engineers, they do not mind placing blame on their clients if they are not succeeding the way they should.

Despite the high rates of poverty in the United States, with 12.3 percent of the population being in poverty as of 2017 (U.S. Census, 2018), being in poverty is seen as being unusual or against the norm of society. This notion of a middle-class norm is often attributed to media depictions of celebrity culture and a culture of consumption (Warr, 2005). The United States hides its poverty through a culture on consumption and mass production. This concept can be summarized as a culture that thrives on materialism, which states that materials are more important to a person's life (Goldsmith et. al., 2012). These materials that a person chooses to buy allow them to portray a life of wealth, when in reality they might not have the money to get a more expensive version of the product they have. Materialism helps an individual make up for what they are lacking in their life, and potentially has the ability for individuals to receive the social recognition that they crave (Goldsmith et. al., 2012). This mentality creates a culture that ignores poverty because it is not easily seen. "Social stigma occurs because of a perceived low social value that is accorded to particular groups, largely because of their difficulty to reciprocate the support or benefits they are deemed to have received" (Warr, 2005, p. 289). Stigma is something that is crucial to the study of barriers surrounding poverty because it can be hidden in other opinions about poverty (Warr, 2005). Most people would avoid leaving a stigmatized area because they did not want to hear the stereotypes that people talked about; people might also try to change their personal style to not look poor or to fit into the areas they are going (Warr, 2005).

There is also a stigma that is associated with the poor in the eyes of those who are not poor. The non-poor tend to look at those who are differently than how the poor look at themselves. Those in various institutions tend to hold beliefs that those who are poor are below

them and use those stigmas to talk to those who are in poverty. The poor tend to have a different frame of mind than those who are well off (Vance, 2016). The way the poor communicate with each other can be different due to the way they talk. They might not talk with correct grammar or English, potentially using a specific accent or dialogue, whereas others try and maintain proper speaking styles (Vance, 2016). The way the two groups communicate through their language primarily shows their difference.

Limitations

This study examines the perceptions of poverty from individuals in power, which fills a gap in the literature. The research found that most of the literature looks into statistics of those in poverty or talks with those in poverty directly. Although Taylor and colleagues interview program managers, they did not look into directors, a city commissioner and the like to gather their data. Therefore, this study will attempt to fill the gap regarding what those in positions of power think about poverty. However, Taylor and colleagues' findings about managers might be compatible to some extent with what was found through the interviews in this study. Local officials offer a critical insight into poverty as they hold power in what can be done locally to address the problems of poverty. Addressing this gap could help with finding information about what can be done from a governmental level rather than an individual level and could also shed light on what programs should look for when improving a current program or looking to add a program to their organization. Most of the existing literature examines either the micro-individual experiences in poverty, or macro structural reasons for poverty. This research examines the mezzo level of small groups.

Methodology

In order to address the question of why people in poverty do not achieve self-sufficiency, data were gathered via interviews. In order to begin this process, IRB approval was secured to interview members of the Dayton community about their opinions on poverty and self-sufficiency. Once the IRB approval was secured, community and city leaders in Dayton were contacted to begin a snowball sample. A variety of individuals were selected from different non-profit or governmental organizations to supply a wide variety of information that was not found through an initial review of the literature. The interviewees were picked based on their role in the organization they were a part of. Participants were selected if they had worked in their organization for at least six months to ensure they understood the processes that people in poverty have to go through, and also so they had a deeper understanding of the barriers that face people in poverty.

Community and city leaders were interviewed as their insight is absent in the existing literature on the barriers that face people while trying to reach self-sufficiency. Individuals interviewed worked at or were associated with St. John, Disaster Relief, the University of Dayton Fitz Center, public officials at the City of Dayton, and Counseling Center. In an effort to maintain confidentiality, most affiliations have been changed to protect the organization and participants were given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Each of the interviewees were asked their job function and purpose, and how long they had been working for their respective organizations. This was used to gain an understanding of how the interviewees potentially see poverty in their everyday work environment. Understanding their job function and purpose allowed for a better understanding of their perception on poverty. The next question delved into the major successes they had seen through their organization, and the major obstacles they had run into through their work. These questions were asked to get an idea of what organizations in the area did to help those in poverty. Following their discussion on the successes and obstacles of their organization, participants were asked about the hidden barriers that they think people face as they are trying to

