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PARENTING WITHIN THE HYPERGHETTO CARCERAL COMPLEX: MAKING MEANING OF YOUTH BEHAVIOR THROUGH PARENTAL IDENTITY

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DEDICATION

To my mother Diana,

and her mother Julia,

and her mother Thomasina...

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I first decided to pursue a doctorate, a former professor of mine, Fanon C. Wilkins, advised me that completing a doctorate was a marathon and not a sprint. He was right, of course. Some people finish marathons in impressively short amounts of time. Others plod along and are just grateful and determined to finish, no matter how long it takes. I am a plodder and I am thankful for those who remembered I was still in the race.

My mother, Diana Davis, died while I was in the middle of this marathon. She was my biggest supporter and in some important ways was the reason behind the whole endeavor. I remain saddened that she never got to see the end. Her death put this project on pause while I had to imagine a world without her. I appreciate everyone who helped me get through that time including my sister Rebecca Hall, my brother, Odell Hall, who never let me even consider quitting, and my closest and dearest friend, Synoria Jones who provided much needed emotional support. My dad, James Hall, was the first to introduce me to the treasures to be found in serious academic scholarly works. He is the first intellectual I knew, and is usually the smartest person in the room.

My extended family members, the descendants of Julia Clark, continue to influence me personally, but also my academic thinking about urban poor black families. Sixty years ago, my maternal grandmother, Julia, piled her 11 children into one old car in search of "the warmth of other suns." They left the fields of Eutawville, SC and made a home for themselves within the concrete and asphalt of Harlem, New York City. What my grandmother found was a mixed bag; some things remained the same, some things got better, and some things got worse. She traded the fields of South Carolina to the floors of other people's kitchens on the upper east side. Some

things stayed the same. Among her descendants--my aunts, uncles, mother, cousins, and siblings-- one can find a lawyer, an advertising executive, at least two accountants, and a whole host of nurses and social workers. Somethings got better. But one can also find pervasive addiction, homelessness, HIV/AIDS, mental illness, child and family services intervention, entrenched reliance on welfare programs for survival, incarceration, and violent and premature death. Some things got worse. It has been remarkable to watch this all happen in real time over the course of my life time, and while these issues were part of broader public discussions and moral panics. Such as, for example, when several cousins and an uncle were heavily addicted to crack cocaine during the crack moral panic of the 1980s. My family has taught me more about the challenges, opportunities, and nuance that exists within black families than anything I've ever heard in a classroom, or read in a book. I love us all intensely.

The faculty of Comparative Human Development has afforded me great kindness, guidance, and patience. Dr. Margaret Beale Spencer has been a mentor to me in every sense of the word. I am continuously inspired by her sense of purpose and determination. She has been exceedingly gracious as I stumbled and fell. Dr. Spencer provided support and helped me see the forest for the trees and never let me get too lost. I am thankful for continued interest in my project, as well as her no-nonsense straight talk when I needed it. Dr. Richard Taub, my initial mentor, and in whose office, I spent countless hours discussing urban sociology. He showed me to trust my instincts as a qualitative researcher and to value my innate skills of observation and listening. Onward and upward! Dr. Micere Keels was instrumental to me during my early years of my doctor study. Her calm demeanor and steadiness allowed me to not give into my anxiety. From her, I learned a great deal about mentorship and academic professionalism. Dr. Reuben Miller was exceedingly helpful to me in thinking through the theory but reminding me to center

the narratives and lives of the participants. It is easy to get lost in the "study," but he reminded me that people are nuanced and three dimensional. This work is richer for it.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Implication of Parents in Youth Criminal and Violent Outcomes

On a September afternoon in 2012, a teenager was shot to death while riding his bike in the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago. At the time of his death, Joseph "Lil Jojo" Coleman, was fielding multiple record label offers and had made a name for himself in the local music scene. His most famous song, "Black Disciple Killer" was a very clear and provocative message to a rival street gang in Chicago. Employing traditional hyper-masculine symbols of power and aggression in the "BDK" music video posted to YouTube, Coleman and his teenaged entourage point large assault rifles at the camera while rapping about their mission to kill Black Disciples. To date, this video has over 6 million views and the song was even sung by fans at his funeral in tribute.

Two months after his death, Coleman's mother appeared on a talk show to discuss his murder along with her older son[1]. Robin Russell stated that she was using the national platform in an effort to find justice for her son, despite being afraid of public threats of retaliation. Halfway through the interview, the show host asked Ms. Russell pointedly, "Did you know your son was affiliated with a gang?"

Caught off guard and immediately defensive, Ms. Russell paused for a split second and responded flatly, "No. I did not." Not satisfied and without missing a beat, the interviewer continued, "Umm, what are you gonna do moving forward to make sure that your other kids

[1] (Smithberg and North, 2012)

don't meet the same fate? Or do you feel powerless going up against the influence of the streets and of the peers that are around?" His message, left unsaid, was clear, "*This is your fault*."

A bit more bolstered, Ms. Russell responded more confidently, "Well I don't feel it's my fault because all I can do is raise my child. I can't hold his hand 24/7 when he goes in the streets. I teach him right from wrong but like I said, I have other kids. I can't be there with him 24 hours."

If Ms. Russell had ever listened to her son's most popular song, it is almost certain that she was aware that he was in fact "affiliated with a gang." Perhaps in the fraction of a second it took her to respond to the host's pointed question, she gathered that he was implicating her in her son's murder on national television. For his part, the host confirmed her suspicions with his follow up question, "What are you gonna do to make sure that your other kids don't meet the same fate?" Embedded in this thinly veiled question was an accusation of negligent parenting at best and willful complicity at worst.

The talk show host was not the only member of the national media to have asked Ms. Russell about her knowledge of her son's gang involvement following his murder. In a *Chicago Tribune* article written just two days after her son's murder, it is documented that Ms. Russell refused to comment on whether Coleman was in a gang when asked by a reporter and she responded as such,

> I didn't get into what he did when he left my house. I tried to be there, tried to teach my son the right way. But you can't hold no child's hand every step of the way. So what he did in the streets I don't know about. What he raps about, I don't know about…Whatever's going on out there, I don't know.[2]

Ms. Russell's feigned lack of knowledge of her son's gang involvement can be read as an acknowledgement of and an attempt to shield herself from the negative judgment of mainstream

[2] (Garner & Kot, 2012)

observers who do not understand her family's circumstances. Further, Ms. Russell's seemingly contradictory statements that "all I can do is raise my child" and "I didn't get into what he did when he left my house," suggest that in at least some ways she considers her parenting actions and her children's outcomes to be unrelated.

Ms. Russell's concern that middle-class observers will judge her was not unfounded. Examples of poor black mothers being vilified in popular media are plentiful. In a 2010 *Chicago Sun Times* op-ed, "Ghetto Parenting Dooms Kids," popular columnist Mary Mitchell tells the follow up story to a 1994 infamous murder of a five-year-old boy who was pushed out of a fourteenth-floor window of a Chicago Housing Authority high-rise by two older neighborhood children, while his eight-year-old brother tried to help.[3] Sixteen years later, the eight-year old brother who witnessed his younger brother's murder was 23 years old and himself convicted of murder. While Mitchell insufficiently accounts for the trauma he experienced at eight years old, "I can only imagine the nightmares that he must have had after his brother's death", she argues that it was the boys' mother who was primarily responsible for the poor outcomes of her children. This mother, it seemed, had "failed her children in every way... the biggest share of the blame belonged to the mother who allowed her young sons to wander around the notoriously dangerous housing project unsupervised." Mitchell then draws a connection between this mother and all poor black parents who raise families in racially segregated low socio-economic neighborhoods. These parents were guilty of a practice that Mitchell coins "ghetto parenting." Mitchell writes,

> Ghetto parenting is cursing around, and at, a child. Ghetto parenting is brawling with your man or your woman in front of your child. Ghetto parenting is letting your child roam the streets until somebody else's mother has to tell the child to go home. Ghetto parenting is putting your child off on friends and relatives because you want to hang out in the street. Ghetto parenting is getting so hooked on substances that the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has to remove your children and place them with strangers.

[3] (Mitchell, 2010)

To Mitchell, it is evident that undesirable outcomes experienced by black youth in poor neighborhoods are willfully caused by their "ghetto parents" who "doom" their children to their fates through the sheer force of their ignorant and negligent behaviors. This narrative contends that if not for the immoral, selfish, and malicious behavior of individual parents, "ghetto children" would be better off. In short, their parents are holding them back from experiencing the success that is available to everyone else in a wealthy free society. This example, along with the media's handling of Ms. Russell suggests that when poor black youth become victims and/or perpetuators of violence and trauma, the root cause is always understood to be their bad "ghetto parents" and more specifically their mothers.

Like Ms. Russell, the parents included in this study maintain that they are doing their best given their circumstances but that much remains beyond their control and also like Ms. Russell, see no contradiction in stating simultaneously "all I can do is raise my child" and "I didn't get into what he did when he left my house." This understanding of parenting is an extension of parents' understanding of their place within a broader social context as parents are acutely aware that they cannot control their own circumstances and therefore cannot control what ultimately happens to their children. As this dissertation explores, Englewood parents expressed sadness and disappointment about undesirable youth outcomes while maintaining that though they have done their best to raise their children, children will ultimately do what they want. In one frustrated participant's words,

> Those kids got a mind of their own. I can't be there when my son getting ready to do something. Then you looking at me like I'm the one that did it. He already knew it first not to do it, but he did it any old way. So why you blaming me? It's not fair. It's not fair at all.

Mainstream, middle class society blames an imagined lazy, inept, and irresponsible "ghetto parent" for the undesirable outcomes of poor children. These parents, in turn, blame an imagined sense of excessive agency on the part of their children. But neither conceptualization is accurate as both are ahistorical and devoid of the contextual realities in which poor black families live.

Englewood Neighborhood Context

This study was conducted in the Englewood community on Chicago's south side. Chicago has become a central talking point in the national conversation on urban violence and gun control. In fact, Chicago is sometimes referred to the "murder capital" of the U.S due to the national media's coverage of the high rates of violent crime within the city (Gramlich & Desliver, 2018). However, violent crime in Chicago is concentrated among specific groups in specific areas. Such crime within the city is overwhelmingly perpetuated by and against African-American male youth. In 2012, the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention reported that,

> Violence affects everyone in Chicago, but it is particularly devastating for our youth. In 2010, 1,109 school-aged youth were shot, and 216 of those were killed. Nearly half of Chicago's homicide victims are young people between the ages of 10 and 25. In 2009, 65% of all violent crime arrests were of youth 25 or younger… The consequences of violence on youth are disproportionately concentrated among African-Americans in our most economically challenged neighborhoods.[4]

In the city of Chicago, violent crime is a problem for poor black youth who live in devastatingly poor and racially segregated neighborhoods on the south and west sides of the city. In fact, there are 23 Chicago police districts, but just two of them, the 7th and 11th, accounted for 25% of the city's violent crime (Annual Report: 2010 A Year in Review, 2011). One of these two, the 7th, is located in Englewood.

[4] (National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, 2015)

Englewood is spread out over three-square miles on the city's south west side. At its peak in 1960, Englewood was home to over 97,000 people. But Englewood, along with the rest of the city, has experienced a sharp population decline over the past 50 losing more than half of its population, and today there are only 30,000 residents. More than 46.6% percent of neighborhood residents live in poverty, more than twice as many than the city average of twenty percent (Census Data- Selected Socioeconomic Indicators in Chicago Neighborhoods 2008-2012, Retreived 11 May 2020).

Englewood's story is similar to that of other segregated African-American urban communities (Wilson, 1990). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the neighborhood was a growing community with a strong economic pulse and a steady inward flow of European immigrants, primarily from Sweden, Ireland, and Germany (Roberts & Stamz, 2002). Due to the neighborhood's proximity to the Chicago stockyards and industrial areas of the city, Englewood was an ideal residence for workers to travel to and from their working-class jobs. The first black residents came to the area during the 1880s and 1890s as domestic workers but remained only one percent of the area's total population for many decades. This pattern changed during the Great Migration during the years immediately following the Second World War, which brought black migrants from the U.S. south to northern cities. As blacks came to settle in Englewood, white residents began to flee to neighboring communities and suburbs during the 1950s. As white residents fled, too few black residents replaced them resulting in numerous neighborhood properties vacant and abandoned. A great deal of this surplus housing stock and abandoned buildings was eventually burned down to rubble or demolished, leaving large patches of vacant lots in their wake. Those abandoned properties that were not burned to rubble or demolished, simply remained unoccupied and unmaintained. Businesses ultimately failed as well due to the

sharp population decline and left to start again in other parts of the city. In a matter of a few years, the population fell from its peak of 97,000 in 1960 to about 59,000 by 1980 (US Census data).

White flight and community divestment also coincided with the rapid de-industrialization of the national economy in 1960s and 1970s in which menial jobs traditionally occupied by low skilled black workers were no longer available. Seemingly overnight, black unemployment rates skyrocketed throughout the country and the proliferation of a widespread drug economy developed in large part, due to limited alternative economic prospects. The propagation of a drug economy in urban inner cities of the 1970s and 1980s meant that undereducated black youth had unprecedented access to money and a livelihood that they would not have been available to them in any other sector of the formal economy. But because of the drug market's inherent illegality and its cutthroat competitive nature, participants are permanently under the threat of arrest or assault from law enforcement authorities and other drug economy participants. In order to make participation in the only available economic market available to them, an increasingly violent gang culture developed to help ensure safety, coordination of effort, and protection of "turf."

Infamously draconian "War on Drug" policies of both conservative and liberal government officials made the penalties of drug market participation increasingly harsher with mandatory minimum prison sentences in the 1980s. The result of which is that a whole generation of poor black youth have spent at least part of their lives incarcerated. Western and Pettit (2004) note that nearly sixty percent of black men who dropped out of high school born between 1965 and 1969 spent time in prison by 1999.

In 2003, over half of all prisoners released from Illinois state prisons reached Chicago---concentrated to just six communities out of Chicago's 77 delineated community areas.

Englewood and West Englewood account for two of these six neighborhoods. In other words, roughly fifteen percent of all exiting prisoners in the state of Illinois reach Englewood at some point in their re-entry process (LaVigne et. al 2003).

The Hyperghetto-Carceral Complex

Englewood families exist within a historical tradition of poor African-Americans in which family relations are disrupted and influenced by omnipotent social institutions with physically coercive power. Loïc Wacquant's theory to explain racialized marginality within the postindustrial city, denotes four derivative and chronologically consecutive "peculiar institutions" have historically defined the lives of the U.S. black poor - chattel slavery (1619-1865), Jim Crow (1865-1965), the northern ghetto (1915-1968), and the hyperghetto-carceral complex (1968-present). Each successive institution is informed by the previous one and each has not only worked to "recruit, organize, and extract labor" but also to "demarcate and ultimately seclude [the black poor] so that they would not contaminate the surrounding white society that viewed them as irrevocably inferior and vile…" (Wacquant, 2001). In Wacquant's theorization of the hyperghetto-carceral complex of the present moment, the prison and the hyper-ghetto become mere extensions of one another as the ghetto becomes increasingly violent, militarized and surveilled and the prison becomes more residential and racially segregated. The prison and the ghetto form a symbiotic relationship, in which they feed off one another with frequent and recurrent cyclical movement between the two.

The hyper-ghetto carceral complex is the context in which Englewood parents raise their children. They and their children are subjected to the unpredictable violence within their neighborhoods and the omnipresence of the carceral state which militarizes schools, basic

neighborhood establishments, and social services. The hyperghetto carceral complex is a constant reminder that Englewood residents are operating under the authority of a coercive power that can be enacted upon them at any moment. This power stakes random claims upon their children and supersedes their own parental authority.

As Wacquant constructs a direct lineage connecting the ways the black poor have historically been defined by an ever-evolving political economy, so too must we construct a direct line through the family relations that must exist within these systems. To fully understand the challenges and constraints of mothers such as Ms. Russell, we must interrogate what it means to be both a parent with a presumption of full authority over your children's lives while simultaneously being subjected to an all-encompassing coercive institutional power.

To construct this familial historical lineage, consider the following passage from the slave narrative genre, which reads remarkably similar to Englewood parents' interpretations of their children "having their own mind."

> One day when [my brother's] father and his mistress both happened to call him at the same time, he hesitated between the two; being perplexed to know which had the strongest claim upon his obedience. He finally concluded to go to his mistress. When my father reproved him for it [my brother] said, "You both called me and I didn't know which I ought to go to first."
>
> 'You are my child,' replied our father, "and when I call you, you should come immediately, if you have to pass through fire and water.'[5]

At that moment, the child in question understood the nature of his predicament. He understood that he was simultaneously subjected to the authority of two overlapping social institutions—that of his family and that of chattel slavery-- and was called at once to choose which "had the strongest claim upon his obedience." He ultimately concluded that the institution of chattel slavery had such a claim because within the "mistress's call" was the ever-present

[5] (Jacobs, 2001)

threat of a coercive power that controlled the bodies of both him and his father. The father, even while knowing that he too is bounded by the confines of chattel slavery, is still disappointed and contends that his authority over his son should have been given primacy. The father concludes that the child had the power to choose and therefore chose to disobey him. In doing so, the father places unrealistic expectations on his child, given both of their circumstances. What really was the nature of the son's choice? What could the child have chosen and to what end? The father imagines a world in which a young boy living in chattel slavery can choose to "pass through fire and water" to make independent decisions devoid of context. He imagines a world in which his son "has his own mind." Why did the father not understand his son's predicament?

Chattel slavery undermined the authority of the father and thus characterized the nature of the father and son's familial relationship. The enslaved father certainly knows that he himself is also bounded by the system of chattel slavery, which begs the question, what purpose does it serve him to imagine that his son can transcend the confines of the institution that he himself cannot?

Like the father of the young boy who "chose" to respond to a beckoning mistress, Englewood parents believe that children "choose" to disobey them and behave in accordance with other neighborhood youth by participating in undesired criminalized behaviors. And just as the enslaved child was fully aware of the wide-reaching authority of chattel slavery and the costs of non-compliance, Englewood youth are aware of the pressing demands of the social system which characterizes their own lives. For the enslaved child, his father can reprimand him, show disappointment, and perhaps enact a minimal level of corporal punishment for disobedience, but the mistress with the full authority of the institution of chattel slavery, can permanently alter his life both in the short and long-term in a way that his father simply cannot. The Englewood youth

is similarly aware of his predicament in his neighborhood. Non-compliance to neighborhood norms and standards of behavior also has lasting and far-reaching implications to overall quality of life which can include death. Englewood parents cannot enact the same level of discipline and coercion that state-sanctioned or neighborhood violence can, which can also include death. To be well socialized into a specific institution is to be able to discern what is immediately expected of you and those like you (Bandura, 1982). Such socialization makes non-compliance with institutional standard behavior an unlikely and unattractive "choice" for many.

Contemporary Parenting Anxieties and Expectations

At the same time that Englewood parents must contend with the hyperghetto/carceral complex while raising children, all parents experience anxieties concerning their children's outcomes. Parents are members of a societal category and are subject to a set of societal expectations, some of which seem obvious and universal. Minimally, every parent must provide materially for their children to the best their resources allow and keep children out of immediate harm's way. But other parental expectations are nuanced, unspoken and reflective of the historical moment in which parents happen to exist.

In contemporary U.S. society, to truly be considered a "good" parent, it must be recognizable to others that they ascribe to an ideology that places their children's experiences above all else. And much of that burden has traditionally fallen upon mothers. In a marked shift from previous generations that blamed social problems on over-involved mothers, and preferred regimentation and child conformity, the current expectation is that mothers must be involved in all aspects of children's lives (Coontz 2011; Vincent 2009). In recent years, "the helicopter mom," the "soccer mom," and the "tiger mother" have become well-worn archetypes for an

involved parent, again mother, who steers her child on the path to success. These archetypes are indicative of what Michaels and Douglas (2005) call "the new momism."

> The new momism: the insistence that no woman is ever truly complete or fulfilled unless she has kids, that women reman the best primary caretakers of children, and that to be a remotely decent mother, a woman has to devote her entire physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual being, 24/7 to her children… The new momism is a set of ideals, norms, and practices most frequently and powerfully represented in the media, that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond your reach.

One vital way that the concept of "the new momism" is operationalized into actual behaviors is through the cultural practice of "intensive mothering." "Intensive mothering" is "child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive" (Hays 1996). This exhaustive practice of intensive mothering has now become the standard by which all mothers are judged (Vincent 2009). These outward displays should also signal to others that one is anxious about their child's future and doing all they can to ensure their child's upwardly mobility.

In order to best prepare children to compete in a world of ever-increasing income inequality and a shrinking middle class, contemporary middle-class parents "cultivate" their children's childhoods in order to prepare their children to inhabit middle class lifestyles (Lareau, 2011). Failure to meet this standard, results in socially sanctioned scorn, sympathy for children, and demonization of parents who do not publicly live up to these increasing standards. In other words, if parents do not appear to use all their resources to ensure advantages for their children, they are thought to be remiss in their parenting role.

Since the late 20th century, parenting standards have grown progressively higher and more encompassing. The result is that nearly all parents experience anxiety around parenting and child outcomes. As Michaels and Douglas (2005) note, all parents today receive pointed

messages which make it clear "you are responsible for your child's welfare: The buck stops with you and you better be a rock star." Contemporary parents are doing more and providing longer for children than in previous generations have in order to manage this precariousness (Miller, 2018). This unprecedented resource provision and anxiety has resulted in an extended parenting period, known as emerging adulthood between the ages 18-25, as young people need longer periods of preparation and training (Arnett, 2011). Middle class parents now feel as if they must do whatever it takes to provide opportunities and advantages for their children.

Perhaps the most egregious recent example is the college admissions scandal in which wealthy parents illegally paid large sums of money, some more than a million dollars, to ensure their children's admission into Ivy League and other elite institutions. This scandal spurred a larger conversation about the amount of resources some parents expend legally to ensure their children's future success that are beyond reach for most. What became clear was that access to elite institutions, long considered the hallmark of upward mobility, was guaranteed through a "backdoor" by the extremely wealthy who can donate millions or pass along an inherited legacy placement to their children (Golden, 2007). And less wealthy middle-class parents are able to invest large expenditures include buying homes in exclusive areas with better school districts, spending thousands of dollars on tutoring, relying on social networks for impressive internships and participation in expensive extracurricular activities (Bray, 1999). But even with these increasing investments, wealthy parents are still anxious about their children's prospects. It never seems to be enough.

If ensuring a middle-class life for children requires large amounts of resources, then it is almost certain that poor black parents with limited social and financial capital will never be able to provide the same for their children. In fact, some have been criminally penalized when they

have tried to ensure their children access to good public education (Applebome, 2011). Why, then, are poor black parents vilified for not being able to provide a middle-class lifestyle for their children?

Significance of Study

When broader social narratives tell everyone that poor black parents in low resourced, segregated neighborhoods should be able to transcend their circumstances and produce socially desirable middle-class outcomes for their children, even while middle-class parents are struggling to do so, such parents become scapegoats for broader social anxieties. Additionally, opportunities to provide support are missed.

Furthermore, such parents come to internalize these inaccurate messages and subscribe to operating predominant ideology which tells them that they are deficient. A Pew Research Survey (2015), for example, reported that in a national survey, black and Hispanic parents were more likely than white parents to report that they fault themselves when their children experience undesirable outcomes.

Even though not all parents are burdened by the same social and historical forces, all are expected to yield the same desirable child outcomes and employ the same set of culturally approved strategies and behaviors. Not to do so is to fail in your parental role and be a failure in your parenting identity. Parental identity, like all identities, is dependent to some extent on comparison with others who are both similar and different. But in order to protect their individual parental identity, such parents make the cognitive leap between not being able to control their children's outcomes while simultaneously being blamed for them, by imagining children as capable agents with their own desires, motives, and actions that are contrary to what

their parents want for them. Poor black youth then, are thought to have much more agency than their parents and are therefore choosing their outcomes.

Study Objectives/Research Questions

A central part of the discourse surrounding young people perpetuating and being victimized by criminalized behaviors in certain neighborhoods centers around assumptions and stereotypes regarding the types of parents and families that raise them. Given the nature of such discourse, the present study examines the way that parents in one neighborhood think about and address youth participation in criminalized behaviors. The central research questions include:

1. How do parents understand and make meaning of youth participation in criminalized behaviors among their own children, as well as among other youth within the same neighborhood?
2. How, if at all, does youth participation in criminalized behaviors inform parenting behaviors?
3. In what ways do parents think about their roles and obligations as parents within the specific constraints and opportunities of their neighborhood context?

If poor black parents can be held individually responsible for their children's undesirable outcomes despite their trying environments, then middle-class mainstream parents can hold themselves individually responsible for the desirable and culturally lauded outcomes of their children. Considerations of the role of unearned intergenerational privilege, socioeconomic class, and social policies are not acknowledged because what is at stake in the judgment of poor black parents are the parental identities of all parents. Also, if youth outcomes can exclusively be thought of as the result of personal failings without any thought to real structural challenges then we are not collectively shamed for allowing the perpetuation of structural inequality and racism.

Combining Elder's Life Course Theory (LCT) and Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) as its theoretical framework, this dissertation considers the broader historical structural forces that shape the living environment of poor black families in Englewood and the individualized way that people, particularly parents, make meaning and cope with being sentient in a hostile space. LCT provides a model for understanding how individual lives are inextricable from the moment in time in which they exist. But LCT only takes us so far. Generations and cohorts are comprised of individuals who have their own histories, relationships, and phenomenological processes. The inclusion of the PVEST model allows us to consider the differing ways that people make meaning of these broad forces in individualized ways.

More broadly, this dissertation examines the work of social reproduction through the lens of power and subjective interpretation. Blame for socially undesirable child outcomes is assigned to different social actors by those with more social power. Middle class observers blame the failures of poor black children on poor black parents and these parents in turn blame the youth themselves for their criminal and violent outcomes. What is missing from both, is an examination of the power of social institutions to complicate and define intimate relationships, restrain individual behavior, and reproduce socioeconomic class.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenting Theory, Function and Process

The "nurturant socialization" of children is a prerequisite of all human society and the family is the context in which it takes place (Reis, 1965). Parents are charged with the responsibility of rearing children until they become adults. The goal of parenting is understood to that of preparing children to become adequate participating adult members of society. Maccoby (1992) states that there are four areas in which children must learn to be competent in order to be considered adequate members of society. As adults, children must be able to—avoid deviant behavior, economically contribute to the support of themselves and their families, be able to form close relationships with others, and lastly be able to parent their own children. Further, Goffman (1956) contends that individuals are viewed as fully socialized and "housebroken" when they can exhibit good demeanor and display appropriate deference by participating in the social rituals that bind society together. Even though other actors and agents such as schools and neighborhoods are involved in child socialization, parenting is understood to be the primary way through which children learn these skills.

Belsky (1984) asserts that the parenting process is "multiply determined" by the combination of personal features of the parent, contextual factors like environment and socio-economic status, and child characteristics. Baumrind's (1971) study of 146 pre-school children concluded that parenting styles were correlated with specific child outcomes. Three distinct parenting styles were identified—authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Authoritarian parenting, which is described as overly restrictive and demanding and displaying little warmth, is associated with

antisocial behavior and poor school performance among adolescents. Permissive parenting is also associated with less desirable outcomes among adolescents of poor school performance. This type of parenting is characterized as undemanding and providing little parental input. Authoritative parenting, considered the gold standard, is described as placing age appropriate demands on children, displaying warmth and affection, and bidirectional communication between parents and children. This type of parenting style is associated with individual and social competence. Baumrind (1972) later acknowledged that black children and white children showed different responses to parenting styles. Specifically, that though white children with parents who used authoritarian techniques lacked spontaneity and curiosity, black girls with such parents were found to be the most self-assertive and independent.

Douglass and Michaels (2005) assert, mothers are expected to willingly and lovingly sacrifice every aspect of themselves for their children's success and to be perceived as doing anything less is deplorable. "The new "momism", or intensive mothering, is a set of ideals, norms, and practices, most frequently and powerfully represented in the media, that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond your reach… today the standards of good motherhood are really over the top." The result of this is that "motherhood has become a psychological police state."