achieve self-sufficiency. This follow-up was used to see if interviewees had ideas on how to help get rid of the hidden barrier and if their respective organizations were doing anything at the time to try to help alleviate any barriers. Participants were asked if there were any community partnerships that would help make improvements on the hidden barriers and had them explain how those partnerships would help ease the problems that organizations have been facing with these barriers. Next, legislative policies were discussed. Although the chances of changing legislative policies through this project would be difficult, gathering data on the opinions of individuals who see poverty on a daily basis was a good foundation to begin looking at how policies could be altered to help those in need. The final question to the participants was whether they knew anyone else who might be willing to talk with the researcher about their views on the poverty situation in Dayton. This question allowed the use of the snowball method to find other participants that were willing to provide their thoughts on the barriers that stop someone from achieving self-sufficiency.

In order to analyze the data, coding took place in multiple ways. All of the interviews were audio-recorded using a cell phone application to ensure that every bit of information was taken out of the interview to provide consistency with handwritten notes. After the interview, the responses were transcribed verbatim, and emailed to the participants to ensure that they said everything they needed to in the interview and to ensure that everything was written down correctly. In some cases, words were changed, or ideas added to allow the interviewee to keep a better picture of what they wanted to convey in their interview. Once the interview notes were confirmed, the information was added into an analysis document. This analysis document was framed as notes, including bullet point lists of parts of the questions along with bullet points that supported the participants answers. This made it easier to focus on the answers that were provided, rather than looking through the notes to find the main points of the participants answers. These analysis forms allowed the opportunity to connect all the information from the interviews once they were done. The analysis focused on the variety of answers that were given

from the interviewees. An interview analysis table was made with all of the important information gathered from the interviews, so common themes could be looked at further in the analysis component of this project. Once the analysis table was formed, common information was identified that would help in figuring out the main points from the interview. At this point, key words were emphasized from the different interviews. For example, if a certain word was said more than once in their interview, a note of that was made, along with the any phrases that seemed important. On a separate analysis form that was developed from the analysis table, notable quotes that came up during the interviews were noted to ensure they could be found later on in the project.

This project takes a grounded theory approach in conducting research and analyzing results, meaning that the project begins with a blank slate and as research is conducted it allows themes to emerge from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The project started with the basic question of why people in poverty do not take advantage of self-sufficiency programs and as it progressed there was deeper consideration for the barriers that someone in poverty faces. As data were collected, patterns were identified and analyzed to see how other pieces of information could be matched together.

There were advantages and disadvantages of using interviews as the method of data collection. One advantage was being able to connect with leaders in the community. From the interviews, connections were made with participants through mutual interests, especially in learning more about poverty's hidden barriers. Another advantage was being able to find many different types of themes that were mentioned. These themes might not have been mentioned if a survey were conducted because limited space would be available for their thoughts. With an unlimited time for interviews, most never exceeding one hour, there was copious amount of time for participants to mention anything about self-sufficiency that they believed to be important. A main disadvantage with conducting interviews was a lack of responses. The researcher reached

out to many individuals and subsequently received no response from members of the community that would have provided quality information to help in this project.

Results

The intent of this project is to delve deeper into the reasons why people in poverty struggle to achieve self-sufficiency. The goal of the interviews was to ask participants on their thoughts regarding hidden barriers and other potential hidden barriers that the initial review of the literature might have missed.

Through subsequent interviews with individuals at St. John, Disaster Relief, the University of Dayton Fitz Center, public officials at the City of Dayton, and Counseling Center information was gathered about a variety of barriers that face people in poverty. Participants were asked about their opinions on what could be considered a hidden barrier among their opinions on their organizations successes and obstacles in potentially solving those barriers.

St. John is an organization that provides shelter, clothes, food and personal need items to people that do not have a home. The public official with the City of Dayton explained that the city's role is keeping the city up and running, including making sure that parts of the city government are running correctly and making sure that everyone is getting paid. The University of Dayton Fitz Center specifically works with community partners and a variety of faculty to cultivate partnerships within the community. The center engages with the public to find ways that UD and the community can benefit, such as bringing knowledge into a certain course, providing internships or research opportunities. Disaster relief is an organization that helps respond to a variety of disasters that can affect people within the city, specifically the organization helps with house fires in the area and helping those victims get back on their feet. Counseling Center gives mediation services to people in the area. The organization helps promote productive and constructive conversations by supporting the people in those conversations. The types of conversations they deal with include conflict coaching, mediation, facilitation and team building.

Hidden barriers and obstacles were identified by the participants over the course of the interviews. A participant stated that organizations need to see "what's under the iceberg" in order to help the individuals in the community better rather than just looking at the surface level

problems. The participant tied this to their discussions on hidden barriers and thought looking under the iceberg was very important. A key, they believed, is having the ability to figure out what was below the surface in order to help what was happening on the outside. Obstacles that were identified included a lack of common view of poverty, lack of adequate housing or income, health and child care, lack of adequate education, and overall a lack of resources available to those who need them. All of the participants named education as an obstacle that faces those in poverty, although they mentioned education in different ways. Interviewees identified a lack of adequate education for children and even adult education on certain subjects, including how to deal with problems in their house, how to handle finances and the like were among the obstacles mentioned. Most participants mentioned that a lack of adequate housing posed as a major barrier because people who needed special housing accommodations, such as section 8, had no way of getting that type of housing. Along with those obstacles, a lack of coordination between organizations was discussed in multiple interviews. The lack of coordination was mentioned frequently and included organizations who work with mental illness and education. When participants mentioned lack of coordination, they were articulating that organizations were not working together in order to help those in need, but rather looked more for the success of their organization without thinking about how people could work together. It was explained that the sheer amount of organizations that try to help the community and the low-quality jobs available have created major obstacles that face the community. A participant stated that overall it is important to remember that there is always something going on that can pose as an obstacle, so it's important to treat people with respect when dealing with their problems. A final hidden barrier that was identified by a participant was that "they are homeless for a reason, they don't have living skills." This participant believing that it is important for organizations to realize that individuals in these circumstances sometimes lack skills that successful people deem common sense. The participant did not say this to demean individuals who are affected by poverty, but rather to shed truth on the circumstances that could face someone in poverty.

Even though there are barriers that prevent people from reaching self-sufficiency, there are successes from the organizations that were identified by the participants. The city itself uses its voice as a success because they are able to give people a voice who do not necessarily have one. The Fitz Center works with local schools and other organizations to ensure that schools in the area are getting the resources they need so their students can succeed. The organization has seen success through their semester of service program with university students. The successes are seen through the development of relationships with the communities that the students work in. The major successes that Disaster Relief sees are through their help with their clients who have been affected by disaster, specifically through fire disasters. If they are able to help them through their rough time and send their clients to other organizations that can further help them, they see it as a success. They do not just deem their successes as solely helping a client through the tough time of a house fire, but rather also the success of them being able to point them to other organizations that can help them even more throughout the rest of the process of recovering from disaster. However, it was noted by Disaster Relief that even though disasters can reach anyone, single family homes are consistently the target mainly due to a lack of funds that are available to them. Single families are unable to have extensive home coverage for disasters like this unlike their wealthy counterparts who, if hit by disaster, are usually able to stay with someone else and have the funds to fix the problems the disaster may have caused. Disaster relief also noted that the poor tend to be more resilient than they are made out to be. The participant believes that being able to give the poor more resources would help them potentially get out of the situation they are in or be more prepared for situations that they might face later on, leading organizations to other successes in combating poverty. The Counseling Center sees successes through their ability to preserve the relationships that they help to mediate. They see this as a major success because preserving relationships can be key to staying out of poverty and continuing on the road to self-sufficiency.

Legislative policies were discussed with the participants. They were asked if there were policy changes that could be made, or if there were programs that would be helpful to help alleviate the burden of poverty and promote self-sufficiency. The interviewer believed policies would be helpful in alleviating poverty and the strain it puts on those in it. However, the interviewer knew that policies would not be altered after this project but wanted to gauge the opinions of those in positions of power. It was thought to be important that policies were discussed as it starts the conversation about what leaders in the community think about how to help alleviate poverty. With this conversation, the researcher got some ideas of potential legislative changes that these key leaders believed to be important. The leaders believed that fixing policies regarding wages, housing and transportation would be important places to start, however these ideas were discussed at a minimum since it was not the explicit goal of the research.