Parenting in Poor, Racially Segregated Neighborhoods

Socioeconomic status and physical location both impact family processes and parenting behaviors. Scheper-Hughes (1993), for example, discusses how devastatingly poor mothers in a Brazilian favela appeared to give little care to whether their small children lived or died within an environment when death was ever present due to a high infant mortality rate. Scheper-Hughes

recounts the story of one of her ethnographic participants in which one mother all but abandoned her infant child whom she thought was sure to die soon. But when someone intervened to save the infant's life and it was clear that the infant would survive the ordeal, the mother resumed caregiving. This suggests that mothers were making calculated choices to reserve limited emotional and material resources on those children that would live. In this way, the context significantly affected parenting behaviors.

Annette Lareau (2011) ethnographically studied family life patterns among middle class, working class, and poor families of varied racial backgrounds within the U.S. Lareau was able to identify blatant class differences in parental strategies. Unlike middle class parents who view their primary parental role as one of "concerted cultivation," poor and working-class parents understand their role as one in which "natural growth" of children is encouraged. Parents of poor children cannot and do not seek to spend large amounts of time arranging children's activities but instead teach children to recognize and understand authority. In this model, children spend a great deal of unstructured time with peers of various ages unsupervised by adults. Adult and child domains are largely understood to be exclusive of each other. Within this "natural growth" model, parents view their primary role to be the adequate provision of necessities for children such as safety, food, and clothing. These children learn a drastically different skill set from their middle-class counterparts.

Edin and Kefalas (2005) also point to the ways poor parents in isolated neighborhoods view their parenting roles and responsibilities. Given financial constraints and through routinely witnessing the negative outcomes of other families, poor single mothers place emphasis on "being there" for their children. In other words, such mothers do not judge their success at motherhood based on their children's outcomes because they know that even if they do all the

"right" things for their children and hope for the best, peer groups and risky neighborhoods can undermine their efforts.

Neighborhood context has been associated with varying parenting behaviors. For example, relatively violent neighborhoods and increased poverty are both associated with harsh and inconsistent parental discipline and reduced displays of warmth toward children. Pinderhughes et. al (2007) note that parents in poor urban neighborhoods are less likely to display positive promoting behaviors and more likely to emphasize punishing and punitive behaviors. Parents understand the limitations and challenges that exist within their high-risk environments and recognize their role in minimizing the potential risk that these environments pose for their children. As such, parents in these settings often employ a variety of strategies to keep danger at bay. Techniques such as hyper-vigilant monitoring of children, parental resource seeking behaviors and using the in-home environment for learning have been identified as effective strategies (Jarrett R. , 1999). Still other useful techniques involve adopting an ideology of distinctiveness from other neighborhood families, enforcing family protection strategies to combat physical and moral dangers, and rejecting "street values" by emphasizing family relations and values were also extremely helpful tools for families, (Jarrett & Burton, 2000).

In his review of juvenile delinquency risk factors, (Shrader, 2004) found that simply living in a poor neighborhood puts youth at risk. And some of the very parental strategies that parents in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage employ, put their children at greater risk of participation in criminalized behaviors. Risk factors include harsh discipline methods, exposure to violence, being aggressive, and weak social ties.

Though the sheer magnitude of current incarceration rates is unprecedented, the historical overrepresentation of socially undesirable outcomes within black communities and families that

can lead to incarceration during the 19th and 20th centuries is well documented. Several socio-cultural theories and explanations have been used to explain this phenomenon.

The Black Family, History and Culture of Poverty

Historically, broad cultural imaginations of poor "black fathers" and "black mothers" have been pathological and vilifying, and continue to be so in the present. In his review of published media over a two-year period from 2015 through 2016, for example, communications professor Travis Dixon (2017) found that national, local and opinion news media distorted representations of black families,

> Overall the findings show that news and opinion media outlets routinely and inaccurately portray Black families as a source of social instability…Media incorrectly depict Black fathers as uninvolved and that Black mothers make bad decisions about family structure and/or relationships.

This presentation of the Black family is due in part to hegemonic standards and American cultural mythology which proselytize that there is only one way to properly raise children. That is, a married couple with a high earning male provider who can support a stay at home, or at the most, part time employed doting mother who cares for children and sacrifices all personal desires in order to ensure their success as economically productive adults in their own right. The extent to which a family or parent diverges from this model, the more they are found to be deficient and responsible for any ills that befall their children. And, more to the point, the less society should empathize about children's undesirable outcomes because the parents caused it by not abiding to societal norms.

Black parents are blamed for their children's outcomes because there is a strong historical tradition that exists to do so. The way in which black families are blamed for their social position becomes especially evident when one considers that when adverse situations that have

historically affected black families and communities manifest themselves within white communities, white parents are rarely vilified in the manner that black parents are. For example, various communities are currently experiencing an "opioid epidemic" which has resulted in increased participation in child welfare and court systems. Yet, the governmental response has been multi-faceted with bipartisan support at all levels of the political spectrum. There is little talk of "personal responsibility" and more of a focus on holding pharmaceutical companies accountable, expanding available judicial system interventions and a widespread mobilization of the psychological and social effects of substance use disorder. These options were unheard of 30 years ago when poor black communities experienced a similar "crack cocaine epidemic" in which the only response was the punitive acceleration of the carceral state which only served to acerbate the problems that families faced and undermined family functioning.

Both poor black women and men are blamed for their non-adherence to the "Standard North American Family" and the sociological conditions which are thought to rise from such deviance (Smith D. , 1999). Putting aside the power of popular media to both constrict the parameters of dialogue on complex social problems and to inform actual policy decision making, for the purposes of our discussion, examples from popular media about poor black mothers and fathers beg more pointed consideration about how such messages affect social identity. What does it mean to inhabit a role with incredibly high stakes and which people tell you that you are failing at simply through your existence? What does it mean to inhabit a role in which there is no effort to understand any kind of individual variation or extenuating circumstances? If you are a single black mother in a poor neighborhood or an unemployed black father who does not live in the home with your children, then you are perceived as a failure by nature of your very existence. And if you are any one of these things and your child is experiencing undesired outcomes or is a

victim of such, then it is most certainly your fault because it is a result of your poor personal decisions. You have failed in your role as a parent. Furthermore, and perhaps more interestingly, what does it mean to have the privilege to not occupy such roles? How does the existence of such depictions of poor black parents affect a mainstream American middle class that judges from afar?

Conceptualizing Black Mothers: Past and Present

Historically, black mothers have been conceptualized in the broader imagination as negligent, morally deficient, and incapable of completing the central parenting task, which is, to raise responsible and productive citizens (Roberts D. , 1997). In fact, black mothers have been seen largely as corrupting figures that tarnish black youth, who often need state sanctioned protection from their selfish black mothers who put their own needs ahead of their children (Roberts, 2012).

Since at least the end of the Civil War, the social ills of the black community were thought to be rooted in the deficient instruction of black children by black mothers. The exact nature of the conceptualizations evolved as society changed, but all involved comparing black mothers to their white counterparts and the relationship of the use value of black women's labor to the contemporary political economy.

Immediately following the abolition of chattel slavery, a rapidly changing political economy and the reorganization of social roles created a society in flux. Amid this social turbulence, observations on how formerly enslaved black people would make use of their new social position and organize themselves and their families proliferated. Specifically, people were interested in how well black people could fit into modern society and adapt to mainstream

traditions and the privileges of citizenship. In the American south, where slavery proliferated, a campaign ensued to prevent black people from full citizenship, despite amendments to the U.S. constitution which recognized the full citizenship of all who were born in the U.S., regardless of race. And in the industrialized north which had previously abolished the practice of slavery, white northerners had to also contend with the newfound freedom of black men who could now vote and compete with whites for jobs. In this environment, efforts were undertaken to prove that blacks should remain an inferior societal class despite the gains of newfound citizenship. One place that such arguments were made was the immorality of black women, which then extended to the rest of the family through her. Thus, the disenfranchisement of blacks was further justified through the judging of black womanhood as inferior and vulgar.

A prevailing ideology at the time was "The Cult of True Womanhood," TCTW, which governed the lives of middle- and upper-class women, but by which all women were judged. The four key tenets of the philosophy were piety, purity, submission, and domesticity (Welter, 1966). As TCTW extolled, it is through women that society is uplifted and liberated from the perverse nature of men (Patton, 2000). In other words, society was thought to rely on an assumed moral superiority of women to impart such morality onto the men in their home. Women, then, were supposed to be mothers who remained within the home where they exerted their influence on the larger society through nurturing their husbands and children. The further one was from living this ideal, the more immoral and depraved one was thought to be, and by extension, their communities. Newly freed black women were never able to live up to this standard of womanhood due to the nature of their need to work outside the home in order to support themselves and their families. And the institution of chattel slavery affected family formation such that black families, never entered marriages at the same rate as white families and were

much more comfortable with cohabitation arrangements and dissolution of child-producing relationships (DuBois, 1995). Consider the following excerpt from an article in popular national magazine in 1904,

> Negro women evidence more nearly the popular idea of total depravity than the men do. They are so nearly all lacking in virtue that the color of a negro woman's skin is generally taken (and quite correctly) as a guarantee of her immorality. On the whole, I think they are the greatest menace possible to the moral life of any community where they live. And they are evidently the chief instruments of the degradation of the men of their race. When a man's mother, wife, and daughters are all immoral women, there is no room in his fallen nature for the aspiration of honor and virtue... I sometimes read of virtuous negro women, hear of them, but the idea is absolutely inconceivable to me... I cannot imagine such a creation as a virtuous black woman.[6]

But what is missing from this depiction of immoral black motherhood is an acknowledgment that black women's maternal labor, nurturing, and moral instruction was valued in various white households and was in fact, the archetype of such labor, personified by the "mammy" stereotype. And even after the abolition of chattel slavery, black women continued to find employment in white households as caregiver to white children. Why then is the black mother figure seen as disruptive and corrupting when applied to her own children, but nurturing and functional when performed within white households? This difference in meaning ascription suggests that the performance itself is static, but interpretations of the observers are not. And informed by the identification of black women as economic subjects.

In the 1970s and 1980s, black mothers were located at the center of a moral panic situated within American inner cities. As inner cities were decimated by changing economic patterns and the shift from an industrial economy which relied on the surplus physical labor or men in factories and domestic work of women, everyone with the means and agency abandoned the city center for the suburbs. The types of jobs that were previously plentiful became hard to

[6] (Woman, 1904)

come by. The largely poor black population that remained in the city were no longer useful in the new economy and struggled to find gainful employment. As the formal economy became increasingly unreliable, the black poor looked for other ways to meet their economic needs, which included government assistance and participation in criminalized economies (Kohler-Hausmann, 2015). Again, black women's relationship to a shifting economic landscape brought along a new stigmatizing identity. The "welfare queen," the unwed teenaged mother, and the "crack mother" all became archetypes for the state of black motherhood.

Recent examples from popular media suggest that even when poor black youth have the misfortune to become victims of violence and trauma that take place outside of the home, the root cause is suspected to be their bad "ghetto parents" and more specifically their mothers (Mitchell, 2010).

Conceptualizing Black Fathers: Past and Present

Black families have traditionally been conceptualized as matriarchal (Frazier, 2001). In such depictions, fathers are absent and/or irresponsible and not involved in child rearing duties in any meaningful way. Unlike black mothers, black fathers have not been thought to directly corrupt black children, but rather, their absence provides a mechanism for wayward children to take advantage. The black father is either a sexually aggressive and irresponsible or childlike and subordinated by the domineering black mother. In both conceptualizations, he is a poor role model because he is ineffective.

During the historical period of chattel slavery, the primary image of black men was that of the childlike buffoons who was content with his place in society (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016), embodied in the popular imagination by Beecher's Uncle Tom character who was loving and

exceedingly loyal to his enslavers. During chattel slavery, enslaved fathers had no legal connections to their children because their offspring was legally "owned" by enslavers and children "inherited their legal status from the condition of their mothers. Slave fathers had none of the authority, status, or rights possessed by White male patriarchs. Rather, slave fathers were compelled to serve functionally, and psychologically, as sires of children who were not legally theirs, and instead were the master's property " (Cammett, 2014). Additionally, after chattel slavery ended, black men were further set apart from patriarchal expectations of mainstream society in that such expectations were heavily dependent upon a man's ability to attain adequate employment sufficient to support a family. As mentioned before, black women were fully entrenched in the labor force and consequently their families were thought to be inadequate by extension. Black women corrupted their families by their existence and black men did so by their absence.

After the Civil War, black men, like their female counterparts began to be viewed differently as they became socio-political and economic competitors. An anxiety among whites about possible changes to the social hierarchy gave rise to new depictions of black men as threats to civilization and as sexually aggressive "brutes." A contemporary lawyer and humorist Charles Smith (1893) describes how mainstream society viewed the newly freed black male during this period, "A bad Negro is the most horrible creature upon the earth, the most brutal and merciless."

In the middle years of the twentieth century, as blacks moved from the agricultural south to the urban north to seek new opportunities in droves, black men found jobs primarily as unskilled workers in manufacturing or by providing menial labor. But by the end of the late 20th century, these jobs became increasingly less available and black men within the postindustrial city center were unable to find meaningful sustaining work. While black women with children

were able to receive benefits from the state through cash and food stamp benefits, low skilled uneducated black men were not able to access such benefits due to policies that that were ideologically opposed to giving able-bodied men help with supporting their families (Cammett, 2014).

In the 1986 Peabody winning CBS News Report special *The Vanishing Black Family: Crisis in Black America*[7]*,* which aired during primetime to an audience of millions and called "one of the best television reports in years" by the *New York Times*[8], the "absence" of fathers in urban black America was explored in detail. "Black America" was in "crisis" because all the fathers were gone. So much so that the black family as a social tradition was thought to be "vanishing." Moyers paints a picture of the modern black family which highlighted teenage mothers raised by teenage mothers supported solely by welfare benefits and in which fathers were an expendable burden. The opening segment shows a focus group comprised of urban teenage black mothers, one of whom states matter-of-factly, "Male figures are not substantially important in the family." The fathers who are present in the film are depicted as helpless, irresponsible, and disposable. As one teenage mother describes the low expectations she had of her co-parent, "He can't even help himself, it's pitiful to say, but he can't." The father who is most extensively profiled is named Timothy McSeed, a chronically unemployed high school dropout with a criminal record who had fathered six children by four women by his mid-20s. He brags of his sexual prowess and refusal to commit to any one woman or use birth control. McSeed is a caricature thought to stand in for all urban black fathers and power of such imagery defined the way a generation of Americans thought of poor black fathers and resulting policies to address intergeneration poverty (Cassiman, 2008).

[7] (Moyers, 1986)
[8] (Corry, 1986)

This conceptualization still exists in contemporary understandings of black fathers. In recent years, black father-figure celebrities like Barack Obama and the now-disgraced Bill Cosby further perpetuated these depictions by publicly admonishing "absent" fathers when addressing communities of color. (Coleman, 2018), (Purnell, 2019).

E. Franklin Frazier's classic *The Negro Family in the United States* (Frazier, 2001) when first published in 1939, was influential because it refuted long held conceptualizations about African-American families. Before Frazier's contribution, a not too uncommon view was that African-Americans were innately and biologically different from "whites" and that these supposed genetic or biological differences were what explained the differences in family composition and social organization seen in African-American communities. Frazier linked his ethnographic observations with structural and historical experiences of African-American families and created a scholarly paradigm in which structural systems had significant implications for African-American life. Frazier studied African-Americans in both the agricultural south and the industrial north and referenced the legacy of chattel slavery as an explanation for the "matri-focal" and "disorganized" familial tradition he witnessed among poor African-Americans. Frazier did not question the normative white middle class model as ideal and used the disruptive and dehumanizing slavery system to explain why poor African-American families did not match his normative pattern.

In their 1945 work *Black Metropolis*, Drake and Cayton describe the segregated black belt in Chicago in the Great Depression and the years immediately before World War II (Drake & Cayton, 1993). The mostly ethnographic data show the contrast between the family life patterns of the low-socioeconomic group with those of middle class and high socioeconomic blacks. The authors create a picture of "lower class negroes" that included patterns of "social

disorganization" which included the dissolution of the family structure, transient black men, dominant female-headed households, juvenile delinquency, out of wedlock births, reliance on violence to solve interpersonal conflicts, and lower educational attainment. Similar to Frazier, the authors suggest that these are customs and habits left over from peasant life in the agricultural south and the institution of slavery, which did not foster long-term family organization, or discourage out of wedlock births.

The contribution like Frazier, and Drake and Cayton, highlight the interaction between societal structures and the people existing within them. Other researchers also made connections between oppressive social structures and the development of enduring cultural patterns. While studying impoverished families in Mexican slums, cultural anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1959) theorized that pervasive and inter-generational poverty within areas concentrated with high amounts of poor people compels those who exist within such areas to develop beliefs and behaviors to cope with dehumanizing conditions. This adaptive set of practices and beliefs, or culture allows individuals to manage both the psychological disappointments and extreme material hardships that accompany the specifics type of disillusioning poverty that exists within capitalist societies with great gaps between the wealthy and extremely poor. Lewis further argued that although such a culture allows poor people to better manage in their own context and circumstances, these behaviors are maladaptive to mainstream societal norms and assist in ensuring that poor people continue to remain poor inter-generationally as parents socialize their children into this "culture of poverty." Lewis later applied the same analysis to Puerto Rican families in San Juan and New York City (Lewis, 1966).

Heavily influenced by Lewis's "culture of poverty" theory, Michael Harrington released *The Other America* (Harrington, 1997). Harrington argued that in the early to mid-twentieth

century, as the United States rose to the position of the pre-eminent global power, two Americas existed. One America was largely visible and reflected the nation's unprecedented wealth and influence, while the second America was characterized by extensive and abject poverty. These two Americas were so separate, Harrington wrote, that the poor developed a subculture all of its own with different values and accepted norms than those of mainstream America. Harrington argued that African-Americans were especially vulnerable to this all-encompassing culture of poverty, because they were victims of institutionalized racism that would keep them out of the mainstream America even if economic conditions improved. Harrington's analysis was not as fatalistic as Lewis's though, as Harrington argued for the government to take action through federal policy to fix these broken systems. For Harrington, once these institutional problems were alleviated, the social problems associated with poverty would disappear.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Moynihan (1965) observed similar patterns among poor African-American communities and concluded that although racist structural, and discriminatory practices perpetuated by mainstream society has caused the deplorable conditions of black urban poverty, the resulting "tangle of pathology" among African-Americans had the power to perpetuate poverty even when the external structural or political factors ceased to exist. In other words, poor people were pervasively and inter-generationally poor because of their maladaptive culture that worked to keep them disadvantaged. By "tangle of poverty," Moynihan was referring to the inter-connected web of social problems that disproportionally affected poor African-American neighborhoods such as single-parent household formation, low educational attainment, disproportionate reliance on public assistance, and high unemployment rates. Moynihan went further and argued that the dissolution of the African-American family, or rather

the prevalence of women-headed households, was at the root of the social problems facing poor African-Americans.

Such "culture of poverty" theoretical arguments about urban poor families have been largely refuted and fell out of favor during the 1970s and 1980s due to the lack of supporting empirical evidence and because these arguments were viewed as "blaming the victim." Furthermore, some scholars argued that "culture of poverty" theories unfairly obfuscated the successful the successful and productive aspects of urban poor families and were not comprehensive enough to accurately portray the urban poor because they did not account for resilience or variance among individuals and families.

In response to culture of poverty arguments and a legacy of scholarship that alienated and ostracized poor African-American families from that of mainstream American values, a crop of post-civil rights era scholarship sought to document the resourceful and functional aspects of poor black family life. Anthropologist Carol Stack's *All Our Kin* (2008), for example, depicted poor African-American families in the post-manufacturing economy of a midwestern town. The families in Stack's ethnography were organized and helped each other survive hardship through systematized sharing of extremely limited resources.

Historian Herbert Gutman (1977) argued directly against Frazier's claims and depicted a different type of poor African-American family that had retained a great deal of cohesion and structure in spite of the challenges imposed by slavery and harsh socio-economic and political environments that followed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Gutman's historical analysis attempted to show that the family was not broken down as argued but in fact occupied a central role in African-American culture that helped to survive hard times.

Sociologists such as Joyce Ladner (2007) and Andrew Billingsley (1988) argued that African-American families were not pathological, but social science had only focused on the apparent weaknesses and ignored the many existing strengths. Specifically, they argued that social sciences paid attention to supposed behaviors and attitudes among African-Americans and not enough on the structural systems that historically disenfranchised them.

More recently, the culture issue has been taken up by a new generation of scholars who are interested in discovering the links, if any, between culture and socioeconomic status. Small et. al. (2010) for example, state that culture, or more specifically, a constellation of seven concepts—values, frames, repertoires, narratives, symbolic boundaries, cultural capital, and institutions-- do provide valuable information on families living in poverty and should be considered and not discounted. But what distinguishes this emerging "culture *and* poverty" research from the previous "culture of poverty" tradition is that the newer research does not seek to make any claims that culture causes poverty, and instead focuses on how people living in poverty respond to their circumstances.

Hyper-incarceration

Poor black communities are more likely to be police than other types of neighborhoods. And a considerable portion of police action is hinged upon the personal discretion of individual discretion. In accordance with stop and frisk" policies which allow officers to stop and search anyone they consider to be "suspicious," black and Latino males are more likely to be targeted than all other groups (Goldstein, 2013).

Bruce Western (2007) asserts that social, racial, and economic factors of the 1960s and 1970s led to a "political project" that targeted young poor urban African-Americans and

eventually became the defining experience of such men and part of the normative life course. Incarceration has become more common among this population than bachelor degrees, marriage, or military participation. For this group of men, incarceration is cyclical and self-perpetuating, as men who are released from prison must continue to engage in illegal activities because a prison record impedes their ability to enter the formal wage economy.

Civil rights attorney Michelle Alexander (2010) also links the present moment with past social and political experiences of African-Americans. Alexander argues that the current systemic criminalization of poor urban males functions in the same ways as previous Jim Crow laws by actively disenfranchising poor blacks. Alexander paints a sharp and compelling picture in which "more African-Americans are incarcerated today than were enslaved in 1850." Undereducated poor black men historically relied on manufacturing jobs, but as the U.S. economy shifted toward the service sector, manufacturing jobs were exported overseas and these men were left with no job prospects in the formal economy. Alexander argues that at the time, political leaders and American citizens could have made a collective choice to invest in schools in poor communities to equip workers with necessary skills to participate in the new economy, but instead investments were made in prisons and polices so as to heavily penalize relatively minor offenses.

In *Imprisoning Communities*, Clear (2009) documents the ways that "tough on crime" policies systematically undermine poor communities by removing people and resources from them, and essentially creating a revolving door between prisons and communities. This constant movement puts communities at risk for public health issues, exacerbating patterns of violence, and promoting illegal activity.

In “Deadly Symbiosis,” Loïc Wacquant (2001) puts forth a theory that four related and consecutive “peculiar institutions” have historically defined the lives of the U.S. black poor - chattel slavery (1619-1865), Jim Crow (1865-1965), the northern ghetto (1915-1968), and the hyperghetto-carceral complex (1968-present).

Figure 1. The four peculiar institutions and their basis

Institution	Form of labour	Core of economy	Dominant social type
Slavery (1619–1865)	unfree fixed labour	Plantation	slave
Jim Crow (South, 1865–1965)	free fixed labour	Agrarian and extractive	sharecropper
Ghetto (North, 1915–68)	free mobile labour	Segmented industrial manufacturing	menial worker
Hyperghetto & Prison (1968–)	fixed surplus labour	Polarized postindustrial services	welfare recipient & criminal

Source: Wacquant, Loic (2002). From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Rethinking the 'race question' in the U.S. *New Left Review*.

Wacquant argues that each of these institutions have not only worked to “recruit, organize, and extract labor” but also to “demarcate and ultimately seclude [the black poor] so that they would not contaminate the surrounding white society that viewed them as irrevocably inferior and vile…” Consequently, and very important to the present study, each institution ascribes a specific stigmatizing status role to the black poor that has major implications for the intimacies, opportunities and life chances throughout the life course. Further, each institution is derived from its immediate predecessor and each status role is directly related to the

contemporary economic needs of the moment. Thus in Wacquant's theory, the status of the black poor is dependent upon how its labor can be used by an ever-evolving U.S. economy.

Chattel Slavery (1619-1865)

In an agrarian based plantation economy, the labor of a forcefully migrated black peasantry was extracted by violence and enslavement. The social institution of chattel slavery assigned the status of slave to black bodies and as slaves they were not allowed to participate in the political process. Slaves were subject to the whims of the plantation elite specifically, but to all whites in general. In order to maintain a clear and permanent hierarchy that could supply an inexhaustible amount of manual labor to fuel and grow an agrarian based economy, chattel slavery was a "race-making" institution in which the claim was put forth that those with recent ancestry from Africa were to be considered "blacks" and were subsequently biologically inferior. And because of this inferiority they should never be able to actively participate in civil society. They were always to be objects and dehumanized. As such, laws forbade blacks from learning to read and severely restricted their movements and ascribed them and their descendants a slave status into perpetuity. And so inferior were blacks that just "one-drop of black blood" was enough to contaminate whites into a lessor "black" status. And in order to maintain this strict caste hierarchy, violence was readily employed upon those who failed to comply.

Jim Crow (1865-1965)

After emancipation and the outlaw of chattel slavery, newly freed blacks had lawful access to the rights of the republic as citizens and were no longer confined to the plantation. And in the years immediately following emancipation, many ex-slaves left to pursue their newfound freedom. This was terribly inconvenient because the nation's economy remained agriculturally

based and therefore still needed to maintain the production of slave labor. Consequently a series of "Jim Crow" and vagrancy laws were passed in which poor blacks were assigned a second-class citizenship through forced segregation and labor, disenfranchisement and manipulation to bind the freed slaves to the plantation to work in a still agrarian economy. Under this new Jim Crow institution, poor blacks were assigned the role of sharecropper to the southern black poor. Poor blacks were still kept separate from whites through the ever-present use and threat of violence through lynching.

The Northern Ghetto (1915-1968)

The institution of the northern ghetto rose as an increasingly industrialized economy compelled southern blacks to migrate from the southern plantation to the north factories and plants. In the north, blacks worked for the factories, office buildings, railroads, steel mills and packinghouses of the new age which welcomed the surge of unskilled black men to work the menial jobs as elevator operators, factory workers, linemen, servers and porters. Poor black women also worked menial jobs, primarily as nannies and maids. But because blackness still had the power to contaminate whites, blacks were relegated to specifically designated areas called ghettos. Through judicial policies and social practice, black people lived a supposedly "separate but equal" world with intentionally substandard parallel institutions such as schools, hospitals, and housing stock that were permanently underfunded and subpar. The northern ghetto functioned to organize and easily access unskilled labor while also creating a non-negotiable solid physical boundary to separate white people from black people.

Hyperghetto-Carceral Complex (1968-present)

In the hyperghetto-carceral complex of the present moment, the prison and the hyper-ghetto become mere extensions of one another as the ghetto becomes increasingly militarized and surveilled and the prison becomes more residential and racially segregated like the ghetto. The prison and the ghetto form a symbiotic relationship, in which they feed off one another with frequent and recurrent cyclical movement between the two.

Laws passed in the 1960s officially outlawed housing segregation and enabled the black middle class to leave northern ghettos and integrate into other areas, primarily suburbs. The out migration of the black middle class resulted in ghettos being inhabited exclusively by the intergenerational poor who had little to no mainstream social capital with failing social institutions (Wilson, 1990). Businesses and private enterprises that were kept afloat by the patronage of the black middle class were no longer able to survive in the ghetto and failed in their absence.

As the post-industrial economy of the late 20th century no longer required such extensive surplus unskilled labor, the black poor experienced rampant joblessness rendering them obsolete and unnecessary to the new economy. Simultaneously, federal and local governments decided to defund social assistance programs due to lobbying from working class whites that were threatened by the gains black people made during by the civil rights movement, which managed to remove some of the stigma of blackness and provided blacks with increased political power.

Whereas the ghetto of the previous institution was segregated solely by race, the hyperghetto is segregated by both race and class (Massey & Denton, 1994) . Socio-economically speaking, the hyperghetto and the prison become simple reflections of each other with the population of both being overwhelmingly under-educated, poor, and disproportionately black and brown. The hyperghetto is increasingly violent, heavily policed through video surveillance

and the physical presence of uniformed officers. Residents are subjected to "random" pat-downs while retail and bullet-proofed glass and metal gates secure service establishments and the police govern infractions in neighborhood grammar schools of young children.

The prison has become more like the historical ghetto, by segregating inmates along racial lines, and functioning to simply remove socially undesirable people from mainstream society instead of to rehabilitate and reintegrate. The quest to isolate, stigmatize, and segregate undesirable people away from the mainstream population ensures that the prison works simply to provide overcrowded racial and economically segregated housing facilities as the northern ghetto of the past did.

> When the prison is used as an implement for social and cultural purging, like the ghetto, it no longer points beyond itself; it turns into a self-contained contraption which fulfills its function, and thus justifies itself, by its mere existence. And its inhabitants learn to live in the here-and-now, bathed in the concentrate of violence and hopelessness brewing within the walls.

In all of the previous institutions, men and women occupied the same status role —slave, sharecropper, and menial worker. In the hyperghetto-carceral complex however, there are gendered status roles. Women are now welfare recipients and men are convicts/ex-offenders.

These two theories work well to situate the present study of parents of juvenile offenders within a specific neighborhood context. Using these theories to frame this study acknowledges the contextual, individual, and relational aspects of the family environment while also accounting for the larger historical and structural systems of the neighborhood and the present political moment.

But at the same time that structural explanations work to help examine the full picture, these types of theories do little to explain everyday "on the ground" ways that such policies can work through individual people.

Carceral Systems and Family Life

Goffman (2014) explores how the permanent presence of correctional system personnel (police, probation and parole officers, etc.) has affected personal relationships in a poor urban community in Philadelphia. Goffman argues that because of the constant threat of incarceration and the harsh nature of the interaction between poor blacks and the correctional system, interpersonal and familial relationships are innately affected. Specifically, young black men are encouraged to form tenuous relationships with families and formal employment because doing so makes them less vulnerable to capture. If their whereabouts become predictable and regimented, correctional personnel will be able to locate them readily. Further, if family members know where they are, these family members become targets for correctional system personnel who can threaten them for not providing information. As evidence, Goffman presents accounts of men who were taken into custody when they performed routine acts such as show up for work, or visited their newborn child in the hospital.

Nurse's (2010) qualitative study of male juvenile offenders who are fathers also explores the problem of forming and maintaining familial relationships from within the correctional system. Such fathers recount how incarcerated time away from their children thwarts attachments between them and their children. These young men also report that it becomes almost impossible to maintain relationships with their significant others, or the mothers of their children. Nurse reports that these relationships are already fraught with distrust and difficulties, and incarceration causes further strains and burdens.

Comfort's (2007) ethnography examines how intimate relationships are affected by incarceration. But Comfort argues that the role of incarceration is nuanced and that while it poses a problem for intimate relationships, in some ways it also fosters them. For example, wives and

significant others of inmates in a California prison report that men are more predictable in prison than they ever were while on they were in the community. Women found that these men were more communicative and expressive. Also, quite obviously, these women knew where their significant others were at all times and were able to make visiting days a family affair in which all parties worked to keep disagreements at minimum since all time together now became rare and valuable.

Parenting Youth Involved in Criminal Behaviors

There is a scholarly tradition that links youth participation in criminalized behaviors to problems in family functioning. For example, Shulman (1949) categorized juvenile delinquency as "an acute breakdown in the normal functions of family life." Gove and Crutchfield (1982) empirically identified parental attachment, family structure, parental control and parent-child interactions as predictive variables for delinquency. And Patterson and Stouthamer-Louber (1984) argued that family management techniques such as monitoring were found to be determining factors between delinquent and non-delinquent boys in their sample of boys aged 11 through 16.

Historically, the general public and law enforcement personnel such as police officers, judges, and probation officers have also implicated parents and families in juvenile offenses and have sought to intervene through this pathway. Some court systems have attempted to support parents through mandating parenting skill classes (Schaffner, 1997) as well as through intervening in areas in which they think parents have been remiss in their monitoring duties by imposing juvenile curfews (Adams, 2003).

Schaffner (1997) examined one such court ordered parenting class for predominately poor minority parents of juvenile offenders and argues that probation officers frame parenting as a skill that is performed best by those who are most highly trained. Schaffner also found that probation officers understood a fundamental role of parenting to be "getting teenagers to obey the law." Such views on parenting put parents at odds with probation officers even when both groups had the same objective of keeping youth out of the juvenile justice system.

Similarly, Rios (2011) discusses how demographically similar parents of juvenile offenders in his ethnographic study were also instructed by law enforcement to be better parents by enforcing harsher discipline and establishing control because it is assumed that the parents have not tried to perform these parenting behaviors and that to do so would immediately stop the youth's offending behavior.

However, this theoretical paradigm is problematic because as Simons et. al. (2002) demonstrate in their sample of 841 African-American families, parental control as a deterrent to youth criminal activity is only effective up to a point. But as deviant behavior become more widespread in a community, this effect gets smaller. In other words, simply telling parents to take better control of their children in poor neighborhoods does not work to prevent or reduce juvenile offending.

The U.S. incarceration rate has quintupled since 1970. The current rate of incarceration is higher than that of any other country in the world, and is almost quadruple that of the UK, its nearest socio-economic comparison. With well over seven million Americans, or three percent of the total population, currently incarcerated or under correctional supervision through parole or supervision, there are now more people affected by the U.S. correctional system than ever before (Glaze and Parks 2012).

This recent socio-cultural phenomenon of mass incarceration is largely located at the intersection of gender, place, and race (Wilderman and Western 2010; Alexander 2010). Specifically, poor young African-American men who reside in racially segregated poor neighborhoods are more likely to be involved in correctional systems than any other group in the U.S. While the entire U.S. population is certainly affected by this large-scale mass incarceration, the effects are magnified exponentially in poor urban neighborhoods in which people of color are the majority. Thus, if the U.S. has a *mass* incarceration issue, poor urban African-American communities have a *hyper*-incarceration issue in which all the problems of incarceration are magnified and exaggerated. And indeed, the impact is dire within such communities. Among the cohort of African-American men who were born between 1969 and 1971, forty percent for those with only a high school diploma and very disturbing sixty percent of those without a high school diploma has had some involvement with U.S. carceral systems (Western 2006).

This large-scale increase of carceral system involvement has affected poor African-American males across the life course and significantly impacts the juvenile population. In 2009 alone, more than 1.8 million youth were arrested, 500,000 of which were placed on probation (Hanes 2012). On any given night in the U.S., more than 80,000 youth, or more than all the youth in mid-sized cities such as Baltimore, MD or Louisville, KY, are detained within carceral facilities and two thirds of these juveniles are African-American or Latino (Mendel 2011). The level of participation in carceral systems for poor and segregated African-American boys has become so pervasive, that scholars and activist have used the metaphor of a pipeline to invoke the predictable and assured way in which such youth are "channeled" into the criminal justice system (ACLU 2008; Rios 2009).

In recent years, much has been written about the phenomenon of mass incarceration and its implications for families. The bulk of such research focuses on how families are impacted when an adult member of the family is incarcerated (Braman 2007; Comfort 2005; Nurse 2003). A great deal of research has also increased our collective understanding of how individual families are burdened even further by the effects that aggregate mass incarceration has had on the communities in which they live (Alexander 2010; Clear 2007; Goffman 2009). And in terms of juvenile involvement with carceral systems, most of the research has focused on family context and structure as the causes and basis on juvenile delinquency (Glueck & Glueck 1950; Patchin 2006).

However, relatively little scholarly research has addressed how parents personally understand and make meaning of youth carceral system involvement and whether such understanding affects specific parenting behaviors and processes. Additionally, little is known about how parents interpret youth participation in criminalized behaviors within communities greatly affected by the present hyper-incarceration moment. As a disproportionate number of youth from poor racially segregated communities come in contact with carceral systems each year, we must have a more nuanced and complete understanding of not only how such families understand and respond to their predicament, but also how such families contextualize their actions and behaviors in relation to their environment. The present study investigates how parents in poor racially segregated understand and cope with the task of parenting within an era of hyper-incarceration. Understanding how such parents think about what is means to raise a child in the present moment has significant implications for the life course of parents and youth, as well as for the quality of life within such communities.

Youth participation in criminalized behaviors and youth victimization are inextricably linked and it is often the same parents who are forced to deal with both outcomes disproportionately.

Coping, Phenomenology, Identity

While structural and cultural explanations and arguments can help shape the way we begin to think about families and individuals, they can never provide a complete understanding. Indeed, Sampson and Laub (1994) remark, "It is our contention that sociological explanations of delinquency have too often focused on structural background (e.g., poverty) without an understanding of mediating family processes, especially informal social control." Also, individuals are actors in their own life stories and are not simply passive receptors of the world. People make meaning of their contexts and the people and systems that make up that context. Based upon their interpretations, individuals make decisions about themselves and others.

Bandura (1982) emphasizes the role that human cognition and behavior play in development. Central to his social cognitive theory is the concept of self-efficacy, or the belief one has in the power of their abilities to shape and affect their circumstances in a meaningful way. One significant way people determine their own self-efficacy is through routinely assessing feedback from the external world and internally judging their past abilities to be an effective agent upon their own circumstances. Another way people appraise their own capabilities is through observing others with similar characteristics operating within the same context. Personal conceptions of self-efficacy impact other cognitive processes, along with emotional and behavioral reactions to situational tasks. Beliefs in one's self-efficacy can be either self-aiding or self-defeating. Those with high self-efficacy are able to imagine themselves in successful

scenarios and are more willing to put forth effort because they think that their labors will yield effective results.

Spencer et. al. (1997) note that it is inadequate to only consider the "risks" or disadvantages when theorizing about individuals in context. Spencer's phenomenological variant systems theory (PVEST) model, notes that everyone across the socioeconomic spectrum has a net amount of both risk factors and supportive factors. While youth in poor communities may collectively have a disproportionate amount of risk factors, there will also be varying amounts of supportive factors among youth who live within the same context. Such consideration of risk and supportive factors aids in the understanding of resilience and why people within the same context can yield vastly different results.

African-American adolescent males in poor neighborhoods interpret an enormous number of messages from peers, their communities, and mainstream society. Stevenson (1997) argues that the impossibility of navigating and constructing a stable identity leaves such youth "pissed, missed and dissed," or seething with expressed and unexpressed long-term anger, misinterpreted by others, and disrespected by authorities. Such youth often utilize hypermasculine behaviors such as carrying weapons and being outwardly aggressive in order to shield themselves from fear and stress induced by multiple environmental threats. Unfortunately, hypermasculinity often proves to be a maladaptive short-term solution because youth who engage in such behaviors increase their chances of encountering the very circumstances they seek to avoid (Seaton, 2007).

While this research addresses some of the critical concerns of the context of youth participation in criminalized behaviors and parenting in poor black neighborhoods, scholars have not yet adequately addressed the phenomenological processes through which parents explain and

make meaning of such behaviors within their communities. If one key role of parenting is understood to be that of training children to fully participate in society and keep them from harm, how do parents in such environments manage and understand the difference between what is understood to be ideal and expected and their actual lived experience?

Theoretical Framework

The present study is principally concerned with the role of environmental context on human development. Specifically, it is concerned with how people make meaning of their shared environmental circumstances and how such meaning making affects behavior. The above review of literature explored how environmental factors shape the life circumstances of urban poor families with an emphasis on the role of how the environment constrains and encourages a wide array of behaviors. These behaviors affect familial roles and relationships.

This study is framed by two theoretical models that each conceives of the role of context on development across the lifespan in specific ways. Elder's life course perspective provides a framework to understand individual lives within a distinguishable place in time which makes them subject to an inextricable set of circumstances that shapes the very nature of development. Spencer's PVEST model provides a framework for individualized processes that are largely absent from previous ecological and macro-level theories, particularly among people of color. Using the two frameworks together allows for the full consideration of the socio-historical and structural traditions that shape the immediate lives of the sample population, as well as how these larger forces manifest themselves within individual lives.

Life Course Theory

Development and Overview

The life course perspective was first conceptualized by Glen Elder 1974 after an analysis of life outcome data of adults who were adolescents during the Great Depression and experienced a sudden economic loss from the middle-class prosperity they enjoyed as children in the 1920s. As part of this longitudinal study known as the Oakland Growth Study, Elder identified patterns among this group that suggested a "cohort effect" of life trajectories that were heavily influenced by the economic disruption and social instability of the Great Depression (Elder, Children of the Great Depression, 1998). These cohort patterns became even more evident when compared with the children included in the Berkeley Guidance study who born a decade later and experienced adolescence during World War II years. Compared to the children of the Oakland study, the Berkeley study children appeared to be "more adversely affected" by the economic fallout of the Great Depression when they had been small children, then grew into adolescence while World War II when societal disruptions took men and women out of the home. Aside from the cohort patters, Elder also found that these larger social disruptions created trajectories which set the course for later life outcomes (Elder & Giele, 2009). Recognizing the differences of birth year on life trajectories led to the development of a life course theory framework that allows for such considerations. As Elder (1998) notes, "Historical forces shape the social trajectories of family, education, and work, and they in turn influence behavior and particular lines of development."

Life Course Perspective Fundamental Principles

Further developed, the theory came to delineate six central and interrelated principles that Elder argued were necessary to truly understand how people come to be who they are throughout the course of their lives. These principles include: historical place and time; the timing of significant events; linked lives; personal agency; life stage; and accentuation (Shanahan & Macmillan, 2008).

The principal of historical time and place indicates that people can only begin to be wholly understood within the constraints and opportunities of the social and structural environments in which they were born. Social meanings and constructions change over time and have varying degrees of import. Variables such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, for example, have taken on vastly different social implications at different historical periods. For example, we cannot analyze the lives of women in contemporary American society with the same lens as women born a century ago, or with women born on a different continent into a different culture. People understand themselves and behave according to the traditions they inherit. Even the difference of only a few years can have tremendous impact on the opportunities available to individuals. As such, children born within the same distinctive socio-historical period exhibit a "cohort" or "period effect" in which there are some similarities in life outcomes such as educational attainment and occupational success (Elder, 1998).

The timing of significant events refers to the sequential order of major events such as marriage, parenthood, or military service influence those events that come after it and present or limit relevant opportunities.

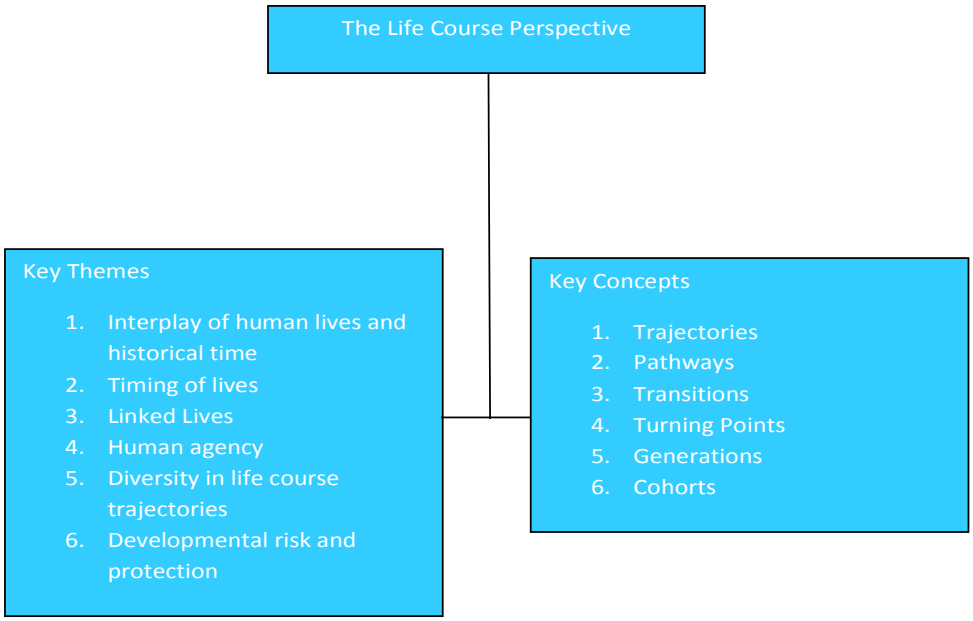
The concept of linked lives is also helpful in that it reinforces the idea that people do not exist alone and are also affected by the experiences of those close to them.

Individuals also have a great deal of *personal agency* that assists them in manipulating and contouring the world they encounter. People do not simply soak up information around them, but rather make decisions that intrinsically influence their life course. The personal agency utilized by individuals accounts for drastic differences among those who are exposed to the same circumstances but have vastly differing life outcomes (Bandura, 2000).

Life stage is important in that the age of a person at the time of significant experiences shapes the experience and the way the person interprets it.

And finally, accentuation refers to the behavioral patterns that people already possess at the time of transitional changes. These behavioral patterns affect the way people respond to new situations.

Figure 2. Key themes and concepts of the life course perspective



Adapted from Source: Brady, E. & Gilligan, R. (2018). The life course perspective: An integrative research paradigm for examining the educational experiences of adult care leavers? *Child and Youth Services Review*, 87. 60-77

Table 1. Life Course Theoretical Principles Application to Sample Population

Life Course Theory Principle	Black Families living in the hyperghetto/carceral complex
Historical Time/Place	Current moment is characterized by unprecedented numbers of poor black men involved in the hyperghetto/carceral system. Limited economic opportunities, inferior education, along with high rates of victimization and perpetuation of crime within poor segregated urban communities.
Timing of Significant Events	Specifically, involvement in the carceral system early in the life course makes such involvement later in life more likely. This involvement, puts youth on a trajectory that makes undesirable outcomes more likely.
Linked Lives	As carceral system involvement becomes a normative part of the life course, youth and their parents become more likely to know and interact with those involved in these systems. Parents, themselves may be involved as well as other relatives.
Personal Agency	Within the same cohort, some children will participate in criminalized behaviors while others will not. Parents within the same communities will respond differently to such behaviors among children. Personal agency may help explain some of the differences within cohorts.
Life Stage	Adolescence is a time in which youth are more likely to experiment with risk taking behavior and when they seek approval from peers. Adolescence is also a time in which the peer group is given primacy over self so that youth may feel the need to fit in at "all costs" despite potential consequences.
Accentuation	Youth in such neighborhoods are disproportionately exposed to criminalized behaviors and violence. As such they are more likely to employ these types of behaviors themselves.

The theory is further bolstered by the key concepts that work to operationalize the principles. Especially important to this study are the idea of generations, cohorts, and periods.

What is most useful about life course theory for the present study is the a priori assumption that one's existence in space time cannot be extricated from their very development. One's location sets the stage, intimacies, opportunities, and expectations for one's whole life.

Life Course Theory limitations

Life course theory was developed based on the study of an exclusively white population that came of age in the early 20th century. Though, these children experienced hardships during the Great Depression years, they were part of the middle class before and after. Study conclusions and analysis drawn from a socioeconomic and racially homogenic sample population does not lend themselves to generalizability. Indeed, McLoyd (1998) argued that some of Elder's conclusions drawn from his initial study about children who experienced "transitory poverty" did not match up with contemporary study findings about African-American youth who lived in pervasive poverty.

Life course theory provides a useful way to think about generations and cohorts, but very little of individual sentient beings that comprise them. How does the work of the generational and period effects account for individual differences? But another limitation of the theory is that it does not help us conceptualize how individual processes are affected by sociological and historical phenomenon. The theory's principle of *human agency* begins to shed light on individual differences. Elder (1998) notes,

> Some individuals are able to select the paths they follow, a phenomenon known as human agency, but these choices are not made in a vacuum. All life choices are contingent on the opportunities and constraints of social structure and culture.

While useful and accurate, this explanation is wholly inadequate and still conceives of individual differences on a macro level. How might we account for people who have the same set of

socially contingent opportunities and constraints yet make different choices. Life course theory does not allow for such consideration.

Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems theory (PVEST)

Development and Overview

Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) was developed by psychologist Margaret Beale Spencer (1995) specifically for conceptualizing developmental processes for African-American adolescents within adverse environments. Previous theorizing about such youth either focused too much on environmental challenges without serious consideration of the individual processes of those who existed within them or relied too much on "personal attributes" explanations without consideration for the environments in which development took place. Both types of theories located African American youth development outside the paradigm of normative human development by emphasizing pathology view stigmatizing their developmental experiences.

An exception to these types of theories was Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) which provided a framework for the intersection of developmental process, person, and context. While appreciating the work of Bronfenbrenner, Spencer built upon ecological systems theory to create a new model that prioritized phenomenological, or individualized meaning-making, processes within environmental context. Spencer (1995) notes,

> The integration of a phenomenological approach to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, one that emphasized process-person-context, is critical since it affords a method for capturing the individual's intersubjectivity, the adolescent's ability to understand the shared-in-common and mutually endorsed societal expectations and expressed categories generally shared within a culture.

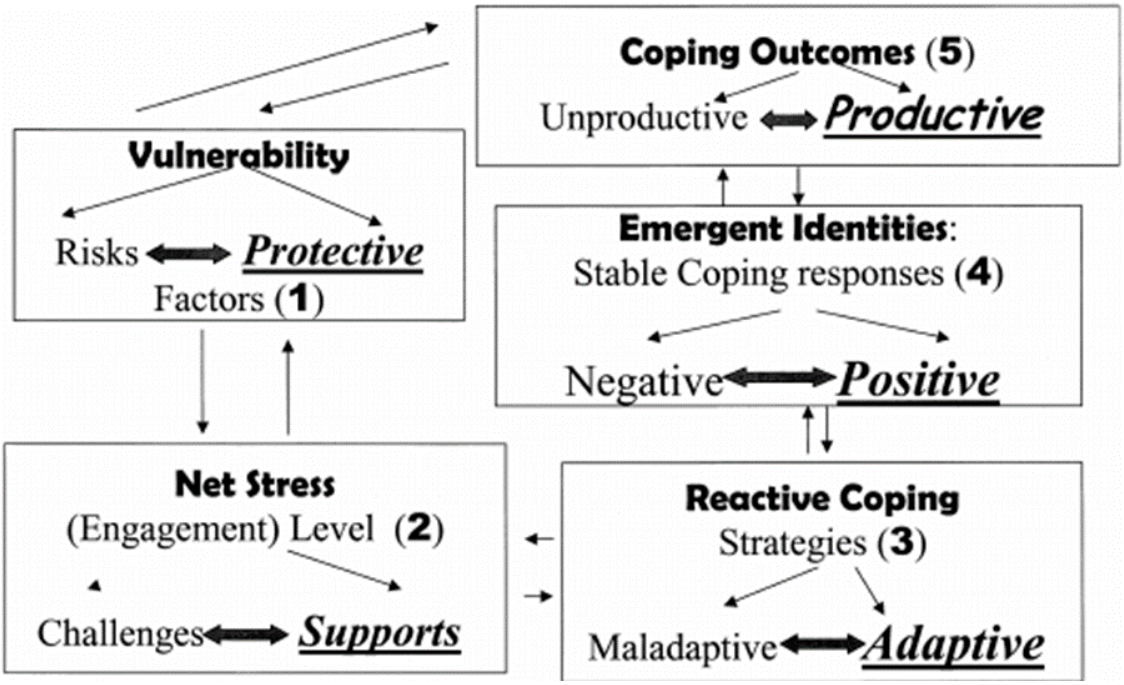
This is a vital consideration, particularly when seeking to explain difference among cohorts within the same time and place. PVEST, then, is "a version [of ecological systems theory] that

highlights the role of the individual's phenomenological analysis of context and self…," Spencer 1995).

PVEST Fundamental Assumptions

Before exploring the tenets of the model, we must first delineate its key assumptions and underpinnings. First, PVEST assumes that all human beings are faced with large and small challenges or risks. And all individuals have some supportive factors that help them meet these risks. Because of this assumption, knowing about the risks within an environment in which youth develop is only part of an equation but is not enough by itself to explain developmental outcomes from a PVEST framework because risk is a part of normative human development. Second, people have individualized perception and experiential processes. In other words, people do not "see" and "feel" in the same way. What one person might experience as a support, another person may experience as a source of stress or a threat. Subsequently two individuals within the same environmental context do not experience it in the same way and can potentially manifest diverging outcomes. For example, some appear to be strengthened by adversity and are somehow able to develop resilience which prepares them for other challenges later in life, while others wither under the burden of their risk and manifest undesirable outcomes. Third, identity is a central component of human development and determines the way an individual. In this way context matters, as environment determines the vulnerabilities, stressors and coping strategies someone consistently employs. And it is the consistent reactive coping strategies one uses that forms the basis of identity development. Thus, one's environment becomes central to induvial processes.

Figure 3: PVEST Model of Psychosocial Development of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Youth



Source: Swanson et al. (2003) Psychosocial Development in Racially and Ethnically Diverse Youth: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges in the 21st Century. *Development and Psychopathology*.

PVEST Model Specifics Description

PVEST is comprised of 5 basic components- net vulnerability level, net stress engagement, reactive coping strategies, emergent identities, and coping outcomes. To understand how people within the same environment and even families, can be exposed to the same stresses, but yield differing results, one must consider these 5 components.

An individual's *net vulnerability level* is the result of both their risk contributors and protective factors. Risk contributors are those variables that affect a person's life that they cannot control. Examples of risk contributors include physical maturation, major life events, race and

ethnicity, neighborhood factors, and socioeconomic status. These contributors affect how others judge and respond to them and subsequently influence a person's own internal self-appraisal processes. Protective factors are those variables that could potentially serve to mitigate risk contributors such as Examples of protective factors include cultural capital or situationally advantageous natural temperament.

Net stress engagement is concerned with the lived experiences of individuals within their environmental context that can pose obstacles to wellbeing. While the previous component, net vulnerability level, is about potential risk that an environment can impose on an individual, net stress engagement is about those actual risks experienced. The net stress engagement is comprised of experienced stressors and experienced supports which help mitigate the effects of the stressors. Examples of stressors might include experiences of racism or colorism, violence or danger experienced by an individual, and just general daily hassles. An example of a social support might be positive relationships with adult role models.

Coping is a part of normative human development. Reactive coping is comprised of those personalized behaviors and cognitive techniques one employs to help manage the reality of their circumstances. Coping mechanisms are products of the environments in which they exist and can be maladaptive or adaptive in nature. Coping strategies react to the immediate stressors and provide opportunities for problem solving. For example, one immediate stressor for an adolescent within a violent neighborhood might be the feeling of being unsafe on the way to and from school. A maladaptive response might be to adopt hypermasculine behaviors to signal that they are "tough" and not easy victims. An adaptive response to the same stressor might be to identify and form relationships with "safe" people and develop "safe" routines that minimize risk when negotiating the environment.

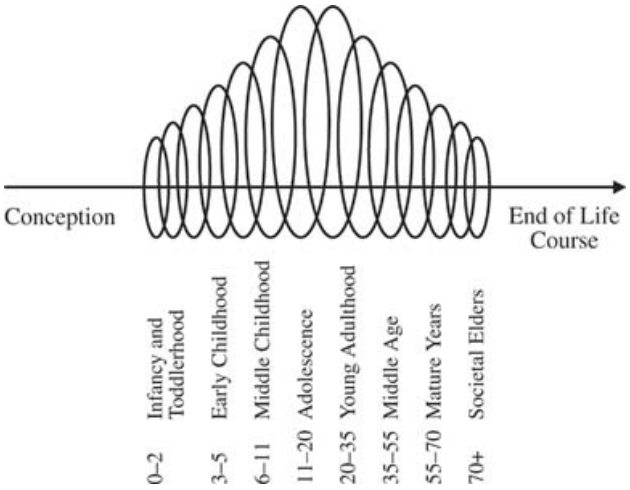
Eventually coping mechanisms form the basis of identity development. As one employs the same set of techniques on a consistent basis and interprets the responses they get from the external environment, they decide what is useful and helpful until they find those available strategies that get enough responses. These are the strategies that get repeated often and internalized. It is through this process that emergent identities develop. These tentative identities provide a framework for how individuals view themselves in multiple contexts while continuing to receive feedback from others and could be negative or positive. Emergent identities also provide an organized and stable sense of self for the individual navigating the worlds and the set of behaviors they deem appropriate for themselves.