Discussion

This project was meant to shine light and better understand hidden barriers that face people in poverty. The interviews were conducted to further knowledge about the barriers and potentially find other barriers that could be looked at as well. Participants were asked about what they believed hidden barriers were, obstacles that their organization faces, and the successes that they have seen through their organization. From that, interviews were analyzed to look at key themes and common barriers that came up during the conversations.

The research connected with the literature through some key hidden barriers that the participants discussed. The researcher was expecting the participants to discuss inadequacies with education, housing and transportation due to what had been read in the literature. This was mentioned in every single interview that was conducted, suggesting that education, housing, and transportation are key barriers that are worth looking into and understanding more. Participants talked about how inadequate education, especially for younger children, poses a major problem in their potential future of being self-sufficient. Inequalities in education were mentioned explicitly in the interview because education gives someone the framework they need to succeed. Without an equal framework, or understanding of basic concepts, students lack an understanding that can get them out of a generational poverty situation and into a successful one. With lack of adequate housing, a participant explained that an organization can help someone understand how to get a job and keep it, but if there is not housing for them it makes it difficult to actually get rid of that barrier. This consisted with what was found in the literature because the number of houses was mentioned along with just the lack of affordable housing.

There were also inconsistencies with the literature that was discovered during the interviews. While reading the literature, there was never a mention of a lack of communication or an overabundance of organizations. A participant explained that organizations need to work together in order to make more of an impact. If each organization acts as though they are the only ones doing the work, it makes it more difficult for the people they are trying to help because they do

not know which organization to turn to in order to get help. Most of the participants stated that a lack of communication between organizations was a major barrier that stopped people from achieving self-sufficiency. It was suggested that major organizations work together to decipher what all each of them does and to improve on their communication skills with one another. It was further explained that if organizations know what other organizations do, then if they are referring a client to another organization they can lead them to someone that specializes in whatever they need help with. In regards to an overabundance of organizations, a participant explicitly explained that there are hundreds of veteran organizations in the Dayton-Cincinnati region that do the same thing. They noted that at that point it becomes overwhelming for those in need of the services because they cannot effectively decide with all the options available to them. With this comment, the participant was not saying that organizations need to shut their doors and that there needs to be a limit on how many organizations can be doing similar work, but rather was just re-emphasizing the point that organizations need to work together. With this, they were also pointing out the sheer number of organizations in the metroplex that are trying to do similar things to help those in need and that the amount of organizations should be considered and looked at to ensure that people are getting the help that they deserve, easily.

These observations were unexpected because in the literature a lack of communication or an overabundance of organization were not mentioned as a possible obstacle that would pose problems to those trying to achieve self-sufficiency. However, it came up in almost every interview that a lack of communication between organizations can affect the success of someone reaching self-sufficiency. Unexpectedly, a major barrier to be the organizations that are supposed to be helping people get out of self-sufficiency.

The interviews and analysis provided a unique perspective that was not initially expected and made the research more usable. With the participants honesty, the researcher was able to get a better sense of what major barriers can face someone in poverty and opened up the possibility that those barriers might not be ones that are only associated with the ones that are in poverty.

However, some of those barriers have to do with the organizations themselves, and through this research their role becomes very prominent. Each of the participants had interesting things to point out about how their organization helped with poverty, the successes they had seen, and hidden barriers that they thought were important.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations of this project became very apparent during the final stages of work. With a lack of notable individuals to contact it became difficult to find participants that would be knowledgeable enough to be interviewed. Despite outreach to twelve participants, many of them simply did not reply. Another limitation was a lack of time. Although the researcher worked on this project for over a year, it was difficult to keep up with the demands of the research and interviews along with having to focus on other school obligations.

For a future study it would be beneficial to be able to devote ample time to this project. It would be helpful to have more time to focus on the literature for the six themes mentioned, but also expand the knowledge to other themes that this project did not look into. With limited time to complete the project, the researcher had to pick and choose which subjects they wanted to focus the literature review on, thus being forced to choose which subjects were more important to delve into. Future research would benefit from relying on other insiders about getting participants to agree to an interview. This project would hold so much more weight if more interviews were conducted because there could be more hidden barriers, but there also could be a better understanding of the barriers that are already mentioned. An interesting way to extend this project would be adding a quantitative approach to the research. Although it would not be the main way of collecting data, a study could use quantitative data to provide a better background for poverty in the area by citizens instead of leaders. It would be interesting to have data for general public opinions on poverty, the poverty rate based on gender and age, perceptions of organizations that help with poverty, and general public opinions on whether policies should be changed. This