Lastly, life stage specific outcomes are the result of forged identities. These specific outcomes could prove to be unproductive or productive. For example, if an adolescent, seeking to cope with feeling unsafe in a violent neighborhood by participating in violent behaviors, he might eventually begin to identify himself as someone who victimizes others. In this case his coping became an identity which might result in a series of unproductive outcomes including negative relationships, incarceration, and financial insecurity.

While initially articulated as an adolescent developmental theory, PVEST model was extended to be applicable to individuals throughout the life course. New situations and challenges arise as people move through the life course. As people develop new cognitive techniques in the manner described above to navigate these new scenarios. In this way, PVEST is a dynamic theory that allows for the constant changes in environment and identity. Though this study is primarily concerned with meaning making among adult parents in middle age, considerable attention is also paid to the developmental processes of adolescent boys. PVEST is useful in conceptualizing individual processes among both groups within the environmental

milieu. While most of the research utilizing a PVEST framework focuses on male adolescents and young adults, this study seeks to contribute to the PVEST literature by applying the framework to those in middle adulthood.

Figure 4: Spiraling and interactive systemic processes: An assumed "unfolding" of human processes occurs across the life course from conception to death



Source: Spencer, M.B. (2006) Phenomenology and Ecological Systems Theory: Development of Diverse Groups. *Handbook of Child Psychology*. W. Damon and R. Lerner. New York, Wiley Publishers. 1:829-893.

Life Course Theory and PVEST work well together to situate the present study of individual processes of meaning making among parents within their specific neighborhood context. Using these theories to frame this study acknowledges the contextual, individual, and relational aspects of the family environment while also accounting for the larger historical and structural systems of the neighborhood and the present political moment.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative methodology. Strauss & Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification." There are various approaches to qualitative research and this study employed a ground theory method (GTM) approach because GTM allows the researcher to focus on everyday life experiences and prioritizes participants' perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). As the present study investigates how parents understand both their role as parents and the behaviors of children in their neighborhood in order to further understand parenting in context, GTM methods are well matched to these aims. A central goal of GTM is to help the researcher analyze qualitative data in order to develop theory to explain the world in which study participants live (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Charmaz (1996) notes that GTM is particularly useful for interpretive or phenomenological studies.

> This tradition starts with and develops analyses from the point of view of the experiencing person. Such studies aim to capture the worlds of people by describing their situations, thoughts, feelings and actions and by relying on portraying the research participants' lives and voices. Their concerns shape the direction and form of the research. The researcher seeks to learn how they construct their experience through their actions, intentions, beliefs and feelings.

Studies employing GTM do not seek to be generalizable to large populations, but instead attempt to develop theory to explain phenomena. To that end, GTM suggests using purposive sampling techniques in which the researcher selects participants that possess the very characteristics that are being examined. In the case of this study, parents who were raising

teenaged boys in Englewood were the population of people being studied and recruited to participate. Given the necessity for homogeneity, this study employed snowball sampling because people tend to know of other people who possess similar characteristics. Also, due to the referral mechanism, snowball sampling allows for a way "inside" a community network that might not otherwise allow outsiders access. An acknowledged drawback of this sampling technique is that by its nature it misses out on those who have few social ties or are isolated from the broader community (Weiss 1994). Consequently, as it relates to this study, it must be understood that the parents included cannot be thought to represent an exhaustive set of the ideas and sentiments that exist among all parents in the Englewood community.

Subjectivity and Positionality

Though all social scientific research is influenced by researchers' and societal pre-existing ideas and values, qualitative research is particularly vulnerable to researcher influence due to the physical presence of the researcher within the researched environment, becoming a "co-participant" (Chavez, 2008). Because of such influence, it becomes important to consider the researcher.

I am black woman who grew up in Harlem and the South Bronx in the 1980s and 1990s within a large, and unusually close extended family. Though New York City looks different today, during the time I grew up, the city was racially and economically segregated in the same ways that Englewood is today. In total I have 30 maternal cousins, thirteen of whom are male. Eight of the 13 have various histories of incarceration, all beginning in adolescence. While some of their individual incarceration histories stopped by early adulthood, others continued to cycle in and out of prison throughout their lives. One of my cousins died while incarcerated, after

spending most of his adult life in prison. Still another only recently finished a 25-year sentence in 2016 for a murder perpetrated when he was a teenager.

Given my family's history and socioeconomic location, I have had knowledge of the carceral state as a young child and understood to some degree, some of the ways it affected families. Within my own family, it often manifested through shame and disconnection. Even as similar sorts of outcomes were manifesting themselves among my cousins, it was still an exceedingly shameful experience for my aunts each time one of their sons was incarcerated. This shame would result in delayed family notification and disappearances from family functions. After an accepted period of time, someone would acknowledge that they hadn't seen a particular person in a while and inquire about how he was doing. The answer was almost always a resigned "You know where he at..."

I knew that my aunts were not negligent or "bad mothers." While they had different personalities, and I certainly had my favorites, all of them cared for their children and me with varying degrees of loving attentiveness. They raised me, too. All did what they thought was best. I also knew my cousins were not "bad boys." Though almost all were disengaged from school, they were respectful of their family and friends. They loved me and many people loved them. I personally knew that operating narratives that relied exclusively on the moral inadequacies and pathology of black families to explain increased incarceration rates were simply not true or explanatory.

Because of my own family experiences, I understood that I was asking these parents to theorize and abstract about very personal and perhaps shameful experiences. I understood the frustrations of wanting the best for your family and not being able to make it so. In doing so, I

wanted to provide them an opportunity to talk about what these experiences meant to them in a non-judgmental space.

But what I did not understand was what it meant to be held personally responsible for these outcomes. I have never been a parent. And though I grew up in a space that might be considered similar to Englewood in some meaningful ways, I grew up in a different era and in another area of the country. Almost all of the parents and children included in this study has spent their entire lives within the bounds of their communities. However, I have had significant life experiences outside of the hyperghetto. My very position as a graduate student at an elite institution underscores my connection to, and investment in mainstream conceptualizations of societal structures.

In these ways, I occupied both "insider" and "outsider" status (Chavez, 2008). I think my "insider" status helped me to build rapport with the first participant, who in turn, helped me gain access to the community via referral. I think my outsider status created a boundary around which I was not wholly able to bridge with some participants.

Participant Observation

From 2013 through 2015, I rented a space in which I operated a small private mental health practice in the neighborhood adjacent to Englewood. In this manner, I was able to meet Englewood business owners and social service providers including an international child welfare organization whose Chicago campus is located in Englewood. I provided contracted clinical services to this organization and spent a great deal of time providing services to clients within the neighborhood in this capacity. To be clear, none of the families to which I provided services participated in study. But in providing such services, I was in the community on a daily basis

which allowed me to contextual information and access to neighborhood spaces used by various community members.

I took field notes within Englewood over the course of one year from the summer 2014 through the summer of 2015. I ran errands in the neighborhood, such as grocery shopping, patronized various neighborhood laundromats, attended church services, attended events sponsored by neighborhood organizations and visited the homes of friends and coworkers who lived in the neighborhood. In this manner, I gathered information about what life inside the neighborhood was like in addition to what the participant parents disclosed in their interviews.

Sample Selection

While spending time in the neighborhood in the manner described above, I met a woman in her late 30s named Sharon who eventually became a friendly acquaintance. Sharon was a married mother of two teenage boys and worked as a phlebotomist in a community hospital. She was hilarious, outspoken, and always had something funny to say about current events and pop culture. We enjoyed talking to each other. We would run into each other somewhat regularly at various community events, exchanging pleasantries whenever we did, and eventually developed a friendship. Soon, she began to invite me to her personal family events such as birthday parties and holiday functions.

About a year after we met, Sharon confided that her older son had been arrested on burglary charges. He and a group of his friends had been arrested by police after they were found opening unlocked car doors and taking items from them. She was upset and frustrated, but she was also unsure about how best to navigate the situation because she wanted to be mindful of her impressionable younger son. Awhile later, after the immediacy of her son's arrest had subsided, I

explained my dissertation project to her and told her that I was very interested in hearing more about this aspect of her family's story and asked if she was willing to participate in the study. Fortunately for the project, Sharon was more than willing to participate, and expressed that she felt it was an important matter to investigate.

Sharon prided herself as a success story when compared to her family and peers. She and her husband, also a phlebotomist, had long histories of stable employment in Chicago area hospitals, and received no material public assistance. Neither had ever been to jail or had a drug addiction. Few in their social or familial circle were able to share this set of fortunate circumstances. Sharon had many thoughts on why that was and shared them often.

Aside from having a genuine and personal interest in the subject matter, I think Sharon also took an interest in me and wanted me to succeed. Sharon and I were about the same age and shared a great deal of personal interests, and had similar back stories. For example, we both were one generation removed from the rural south, raised in large families in a poor black section of a major city, and had friends and family who had walked drastically different and unfortunate paths. But in other ways, our lives were very different. More than once, she pointed to my lack of social connectedness such as how I was so far from my family on the east coast, with no husband or children, and called me "free." At times she expressed envy of my "freedom" and other times pity. In any event, I think Sharon responded to my perceived freedom by trying to protect it and me. For example, she was beyond exasperated by what she thought was naivete when I told her that I planned to conduct interviews in people's homes.

After Sharon completed an interview, I asked her if she knew of other neighborhood parents who were raising adolescent and teenage boys going through similar struggles who might be interested in participating in the study. Sharon said she did and passed along my phone

number to them. In this way, Sharon became the key informant (Weiss, 1994) or key actor that helped me "gain entree" into the field (Bailey, 2007).

Initially, my goal was to select participants based on whether their children were participating in criminalized behaviors such as being arrested, getting into trouble in school often, or knowingly breaking the law or not. I had assumed that parents whose children were getting into trouble would be qualitatively different from those parents whose children were not getting into trouble. Under that assumption, I thought I would be able to say something meaningful about the qualitative differences between these imagined two groups. However, early in the data collection process I discovered that this was not a helpful way to conceptualize, recruit, or organize the participant sample. Specifically, I was hearing from parents that it was not uncommon for children of similar ages and living within the same home to experience different outcomes. The same parent that had a male child who had been arrested for gun possession, for example, would have another male child who was a “book worm” honor student with no interactions with police. Sharon is an illustrative example of this phenomenon. While her older son got into trouble often and had been doing so since he was about nine or so, her younger son who was also a teenager displayed no such behaviors, held an after-school job and participated in extra-curricular activities throughout the city. Because of this, after the third interview, I stopped using “getting into trouble” and “not getting into trouble” as selective sorting criteria. Beginning with the fourth parent, I began asking parents simply if they knew of any of other parents in the Englewood who were parenting male youth between the ages of twelve and eighteen years old who might be interested in participating in the study. Using this snowball method, I ultimately conducted interviews with thirty-six participants. This is in line with the phenomenological nature of the study. As Abrams (2010) notes, "phenomenological

research tends to involve small samples of carefully and purposively selected individuals who share a common experience with the goal of generating detailed patterns and relationships of meaning."

Sample Size

This study has a larger sample size than most qualitative phenomenological studies. Parenting expectations and performances are inherently gendered. I sought to include enough men and women to ensure enough material for analysis in each group. Of the thirty-six parents, twenty-one were women and fifteen were men. This sized sample then, allows for an analysis of a large group of parents but also, sub samples of mothers and fathers with a sufficiently sized homogeneous group on their own. It was especially important to talk to both mothers and fathers, because popular culture has very gendered based narratives about the practices of income mothers and fathers. In this regard, it was essential to have both types of parents included in the study.

The sample was recruited through snowball sampling. Before the beginning of each interview, I informed each participant that I was interested in talking to other parents in the neighborhood who had male children between the ages of 12 and 18. Parents were then asked if they knew someone who met that criteria and whom might be available for an interview in the upcoming weeks. I provided my phone number to pass along to anyone who they thought might be appropriate and interested. When potential participants called, I confirmed that they met selection criteria and arranged to meet to talk with them and complete an interview.

Semi-structured Interview

The unstructured open-ended interview was the central component of this study's data collection. At the beginning of the interview, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, reminded of why they were selected to participate and told that they would receive $20.00 once the interview was completed. Each participant was informed that the interview would be audio recorded and transcribed into written text. They were further informed that all efforts would be made to remove all identifying information from the transcripts as well as in the final write-up. After each participant signed an informed consent letter, the interview began. In the interview, participants were asked to reflect upon themselves, their children, their neighborhood, and their parenting beliefs and practices. The shortest interview conducted was 25 minutes, while the longest lasted for 57 minutes, as some participants were more talkative than others. The average interview lasted around 45 minutes.

The interview was organized into three broad sections- one about the participant, one about their children, and one about their community- though there was much overlap. Each section began with a probing, minimally directive opening prompt, such as "Please tell me about yourself..." For most, this was enough to begin the conversation and they began by disclosing demographic information such as how old they were, how many children they had, employment status, etc. Some participants, however, asked for more direction following the prompt. In such circumstances, I followed up with another prompt requesting specific demographic information such as, "Tell me how old you are." Most of the interviews commenced either after the initial prompt and the remainder did so after the second more directive prompt.

As much as possible, I allowed flexibility in each interview by letting it unfold as a free-flowing conversation. I would prompt the conversation to go into the areas that I wanted the

participant to address, while encouraging as much reflection and narrative as that they felt comfortable sharing. As mentioned above, some participants called for more prompting than others. In all but one interview, I was alone with the participant for the duration.

In this way, each interview was a distinct experience dependent upon the rapport I was able to build with each participant. Some of the interviews were very emotional. For example, my interview with Wanda, a 38-year-old mother of five, was emotional from the start. Wanda was small in stature and appeared fragile, because of her small size and big sad eyes. From the interview, I would learn that she had one son in prison serving a 15-year sentence for attempted murder and another son recuperating after having been shot 8 times. Her family was under a great deal of acute and chronic stress and she was the only parent. Her face seemed so much older than her age, but her demeanor and mannerisms gave off the impression of someone much younger. Wanda began to cry soon after the interview began. Here are excerpts from the beginning of our interview[9]:

> Me: Okay, so tell me a little bit about yourself.
>
> Wanda: Okay, I have four sons, one daughter, and I'm a single parent in a high crime neighborhood hoping to live another day. [Her voice is soft and breaking.]
>
> Me: How old are you?
>
> Wanda: 38
>
> Me: And do you live alone with your kids? [She shakes her head.] You live with other people?
>
> Wanda: We live with other people right now.
>
> Me: Who do you live with?
>
> Wanda: My cousin.
>
> Me: What was it like growing up for you?

[9] Edited for brevity and clarity.

Wanda: Well, for me it was kind of hard... Um, it was rough.

Me: In what ways?

Wanda: Um, well, I wasn't raised by my... I was... I became a ward of the state in my early teenage years and from then on, it's been rough.

Me: Why did you become a ward of the state if you don't mind me asking?

Wanda: Because my mother was on drugs.

Me: Who raised you after you became a ward of the state?

Wanda: My dad and my foster mother... My dad taught me about life. I think he led me the right way, because I had no guidance. None of the things that a woman should teach her daughter. My mother never taught me.

Me: So, did your foster mom teach you things?

Wanda: Yeah, she did. She taught me to be strong. That's what she did.

Me: Do you feel like you learned how to be strong?

Wanda: I feel like I was forced to be. I had no other choice.

Me: Are you always strong now too, you think?

Wanda: For the most part I try to be, but it's hard.

[Here there is a long pause as she begins to cry and we sit in silence. In the silence, I acknowledge her emotion with an "ohh" and touch her arm. She nodded and made a motion that she wanted to proceed.]

Me: Um, where do you see yourself in the next five years? [Hoping to move the conversation in a less painful direction.]

Wanda: I hope I'm not dead. Innocent people always get hurt.

[She is sniffling. And her face contorts like she is hurt. It seemed like she wanted to stop, so I asked her if she wanted to.]

Me: Do you want to stop?

Wanda: I can go on.

Me: Um, do you know many people who got hurt or who were killed?

Wanda: Well, my son was shot a year ago. He was shot 8 times.

Still other interviews were matter of fact and unemotional even as participants disclosed trauma, separation, and loss. In my interview with Keisha, a 38-year-old mother of 7, she recounts how the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services removed 5 of her 7 children from her care. Two of them would have been in their late teens at the time of the interview, but she had not seen them since they were infants. It is heartbreaking. Keisha was very engaged throughout the interview and seemed to take being interviewed very seriously. For the duration of the 44-minute interview, she sat with her wool coat buttoned all the way to the top of her neck and with her hands clasped together atop the table between us. Her eyes were intense and moved quickly while in thought. She spoke directly into the recorder hardly making any eye-contact with me. Her box braids were freshly done and piled in a bun atop her head and her face had a few healed marks and scars of various sizes and colors all over her face. I wonder if they are all over her body as well. Keisha was polite and seemed honest and earnest. She began the interview with a litany of personal facts about herself, striving to get every detail right.

Me: Okay, so could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Keisha: Okay, well, my name Keisha Owens, and I reside at .... I've been there for 9 years. I have all together 7 kids. But I have 2 that's with me and the rest stay with their people, fathers and grandmothers or whatever. Um, I went to McMillan Elementary School. Then from there I went to Walden High School. Then from there I started working.

Me: What kind of work did you do?

Keisha: I worked at McDonalds for a year and then I worked at White Castles for a year. Then after that I was going to a business school down town. I forgot the name of it. It's been a while. [She looks and sounds frustrated that she cannot remember the name.]

Me: That's okay. [I laugh in an effort to calm her.]

Keisha: Then I started going to Kennedy-King to take up some GED classes.

Me: Okay.

Keisha: And I completed my time, but I didn't get my GED, so I'm still struggling to get that. And I work for the Department of Rehabilitation Services.

Me: Okay, okay. And you have 5 other children you said?

Keisha: Um, my other 2 oldest kids, they stay with their father.

Me: Why do they stay with him?

Keisha: Huh?

Me: Why do they stay with him?

Keisha: Um, because I was young when I had them.

Me: Okay.

Keisha: So, it's like I was in the streets. You know, you do stuff, make mistakes.

Me: Got it.

Keisha: And instead of me letting them go to a foster home, he took guardianship.

Me: Okay. Is he older than you? He was more stable then you were?

Keisha: Yes, he was. Because see I was living here, there. You know, just doing stuff I had no business doing.

Me: Got it.

Keisha: And I have another son that's by him. But that son ended up in foster care. So he's adopted. But they stay way out in Mississippi somewhere. But I do talks to him. He call me, I talks to him. I'm friends with him on Facebook.

Me: How's he doing?

Keisha: He's doing excellent. And then my other, the other, they are, I don't know where they're at. They went through foster care. So, I don't know where they are.

Me: Would you be able to find out?

Keisha: Uh, in a way, yes. Because I know their names probably got changed.

Me: Their last names?

Keisha: Last names. So, I wouldn't know what. I don't, I do not know what they look like. I haven't seen them.

Me: Since they were babies?

Keisha: Since they were babies.

At the onset of the study, I planned to interview participants within their own homes because I thought doing so would keep participants in context and this study focuses on how people understand their context. Additionally, I imagined that participants would be primed to speak more candidly and unhurriedly within their own homes because they would be more at ease. This plan became an issue early on, as participants were reluctant to allow me into their homes.

Thankfully, Sharon solved this problem by volunteering the use of a private room in the basement of her home for me to use as a research base in the community. Her finished basement was wood paneled and dimly lit. The room she provided was primarily used as a storage space, but there was a card table and folding chairs that I could use. Though it offered a great deal of privacy, it was not quiet. Sharon's home was busy and alive. In addition to the four people who lived there, the family often invited friends and neighbor in their home. The sounds of her household can be heard in the background of the audio recordings: people talking and laughing in the distance, loud music, the family's dog barking, the microwave beeping, the home phone ringing shrilly. Thirty-four participants chose to be interviewed in Sharon's home. Tiffany, a 37-year-old single mother of six, was the only participant who preferred to have the interview in her home.

After I scheduled our interview, I learned that Tiffany braided hair in her home. She did not say this specifically, but I suspect that she did not want to miss out on any income by leaving her home to take part in an interview. She determined that she could braid hair and talk to me at the same time. During our interview, she was braiding one client's hair and there were 4 people waiting around for their turn. Two of her younger children also milled about. The room was buzzing with movement and voices.

The inside of Tiffany's home was large and airy. The white unpainted walls were scuffed and the living room was sparsely furnished. It didn't seem as if she had lived there long. She was seated on her couch and her client was seated on the floor in front of her as Tiffany tended the client's hair. On the couch next to her was an assortment of hair styling products and no room to sit. All of the seats were taken by her clients. I did not know where to set up so I stood directly in her line of vision, somewhat awkwardly. I did not want to appear disrespectful by moving too freely within her home, so I stood awaiting some instruction from her. It never came. She made a lewd joke about the part of my body that was directly "in her face" as I stood there. Everyone laughed and I took a seat on the floor. Immediately as a I turned on the recorder to begin the interview, she was notified that there was someone at her front door.

Me: Okay. So--

Tiffany: Who is that? Corn? Who?

[She gets up from the couch and moves to her front door where she begins a conversation with a prospective male hair client who was hoping for an unscheduled appointment. His voice is muffled and only partially heard in the recording.]

Tiffany: Hey! Why you didn't call me! ...I'm 'bout to give you my number 'cause I won't have no space for you for the next three hours. Is that ok? ...I got clients in the chair right now! Boy, look! Come look inside! [She lets him peer inside the living room where we are all sitting.] You can't do nothing with this! People are here!... What you wanna pay me? Come on! You wanna pay me $200? Get in the

> chair right now! [She playfully turns to everyone in the room and laughs] "Fuck all yall!... Well I hope so too. You the one popping up in here when I got clients in here. You don't got nobody number? You can call a lot of people and get my number.... You black sucka, stop playing! Alright, call me!

As she talks to her client, her voice is boisterous and playful. She is relaxed. When she turns her attention back to me, her voice is immediately subdued and formal. I wonder if she doesn't think I will know how to accurately interpret her, so she presents the part of herself that she thinks I want to see. Or perhaps she simply felt no reason to be her full self in our interview. Maybe it never occurred to her. In any event, I am disappointed that the light in her voice is gone. When talking to me, she sounds like she is in a job interview as she strings together important sounding words. To Tiffany, I am most certainly an outsider.

> Tiffany: I'm sorry for that.
>
> Me: No problem. Okay. So, tell me a little bit about yourself. [My voice is clipped and hurried].
>
> Tiffany: I am a 36, no, I'm 37 years old. I'm a mother of six. I'm an entrepreneur. And, I am excited about the holistic approach and help the community and the people in need.

This interaction with Tiffany highlights an important point, I think. I conducted singular interviews with people with whom I had no previous relationship and only saw once for an average of 45 minutes within the context of a research interview. I therefore, had no way of knowing if the information they provided was accurate or representative of their true feelings and thoughts. These excerpts from my interviews with Wanda, Keisha, and Tiffany raise questions about the work of the interview and the roles of interviewer and interviewee.

Luker (2008) argues that the utility of the interview in social science research is to help the researcher understand the world of the participant within the group in a phenomenological sense,

> As is the case with participant observation/ethnography, ...sociologists do interviews in order to build theory. By and large, we are not so much interested in the veracity of the interviews, in some cosmic sense of the world, as we are in the deep truth of them. Regardless of whether things happened the way people said they did, what interests us is that people choose to tell us that they happened that way... interviews are "narratives," stories about what the person being interviewed *thinks* happened, or thinks *should have happened*, or even *wanted* to have happened... interviews are almost by definition, accurate accounts of the kinds of mental maps that people carry around inside their heads, and that it is this, rather than some videotape of "reality," which is of interest to us.

We can look to Keisha again to consider the work being done through unstructured interview. In talking about her own adolescence, she makes two seemingly conflicting statements. In the first statement, she makes a point to distance herself from sex work, even though I never brought it up and it hadn't come up previously in the interview.

> Keisha: And that's how I started getting..., hanging out, meeting the wrong people, getting with the wrong crowd, doing stuff I had no business doing.
>
> Me: What do you mean when you keep saying "doing stuff you didn't have no business doing?"
>
> Keisha: Selling drugs. Um, fighting. I never prostituted. I never had sex for money or none of that. It was mainly selling drugs and fighting.

But a bit later in the interview, Keisha talks about deciding to get out of "these streets."

> And back then, I look at it like this. I'm young, I got a life. I'd rather fight than to have you have me out there on a corner doing things I shouldn't be put out. Me doing things for you while you getting rich off of me. So, I got myself out of that... I got in touch with [my mother]. And she saw the trouble I was in and she said that she's willing to help me [rather than] to lose me out here in these streets.

This statement sounds a lot like she was escaping sex trafficking. If this is so, it is important to consider why she would bring up the topic without provocation, only to insist that she would not participate in such acts. Perhaps, as Luker (2008) notes above, consider if Keisha is trying to reconfigure her life into what she may have wanted to happen or into what she thinks should have happened. Social desirability bias is well documented in interview data in the social

sciences (Nederhof, 1985), particularly when participants are asked about socially stigmatized behaviors (Latkin, Edwards, Davey-Rothwell, & Tobin, 2017). The concept refers to people's tendency to want to be viewed in a favorable light, so they deny engaging in those behaviors that are socially unacceptable. If it is true that Keisha was engaged in sex work as an adolescent, she made a calculation that fighting and selling drugs, though undesirable, are less so than adolescent sex work.

These examples, make us consider the participants' deliberate presentation of self. My interactions with Keisha and Tiffany afford vantage points into how people present different aspects of themselves, and by extension, their thoughts to different social actors. It is unlikely that Tiffany, or any of the other parents who participated in this study, would have expressed the same thoughts and views to people who they consider to be their peers in the same manner. Thus, the interview is not and cannot be representative of the depth and nuance of an individual's thought.

Participants

The sample ranged in age from 29-54 years old. Each participant had at least one male child between the ages of 12 and 18 during the time of the interview, and several also had older male children who were in their early 20s as well. The number of children that parents had ranged from 1 child to 9 children. Eighteen parents had three or more children. Fourteen parents included in the study reported no children involved in any criminal justice systems or police involvement, twenty-two did report children with such outcomes. The mean age for participating mothers is 34.9, while the mean age for participating fathers is 42.1. The typical participant of this study was an unemployed African-American single mother in her mid-30s,

with at least two children, one of which was known to be participating in criminalized behavior and/or had previous police contact.

In Wacquant's hyperghetto/carceral complex, he argues that inhabitants occupy different gender-based social types. For men, it is the "criminal" and for women, it is the "welfare recipient" (Wacquant, 2002). Since this study sought to understand how parents understand their task of raising children in the within the context of the hyperghetto carceral complex, it is worth mentioning that some parents disclosed histories of incarceration and police involvement and this was largely split among gender. Fathers were more likely to report such history.

Table 2. Participant Demographics

	Total
Total	***N*=36**
Gender	**21 women (55%)** 15 men
Employment Status	11 employed **23 unemployed (67%)**
Age Range[10]	29-54
Race	**36 African-American (100%)**
Marital Status	8 Married **28 Single (82%)**
Number of children range	1-9
Parenting adjudicated/police involved youth	13 No **21 Yes (55%)**

For those twenty-three participants who had police involved youth, their children had been arrested for offenses ranging from petty larceny to attempted murder.

[10] Three parents chose not to disclose their age.