information would provide background information that could support the information received from the participants or could shed light on topics that might not have been addressed in the original research. Another potential future approach could be interviewing people that are in poverty or conducting focus groups with them to get their opinions on poverty and self-sufficiency. Initially, this research would include observations of a focus group with individuals who successfully went through a self-sufficiency program, however, due to a lack of time and problems with the organization, that component was never completed. The focus group would add a way to confirm if self-sufficiency programs are successful, but would also give a way to check if the data provided by leaders was reliable.

Conclusion

Poverty is not something that can be solved from one project or through one organization. This project was not looking to solve poverty, but only provide better context on the barriers that face someone in poverty. The themes that were initially looked at in the literature provided a nice framework for the interview questions that were asked to participants. During the interviews, it was expected that some of those six themes come up, but what was not expected was other barriers to arise. The culture of poverty was discussed in multiple interviews, confirming the stigma associated with those in the poor. The component of the culture of poverty that was seen throughout the interviews as well as the literature was that the poor lack certain life skills that would propel them into the achievement of self-sufficiency. Another key barrier that came up in the project was the overabundance of resources available to them. With too many resources, individuals can feel overwhelmed and stressed when they are trying to decide how they want to receive help.

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Appendix

IRB Documents**Fast-Track Survey / Interview IRB Application****FOR APPROVAL OF EXEMPT HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH (Category b-2)**

This Checklist may be used by researchers at the University of Dayton who want to conduct **anonymous paper surveys, confidential online surveys, or non-sensitive interviews using only adult subjects**. Any other type of research must use the appropriate exempt or non-exempt form available at the IRB web site. This application form may NOT be used if the research is sponsored with federal funds, if prison populations are used, if compensation is involved, or if minors under the age of 18 are involved. This form can only be submitted to the IRB by a University of Dayton faculty member or full-time staff member. **If you are a student, you must ask your faculty mentor to approve the checklist and submit it, along with the Invitation to Participate/Information Sheet and list of survey/interview questions to IRB@udayton.edu. Visit: <http://www.udayton.edu/research/compliance/irb/>**

1. PRIMARY RESEARCHER

Researcher name, department, and UD e-mail:

Claudia Hampel; Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work; hampelc2@udayton.edu

Faculty Sponsor Name (required for student projects), department and e-mail:

Dr. Leslie Picca; Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work; leslie.picca@udayton.edu

2. PROJECT TITLE:**3. CHECKLIST:**

- X No federal funds will be used in this research. (You may not use this form if federal funds are used.)
- X No compensation will be offered to participants. (You may not use this form if compensation is used.)
- X No subjects under the age of 18 will be used in this research.
- X No prisoners will be used in this research.
- X No deception will be used in this research.
- X The researcher has approval to conduct their research at the data collection site. LOCATION:
Goodwill Easter Seals
- X The researcher will not be collecting or recording any identifying information from the subjects.
- X If interviews are involved, NO sensitive topics are involved. (If for any reason the subject might be at risk if their identity and their responses are linked, you may not use this fast-track form.)
- X Survey Data and Interview Responses will be secured and kept private using lock-and-key (paper data) or password-protected computer files (digital data) on a computer with limited access.
- X Access to the research data will be protected and restricted to the researcher and/or faculty member.

- X This type of research does not require the researcher to document informed consent. In lieu, the researcher will use the **University-approved Invitation/Information Sheet** template (see the IRB web site). This sheet will be provided to the subjects prior to data collection.
- X I have included the **Invitation to Participate/Information Sheet** and **Survey/Interview Questions** for this study with this form for review.
- X Only a faculty or staff member may submit this form to the IRB.

IF ANY OF THE BOXES ABOVE ARE NOT CHECKED, you may not use the FAST-TRACK FORM. Please visit the IRB web site for the regular application for exemption or non-exempt research application.