Table 3. List of Participating Mothers Demographics

	Name[11]	Age	Employment Status	Public Assistance Benefits	# of Children	Child Offenses
1	Sharon	38	employed	no	2	burglary
2	Wanda	38	unemployed	yes	5	gun possession; robbery
3	Desiree	30	employed	yes	3	assault
4	Rachel	37	employed	no	1	none
5	Keisha	38	employed	yes	7	drug possession
6	Melanie	42	unemployed	yes	4	none
7	Kathy	50	unemployed	yes	3	gun possession; drug possession; assault; theft
8	Toya	44	employed	no	1	none
9	Denise	40	unemployed	yes	1	none
10	Mary	51	employed	no	6	theft; gun possession
11	Trice	43	employed	no	3	robbery; credit card fraud
12	Sandy	36	unemployed	yes	5	none
13	Chareese	44	employed	yes	2	none
14	Kim	36	unemployed	yes	2	none
15	Tiffany	37	self employed	yes	6	assault of police officer
16	Betty	None provided	retired	no	2	robbery
17	Tammy	29	unemployed	yes	1	none
18	Ebony	31	unemployed	yes	2	none
19	Karen	39	employed	no	1	none
20	Kelly	31	unemployed	yes	5	drug possession
21	Faith	none provided	unemployed	yes	1	none

[11] All are aliases

Table 4. List of Participating Fathers Demographics

	Name[12]	Age	Employment Status	Incarceration History	# of children	Reported Child Offenses
1	Larry	50	unemployed	yes	5	statutory rape
2	Jimmy	45	employed	none	3	selling drugs, burglary
3	Dante	43	unemployed	yes	3	gun possession
4	Warren	54	unemployed	none	6	selling drugs
5	Charles	50	unemployed	none	4	none
6	Will	47	unemployed	none	4	Fighting at school
7	Joseph	34	employed	yes	2	Fighting at school
8	Tony	46	unemployed	none	9	selling drugs
9	John	47	employed	none	1	Petit theft
10	Keith	None provided	unemployed	none	3	DWI; driving w/o license
11	Cliff	45	unemployed	yes	3	robbery
12	Robert	43	employed	none	1	theft
13	Gerald	34	unemployed	yes	3	none
14	Mark	30	unemployed	yes	1	none
15	Jordan	30	unemployed	yes	2	none

[12] All are aliases

Table 5.
Youth Offenses

Offenses	**Total**[13]
Gun Possession	3
Drug Possession or Selling	6
Burglary, Theft, Larceny	4
Aggravated Assault/Aggravated Robbery	4
Attempted Murder	1
Rape	1
Driving Without a License	2
Driving Under the Influence	1
Fighting at school	2

Data Analysis

Audio recordings of participant interviews were transcribed by a contracted transcriber. Interview transcriptions were coded and analyzed. I listened to the audio recordings and read through each transcript several times. Once I was familiar with the data, I began to develop codes for analysis through multiple rounds of coding-- open, axial, and selective (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

First, the transcripts were each subjected to an open coding process in which each line of transcript was assigned a subject matter theme such as "fear of violence," "relationships," "absence of parent," or "personal substance use." After each line was coded, similar subject

[13] The total adds up to more than twenty-one because some youth had multiple charges.

themes were grouped together into a singular, larger more inclusive code. In this manner, fifteen broad codes were developed and recorded.

Table 6.
Open Coding Results

Most Recurrent Themes
• lack of community resources • undesirable youth outcomes • parents' shared childhood experiences • agentive parenting • peer influence • "good" parents • "bad" parents • parental self-assessment • agentive youth • unpredictable violence • carceral authority • impact on relationships • prison and neighborhood symbiosis • poverty • parenting goals

Through axial coding, these topics were grouped together into larger categories based on how they related to each other into four broader categories: explanations for youth behavior, parenting experiences, parenting theories, and contextual considerations.

Table 7.
Final Data Analysis Codes

	Parenting Worldview		
Youth Behavior Explanations	**Parenting Experience**	**Parenting Theory**	**Parenting in Context**
• agentive youth • peer influence • lack of community resources • poverty	• undesirable youth behaviors • shared childhood experiences • agentive parenting	• parental judgment • parental self-assessment • purpose of parenting	• unpredictable violence • carceral power display • impact on relationships • prison/neighborhood symbiosis

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

A common point of contention of qualitative research is the suspicion of data "cherry picking" in which the researcher simply picks the "best quotes" from the data and centers analysis only around these quotes (Morse, 2010). In this chapter, I provide a fuller presentation of from a variety of participants to depict the expansiveness of the data collected. In the following chapter, I will focus on the voices of a smaller subset of participants to show the depth of responses and how they tie in in broader social scientific problems. Participant responses depicted in this section were cleaned for clarity and brevity, as well as condensed from interview format into statement format. For each theme presented, examples of parent responses are listed.

Explanations for Youth Behavior

The themes included in this group, are those most frequently and strongly used by participants to explain the causes of undesirable youth behavior and outcomes.

Agentive Youth. More so than any other significant theme presented, the concept of agentive children was most uniformly and consistently described by participants when explaining the causes of youth behavior. The phrase "children have a mind of their own" or some derivative, was repeated often when participants discussed undesirable outcomes of youth. The idea that youth operate on their own accord and without regard to the instruction received from adults was very common. Below are examples of the way that parents invoked the sentiment.

The kids have a mind of their own. And they go their own way and do what they want to do. I mean, there's doctors and lawyers and teachers and preachers who got kids that went the wrong way. We don't ask our kids to go that way, we don't raise them to turn out to shoot somebody or to rob somebody to do bad things, but that's the choice they make. So, you can't blame the parent for something a child done. *Wanda, 38-year-old parent of five*.

These kids do what they want to do. They want to be cool and fit in with they little friends or whatever. You can only do so much. These kids got a mind of they own. *Eddie, 45-year-old father of 5*.

Sometimes you can't help the kid. Sometimes there just ain't no help. They just have their own mind. Regardless of how you brought them up. Some of these kids be brought up in a nice house with the father, the mother, everything they want and they're the one out here. Some of them the ones out here with felonies stealing, robbing, killing, just because they want to do it. Just because it might be fun. *Rachel, 37-year-old mother of one*.

Some of these kids are just hard headed, not listening. Just not willing to do the right thing. They just don't care. Just evil. I see them out there. I look at them. And they just don't care. They just want to shoot. *Warren, 54-year-old father of six*

Those kids got a mind of their own. I can't be there when my son getting ready to do something. Then you looking at me like I'm the one that did it. He already knew it first not to do it, but he did it any old way, so why you blaming me? It's not fair. It's not fair at all. *Betty, mother of two*

Kids are gonna do what they do regardless of how their parents taught them. Kids still gonna do what they want to do. I know a lot of parents that done the best, worked the hardest, provided the best for their kids and they still turned out to be, excuse my language, shit. So, it's like in certain situations it's not always the parent, it's the kid. Because once they get to a certain age they gonna start thinking and doing what they want to do regardless of what you might provide for them or what you got for them. Like everybody that's out here hustling, robbing, stealing, they don't have to. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three.*

I done seen and experienced parents who did all they could for their kids and the kids still turned out when they get their own mind, they’re hanging with different crowds, still tend to do what they want to do. It sometimes be out of your hands. *Faith, mother of two*

Peer Influences. Most parents discussed how their children's peers were the primary negative influence on youth behavior. Further, most felt that peers undermined parent's desires and lessons. Parents referred to other neighborhood youth as an ever-present threat to the instruction that their own children received at home.

> It's just the young men that he's hanging with, I don't approve of them because I know what they do. All of them smoke marijuana. To him it's fun. It's cute. He laughing, he's joking. He thinks it's great. *Keisha, 38-year-old mother of seven*

> Sometimes the younger guys look up to these older guys and they look up to what they got on or what they're wearing. You could talk 'til you blue in the face, but if this type of little trinket excite them, sometimes they often be with the person that got all these trinkets and all this little flashy stuff that they like. *Rachel, 37-year-old mother of one*.

> It's either you roll with them or you get rolled on. Either you join the gang or you get beat up by the gang. You have to be tough. But if you get in the wrong area, they will get at you. They'll pick a fight with you. They'll rob you. They'll do whatever they can. They'll try to get your attention. Then once you say something, they'll get you. They will probably kill you. *Jimmy, father of three*

> Some kids are born leaders and some kids are born followers. The leaders know how to lead and they're smart. You got some followers that just want to follow the leader around and the leader might say, "Hey, you go do this and do that." And he sent the follower to a lot of trouble and the leader never gets in no trouble. And the followers get in all the trouble. *Dante 43-year-old father of three.*

Lack of Community Resources. Participants stated that more neighborhood resources for youth would help to reduce problematic youth behaviors. Parents reported that many of these behaviors occur during out of school time while parents are at work and youth are idle and unsupervised. On the whole, parents thought that if youth had more available alternatives within the neighborhood for recreation and leisure, they would be less likely to get into mischief with negatively influential peers.

> Parents don't get home until after six. Once that kid get out of school it's a lot of free time for them. It's no fieldhouses [Parks Department Recreational Centers] by

> the school houses like when I was growing up. You could go to the field house and play ping pong, bumper pool. It's no more of that anymore. And so, a lot of kids have a lot of idle time on their hands. *Charles, 50-year-old father of four.*
>
> I think if the kids had somewhere to go or something to do. Something constructive where they're not getting harassed or bullied or that's not just people bullying them it's also the police. Where they can go out freely and have fun and then maybe there wouldn't be so many issues. *Melanie, 42-year-old mother of two*.
>
> We need more things for the youth to do. When we were growing up we had baseball programs and stuff. We need more boys' and girls' clubs. Places for the youth to hang out when they're not associated with gangbangers and drug dealers. Now they just kind of sit home and this is all they see. Dante, *43-year-old father of three*
>
> I want to start some kind of program and call it "Lost Kids" because [the youth] ain't got no guidance. *Kathy, 50-year-old mother of three*.
>
> I think more programs are need to help the youth. That's the main thing. The youth needs to be guided. Once they go outside the door, then it takes a village to raise you up. *Will, 47-year-old father of four*.
>
> I think the neighborhood needs more resources. All different kinds of things to help families out that's in situations, that [might need] temporary living situations. Social services for families. And something to keep kids busy. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of five*.

Poverty. Participants express the belief that poverty and lack of money accounts for a great deal of youth undesirable behaviors and outcomes. Specifically, parents stated that many undesirable youth behaviors are caused by the pursuit of money.

> I wanted fast money, and when I was going to school I didn't have everything that I wanted. I used to go to school, and I'd see people coming in with this and that, and I'm like, I [only] got two pair of black pants. Two white shirts...so that why I went to the streets. And I moved out from my mother when I was 15. *Joseph, 34-year-old father of two*
>
> It all goes back to how people look at you and how the girls look at you and stuff. So now you want the better stuff and your parents can't buy them $300 pants so you want to get it yourself. *Tony, 46-year-old father of nine.*

> They come in the house and ask mama for a dollar and she ain't got it. And they walk to the store and see the [drug dealer] up in there, "Man can I have a dollar?" And he pull out this big stack of bills and the child is like, "huh." So, every day they see him they want to talk to him. That's how that be. *Dante, 43-year-old father of three*.
>
> If they ask me for something I'm gonna get it. I'm not gonna let them go out and rob people. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.
>
> I think if we get these gangs together and put them on some kind of funds to where you get them a little payroll it would be a better world. Money talk, excuse my language, and bullshit walk. I believe it would pull some this these brothers off the street. *Kathy, 50-year-old mother of three*
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> [The younger youth have] older siblings and gang members out here think they helping the kids but you ain't helping them. They think they helping them because they trying to teach them. I'd heard some of the guys say "I'm gonna show you how to make money. How to keep money. It's all about money." You ain't giving them no type of education. So, all they're gonna know is money. That's it. That's all they're gonna know is how to sell a drug. *Rachel, 37-year-old mother of one*.
>
> Selling drugs is like a rite of passage for most of the boys. It happens. If most of the people on low income don't make a lot of money, always looking for a come up, the boys, sometimes the girls, too, have a urge to have more than what they willing to work for. They want a lot of materialistic things. As opposed to working hard for it, they want it the fast way. And they don't really care who they hurt. Most of the time they sell it to their family members, the same uncle they been seeing all their life growing up with, on drugs. If they start selling, they'll sell it to their uncle. And they don't really care about how it affects their family member or whatever. All they care about is, "I'm going to get this money and buy me a nice car." *Sharon, 38-year-old mother of two*.

Parenting Experiences

Themes included in this category reflect those themes that seem to inform participant parents' outlook on parenting. Parents have had certain kinds of personal experiences that affect how they make meaning of their role as parents.

Reflections on How They were Parented. Participants shared and reflected on their childhoods and how they were parented. Present in many of these reflections were the absence of one or both parents, hardship, and struggle. Most participants considered their parents who were present in their own lives to be "good parents" who raised them well, regardless of circumstances.

> Growing up was a struggle. I became a ward of the state at about 4 or 5 and remained one until I aged out at 21. I was placed with different people. Group homes, typical life. My mama was a typical drug addict. She wasn't paying attention to us. Mostly doing drugs instead of paying attention to the kids. I rarely seen her. My father died when I was born. He was murdered. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.

> Growing up was a joyride. It was nice for me because our parents showed us a lot of attention. I couldn't even be outside. When we do go outside, we had our parents outside with us. *Kathy, 50-year-old mother of three*.

> When I was born [my father] left. He was never around because he was on heroin. My mother raised five boys all by herself. She ran a real strong household, as far as training us and keeping us in line. I think she raised me well. My mom sold drugs, my brothers and them sold drugs. Drugs was around me all my life even when I was a young kid my mom was selling heroin. *Larry, 50-year-old father of three*.

> I think my parents did a very good job of raising me. My father was a hard worker. My mother was a housewife. My father was always the protector. He was always there. Always telling us what we were worth and that they loved us. They've been married for 52 years. *Toya, 44-year-old mother of one*.

> I had good parents. My mama was the type to say, "Don't let nobody do nothing to you. If they try to jump on you, you defend yourself. You do this. You do that." She was not saying to be bad, but she did want to put that toughness in us. My parents tried to keep me out of trouble as much as he could, but the streets kept me in a little bit of it. They always had my back no matter what it was. I mean, I used to be bad. I even had the house shot up, raided, all that. They never turned their back on me. *Dante, 43-year-old father of three*.

> My mom didn't raise me. My mother left me and my two brothers when we were kids. When we were babies rather. And my father raised us. He did the best he could. In my household I dealt with a lot of molestation, drug use, alcohol. My father was at work a lot. My grandmother's son was a pervert, and also my oldest brother, so I was between those two. *Denise, 40-year-old mother of one*.

> After my mother died, my father moved on. He went and married a young woman. But see life goes on. She moved on now. She married to somebody else. It just seemed like everything left when my mom left. My daddy went as far as doing this thing and he took the refrigerator. He took the stove and moved in with the woman and left us. *Kim, 36-year-old mother of two.*
>
> My mom was strict. She was a hardworking woman. You know one parent. My father was around doing whatever he wanted to do, he didn't live with us. She did a good job raising us. All of us turned out pretty good. *John, 47-year-old father of one*.
>
> I remember my father leaving us. It was 5 boys and 1 girl and he left us in the cold; no heat. Just left. My mother tried her best. But you know when a woman in a single household you can only do so much. And it was rough. I was a younger person seeing tragic things. Everyday something. Fights, if it wasn't fights it was shoot-outs. If it wasn't shoot-outs it was stabbings, rapes, murders. *Keith, father of three*.
>
> Growing up was hard for me. It was rough. I became a ward of the state in my early teenage years and from then on it was rough. I was split up from my siblings. My mother was on drugs. She was hard. She was crazy. I didn't meet my father until I was 12 or 11. I was forced to be strong. I didn't have a choice. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of five*.
>
> My parents were loveable. The only thing I hated was that my dad was an alcoholic and he died of cirrhosis of the liver when I was 12. And that probably killed me because he was like my best friend. He the one who taught me how to survive in the world. How not to take no mess off no man. No matter what type of man it is, don't let them do things to you they shouldn't be doing. Don't let them say to you or put you in places you shouldn't be. Don't let a man misuse you. I looked up to him. Because even though he was a alcoholic, he still was teaching me. *Keisha, 38-year-old mother of seven*.

Undesirable youth behaviors. Participants report how their children had participated in behaviors that were disappointing. All such parents described how youth performed such behaviors against their parents' wishes.

> He cusses his teachers out and everything at school. And a couple of times I had to go to the school and straighten it out. *Dante 43-year-old father of three*.
>
> First time he got in trouble with the law, him and his friend and a uncle. It was allegedly a robbery was supposed to take place. His best friend got shot and

killed. The guy that they tried to rob for some reason recanted his story and said [my son] wasn't there. Basically, if the guy didn't recant his story he would have been looking at 30 years. Just like this best friend uncle is doing 30 years right now. [My son] was 14 years old at the time. *Trice, 43-year-old mother of three*.

He just got out of jail. For shooting a BB gun. He and his friends were shooting at each other with the BB gun. And a little girl was out there. One of the BB's popped her and she said, "Don't shoot me no more." And him being him just took the whole BB gun and just let it loose on her little legs. [I asked him] Why did you do that?" [He responded] "Because she should have shut up. She talked too much"... Before that he got arrested for fighting my cousin while she was pregnant and beating her neighbor car with a wheel from a bike. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.

He snuck out of the house and got the car out and ran through 55th and Garfield. Hit one of the street poles. I had to pay for that. I had to pay for him. Got to go to court. Got to pay court fees. *Keith, father of three*

I found out about my son on YouTube. These kids do shit and then post it on YouTube. They just want everybody to know. You want to be out there for everybody to see you this big, bad, tough, guy. He had a pistol and was smoking on a blunt. I felt like shit for not knowing. I called the police on him. *Mary, 51-year-old mother of six*.

I have a son in jail now for having a gun. He had just turned 16. He got a gun, robbed somebody in a whole 'nother neighborhood, and shot somebody. He was sentenced to 15 years. To my knowledge, he was on his way to my brother house. I didn't teach him to do things like that. And I always worked. I never gave him that type of lifestyle. So, it shocked me. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of five*.

This child here is off the chain. Just don't want to listen. No respect. I tell him to come in off the street and he ain't' gonna do it. Curfew, he don't care. He steal at the store. Like petty, petty stuff that can get you killed. They caught him with some weed. He was trying to sell some weed. Caught him with a BB gun. And what was he gonna do with it? What if he pull his BB gun out like this. Pull that on somebody. I don't know if he fixing to rob somebody. You ain't carrying no BB gun just to be carrying it. He see a older person walk down the street, he say something stupid. "What you got in your pockets old man?" You don't do that. Police keep picking him up. And I keep telling him, "You keep on doing this, they gonna try you as an adult. *Kathy, 50-year-old, mother of three*.

Shared experiences with youth. Some participants were able to identify personal characteristics and experiences that they had in their youth that they shared with their children. Some

understood these similarities to then understand what their children might be going through, while others used these experiences to explain how they were different from their children.

> When I was 15, I started getting in trouble. Gangbanging. When I was 16, I went to jail for a stolen car. When I was 18, I went to jail again for aggravated battery. [My son] got arrested 'cause he stole a car for a joy ride. I was not surprised because that was the first thing he did and that was the first thing I did. I hope he don't follow in my footsteps. *Cliff, 45-year-old father of three*.

> My 17-year-old reminds me of myself when I was his age. I liked to fight and so does he. I was angry at the world when I was his age and so is he. I was responsible for my younger brothers and sisters. He is too. I think he got his hot quick temper from me. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of five*.

> When I was young, I was bad for reasons. I wasn't listening. I was rough. I was fighting people alot. It was 'cause I didn't have my parents. Like if you have your parents, I was beating you up. I was fighting you. I'm gonna tear her head off. I'm gonna bust his head. My son has a temper. I think that's what's gonna keep in in a lot of trouble, his temper. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.

> I think I could have been farther in life if I wouldn't have chose the roads I chose. I chose some bumpy roads. Just wanting to be rebellious, want to leave the house, want to just see what was out there. I left the house at 16, 17. *Rachel, 37-year-old mother of one*.

Agentive parenting strategies. Parents recalled strategies that they and other parents used in response to their environmental context. Some evaluated how effective they considered these strategies to be in varying levels of detail. Two divergent strategies are used. One in which, parents attempt to shield their children from the neighborhood challenges and another in which parents try instruct children on how to fit in and interact with their neighbors while remaining wise and strong willed.

> Some parents are less involved, less engaged [with the community]. I think its 'cause of the violence. As they keep the kids away from the streets, which you really can't, because then they want to get to it even more, the more you keep them away from it. You should be able to introduce them to a little bit of the streets and let them get knocked around a little bit, and let them realize, "Okay, I don't want to do that." But you can't do that now because they shoot them. So ain't

no come back from it. You could get shot and killed. You might let your kid out there with a little leash and let them get to the real taste of this. But you won't be doing it. And you used to could do that but you can't do that now, 'cause you may get killed. [Before they only might have gotten] beat up or robbed or your feelings hurt. But now you may actually get killed. So, they really sheltered. Now when they go out there and you not around, they don't even know how to handle things. *Tony, 46-year-old father of nine.*

I don't allow them to get on buses and go to a friend's house, even though I know they're probably thinking they don't have no freedom I'm just overprotective. I'm scared. I know everything that's going on out here and I'm scared. I know how these guys are. I have three sons, 15, 16, and 21. I'm terrified when they go out the door that I'm going to get a phone call or something. *Sandy, 36-year-old mother of five.*

I think I'm more willing to go outside of the neighborhood like they can all get in the car and we can go to the movies or go bowling or do some kind of activity outside of the neighborhood where some people can't or don't spend any time with them or take them to a movie or even have money to go. *Melanie, 42-year-old mother of two*.

A lot of parents, they teach their kids basically not to be disrespected. They don't teach them how to give respect. Because its rough in Englewood and I guess they got to grow up tough. So, they wants to walk around with their body armor so won't nobody bother them. *Dante 43-year-old father of three*.

I don't allow him to be in the street. His mother don't play either. He is a sweet kid and a lot of people, including my nephew, his own family would take that as being sweet for real. You can push him over until finally he got tired of it and then he started to fight a lot. Kids at school. My nephew's friends, whoever that came at him. Most of the time it was somebody, taken to be sweet. *Will, 47-year-old father of three.*

I wasn't strict but, I was articulate about school, homework, home to do chores. Then you might have a little time to go outside. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of five*.

Parenting Theory

In this section, those themes which cover participant's ideas about parenting are included.

Parents reflect on what variables they use to judge their parenting and those of their peers.

Participants also disclose what they imagine the overall purpose of parenting to be.

Good parenting. Participant parents reflect on what they consider to be "good" parenting and provide examples. Parents most readily pointed out that providing materially for children and "being there" was most characteristic of "good" parenting.

> Just being in your child life, it means so much. Just being active. Being there, you know. Just be interested. Because they'll take that into their life. *Kim, 36-year-old mother of two*.

> Bathing, keeping them clean, housing them, keeping clothes on their back, keeping food in their mouth, helping them with school, make sure they be in different programs, make sure they do different things instead of just hanging out with their friend, make sure they're not just watching TV.

> A good parent is a parent that teaches their kids right from wrong. They give their kids morals and values in life. A good parent is a good person who tries their best to accommodate their kids and be there to teach their kids. And discipline them.

> A parent that listens and is concerned and actually participates and do activities with your kids, not just let them run amok. *Melanie, 42-year-old mother of one*.

> A good parent takes care of their kids. They discipline them when it's needed. They talk to them about different things in life and make sure they go to school.

> A good parent is a parent that's just there with their kids at all times. No matter what they go through. They stick by them. *Larry, 50-year-old father of three*.

Bad parenting. While "good" parenting for most participants seemed to be defined by being physically present in kids' lives and providing materially, "bad" parenting was not simply the inverse but was defined beyond the absence of such things. Though physical absence was cited as an example of "bad" parenting, "bad" parenting was also imagined as a set of behaviors and interactions with children in which the parent becomes a destructive or negative influence on youth behavior. A common sentiment was that there were plenty of bad parents within the neighborhood. Also common among participants' theories of "bad" parenting was the lack of

observable differentiation between parental and child roles, particularly when engaging in vices. A significant number of parents expressed a generational difference in parenting styles, in which younger parents as a group were conceptualized to be "bad" parents.

> [My son's] mama is a bad parent. When you drink and you smoke and your kid's having company and they're all there watching you it's not no good. I mean, what's that gonna make him do? You come in the house, you're arguing with your kids all the time. You're arguing with your kids. You tell them to do this. You tell them to do that. And you're going about your way. That's not right. *Jimmy, father of three*

> A parent that don't listen. That don't come around. A parent that don't provide. A parent that just sit up, drinks, smoke, party. You can't do that because when you have kids you have to make time. It's a time and a place when you can go out and party. I don't knock people that smoke and drink every day. But when it come time for your kids, I don't think you're supposed to be that role model for your kids. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.

> Now it's like kids, they party with their parents. Everybody turn up. The mama turning up, the grandmother turning up, kid turning up, the baby's turning up. How can an adult raise a child when you on a child level? That's a problem. *Gerald, 34-year-old father of three*.

> Letting the streets take them. *Warren, 54-year-old father of six*

> Their parents are so young. The parents still want to be young. And you cannot be your child friend. You can't sit down and think you can smoke a cigarette, smoke drugs with your child and think your child gonna listen to you. Baby, I see it every day. *Kathy, 50-year-old mother of three*.

> Most of these parents [in the neighborhood], they hang and kick it with their kids. That's not what you should do. I'm sorry. Most of the parents in this neighborhood are the same. Smoke, kick it, and drink with their kids. And I feel like that's a big problem. That's why the kids don't have no respect for you. That's why they run over you. That's why the kids talk back to you. That's why they went to your house, call you a bitch... because you drinking, you kicking it with their friends. I know some [of my] friends now that do that. *Rachel, 37-year-old mother of one*

> I see so many women snatching on the kids. Smacking kids upside the head. I'm talking 3, 4, 5-year-olds. And they're talking to them and expecting them to move and react like and adult. I'm standing there thinking, "This is a 4-year-old. *Robert, 43-year-old father of one*.

> Beating your kids for no reason. *Cliff, 45-year-old father of three*.

> As far as older parents like my age maybe 35. No, not even 35, maybe the 40-year olds, they're probably kind of the same with the old ways of raising kids and stuff like that. But the new parents, this new age thing, they all the same. They believe in, you know, getting out fighting, shooting, cussing, hollering not know, let's reason this out. Let's see if the child was actually wrong or no, it's just different. *Chareese, 44-year-old mother of two*

> I know a bad parent. My son got a baby by this girl. But she got two other kids. She bring the kids over [to my mother] because my mother try to keep them all together. And she leave them over there 6 months at a time. These little babies. They need Pampers and milk. She don't buy no Pampers, no milk. We feed them every day. We take care of all of this. She don't do none of that. That's a bad parent. I want to turn her into DCFS so bad, but I don't really want the kids to get caught in the system because I know she's the type of girl who won't be able to follow the rules to get them back. So, we try to help as much as we can. *Dante, 43-year-old father three*

Parental self-assessment. After each participant was asked to theorize about the concepts of "good" and "bad" parenting, they were asked whether they considered themselves to be a good parent. Of the 35 parents that participated in this study, 34 considered themselves to be a good parent, regardless of child outcomes. The one parent who was not as sure of herself, responded that she was not a good parent because she was struggling financially and therefore could not provide materially for her children the way she would have liked. The most common reasons that parents gave for considering themselves "good" parents was because of their very presence in their children's lives and being able to provide the basics for survival.

> I'm a good parent because I'm still here. A lot of parents run off and leave. My sister raising my little niece right now. And the mama somewhere running around here. And the daddy, he just doing him too. They think it's easy to make a baby and run off and leave, but it's really not. You are a strong parent, you gotta stick it out and be there. That's just my goal right there. *Joseph, 34, father of two.*

> Of course, I'm a good parent. I'm an active parent. I be involved with my children. I know where they at. I take phone numbers. I'm involved. I go up to the school. I

talk to the parents. I go to the meetings, the open houses. I talk to the teachers. So, I like to say I'm king of involved. *Kim*, *36-year-old mother of two.*

I would consider myself a good parent. Because no matter what I've been through and [what my kids have] been through, I've been 100 percent there, no matter what. And at times when the Lord knows that I didn't want to. Also, because I'm the only parent. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of five*.

I'm a good parent because I love my son. I encourage him to stay in school. I encourage him to treat people with respect, and love yourself. *Denise, 40-year-old mother of one*.

I consider myself an excellent parent. I'm there. I don't go out. I don't hang out. I'm there 24/7 all day long. They come home and they know they ain't missing no meals because [their] mom already done cooked dinner hot. I'm just waiting on them. *Keisha*

I'm a good parent. I mean I've been a part of my son's life since he's been here. So yeah, I consider myself a good parent. I go to his school. I talk to him. I listen. That's it. I'm a good parent.

I consider myself a good parent because I'm going through it with my kids. I'm still in their life. I take care of them financially. Anything they need they know they can call me and get it. *Dante 43-year father of three.*

Yeah. I consider myself a good parent because I stay on them all the time. And I'm not gonna let up. I stay with them 100 percent. *Jimmy, father of three*.

Parental Purpose. Parents were asked about the purpose of parenting. Most expressed a desire to raise children who would be able to grow up to have a quality of life that exceeded their own. Parents expressed that they sought to raise productive, independent adults.

The purpose of parenting is to make them self-sufficient adults that are going to be a productive part of society. They have to know how they want to live. What kind of life they want. I want him to be a self-sufficient well-rounded individual. *Toya, 44-year-old mother of one*.

My purpose is to raise my kids up to be better than me, so they can do better, see better, live better. To instill those good things into them regardless of what they take from and where they apply it. So, anything that I can put into them that will make them knowledgeable for the world, then that's my main goal. *Gerald, 34-year-old father of three*.

> To teach a child guidance, love and to grow and be healthy, strong, independent individuals. And to teach them the best things that you know. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of five*.

> Make sure your kids get a good education and be better than you were. Try to teach them better and have them a better life than you had. *Mark, 30, father of one.*

> To give them a better future than I had. Better life than I had. Well educated. Just be more than I was. *Kim, 36-year-old mother of two*

> To try to instill values. To give [children] the tools you need so that you can take care of yourself. Robert, *43-year-old father of one*.

> To teach somebody how to be better than you was. *Cliff 45-year-old father of three*.

Parenting detached from child outcomes. Participants shared their views on the relationship between child outcomes and behaviors and the role of parenting. Most parents did not see a direct correlation between the two. In order to explain the disconnect, many pointed to a duality in children's overall behavior in which children displayed certain types of behaviors at home and different set of behaviors while outside the home. Some parents also pointed to the phenomenon of children being raised in the same house with the same parents, but had very different outcomes.

> You could be the best parent in the world and your kid still turn out to be nothing. You could try to the best parent, try to the best right now. Who's to say what he gon' do three years from now. *Joseph, 34-year-old father of two.*

> You could have two kids from the same household and they don't always turn out the same. Some people are gonna be the way they are regardless of if they had a good parent or not. *Melanie, 42-year-old mother of two.*

> I think we put too much on us sometimes. I think sometimes they act like we almost got to live [our children's] lives for them. Nah. I don't agree with [the idea that] the parent gets in trouble if the kid get in trouble. How the fuck is that? I can't be with them. Okay, I'm supposed to shadow him constantly, everywhere he

> go. How do we eat [if I'm only following him and not working to earn money]? How do we have a house? Then you mad at me about that, that I'm not providing for them. Something's gotta give. *Tony 46-year-old father of nine.*
>
> It's up to them what they gonna do, the choice and decisions they make. We can't walk with them hand in hand in life. When they leave from us we just hope they do the right thing, but you can't blame the parent. Not all the time. If you don't know what your kids are doing when they leave you, I can't blame you. *Gerald, 34, father of three*.
>
> Sometimes your circumstances lead you do certain things or you're forced to do certain things. No parent that has a child looks at this baby and say "Yeah, my kid gonna be a mass murderer one day." I would never put that stigma on a parent, because I don't want to be stigmatized like that. *Gregory*, *50-year-old father of four*
>
> [Children] can be an angel in front of [their parents]. When they leave out their door, they could be a whole different person. A whole different child. A whole another persona they got to put on when they're outside. *Mark, 30, father of one*
>
> My parents gave me unconditional love. But I was different from a lot of other people. I was bad in the street, but a good boy in the house. *Dante 43-year-old father of three*.
>
> You can be a good parent, a strict parent. You can do the right things in trying to raise your child, but once they leave the house it's up to them to act in a certain way. *John, 47-year-old father of one*.
>
> You can teach your child right and wrong. You can teach them this is the good, this is the bad, but the streets is like a drug. If the streets wants to get a hold of them, they're out there. *Trice, 43-year-old mother of three.*

Contextual Considerations

This category includes those themes that best described how parents understood the neighborhood context in which they raised their families. Most parents talked specifically about the instability in their neighborhoods. Various components of the neighborhood created an environment of unpredictability and displays of authority by outside forces. These forces had the ability to disrupt and influence family dynamics and relationships.

Unpredictable violence. Parents discussed how their neighborhood was characterized by unpredictable and indiscriminate violence which affected everyone, including "innocent bystanders." Participants further characterized this violence in a way that suggested that it was both inevitable and unstoppable. Taking the violence into consideration alters behavior.

> My son just got shot. He said, "Dad, I was going to the store and the car pulled up with tinted windows. And they rolled the window down and they started shooting and we started running." And I was like "Why?" And he was like, "I don't know." I be scared for him. He's sixteen. He was shot in the leg. He's okay, but he's really shook up. *Charles, 50-year-old father of four*.

> My son got shot a year ago. He's lucky to be alive. He was shot 8 times. He was going to visit my aunt. When he got on her porch, two guys just started shooting. They just came from out the gangway he said. A bullet hit his nerve in his pelvic [area]. So, he has problems with walking. He's not paralyzed, but he had to have assistance with a cane to walk.... He don't want to go nowhere because you know it's just senseless violence everywhere. And you don't have to do anything to nobody. They're shooting babies, women, old people. They don't care no more. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of five*.

> I was in an accidental shooting and my thumb got shot off when I was seventeen. It was a stray bullet came from out of nowhere... It's always crossfire, always shooting, always shooting. They get to the point they shoot out the streetlights and one time they robbed the police and took their CB and they walkie-talkies, so they can get the scanner, so they can hear when they coming. They'll shoot out the streetlights when they know the police coming. *Trice, 43-year-old mother of three*.

> It really ain't safe for the kids at all. [But it's the kids] causing the problems. The youngest I would have seen with a gun probably was ten. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.

> It's like you're fighting the streets. I mean, home fighting against the streets. Everybody know how violent and wild these streets are. *Tiffany, 37-year-old mother of six*.

> Recently, we had an incident where we was driving down the block and there was some gunshots going off. I'm driving and trying to figure out where the gunshots coming from. They were coming straight towards us. One of those bullets went through the front windshield. *Sandy, 36-year-old mother of five*.

> It's a death trap. You just scared of what happens next to you. In the past 10 years, I've probably seen a dozen people I know get killed, not just die, get killed. *Will, 47-year-old father of four.*
>
> It's really rough. You just never know what's gonna happen. You can't go to the store. You go to the stores you got to be watching out for this person. You got to be watching. You're probably at the wrong place, wrong time and then it just happens. I can't send him to no stores. *Rachel 37-year-old mother of one*.

Jail and Neighborhood Symbiosis. Some parents reflected on how jails and prisons affected the behaviors of people in them, which ultimately impacted people's actions inside the neighborhood and thus had a lasting impact on all neighborhood residents.

> [My son] is in the Cook County Jail, so he's been in there quite a while now. And the only thing that's going through his head now is gang things. I know, because I've been there. He wasn't in no gang when he was out here, so how he surviving up in there. I don't know. You know when you're locked up it's a whole different people you're locked up. They can come out fucked up. Real fucked up. *Larry 50-year-old father of three*.
>
> [These young mothers] take their [little sums of money] that they get from, I guess, the state or however they get them, hustling or whatever and they send them to their baby daddy's in jail. *Chareese, 44-year-old mother of two*.
>
> My brother is in jail for the rape of me and several other women. He will be incarcerated for the rest of his life. When he was 16, they put him in the penitentiary for armed robbery. So at 16, they put him in the jail with grown men. Ever since then, he wasn't right when he got out. He did 10 years. They put him in with grown men. And he wasn't right no more since then. I knew he made me uncomfortable, but I was on drugs and he was supplying them. And then the women that he talked to, he molested their children. *Mary, 51-year-old mother of six*.
>
> My son is not afraid to go to jail. Jail seems normal now. *Cliff, 45-year-old father of three*.

Carceral coercive power. Participants discussed how the coercive power of the carceral complex was an ever-present reality that was constantly on display. Neighborhood residents are

always aware that the state had the power to physically change their lives and those of their children.

> I done seen people get shot, I done seen the police jump out the cars and chase young boys down and beat them, you know just put drugs on them... it's sad. *Denise, 40-year-old mother of one*.

> It's bad. I was reading the newspaper and it said "this is the red zone." That means it's been dubbed a high crime area by the police department. So there's always a lot of police presence. But crime still is. The police say they're here to serve and protect, but sometime it seem like they're here to hurt more than help. Because the way they treat you. [For example, when the police pull people over], I understand it might be a traffic stop, but I don't think it was necessary for them to lay the guy down on hard concrete like that. They could have just handcuffed him and put him in the car. It's like I don't never see you laying any white people on the concrete. I don't like it. I mean, it's just a traffic stop. And then they let the guy go, so evidently it was[no illegal activity found]. So now you want to cause a black man humiliation. *Charles, 50-year-old father of four.*

> Recently, I was arrested due to my dreadlocks. I was just arrested off the street. Said I fit a description of someone jumping out of window. And I've been incarcerated over a year for that. Finally, I went to trial and won. I was coming from the store and police car been out here. It be so random that the police just ride up on you and just want to frisk you down. It be out the blue. So, I thought it was just a regular, random stop when they stopped me. But he handcuffed me and put me in the car. And I be like "What? Am I being arrested?" He like, "No I want to take you over here and see if someone could point you out." And no one pointed me out, nothing. Sat at a police station for two days. Next thing I know I was at Cook County Jail fighting [a burglary charge] for 17 months. *Jordan, 30-year-old, father of two*.

> He was in school waiting for his friend. He got permission from the coach. But the security police officer of the school came by and told him "You can go right now." His manner was real aggressive and mean. My son told him that he had permission. The school security officer literally grabbed him and tried to force him. They began fighting and the officer pulled out a taser. By this time some other kids came to assist. My son ran and was caught. He was charged with assaulting a police officer. Now he's on probation. They [probation] got in my business. I had to go to court. I hate it. I try to stay away. I'm not good with the police because they have used their authority. They're like sharks. They're like predators really. Like these young police officers, they just want to come out and shoot you. *Tiffany, 37-year-old mother of six*.

> What I don't like about living here is the harassment with the police. The fact that the police never want to let you grow up or change your life. The police always

> see me as the bad guy. It don't matter if I'm the preacher or become the president, I'm still the bad guy to them. They raided my house maybe seven months ago. They just showed up [to my house with] guns, picture of me, warrant search, warrant and everything. Said I was selling drugs. They were disappointed when they didn't find anything. And then they still locked me up and I went to court. And the judge let me out just like that. *Dante, 43-year-old father of three*.
>
> As far as the police, the police treat you like slaves. They treat you like modern day slaves. They talk to you any kind of way. You could be one of the good kids and they'll treat you like you just robbed a bank without hesitation. *Sharon, 38-year-old mother of two*.
>
> I do feel like the police try to railroad our black men. I definitely do, with this generation they're railroading all kids. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.
>
> I didn't get a phone call. I got the police, the state police task force. I was on my way home and my aunt called and said, "Girl they got this house surrounded and they looking for your son." And when I got there, they had the street blocked off. *Trice, 43-year-old mother of three*.

Carceral system and family relationships. Participants described how the power of the carceral state affected their intimate and familial relationships. Some parents discussed how interactions with various parts of the carceral complex had the power to create emotional distance which previously never existed, while others shared how they used carceral power, or the threat of it, to reinforce their parental power over their children to help children to teach long-term lessons about respect and authority.

> He went to jail [for selling drugs] and I paid for his lawyer. The second time when he went I told him, "I don't have any money. I need this money to take care of your brothers and sisters. Take care of my home. I have to live." And he called me collect and that cost us. I said, "No you can't do that." Tough love. *Warren, 54-year-old father of six.*
>
> [When my son got locked up], I went to court but I never visited him [in jail]. Why would I visit someone that's being disciplined? That's defeating the whole purpose. I didn't talk to him mostly. I didn't want to know what he wanted. That's the whole point. Why do we make it like [being in jail] is not discipline? Really think about it, why am I making it easy? It's not supposed to be easy. But sometime we make it easy sometimes. *Tony, 46-year-old, father of nine*.

My sisters and brothers get mad at me because the first thing when my son do anything I'm the one that's calling the police on him. I'm not gonna wait for him to get caught. I'm gonna call. I'm gonna get you locked up. I'm not gonna wait for somebody else to come and do it. You disrespected me, okay, let me see what the police gonna say to you. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.

I will call the police on my kids now. I've had the police take my kids out of the house. One of my sons was bagging up drugs. I came downstairs. I always worked nights so he expected me to be sleeping. I caught him at my dining room table bagging up drugs. Hell yeah, I called the police. I didn't have no problem. *Mary, 51-year-old mother of six*.

They locked him up. The first time I swear it was a relief. I was actually relieved. I got tired of people planning to shoot up my house. I got tired of gunfire on the roof of our house. It's a shame that your little brother say, "I really want him to stay in jail." But we just want him away from us with all the drama. When your little brother's fully aware about you, that's a problem. *Trice, 43-year-old mother of three.*

All the fathers in jail. And that's the big fashion fad thing now. When you ask somebody, "Well, where is the child's dad?" "Oh, my baby daddy's in jail." I don't think they know any better. That's what I'll say on that. I don't think they know better. That's not like a thing that's embarrassing to say. *Chareese, 44-year-old mother of two*.

He actually got released [from jail] before anybody could go and visit and they put him on house arrest. But had he been in jail, no I would not have went to visit him. If he willing to commit a crime, and an adult crime at that, no you on your own because you made that choice, you made that decision and you did the wrong thing so I don't want to be bothered. And it is a bother to have to go to jail, take time out my day, pay to get phone calls and all that when all you had to do was go to work and your freedom is not compromised. *Sharon, 38-year-old mother of two*.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Poor parents raising black boys in racially segregated neighborhoods are located at the center of the hyper-incarceration phenomenon. The aim of this study was to investigate how such parents think about and make meaning of their parenting tasks. When social narratives about such parents appear to prioritize presenting a malicious or negligent parent, it becomes necessary to investigate the processes, theories, and context of these parents more closely. More specifically, this study set out to answer three central questions:

1. How do parents understand and make meaning of criminalized behaviors among their own children, as well as among other youth within the same neighborhood?
2. How, if at all, does youth participation in criminalized behavior inform parenting behaviors?
3. In what ways do parents think about their roles and obligations as parents within the specific constraints and opportunities of their neighborhood context?

Using the results described in the previous chapter, we can begin to answer these questions.

Research Question 1. How do parents understand and make meaning of criminalized behaviors among their own children, as well as among other youth within the same neighborhood?

The first part of this question, "how do parents understand and make meaning of criminalized behavior among their own children," is most readily addressed by participants'

reflections categorized as EXPLANATIONS OF YOUTH BEHAVIOR, which includes youth agency, peer influences, lack of community resources, and poverty. The second part of the question can be answered additionally with participants' statements regarding the parenting behaviors of their neighbors categorized under PARENTING THEORY.

First, participants tended to conceptualize youth as agentive beings who act according to their own interests and motives, who "do what they want to do." Parents think of neighborhood adolescents as rational, independent agents who choose to participate in undesirable behaviors of their own volition because they want "to do the wrong thing".

> These kids do what they want to do. They want to be cool and fit in with they little friends or whatever. You can do so much. These kids got a mind of their own. *Eddie, 45-year-old father of five.*

> I know a lot of parents that done the best, worked the hardest, provided the best for their kids and they still turned out to be, excuse my language, shit. So, it's like in certain situations it's not always the parent, it's the kid. Because once they get to a certain age they gonna start thinking and doing what they want to do regardless of what you might provide for them or what you got for them. Like everybody that's out here hustling, robbing, stealing, they don't have to. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three.*

The idea that child behavioral outcomes are separate from parental behaviors and instruction was further informed, for some parents, by their own histories which seemed to match what they observed to be their children's lived experiences. One parent gave her own life example,

> My parents were good parents and I did some bad things. But they were my choices. So, it's the choices you make in your life. [They're] all your own. You can have the best parents in the world, but if you do something, then that's just what you did.

Participants also point out that their children's peers have significant negative influence on their children's behaviors. This influence can manifest itself in different ways. A central task of adolescence is identity formation and figuring out who one is. (Marcia, 1993) As such, youth try

on identities and are influenced by people who seem to be like them. One way to do this is by fitting in with other youth and want to emulate the behaviors of their friends. Still another way that parents believe that youth are negatively influenced by peers is through the presentation of threats. As other neighborhood youth pose physical threats, youth find themselves with no choice but to also engage in violent activities in order to protect themselves and prevent ongoing victimization.

> It's either you roll with them or you get rolled on. Either you join the gang or you get beat up by the gang. You have to be tough. But if you get in the wrong area, they will get at you. They'll pick a fight with you. They'll rob you. They'll do whatever they can. They'll try to get your attention. Then once you say something, they'll get you. They will probably kill you. *Jimmy, father of three*

> It's just the young men that he's hanging with, I don't approve of them, because I know what they do. All of them smoke marijuana. They do stupid stuff. They be zoned all out [on drugs]. You know, laid out. Don't know where [they're] at. [They're] sitting on a abandoned porch. Why is you laid out sleep like that on a abandoned porch? Go home. And then they get loud and they're out there: pop, pop, pop. Like they got guns. And I don't approve of them. To [my son] it's fun. He laughing, he's joking, you know, he think it's great. You know now he got little pictures of guns and I had to [say to him], "Take [those pictures] out your phone!" *Keisha 38-year-old mother of seven.*

Additionally, parents understand that youth are affected by the lack of financial resources in their families and communities which provokes some youth to participate in criminalized behaviors. Indeed, most of the youth included in this study who had been arrested had been so in an attempt to procure resources through drug sales, robbery, and burglary. Parents realize that there are not many job prospects and their families have difficulties in providing much beyond the bare necessities. In Englewood, a well-known pathway to financial resources, though risky, has been participation in the illegal economy. Youth have easy access to underground economies through role models or mentors who can guide them along the way. Because of these pre-existing relationships and basis of knowledge sharing, it is easier for youth to enter this market than most

others. While the illegal economy increases youth's chances of incarceration and long-term instability, the presence of neighborhood staples such as "the drug dealer" and "the scammer" provide a veil of stability in their consistent presence in neighborhood life (Anderson, 1999).

> Selling drugs is like a rite of passage for most of the boys. *Sharon, 38-year-old mother of two*.

> They come in the house and ask mama for a dollar and she ain't got it. And they walk to the store and see the [drug dealer] up in there, "Man can I have a dollar?" And he pull out this big stack of bills and the child is like, "huh." So, every day they see him they want to talk to him. That's how that be. *Dante, 43-year-old father of three*.

> [The younger youth have] older siblings and gang members out here think they helping the kids but you ain't helping them. They think they helping them because they trying to teach them. I'd heard some of the guys say "I'm gonna show you how to make money. How to keep money. It's all about money." You ain't giving them no type of education. So, all they're gonna know is money. That's it. That's all they're gonna know is how to sell a drug. *Rachel, 37-year-old mother of one*.

Parents also lamented the lack of options for youth and theorized that if there were available alternatives, youth could make different decisions. In this way, the lack of community alternatives was a common explanation of youth participation in criminalized behaviors. Indeed, many scholars have also linked participation in various extra-curricular and out of school time activities with better youth developmental outcomes (Fauth, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007). Participant parents also theorize that too much idle time without supervision has deleterious effect on youth.

> Parents don't get home until after six. Once that kid get out of school it's a lot of free time for them. It's no fieldhouses [Parks Department Recreational Centers] by the school houses like when I was growing up. You could go to the field house and play ping pong, bumper pool. It's no more of that anymore. And so, a lot of kids have a lot of idle time on their hands. *Charles, 50-year-old father of four.*

> I think if the kids had somewhere to go or something to do. Something constructive where they're not getting harassed or bullied or that's not just people bullying them it's also the police. Where they can go out freely and have fun and

> then maybe there wouldn't be so many issues. *Melanie, 42-year-old mother of two*.

Thus, parents understand that children participate in criminalized behavior because they are swayed by peers and want to fit in with other adolescents, lack of financial resources, and the lack of appealing alternatives.

The Myth of the Wholly Agentive Child

This pervasive sentiment among parents that children "have their own mind" can be read as coping strategy to maintain parental identity. The parental role is understood primarily to be one of authority. What then does it mean to occupy the authoritative role of "parent" when your children are not experiencing socially desirable outcomes and your parental ability is challenged because of it? The intersection of expectations of a parental role and the meaning of child outcomes must be constantly negotiated.

One important way that participant parents have negotiated this dilemma is through imagining youth to be wholly agentive and acting according to their own desires. Parents look on as their children experience undesirable outcomes and know that they have given their children moral instruction to prevent these outcomes from manifesting in their children's lives. And often youth experience outcomes that parents have themselves experienced, and had insight that they hoped would help their children avoid the same obstacles. As they watch their children reproduce those very same outcomes, parents point to what they can--the complicity of youth and surmise that their parenting strategies, presence, and techniques simply cannot overcome the desire of children to "do the wrong thing." but do not consider the historical and social forces that make compliance especially likely for children.

As such, parents conclude that children "have their own minds" to explain the reproduction of social conditions. But imagining kids with their own minds is an overstatement

of children's agency and does not fully take into consideration how institutions confine and shape the array of available behavioral options for both parents and children. The children discussed in this study live in a time and place in which the defining experience of poor African American urban youth without a high school diploma is that of incarceration and had been so for at least a generation before them (Western, 2007). They were born after the unprecedented expansion of a carceral state that entrapped older male family members and has defined who their peers are. Indeed, 46% of the father participants of this study themselves disclosed personal histories of incarceration. The carceral state permeates all aspects of social and familial life. This reality problematizes the myth of the wholly agentive child. Englewood youth are not interacting with the carceral state through participating in criminalized behaviors simply because "they have a mind of their own." They are doing so because it is virtually inescapable.

Pervasive and somewhat unrealistic mainstream messages about the means and effects of parenting mandate that parents should be able to overcome any and all challenges in order to accomplish middle class desired behavioral outcomes for children and adolescents. Rightly, participants pushed back against such expectations, but rather unjustly, place the blame on developing adolescents. These parents explain that the lure of fitting in with peers makes it difficult for youth to follow parental instruction.

Chareese provides an example of how neighborhood youth, in this case female, voluntarily choose undesirable paths because it is fashionable to do so:

> [All the fathers are] in jail. And that's the big fashion fad thing now. You know, when you ask somebody, "Well, where is the child's dad?" "Oh, my baby daddy's in jail." So, that's like the big thing, you know. I don't think [these young women] know any better. I don't think they know better. That's not like a embarrassing thing to say. "You know, my baby daddy's in jail. You know, well, he getting out such and such a time."

Chareese is insinuating that because young women in the neighborhood are not ashamed that their romantic partners and co-parents are in jail, they have made certain choices at the expense of other options. Referring to this behavior as a "big fashion fad" implies that young women are choosing these types of partners over readily available other types of partners in order to fit in with other young women in the neighborhood.

But this type of analysis does not fully incorporate a neighborhood in which young men are more likely to have interactions with the criminal justice system than not, and the constant cycling of ex-offenders in and out of prison. In such a system it is very unlikely that young women will find young men who do not have such backgrounds within their community. It also does not consider that incarceration within the hyperghetto-carceral complex does not have the same stigma as it holds in a broader mainstream cultural context. Incarceration is so pervasive in the hyperghetto carceral complex that it ceases to be a meaningful factor for partner selection in and of itself. Young adults personally know family members and sometimes their own parents who are formerly incarcerated. The selection of a romantic partner within the neighborhood is indicative of the broader social and historical forces that have shaped the neighborhood, not only the individual choices of young women.

When talking specifically about how her 13-year-old son has begun to participate in troubling behaviors, 38-year old mother of seven, Keisha discusses how her son delights in emulating the behaviors of his neighborhood peers.

> It's just the young men that he's hanging with, I don't approve of them because I know what they do. All of them smoke marijuana. To him it's fun. It's cute. He laughing, he's joking. He thinks it's great.

Keisha points to both the actions of neighborhood peers and her son's eager readiness to follow along to explain his increasingly worrisome behaviors. She views his delight as willful

complicity. In her interpretation, Keisha's son is choosing to participate in these behaviors despite her objections because it is fun and "cute." Again, this interpretation ignores a broader pattern of available peers within the neighborhood.

These parental views provoke at least one important question: How should poor youth behave in the hyperghetto-carceral complex in which they have few to no opportunities to participate in a formal economy, and must be able to negotiate the challenges of their present environments? While hegemonic cultural beliefs and morals dictate that childhood, and most especially adolescence, is the time to prepare for adulthood and skill development that will serve them for the rest of their lives, these adolescents are aware of their limited adulthood prospects. The admonitions of parental and authority figures' instructions to "go to school" and "keep out of trouble" ring remarkably hollow when there are no real-world examples to even hint at, let alone ensure a long term "payoff" of doing so. This is especially concerning given that only about half of all black boys enrolled in Chicago Public Schools as ninth graders made it to graduation at the time the interviews took place (City of Chicago, 2014)Youth cannot even look to their own parents as examples of stability and economic success. Sixty-six percent of participant mothers and 54% of participant fathers were unemployed, looking for "better" work, or just hoping to gain better ground.

But "trying to be cool," on the other hand, is not simply about fun and avoiding the hard work of school. "Fitting in" acts as useful short-term strategy that help youth navigate their present reality and not an imagined future. As delineated in the results section, their community is characterized by unpredictable violence. Additionally, more than 1100 school aged kids are shot in a given year in Chicago (City of Chicago, 2014), but "fitting in" by participating in hypermasculine and criminalized behaviors with peers means access to at least one group of

peers who recognize you as an insider and identify you as a peer and not an immediate threat or victim to be harmed on sight. This peer group then has very strong claims on youth compliance. Adopting "cool" behaviors additionally creates much needed social capital and provides meaningful cache within the neighborhood institution.

Being perceived by neighborhood peers as a person who is to be respected is tantamount for survival. Youth must figure out ways to signal the demand for respect and honor. Enacting hypermasculine behaviors offers a readily available solution (Cassidy & Stevenson, 2005). Black youth in communities like Englewood use hypermasculinity as a tried and true coping method. Behaviors such as carrying weapons and being outwardly aggressive in order to shield themselves from fear and stress induced by threats from multiple environmental sources become ways to insulate oneself from feeling vulnerable and exposed. In a hypermasculine volatile environment in which youth are adopting risky behaviors in order to retain identity and self-esteem, youth must learn how to navigate at a young age.

Some youth are savvy and attempt to be well socialized to the often-competing sets of expectations within their families and their peer group. Youth attempt to live in a duality as a strategy to negotiate the contradictory authorities of both their parents as well as the demands of their neighborhood. They preform behavioral expectations in specific contexts.

> [A child] can be an angel in front of [their parents]. When they leave out their door, they could be a whole different person. A whole different child. A whole 'nother persona they got to put on when they're outside. *Mark, 30, father of one*

> My parents gave me unconditional love. But I was different from a lot of other people. I was bad in the street, but a good boy in the house. *Dante 43-year-old father of three*

Mark further states that "he has no idea" what his son is like when he is outside with his peers. Because children are adept at figuring out what demands an environment has on their behavior

and compliance, they figure out how to code-switch so that they can be capable social actors in each setting. This duality of being is coping strategy in action. Yet parents see that youth know how to behave according to the moral instruction provided by parents and decide that they are "choosing" to be influenced by their peers. Parents then conclude that children do what they want to do—they are wholly agentive. In this way, parents do not base their children's behaviors on their parenting "ability" or practices.

While some have previously asserted that parental contributions have minimal or limited effects on child outcomes in comparison to peers (Harris, 1995), this interpretation of youth behavior misses the fullness of youth lived experiences and undermines youth cognitive interpretation of their physical environment. It also conveniently, though I suspect accidentally, fits into operating stereotypes of predatory black youth who act without reason in accordance with their dark desires. Also, a conceptualization of an agentive youth who simply "wants to do the wrong thing" and negatively influences other neighborhood youth, also misses critical opportunities for support and only scratches the surface of deeper human functioning. All human beings experience trauma. Trauma is a universal experience but individual responses to trauma are dependent on a myriad of factors. People who live in spaces of socioeconomic disadvantage experience are subject to traumatic experiences without the resources to address and process.