4. FACULTY/STAFF MEMBER CERTIFICATION OF FAST-TRACK APPLICATION: This form may only be submitted by a **full-time faculty or staff member** of the University of Dayton. This form must be submitted, along with the Invitation to Participate/Information Sheet, and list of survey/interview questions for this study, by e-mail to IRB@udayton.edu prior to any data collection. By submitting this form via e-mail to the IRB, the faculty/staff member is certifying that the above information has been reviewed and is true to the best of your knowledge. **The person signing/submitting this form accepts responsibility for the protection of the human subjects recruited to this research study, and for the ethical conduct of this research.**

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Surveys and Interviews

Attached at the end of this document is the participation agreement required by Miami Valley Works, this will be used in lieu of the following.

Research Project Title: Poverty Redemption: Why Those Affected Stay Affected

You have been asked to participate in a research project conducted by Claudia Hampel from the University of Dayton, in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work.

The purpose of the project is: to research why individuals in poverty in the Dayton community do not take advantage of self-sufficiency programs offered by Miami Valley Works, or why individuals interested do not complete the program following enrollment.

You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop participating at any time for any reason. Answering the questions will take about 30 minutes.
- You will not be compensated for your participation.
- All of the information you tell us will be confidential.
- If this is a recorded interview, only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the recording and it will be kept in a secure place.
- If this is a written or online survey, only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to your responses. If you are participating in an online survey: We will not collect identifying information, but we cannot guarantee the security of the computer you use or the security of data transfer between that computer and our data collection point. We urge you to consider this carefully when responding to these questions.
- I understand that I am ONLY eligible to participate if I am over the age of 18.

Please contact the following investigators with any questions or concerns:

Claudia Hampel, hampelc2@udayton.edu, 214-998-4999:

Dr. Leslie Picca, leslie.picca@udayton.edu, Phone Number: 937-229-3139

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Candise Powell, J.D., Chair of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Dayton, IRB@udayton.edu; Phone: (937) 229-3515.



RELEASE OF INFORMATION

I understand that this interview is voluntary and part of an Honors Thesis study conducted by Ms. Claudia Hampel, who is collaborating with Miami Valley Works, a program of Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley, to explore the impact of housing on the question *“Why do many people living in poverty not participate in programs that can potentially move themselves to self-sufficiency?”*

I give my permission to have the interview audio-recorded.

I understand that I may be asked at a later date for permission to use a quote that I have stated during the interview for research purposes, and I may accept or decline this request. I understand that I will be sent a draft of the interview to edit or clarify my oral responses.

I understand that my interview responses will only be used for the research purposes of Ms. Hampel’s Honors Thesis and Miami Valley Works and all recordings and transcripts of the interview will be destroyed at the completion of the research study.

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWEE

DATE

PRINT NAME AND TITLE

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWER

DATE

Interview Questions – repeating questions have been omitted

1. How long have you been working for _____? What do you do?
2. How do you see poverty through your everyday work environment?
3. What are the major successes that you see through _____ to help people move out of poverty? Describe the process for me.
4. What are the major obstacles that _____ sees as inhibiting the reduction of poverty?
5. What is being done through _____ to reduce poverty?
6. What do you feel needs to be done further to reduce poverty?
7. What major barriers do you see that prevent people from moving out of poverty?
8. What would you classify as major barriers that stop people from achieving self-sufficiency?
9. Through the literature review, barriers identified are childcare, mental health issues, and transportation. Besides these what are 2 other hidden barriers that impact low-income people in moving to self-sufficiency?
10. What other barriers would you add to the list?
11. Do you see a connection between poverty, education, housing and stigma?
 - a. Would you consider any of those hidden barriers to fighting poverty?
12. What are one or two next steps to take through _____ to address these hidden barriers?
13. What is _____ doing to address these hidden barriers? / How can these initiatives/ideas best be achieved?
14. What is one idea you have to combat a barrier on the list? Or what is one thing that your organization has done to help combat a barrier on the list?
15. Does housing inequality have a direct effect on who comes to _____? How have you seen a correlation?

16. Could you explain the Dayton Preferred Property Program?
17. How has the 10-year plan affected who takes advantage of _____?
18. What major policies or legislation changes need to be made that would really impact poverty? What community partnerships are needed to address hidden barriers?
19. How have legislative policies been adjusted to account for housings association with poverty?
20. If you could wave a magic wand to make the housing situations perfect or effectively reduce poverty through housing inequalities, what would it look like?
21. Do you have any other thoughts regarding the project? Do you have any recommendations for me to look into, or other people to connect with?