Trauma Runs Throughout

As a clinician, I am wary of unduly diagnosing people and/or pathologizing whole communities. Within a society that does not understand mental health and imagines a causal relationship between mental illness and societal ills, diagnoses can cause stigma and we know that stigma matters. And it must also be said that although, I conducted interviews with

participants, these interviews were not diagnostic or clinical in nature. I never spoke directly with any of the referent children.

However, it must be acknowledged that a significant amount of trauma is present throughout the lives of the participant parents and their children. It is present for example, in the aged scars on Keisha's face, in her lost infants whose faces she cannot remember, and in the young men she witnesses in the neighborhood who "pop pills, zone out, and lay out on the porches of abandoned buildings." For Wanda, trauma was there when her mother's substance use disorder warranted DCFS to intervene. It was there when she was separated from her siblings as they were each placed in different foster homes. Trauma has stayed with Wanda as an adult, when she was in at least one physically abusive romantic relationship, when her son was almost killed, and when her other son was sentenced to 15 years in prison. And I imagine that this is not an exhaustive list of the trauma she endured throughout her life. Each of these experiences on their own would be enough to significantly impact the emotional and mental health of anyone, but the compounding effects of such events all together is immeasurable. How emotionally present can such a person be within the wake of such trauma?

If we consider 51-year-old Mary, who was employed as a certified nursing assistant at the time of our interview. She is the mother of six, and struggled with substance use for many years. She is very proud of the fact that she only had to go into treatment once and never used again after completing the program successfully. Many of her friends cycled in and out of rehabilitation programs for years and were never able to stop. She feels resilient and fortunate.

During her interview, Mary spoke at length about the problems her substance use created, including being raped by her older brother because he was providing her with drugs. Through Mary's story, we can begin to consider the role of trauma in parental behaviors and interactions

with their children and reflect what effect this might have on youth behavior. When asked if she thought her children were aware of her substance use, she responded,

> My kids definitely knew. It got to the point where I didn't try to hide it. I didn't do it in front of them, but they know when I send them to their room. They knew the company or the type of person that was coming around. Of course, they knew. *But right then I was fighting my own battle with my own demons and still trying to keep them.* Being one step away from, [DCFS] well, I always had this policy: "Have kids will travel." Okay, that worked for me being out there when I was in that drug community. "Have kids will travel". I didn't leave my kids alone. If I had money I wanted to get high 'cause I always worked. So, if you wanted me to hang out and to spend my money, my kids have to come with me. I didn't leave them in the house to their own devices or whatever. I always had kids will travel. Nowhere I could go that they couldn't go. So, basically I took them wherever. If I'm getting high here, they were with me for whatever hours I was there. *Playing with the other folk's kids.* And have kids will travel. That was my motto. I just never left them home alone to go and get high. You know, *even though some of the shit that they've seen I thought it was always better for them*, 'cause I hung out with these people, so I knew what could happen when I wasn't there. So, that my motto was always just have kids will travel.
>
> The older ones start voicing their opinions and then of course, I wasn't gonna allow that. *You know, I'm still the mom*. I don't care what I'm doing I'm still the mom. Lost my house. Went through a whole lot of things, but the older ones had voiced the opinion that they didn't want that kind of life. So, the best thing I could do for them was to send them to my mom where they didn't have to be around that environment that, I couldn't get myself out of. I've been in shelters with my kids. Until I got on my feet. My last baby, he's my only drug baby though. Because I had the baby and I was smoking PCP.

Mary recognizes that she was "battling her own demons," in essence, dealing with her own trauma, while raising her kids. She acknowledges that in the process of her battles, her children were exposed to things that she wishes they had not been. They knew of her substance use and they were present while she used with her friends. She also concedes that her substance use lead to her losing their home and moving into shelters. And in Mary's awareness, she remembers that other children were also present for her children to play with while the adults were using drugs together, which suggests something about the level of exposure to substance use of children

within her community. But while Mary is aware of her "own demons," she does not or perhaps cannot leave room to speak about what it might have meant to her children to be raised in such an environment. What might it have been like for her children to be in the other room "definitely knowing" that she and her friends were using drugs? If Mary had ever thought about it in those terms, she does not share such thoughts in our interview. Instead, Mary points to how she tried to mitigate the effects of her substance use on her children by never leaving them alone without supervision, maintaining her parental authority, and eventually sending them to live with her mother temporarily. Her frequently repeated mantra "Have kids will travel" allows her to state that she put her children first even while "battling her demons." In this way, she can maintain her role-based identity. And when her children were old enough to protest the lifestyle, she asserted to them, "I'm still the mom. I don't care what I'm doing, I'm still the mom." In other words, they have no say in her actions because, she sees theirs as a one-directional relationship. In order for her to "still" be "the mom" she must maintain absolute authority, even when her actions expose her children to harm.

Mary is insightful about how her "demons" affected her parenting behavior. She can hold both of these things in her mind at the same time-- battling demons with drug use and being a mother with dependent children. The two of these things together were her reality and she tried to make them both fit in her world. Yet Mary does not consider how "her demons" affected her children's psychosocial development and affected how they experienced the world. Instead, their subordination is prioritized and seen only as children who must pay respect to her parental authority. For instance, much later in the interview, she describes an incident in which she felt compelled to call the police on "her last baby," her "only drug baby" because he had, in her view, disrespected her parental authority.

> One of my sons was bagging up drugs. I came downstairs. I always worked nights. Came downstairs, you know, usually expect for me to be sleeping when I get off from work and caught him at my dining room table bagging up drugs at the table. Hell, yeah, I called the police. I didn't have a problem. He's not angry and if he was I really wouldn't care, because that's not what you do. *That's not respectful, that's not respectful at all.* And that's not how I was taught. *You're supposed to respect your parents.* So, when he lost respect I did too.

She asserts that the same child who was her only "drug baby" because he tested positive for PCP at birth, and who was present and aware of her drug use within her "drug community," and who was living in shelters with her due to her substance use, is "disrespecting" her when he packages drugs in her home. Mary only reads this situation through a lens of disrespect and authority. But what of the child who was born into the instability of her substance use and her "demons"? Where and how does he get to acknowledge the trauma he experienced and the inner stress and conflict that might have resulted? And does the exposure to her "demons" play any role in his participating in criminalized behaviors? Though we can't know what Mary's children think of her role as a mother, or how they interpreted these childhood experiences, another participant's responses might shed some light.

Larry is an affable man of fifty with stooped shoulders. He is unshaven with a kind and relaxed smile. As he tells his story, he has moments of focused intensity in which his smile fades, but it always returns. He speaks quickly and requires few prompts. I learned soon that Larry has the ability to make you laugh with him about unfortunate events in his life and his neighborhood, that are objectively not funny if not for his recounting; he does not take himself or life too seriously. He is an unemployed father of three with a significant substance use history and had been incarcerated on three occasions. When talking about his mother, he begins by saying that she raised him "well" mostly because she was able to maintain parental authority and kept him and his brothers "in line."

> My mother raised five boys all by herself. She ran a real strong household, as far as training us and keeping us in line. I think she raised me well. My mom sold drugs, my [older] brothers and them sold drugs. Drugs was around me all my life even when I was a young kid.
>
> My momma sold drugs, but she never used. My dad never sold drugs, but he used...He left before I was born...That's why he was never around. Because he was on heroin. But like now, my brothers, there's 5 of us. I'm the only one that get high. I'm the only one that was getting high.
> *Larry, 50-year-old father of three*.

Earlier in our interview, Larry shared his initiation into drug use followed by his painful decline into addiction which cost him his job and eventually led to his first stint in prison. In the telling of his story, Larry never mentions a possible inherited genetic predisposition from his father, or a connection to his upbringing in a home with "drugs all around" because his mother sold drugs. When he does invoke his mother, without provocation, it is to mention that she advised him to stop using,

> I started messing with cocaine. Because I met some guys who asked me, "Did I want to make some money?" I told them, "Yeah." And he told me, "Well, you could sell some cocaine if you want to make you some extra money." So, I did that. I took the drugs with me to work every day. You know, but I didn't know selling cocaine that I was gonna be using the cocaine. So, I started snorting it every day and then I got hooked to it until I had to have it every day to keep going. *My mom kept telling me, "You need to stop doing it before you get to go with stronger, stronger drugs."* Which I did... I met a girl who smoked cocaine. She showed me how to cook it... I didn't know my body would deteriorate from me doing all that. I kept doing it. Kept doing it. And then with my job I kept missing days. Like I said I was there 2 years before everything fell off, you know, fell flat on my face. So, I tried to go to a rehab to save myself and my job. That didn't work.

Larry takes ownership of his substance use and never attempts to implicate either of his parents. He views his life mistakes as his fault and his alone. In this same way, Mary does not implicate herself in her son's participation in the drug economy. To Mary, her son chose to do so because he had lost respect for her. Both Larry and Mary's son are thought to be wholly agentive. Mary's

story points to the bind imposed on youth. When her children actually use their agency to protest being around her drug use, Mary protests and experiences the act as a challenge to her parental authority. And when her son participates in drug behavior in her home, behavior first introduced by her when he was a child, she also experiences this as a challenge to her parental role. What space do any of the children referenced in this study have in which they can respond to, or at least, acknowledge trauma and the disorienting environments around them?

Children are more sensitive to trauma than adults for a number of reasons, including their less developed cognitive structures and their dependence on their parents (Bowins, 2010). While, responses to trauma are individualized, most responses are broadly understood to manifest within four typologies of reaction-- hyperarousal, re-experiencing, numbing, and dissociation (Frewen & Lanius, 2006). Hyperarousal responses are those behaviors which indicate overactive physiological functioning such as anger, panic, irritability. Reexperiencing includes intrusive memories, flashbacks, and exaggerated responses to reminders of traumatic events (Bryant, O'Donnell, Creamer, McFarlane, & Silove, 2011). Numbing behaviors are those that help to prevent someone from experiencing emotion and feeling (Daniulaityte & Carlson, 2011). Because the person felt intense emotional discomfort during the trauma, a normative coping response might be to disengage from wanting to feel anything. Examples of numbing behaviors include developing addictions, feeling hopeless, and losing interest in activities and other people. Numbing can also include losing empathy for others (Kerig, Bennett, Thompson, & Becker, 2012). And finally, dissociation responses to trauma include those behaviors that serve to disconnect a person from the reality of trauma such as memory loss and losing a sense of self (Carrion & Steiner, 2000).

The key modality in therapeutic child interventions is play therapy. In child directed play therapy, children often repetitively re-enact traumatic experiences within the relatively safer world of play. The goal of the clinician is to help the child process the trauma in order to eventually gain a sense of mastery and control through the controlled re-enactment. (Perry & Szalavitz, 2007), (Perry, 2013). When children do not have opportunities and spaces to process or even acknowledge the experiences as trauma, they still look to gain understanding, and often through re-enactment throughout the life course unconsciously. In these behavioral re-enactments, the child can take the role of victimizer or victim (van der Kolk, 1989) and could be acted out as harm to others, self-destructiveness or revictimization.

It is not a stretch to consider that all of these described behaviors could be read as "disrespectful" by parents, be criminalized by other adults in the neighborhood, or at the very least serve to isolate youth from others. It is also not a stretch to see how these behaviors could be read as agency or volition to those primed to read disrespect. Youth remain unsupported if the only way to interpret their behavior is to think "they have their own mind" and are disrespectful.

Still another way to think about youth participation in criminalized behaviors is through the literature on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Felitti et. al (1998) found in a nation-wide sample, that over fifty percent of adult respondents reported at least one ACE, however, the more ACEs an individual had, the more at risk one was for participating in adolescent and adult risk behaviors and undesirable outcomes. Such undesirable outcomes include increased risk of substance use (Merrick, Ford, Haegerich, & Simon, 2020), poor health outcomes (Monnat & Chandler, 2015), and increased carceral system involvement (Fox, Perez, Baglivio, & Epps, 2015). In other words, adverse childhood experiences affects behaviors and later in life decision making. This is especially critical when we think about the population included in this study and

those events that are considered ACES. In addition to the experiences of personal abuse, which this study cannot speak to, Felitti et al screened for ACEs within the household including which they titled "household dysfunction." These experiences included 1. Substance use by a member of a child's household, 2. Partner violence experienced by a child's mother, 3. Anyone in the household going to prison, 4. Anyone within the home that was mentally ill.

Since Felitti et. al's original study, other researchers have added other questions to the ACE questionnaire to expand our understanding of the fullness of adversity experienced by children and their lasting effects of these experiences. The ACE list now includes the loss or absence of a parent and also the addition of a community and institutional domain which acknowledges the ways that social and structural institutions can have be experienced as traumatic.

Figure 5. List of Adverse Childhood Experiences

Abuse*
Neglect
Sexual abuse
Unspecified abuse**
Physical abuse
Verbal abuse
Family dysfunction (within household)
Alcohol/drugs
Domestic violence
Loss of parent
Mental illness
Incarceration
Community/institutional trauma**
Poverty (including homelessness and food insecurity)
Community violence (e.g., witnessing violence or feeling unsafe)
Racial discrimination
Bullying
Involvement in child welfare system

Source: Adapted from Berkeley Media Studies Group (2017). Adverse Childhood Experiences in The News: Successes and Opportunities in coverage of Childhood Trauma. *Issue 24*. Public Health Institute.

While this study cannot speak to any personal abuses that the children in this study may have experienced, the parent participants, through the telling of their own stories, indirectly inform us that these children have experienced a great number of the events within the other domains.

It seems the only space afforded to them is the expectation to mind parental authority. Anything else disappoints parents who maintain that they have instructed their children to do otherwise. This is not fair to youth and it belies human responses to trauma. The referent youth in this study were raised by parents who themselves have experienced significant trauma, are

living within a community with widespread violence and victimization. These youth, in turn face direct and vicarious trauma through their neighborhood and through their parents' experiences, and experience their own personal traumas. Yet, parents in this study, never considered it when thinking about why children participate in certain behaviors. It is not a lens through which parents see youth behavior.

For the second part of the first research question, "how do parents understand criminalized behavior among other youth in their neighborhood," participant responses expanded to include the judgment of their peers' parenting behaviors to explain undesirable behavior among other children. To be clear, parents employed previously delineated explanations of youth behavior for all neighborhood children. However, some parents additionally invoked the idea of "bad parenting" to explain some youth behavior in the neighborhood which they never invoked to explain their own children's criminalized behavior. A key point that participants felt contributed to criminalized youth behavior was improper role modeling by their parents, and a lack of parental boundaries in particular.

> Now it's like kids, they party with their parents. Everybody turn up [parties hard]. The mama turning up, the grandmother turning up, kid turning up, the baby's turning up. How can an adult raise a child when you on a child level? That's a problem. *Gerald, 34-year-old father of three*.

> To me, to be honest, I don't really blame the kids, I blame the parent. Because it's lack of parenting. It's lack of attention. It's lack of love. I don't really blame the kids. I just blame where they come from. *Sharon, 38-year-old mother of two*

> When you drink and you smoke and your kid's having company and they're all there watching you it's not no good. I mean, what's that gonna make him do? You come in the house, you're arguing with your kids all the time. You tell them to do this. You tell them to do that. And you're going about your way. That's not right. *Jimmy, father of three*

> Their parents are so young. The parents still want to be young. And you cannot be your child friend. You can't sit down and think you can smoke a cigarette, smoke

> drugs with your child and think your child is gonna listen to you. *Kathy, 50-year-old mother of three*

In other words, those parents who have not managed to create an authority-based relationship with their children were seen as "bad parents" who fostered an environment in which participation in criminalized behavior could flourish. While participants were not solely blaming child outcomes on the actions of their parents, they were certain that such parental behavior contributed to these outcomes. But this invocation of bad parenting behaviors was only applied to other parents and never used by the participant parent when describing their own child outcomes. And perhaps more interesting, participant ideas about "bad parenting" were never applied to their own parents' behavior when explaining their own lived experiences of undesirable outcomes.

> My mother raised five boys all by herself. She ran a real strong household, as far as training us and keeping us in line. I think she raised me well. My mom sold drugs, my brothers and them sold drugs. Drugs was around me all my life even when I was a young kid my mom was selling heroin. *Larry, 50-year-old father of three*.

> I had good parents…My parents tried to keep me out of trouble as much as he could, but the streets kept me in a little bit of it. They always had my back no matter what it was. I mean, I used to be bad. I even had the house shot up, raided, all that. They never turned their back on me. *Dante, 43-year-old father of three*.

In these examples, both participants reflect that their parents raised them "well" and identify their parenting approach as "good." Larry also discloses that he was "around drugs all his life" because his mother sold heroin in order to support a large family as a single parent. Dante also shares that he was "in the street" and had his parents' home "raided" by police and "shot up" by rival gang members. Yet neither Larry or Dante seem to question their parents' abilities. Both Larry and Dante assert that their parents were "good" parents for different reasons. Being introduced to illegal drugs and activity by his mother is immaterial for Larry, who instead points

to her ability to "run a strong household" and keep her sons "in line." He admired and pointed to his mother's ability to maintain authority in a chaotic environment. For Dante, it is his parents' unwavering support despite his troublesome behaviors that understands to be "good." They "had his back" and "never turned their backs" on him despite the grief he caused them.

Dominant Ideology, Power, and Hegemony

An important and telling response from parents, is that when assessing their own family's circumstances, participant parents considered themselves and their actions to be indicative of "good parenting" regardless of child outcomes. This was also true when they reflected on their own parents and how they had been parented. For example, participants often responded similarly to one participant who described her mother as such, "she did the best she could" when describing the actions of their own parents. And again, this was regardless of outcomes that they and their siblings experienced. Participants who reported histories that included incarceration, early pregnancy, or extensive substance use concluded that their parents were "good" just as those who did not did not disclose such histories did. As one participant said, "My parents were good parents and I did some bad things. But they were my choices...You can have the best parents in the world, but if you do something, then that's just what you did. "

In making such determinations, participants consider what was beyond their parents' control in the past and what remains beyond their own control in the present and conclude that youth outcomes are the net result of many variables. Yet surprisingly similar to middle class observers who do not know the difficulties that parents in their neighborhood face, participant parents were sometimes not as generous in their assessments of their neighbors. In these cases,

participants ascribed undesirable outcomes of their neighbors' children to that of bad parenting. I suspect that several factors account for this.

The first is that though Englewood parents exist on the economic and social peripheries, they as everyone in society, are aware of predominant ideological parenting expectations and values (Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2015). They know that "intensive mothering" techniques are socially desirable and thought to yield the best outcomes in children. Yet, this toolbox of behaviors often remains out of reach for Englewood parents because they do not have the same resources or opportunities to meet these time intensive and expensive expectations. They are also aware of parents who have tried to use this strategy only to fail to yield better outcomes as they intended.

By stating that some children who are experiencing the very same undesirable outcomes that their own children are experiencing, may be due to “bad parenting”, parents align themselves with the mainstream middle-class values, while distancing themselves from their peers. In this way, they conceptualize themselves as having more in common with the middle class to which they aspire, than with parents who actually live in the same circumstances. This behavior is in line with the dominant ideology thesis, which proposes that in all societies, there is a dominant set of beliefs that originate in centers of power, but are then incorporated into “subordinate classes” through the media, as well as cultural and legal institutions (Abercrombie & Turner, 1978). Similar to the idea of dominant theory, hegemony is another concept which Williams (1969) defines as the phenomenon in which

> …a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations.

But identifying with predominant ideology creates a gap between lived experiences and ideological beliefs for such parents. If parents are using the dominant ideology to assess the outcomes of their neighbors' children while their own children have those same outcomes, then parents must find a way to explain the difference. In such cases, parents point to youth agentive behavior.

Research Question 2. How, if at all, does participation in criminalized behaviors among neighborhood youth inform parenting behaviors?

Again, part of this question is answered by examining those parent responses that gave primacy to youth agency as described in the previous question. Additionally, responses categorized under AGENTIVE PARENTING STRATEGIES and CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS are also helpful in answering this question.

Parents in the neighborhood do not appear to believe that their parental actions substantially affected youth behavior when it comes to their own adolescent children. Instead, participation in criminalized behavior among youth was less dependent upon parenting behaviors, and more so on negatively influential peers and youth's willingness to follow their lead. Participants expressed that their children were participating in criminalized behaviors despite parental instruction.

> He [got] a gun, robbed somebody and shot them. His sentence is 15 years. To my knowledge he was on his way to my brother's house. I didn't teach him to do things like that. And I always worked. I never gave him that type of lifestyle. So, it shocked me. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of 5*

Wanda addresses the fact that her son committed a very serious crime by noting that such an act was in direct defiance of everything she taught and role modeled for him. In her understanding of the event, there is no need for her to adjust her parental behavior, because she had already given

him the proper moral instruction and role modeling necessary for him to make the right decision. He simply chose not to, and she is "shocked".

Though parents believed that youth participation in criminalized behavior was of their own volition, this conceptualization of youth behavior did not lead to parental inaction. Participants did recount various behaviors that they and their neighbors employed to respond to criminalized youth behavior within their homes as well as in the neighborhood. Some of these behaviors involved endowing children with a sensibility and a set of behaviors that parents hoped would serve to protect them from victimization by others. While research has focused on the way that adolescents adopt hypermasculinity as a coping strategy because they see it as a viable way to keep them safe (Spencer, Fegley, & Seaton, 2004), participant responses in this study seem to indicate that some parents actively teach hypermasculinity to their children to help protect them. In order to navigate the hyperghetto carceral complex, some parents determine they must teach their children to navigate a hostile neighborhood by adopting a set of practices to signal to others that they are to be respected and not easily dominated. Not to do so, may have a cost that youth would have to bear. Here are three different examples of ways that parents and their children negotiate victimization and vulnerability among neighborhood youth.

> *A lot of parents, they teach their kids basically not to be disrespected. They don't teach them how to give respect*. Because its rough in Englewood and I guess they got to grow up tough. So, they wants to walk around with their body armor so won't nobody bother them. *Dante, 43-year-old father of three*.

Dante is describing how parents teach children not to be disrespected as a non-reciprocal interaction. In other words, one's respect and stature in the community depends in part, to the extent that they can get away with disrespecting others. In such a scenario, there will always be "losers" within this context as some will always be seen as more victimizable than others. Such

an environment only encourages one to mask vulnerability and seek safety in the victimization of others.

> I don't allow him to be in the street…He is a sweet kid and a lot of people, including my nephew, his own family would take that as being sweet for real [gay and therefore victimizable]. You can push him over until finally he got tired of it and then he started to fight a lot. Kids at school. My nephew's friends, whoever that came at him. Most of the time it was somebody, taken to be sweet. *Will, 47-year-old father of three.*

Here, Will describes how his son has been perceived as "sweet" by other neighborhood youth, including members of his own family, which resulted in his son being bullied and provoked into fights at school. His "sweetness" or lack of hypermasculine characteristics made him a target and increased his vulnerability. Will concludes the only option is to not allow him to venture into "the street." In keeping him away from the unsupervised youth milieu, Will hopes this keeps his son out of fray that prizes aggression and criminalized behavior. But this is a tough decision that parents must navigate. And either choice places children at risk for increased chances of victimization. Either children "demand respect" from their peers by adopting hypermasculine behaviors which might provoke other youth who must also maintain their social standing, or parents keep children away from "the street" and they are victimized because they are perceived as "sweet." The choice can feel impossible. But even beyond "the street," youth can be victimized within their own homes.

> He's not really like a part of the neighborhood. He hasn't really been out and about. He hasn't been. And the reason that he doesn't really hang out with them [kids in the neighborhood] is because we had problem with some of the kids on our own block trying to steal out of our house. So that cut a lot of friends out. Yes, he had his name written on the back of his, um, game. And the game came up missing right after all the company left. And another boy told us that somebody else had stole it and then we got it back. We got to tell his mom. His mom was trying to protect him. I'm like, "If you look on the back of it his name is right there." So she had no choice but to give it back. But I don't, I don't think that's something that you can really forgive. Like, "Oh, he's still cool." Or you

> can still come over, because I don't trust you now. *Melanie, 42-year-old mother of two*

Melanie is disappointed that another parent would protect their child when they knew he stole from Melanie's son. To Melanie, the only choice is for her to isolate herself and her son from other neighborhood parents and youth. She knows that parents are teaching their children to "get over" at the expense of other neighborhood youth, and decides that she will not allow her son to continue to be victimized. She does not trust other parents to teach their children to do the right thing.

Still another agentive strategy parents reported included calling the police on their own children when they observed them participating in criminalized behaviors in a long-term strategy to minimize harm. These parents, all mothers, sought to align themselves with the authority of law enforcement in hopes to teach youth that their decisions had very real consequences while they are still young and the consequences of such law enforcement engagement is minimized while they have juvenile status.

> I will call the police on my kids now. I've had the police take my kids out of the house. One of my sons was bagging up drugs. I came downstairs. I always worked nights, so he expected me to be sleeping. I caught him at my dining room table bagging up drugs. Hell yeah, I called the police. I didn't have no problem. He's not angry and if he was I really wouldn't care, because that's not what you do. *That's not respectful, that's not respectful at all.* And that's not how I was taught. *You're supposed to respect your parents.* So, *when he lost respect I did too*. *Mary, 51-year-old mother of six*.

> My sisters and brothers get mad at me because the first thing when my son do anything I'm the one that's calling the police on him. I'm not gonna wait for him to get caught. I'm gonna call. I'm gonna get you locked up. I'm not gonna wait for somebody else to come and do it. *You disrespected me, okay, let me see what the police gonna say to you*. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.

Though not especially common among this study's participants, this is a known strategy among some with limited social capital utilize to when their adolescent sons are engaged in criminalized

behaviors and have become unresponsive to parental and educational system authorities (Richardson et al 2014). These mothers hope that after youth get "locked up" they will realize that they do not want to live such a lifestyle and make better decisions. It is a hope that short term discomfort and pain will lead to long term success. This strategy also points to the reality that in the hyperghetto carceral complex, law enforcement agencies, though problematic and fraught with potential danger, are the only reliable social institutions that families can call upon for assistance. These mothers hope that in harnessing the authority themselves and not leaving it to chance, they can yield better outcomes.

Yet another strategy that some parents used was "tough love." Such parents shared that once their children had been arrested, they withdrew previous emotional and material support once afforded to them. This practice, "of tough love", was employed by parents to signal to children that they disapproved of their participation in criminalized behavior and would act accordingly.

> He actually got released [from jail] before anybody could go and visit and they put him on house arrest. But had he been in jail, no I would not have went to visit him. If he willing to commit a crime, and an adult crime at that, no you on your own because you made that choice, you made that decision and you did the wrong thing so I don't want to be bothered. And it is a bother to have to go to jail, take time out my day, pay to get phone calls and all that when all you had to do was go to work and your freedom is not compromised. *Sharon, 38-year-old mother of two*.

> He went to jail [for selling drugs] and I paid for his lawyer. The second time when he went I told him, "I don't have any money. I need this money to take care of your brothers and sisters. Take care of my home. I have to live." And he called me collect and that cost us. I said, "No you can't do that." Tough love. *Warren, 54-year-old father of six.*

> [When my son got locked up], I went to court but I never visited him [in jail]. Why would I visit someone that's being disciplined? That's defeating the whole purpose. I didn't talk to him mostly. I didn't want to know what he wanted. That's the whole point. Why do we make it like [being in jail] is not discipline? Really

> think about it, why am I making it easy? It's not supposed to be easy. But sometime we make it easy sometimes. *Tony, 46-year-old, father of nine*.

While conditional positive regard, employed by these parents is a well-known strategy in various cultures and populations, it causes additional strain on family relationships and carries "significant emotional and coping costs for adolescents." (Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004); (Assor & Tal, 2011). Parents hope that this "significant emotional" struggle will teach youth that continued participation in undesirable behavior will result in isolation and will therefore not be worth it.

Other parents have tried to use the strategy of limited engagement in the neighborhood. Though they do not have the means to move out, they try to limit the time spent there and instead engage their children in leisure and extra-curricular activities in other neighborhoods. In this example, Melanie discusses how she takes her children to other neighborhoods, but she recognizes that this choice may not be available to all parents because it requires resources such as a reliable car and money to pay for activities.

> I think I'm more willing to go outside of the neighborhood like they can all get in the car and we can go to the movies or go bowling or do some kind of activity outside of the neighborhood where some people can't or don't spend any time with them or take them to a movie or even have money to go. *Melanie, 42-year-old mother of two*.

One participant, Tony, reflected on all the various strategies that he has observed among neighborhood parents and voiced his opinion that none of them appeared to be particularly effective to him.

> Some parents are less involved, less engaged [with the community]. I think its 'cause of the violence. And they keep the kids away from the streets, which you really can't, because then they want to get to it even more, the more you keep them away from it. You should be able to introduce them to a little bit of the streets and let them get knocked around a little bit, and let them realize, "Okay, I don't want to do that." But you can't do that now because they shoot them. So ain't no coming back from it. You could get shot and killed. You might let your kid out there with a little leash and let them get to the real taste of this. And you used to could do that but you can't do that now, 'cause you may get killed. [Before, they

> only might have gotten] beat up or robbed or your feelings hurt. But now you may actually get killed. So, they really sheltered. Now when they go out there and you not around, they don't even know how to handle things. *Tony, 46-year-old father of nine.*

Parents are called to make calculated decisions in which they weigh the odds of risk and preparing children to navigate on their own through exposure. From Tony's point of view, there are several factors with which parents must contend, and taking one strategy over another, puts youth at risk in different ways. He sees that some parents try to shield their children from the dangers of the neighborhood by not engaging with their neighbors, but he has seen this strategy backfire because children seek out involvement in activities without their parents' knowledge and then get into situations in which they cannot seek parental guidance. He has seen other parents try to minimally expose their children to neighborhood peers to get them acclimated so that they know how to navigate the environment on their own and can stay out of trouble. Tony states that this used to be the safest strategy, because children would quickly realize that "the streets" were not for them "after they got knocked around a bit" but they would learn enough and make enough contacts to prevent victimization in the future. But the stakes have grown progressively higher and the violence in the neighborhood has increased so much that children are getting killed and no "exposure" is safe. Tony's comments sum up the idea that parents feel as if there is nothing they can do to prevent their children's undesirable outcomes because he has seen various strategies and nothing worked especially well.

Respect, Honor, and Parental Authority

In considering parental responses about how youth participation in criminal behaviors inform parenting behavior, it is important to think about the role of respect and how often the it was brought up by parents. It is a primary concern for parents when thinking of their

relationships with their children. This finding is in line with previous research that links African-American parental understanding of parent-child conflict in terms of respect (Smetana & Gaines, 1999); (Smetana, Crean, & Daddis, 2002). The primacy given to respect in traditional African-American folk cultures (Roberts J. , 1989) and interpersonal relationships is perhaps derivative of U.S. southern honor culture (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996) (Butterfield, 1995) and has been a key finding in multiple studies with African-American participants. Research surrounding the role of respect in African-American urban neighborhoods, for example, has centered around "street culture" (Anderson, 1999), drug market subcultures (Bourgois, 2003) and youth violence (Wilkinson, 2001) and all of these studies have prioritized a lens of masculinity and patriarchy.

But what is the role of respect within parent child relationships, particularly within the context of segregated urban poverty? There is a body of parenting research that points to the performance of demanding respect through maintaining parental authority by employing parenting styles marked by "hostility" and lack of warmth," among African-American parents (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1996). However, these studies are not particularly helpful due to an overall lack of nuance in understanding cultural socialization processes and variations in conceptualization and performance of emotion (Rious, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2019). Also, such research only speaks to an enactment of parental authority without seeking to understand psychosocial factors that inform behavior.

The parents in this study candidly described the personal indignities of poverty, trauma, both inter-personal and community violence, as well as subjugation under institutional power. In hearing these stories, one cannot miss the lack of respect they feel (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). The feeling of being respected and admired by others has important implications for the psychological self and one's sense of identity (Rogers, 1951) (Steele, 1988).

If we again reflect upon the enslaved father who is disheartened when his son answered the call of the mistress before that of his father, we can speculate on what it means psychologically for socially subjugated parents to feel disrespected by their children. This father cannot bear it. It is one thing to experience the daily affronts of slavery and their effects, but it is especially painful to experience them through his son. In answering the mistress's call, the child became a reminder of the father's own lack of power; his son had become an instrument of the mechanisms of chattel slavery. The child reminded the father that he can neither control the fate of his own body or that of his child. And the child, who is learning to navigate the world in his own right, has learned that his father does not have effective power comparable to his mistress. The child has learned through observation that allegiance and loyalty to his father can actually get in the way of staying safe and getting his own needs met. The child is simultaneously a representation of the father's freedom and agency, but also a constant reminder of his lack of power. The father cannot safely voice his frustration and rage about his predicament to the mistress who is only a representative of the more amorphous structural institution and doing so may in fact might serve to worsen his situation. But he can safely express his psychosocial need for respect to his son. But the father's needs are in direct conflict with that of his child's and places the child with an undue burden.

If we extend this analysis to the parents in Englewood, who are the social and cultural heirs of the enslaved father, and exist within the limitations of their own historical time and place, we can speculate on the role of parental respect for them. The only way for such parents to get respect from a society that will not give it as it does to others, is to demand and take it. And the only place they can do that is through their dependent children. They can assert this demand by virtue of having created a child. They do not have to do anything to "deserve" it. And there is

nothing that they can do to warrant the loss of it. Because as Keisha says, "at the end of the day, a parent is a parent" and as Mary noted previously, "I'm still the mom."

> Me: What do you think makes a bad parent?
>
> Keisha: Really there are no bad parents in my eyesight.
>
> Me: Okay.
>
> Keisha: There are not no bad parents, because at the end of a day a parent is a parent. And that parent know what they should and should not be doing. And they know what their child should and should not be doing. And they should know their child's needs.
>
> Me: You said before that some of parents don't take care of their children like they should...
>
> Keisha: Yes.
>
> Me: Would you say that they were bad parents? [She begins to shake her head emphatically] Or you wouldn't say that?
>
> Keisha: I wouldn't say that they're bad parents.
>
> Me: Okay.
>
> Keisha: I'd just say they're parents that need to get their life back and get in control.

To Keisha, even when parents are not living up to the expectations of the parental role, their inabilities do not warrant the loss of respect or the label of "bad parent." Within these relationships, respect must come first because parents are enacting their desires for unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1951). Parents do not have the psychological space to bear affronts from their children, imagined or real.

Another side of this, of course, is that in the parent's desire for respect from their children, there exists considerable room for imagined slights and misunderstandings. Anything that children do that displeases the parent or has the ability to make the parent "lose face" or

"look bad" is experienced as disrespect without consideration for other possible meanings. In trying to meet their own psychosocial needs, some parents might not be able to identify, acknowledge, or address their children's needs.

The inclination of some parents to see and experience themselves has been noted for quite some time within psychology literature, specifically parents attempting to reframe "unfulfilled ambitions" through their children (Brummelman, et al., 2013); (Allport, 1943). People incorporate "close others" into their formation of self, and in doing so they experience a "sense of shared, merged, or interconnected person identities" with them (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997). Perhaps in teaching their children to adopt and use hypermasculine behaviors, parents are resisting the experience of experiencing further disrespect through their children.

Research Question 3. In what ways do parents think about their roles and obligations as parents within the specific constraints and opportunities of their neighborhood context?

This question can be answered best by looking at participant responses categorized under PARENTING THEORY, specifically those responses on the purpose of parenting and parental self-assessment. The most common reason that parents assessed that they were good parents was because of their presence in their children's lives. It can then be interpreted that parents consider being a consistent physical presence for children to be a central obligation, especially in comparison to other parents who are not.

> I'm a good parent because I'm still here. A lot of parents run off and leave. My sister raising my little niece right now. And the mama somewhere running around here. And the daddy, he just doing him too. They think it's easy to make a baby and run off and leave, but it's really not. You are a strong parent, you gotta stick it out and be there. That's just my goal right there. *Joseph, 34, father of two.*

> I consider myself an excellent parent. I'm there. I don't go out. I don't hang out. I'm there 24/7 all day long. They come home and they know they ain't missing no meals because [their] mom already done cooked dinner hot. I'm just waiting on them. *Keisha, 38-year-old mother of seven*

An unexpected area of participant responses that also helps to answer this question is in the area of reflections on their own childhood experiences and the recounting of personal parental loss. Knowing in a visceral way that they cannot count on being present for their children, though they may want to be, influences how parents think about what their most important obligations are. A significant number of the parents included in this study disclosed losing parents at very young ages for a variety of reasons. While some lost parents before they were able to form relationships, some remembered the lessons their parents taught them while they were near.

> My mom didn't raise me. My mother left me and my two brothers when we were kids. When we were babies rather. *Denise, 40-year-old mother of one*.

> After my mother died, my father moved on. He went and married a young woman…It just seemed like everything left when my mom left. My daddy went as far as doing this thing and he took the refrigerator. He took the stove and moved in with the woman and left us. *Kim, 36-year-old mother of two.*

> I became a ward of the state in my early teenage years and from then on it was rough. I was split up from my siblings. *Wanda, 38-year-old mother of five*.

> The only thing I hated was that my dad was an alcoholic and he died of cirrhosis of the liver when I was 12. And that probably killed me because he was like my best friend. He the one who taught me how to survive in the world… Because even though he was a alcoholic, he still was teaching me. *Keisha, 38-year-old mother of seven*.

> When I was born [my father] left. He was never around because he was on heroin. *Larry, 50-year-old father of five*.

> I became a ward of the state at about 4 or 5 and remained one until I aged out at 21. I was placed with different people. Group homes, typical life. My mama was a typical drug addict…My father died when I was born. He was murdered. *Desiree, 30-year-old mother of three*.

> I remember my father leaving us. It was 5 boys and 1 girl and he left us in the cold; no heat. Just left. *Keith, father of three.*

If parents know that a stable family life is not guaranteed or at the very least not to be taken for granted, it becomes more important to provide verbal instruction that their children can remember and refer to, should they become separated in the future. The unpredictable violence in the neighborhood reinforces a general sense of unpredictability.

> It's a death trap. You just scared of what happens next to you. In the past 10 years, I've probably seen a dozen people I know get killed, not just die, get killed. *Will, 47-year-old father of four.*

> It's really rough. You just never know what's gonna happen. You can't go to the store. You go to the stores you got to be watching out for this person. You got to be watching. You're probably at the wrong place, wrong time and then it just happens... *Rachel 37-year-old mother of one*.

> Recently, we had an incident where we was driving down the block and there was some gunshots going off. I'm driving and trying to figure out where the gunshots coming from. They were coming straight towards us. One of those bullets went through the front windshield. *Sandy, 36-year-old mother of five*.

Consequently, in addition to the provision of material necessities and physical presence, most parents saw their essential role as providing moral instruction and behavioral guidance in preparation for independence in adolescence and adulthood. This idea of independence is critical. Especially when childhood and adolescence within their neighborhood context can be shorter than one might expect.

> When he get caught and they take him back to where they found him on the corner, I walked and tried to talk to the police. They wouldn't let me talk to him because he had just turned 17 so they considered him an adult. I'm like "Can I talk to him now? The police said, "No. He's grown and you can't talk to him." *Dante, 43-year-old father of three*.

In this example, it was clear to Dante that while his son was alone in police custody, Dante's presence and concern were not enough to intervene on his son's behalf. The laws of the state made Dante's concerns irrelevant. Dante's role as parent was not of practical use to his son in this situation even though his son was still an adolescent and a legal minor for whom Dante was responsible in other ways. The hyperghetto/carceral complex employs different definitions of adulthood. In this example we can see that even though maintaining a "physical presence" is a central parental task for Englewood parents, sometimes this is not as helpful as parents want it to be. In this way, moral instruction, that is, teaching youth "right versus wrong" and how to navigate the world independently becomes another important parental duty. Parents take this seriously. This moral instruction is robust and includes teaching youth abstract values, acceptable personal behaviors, and what treatment to accept from others. When asked about the purpose of parenting, participants gave the following responses,

> To try to instill values. To give [children] the tools you need so that [they] can take care of [themselves]. Robert, *43-year-old father of one*.

> The purpose of parenting is to make them self-sufficient adults that are going to be a productive part of society. They have to know how they want to live. What kind of life they want. I want him to be a self-sufficient, well-rounded individual. *Toya, 44-year-old mother of one*.

> [My dad was] the one who taught me how to survive in the world. How not to take no mess off no man. No matter what type of man it is, don't let them do things to you they shouldn't be doing. Don't let a man misuse you. I looked up to him. Because even though he was a alcoholic, he still was teaching me. *Keisha, 38-year-old mother of seven.*

> To instill those good things into them regardless of what they take from and where they apply it. So, anything that I can put into them that will make them knowledgeable for the world, then that's my main goal...It's up to them what they gonna do, the choice and decisions they make. We can't walk hand in hand in life. When they leave from us we just hope they do the right thing. *Gerald, 34-year old father of three.*

While parents take this duty seriously, they are also aware of its limitations. In this last excerpt, Gerald states that his job is to "instill good things regardless" of what his children do with this instruction because ultimately it is up to them to make the right decisions when they eventually "leave" him. So instead of focusing on the way in which this information is used, Gerald focuses on imparting the knowledge itself which is his "main goal." This statement is a recognition of how youth operate in the world alone and as such must use the tools they have. Through moral instruction parents hope to provide youth with a useful toolkit that can be employed when needed.

> I think sometimes they [mainstream society at large] act like we almost got to live [our children's] lives for them. Nah. I don't agree with [the idea that] the parent gets in trouble if the kid get in trouble. How the fuck is that? I can't be with them. Okay, I'm supposed to shadow him constantly, everywhere he go. How do we eat [if I'm following him around and not working to earn money to buy food]? How do we have a house? *Then you mad at me about that, that I'm not providing for them.* Something's gotta give. *Tony, 46-year-old father of nine.*

Tony's statement illustrates how parents largely understand their key parental behavioral role as that of moral instructor and role model from birth through childhood in order to prepare youth to be able to navigate independently on their own once they reach adolescence and must be able to be in the world without them. The objective is to give children the tools to make the right decisions and hope they do so.

But Tony's comments also point to an awareness of being seen as deficient and blameworthy no matter what you do. It is in fact their identity as poor black parents in Englewood that positions them as objects of scorn, regardless of their parenting practices or objectives. Tony knows that he and his peers are not afforded the benefit of doubt that most other types of parents are given in assuming that they want the best for their kids and using all the resources they have to make that happen. It's a recognition that their identity

By the time youth are participating in undesirable behaviors in adolescence, parents are hopeful that they have provided enough instruction is earlier years to prepare them to successfully handle the demands of their environment without the need for constant help from their parents.

Toward a theory of parenting within the hyperghetto carceral complex

How can parents simultaneously argue that some parents "do all the right things" and yield undesired outcomes for children while other parents' "bad" behaviors contribute to the undesirable outcomes of their children? How is it that most parents within this environment maintain a positive parent identity? Can both statements be true at the same time? The fact that participant parents have seen both scenarios on multiple occasions have children of their own with vastly different behaviors, explains how parents come to understand that parental behaviors are not directly tied to child outcomes. Parents believe that all variations of the parental equation can manifest similar youth outcomes. The result is a parental theory which posits that parental behaviors have undetermined effects on children's outcomes. There are no tried and true set of behaviors that assure child success.

Participant interview responses in this study answered the questions initially posed at the onset which sought to understand how Englewood parents understood their parental role while living within a context of increased participation in criminalized behaviors and victimization. Drawing upon responses delineated above, a specific understanding of the parental role emerges in which four central tasks of parenting are: being a consistent physical presence, providing material necessities, maintaining appropriate boundaries of parental authority, and delivering moral instruction to teach children "right" and "wrong."

When parents do all four of these duties consistently, they consider themselves and their neighbors to be good parents, regardless of youth outcomes. Youth individual agency, and various environmental factors such as negatively influential peers, poverty, and lack of community programming undermines parenting. This parental paradigm is premised on the notion that parents yield limited control on their physical environments and material resources and the fact that various parental strategies appear to yield undetermined results.

Table 8.

Englewood Parent Prioritized Parental Duties

Practical	Practical	Practical	Theoretical
Consistent physical presence	Provide material necessities	Maintain appropriate boundaries that affirm parental authority	Moral Instruction

To be clear, this model does not claim to be representative of the vast variability of viewpoints and behavior and not meant to be exhaustive of parenting practices. Rather, these four duties were the most consistently expressed among participant responses and were expressed in multiple parts of the interviews as what defined a "good" parent and the interpreted from those things that parents most often identified as "bad" parenting behavior. This schema of parental duty, when compared to the current iteration of middle-class parenting standards, can be interpreted as an emphasis on practical concern for safety in the present moment and affirmation of an undermined parental identity. In contrast, the prevailing intensive parenting model standard emphasizes preparing children for a future presentation of social standing. Intensive parenting practices take for granted the availability of material needs and a continued parental being presence. These findings of this study are in line with Lareau's (2011) argument that parenting

behaviors are dependent upon operating "cultural logics" that differ by social class. Which is to say that one's historical and environmental context informs the way they see their role and its responsibilities.

Additionally, parents focus on the need to maintain a consistent physical presence is in line with Edin and Kefala's (2005) work with low income single mothers who prioritize "being there" because they cannot guarantee much else and to do so is considerably difficult. The theoretical instruction of "right" and "wrong" belies the realities of the present moment. Poor black parents who raise their children within adverse environments have a preoccupation on the present for all the reasons delineated above.

However, this study expands understanding of parenting practices in poor racially segregated communities by investigating psychological processes of parents of youth who participate in criminalized behaviors and how they are able to maintain a positive parenting identity.

Forming and Maintaining a Positive Parent Identity: A Case Study in an Application of PVEST framework

Most parents in this study identify as "good" parents while reporting that at least one of their children was participating in criminalized behaviors. How do participant parents maintain a positive role-based identity when external messages tell them that they are deficient and the cause of their children undesirable outcomes? Using a PVEST analytical lens we can investigate the workings of identity maintenance for such parents.

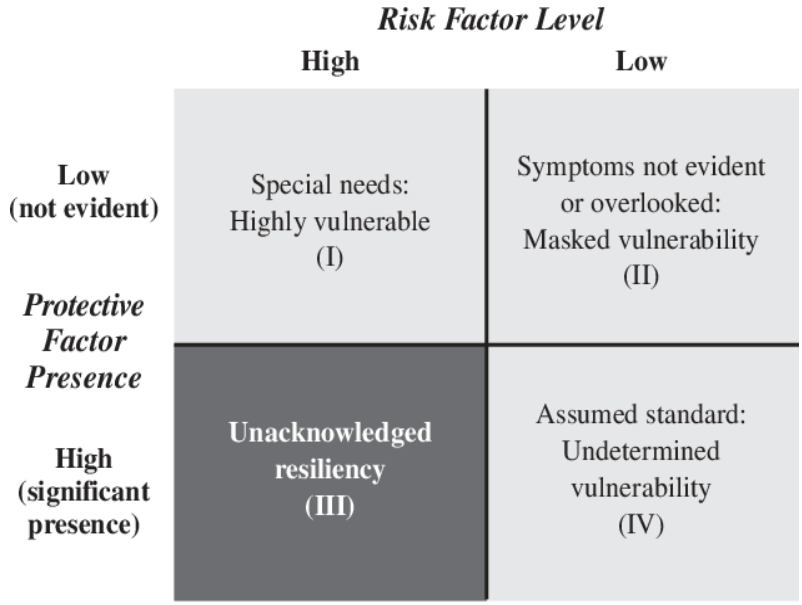
Identity processes are complex, dynamic, and individual. While, it is not possible to consider identity processes for each of the included parents individually, a case study with one participant, Keisha, proves helpful and perhaps representative of such psychological inner-work.

As delineated in the literature review, the PVEST model consists of five components linked through a bi-directional process. It considers an individual's 1. net vulnerabilities (risk and protective factors); 2. net stress engagement (challenges and supports); 3. reactive coping behaviors (maladaptive and adaptive); 4. emergent identities (positive and negative); and 5. life stage outcomes (productive and adverse) in order to think about how they have come to inhabit their identity.

In considering Keisha's net vulnerability, we attempt to take the net value of her risk and protective factors. But when listing these factors, we must remember that PVEST is about phenomenological experiences and that people experience the world differently in, so much as, what one may consider a risk factor, someone else may experience it an opportunity to scale adversity and build strengths to navigate their environment. And similarly, what one may experience a support, another individual may experience as a source of considerable stress. Given this caveat, perhaps, we can include among her risk factors: intergenerational poverty, lack of education, low wage and low valued work, the structural violence of the hyperghetto, lack of institutional support, community level violence, history of trauma. Among her protective factors, we might include her current supportive long-term relationship, stable housing and home life, and employment that allows her to stay in the home with her children, relationships with her mother and sisters. After accounting for her net vulnerability level, Keisha might be categorized in Quadrant 1 of PVEST's vulnerability predicting coping outcome model, which would indicate

that she had a relatively high number of risk factors and lower number of corresponding protective factors. She is highly vulnerable.

Figure 6. PVEST-linked Vulnerability Predicting Dual Axis Coping Outcome Model



Source: Spencer, M.B. (2006). Phenomenology and Ecological Systems Theory: Development of Diverse Groups. *Handbook of Child Psychology*. W. Damon and R. Lerner. New York: Wiley Publishers. 829-893.

The second component of the PVEST model is the consideration of one's net stress level. In this stage we consider the actual challenges and supports that Keisha encounters with on a regular basis. It is her risks and protective factors operationalized in her actual life. Challenges for Keisha might include the daily stress of creating mental maps and navigating her neighborhood with and for her children.

> Because everywhere you look at it, you're gonna see a gang banger on some kind of corner. Or standing in some type of store. You're gonna see illegal drugs being sold... These murders and killers. So, to me, I mean, like I said I, I really don't hang out around here. I'm mostly inside my house. And in the summertime, I will

> sit out on my porch, watch my kids, let them play. As long as I see it's a safe for my kids to play in there.

Another challenge might include feeling isolated from her neighbors and experiencing a significant level of distrust. Keisha, for example, was also one of several parents who reported that she did not have any friends.

> I don't have no friends. I have associates. I don't have friends. I don't have nobody I sit and say, 'This is my best friend" that I could tell a secret to and I know she ain't gonna open her mouth. No. I don't have none of them.

Also, Keisha is the primary caregiver in her home. She is the caregiver for her partner's grandmother, and her children. While she loves her family and reports that she enjoys the work, one can imagine how stressful it could be for her at times (Boyczuk & Fletcher, 2016) (Fletcher, 2017).

Yet another challenge that Keisha brings up is her teenage son's social behavior. It is source of significant stress for her that he is hanging out with friends that she doesn't approve of. She has found pictures of guns in his phone, and he was suspended from school for drug possession.

In terms of supports, Keisha does not mention many but she acknowledges that she maintains relationships with her mother and younger sisters, whom she can call them when she is feeling especially down.

> I talks to my mama time to time. We talk almost every day. And when I go through my little depressing stage or whatever, I talk to her, I call her, I talk to her or I call my sisters.

Keisha also seems to enjoy her relationships with her children and looks forward to caring for them and providing them with support.

The third component of the model, reactive coping, includes those adaptive and maladaptive behaviors a person uses to manage and mitigate their net stress level. Reactive coping processes are dynamic and consist of self-appraisal practices in that individuals try on behaviors and see how others respond to those behaviors. In terms of adaptive coping responses, Keisha has chosen to cope with the stress in her environment by performing her parenting tasks in earnest: making sure her children are fed and well clothed, being physically present in the home when they come home from school, and determining what is safe for them. Keisha also cultivates hobbies that she really enjoys to help her mitigate stresses.

Me: Do you feel like you enjoy your life?

Keisha: Yes.

Me: Yeah. What do you enjoy?

Keisha: Cooking. I love cooking.

Me: Do you really?

Keisha: I throw down in the kitchen.

Me: Okay.

Keisha: I love cooking and I love doing hair.

Me: Okay.

Keisha: Like now, I did my own hair.

Me: Oh, it looks nice.

Keisha: And I'm retouching it up.

Me: Yeah, it looks nice.

Keisha: But um, hair, hair and cooking is my main priorities. That's what I do.

It is telling that her reported primary coping behaviors also align with her mothering duties. Keisha's other coping behavior includes isolating herself from peers in order to prevent or forestall potential problems. In appraising her behaviors and comparing them to that of other parents she decides that her behavior is more effective and in line with her ideas about a mother's role than theirs.

The fourth PVEST component, or one's emergent identity is the summation of one's coping responses and their social characteristics such as gender and socioeconomic status. Keisha had determined that she is a good mother. Even though only two of her seven children remain in her custody and one of them is at heightened risk of undesirable outcomes, she points to her behaviors and intentions

The fifth and final consideration of the model is one's life stage outcomes. At 38 years old, Keisha is at the tail end of early adulthood and moving into middle adulthood (Erikson, 1993). The main psychosocial task of early adulthood is love and intimacy which Keisha appears to have achieved these tasks through her relationships with her family and partner.

Keisha's Parenting Identity Outcome

Ultimately Keisha sees herself as a multi-dimensional person with a complex history and goals for her children's futures, and her own. She does not define herself solely by the mistakes and trauma she suffered when she was younger. When comparing herself to her own parents, she understands that parents are imperfect people with significant limitations but who nevertheless give what they have. Of her father, she remembers "even though he was an alcoholic he was still teaching me... I was taught when an alcoholic talk they speak the truth." Again, using a PVEST framework, we can understand that she has taken something that might be considered a

"challenge", a parent with substance use issues, but experienced it as a support. To Keisha, her father's alcohol use becomes something that bolsters the veracity of his teaching. She feels his teachings were informed by something deeper than abstract parenting instruction, but by life experiences that made him more likely to tell the truth. And of her mother, she notes,

> My mom is like slow. What you call the people that's slow learners? So, it's like she'd catch on things, but then she's slow at catching onto things...And so when I was older I started helping her out. And I got my learning how to shop and all that from her. When she went to the grocery store, we went to the grocery store with her. She showed us the things to buy, what not to buy. You buy more food, you buy less junk. And that's how I was raised. And she showed me how to cook, 'cause she had, she used to sit me in the kitchen with one of them little chairs, and I used to watch her cook.

Again, a mother with cognitive delays could be experienced as a challenge for some, but Keisha experienced it as a support. Having to help her mother, endowed her with crucial life skills and allowed her to see her own skills and capabilities in comparison. In effect, her parents' limitations served to empower her and provided her with knowledge on how to operate within the world. Though she got into significant troubles as an adolescent, Keisha does not think her parents are responsible; they told her what she needed to know and she did not follow instruction. Thus, Englewood parents are holding their children accountable to the same level of personal responsibility in which they experienced their own childhoods. In essence, parents are effectively socializing their children to understand their place on the margins of U.S. society: you cannot control your circumstances, but you alone must be accountable for your outcomes and behaviors. And you should be appreciative and grateful for anything your parents can give you to help you, but you are not owed it, especially given that parents have their own limitations and cannot guarantee much beyond the basics.

Keisha did not have perfect parents and yet she is thankful for their love and instruction which she remembers fondly. When Keisha looks to and evaluates her peers within the neighborhood, she also points to their parental limitations.

> What is your child doing out at 12 o'clock playing on a school night? Where's your mother and father? Sitting in the house getting high or drinking or out partying or just don't care. Why, when your kids get out of school, instead of them in the house taking off their school clothes, doing their homework, getting ready to sit down to eat dinner, after that watching TV, have family time. Your kids are all up and down the street all the way across 3, 4, 5 other blocks.

But even with these parents, Keisha extends understanding and empathy. She surmises that they might be going through momentary difficulties in which they have "lost control" and need to work to "get their life back."

> There are not no bad parents, because at the end of a day a parent is a parent. And that parent know what they should and should not be doing. And they know what their child should and should not be doing. I wouldn't say that they're bad parents. I'd just say they're parents that need to get their life back and get in control of their household and their situation.

For Keisha, life is ever changing and there are periods of ebb and flow. Because one is in dire straits now, does not mean they will be in such forever. For example, she previously tried for a G.E.D. and did not finish her program successfully, but it is still something she wants to pursue. She extends this same logic to the process of parenting. She was "out of control" when her older children were born, which resulted in the termination of her parental rights, but she has since gotten her "life back" and considers herself an "excellent" doting mother. In other words, Keisha presents as someone who does not allow her past mistakes to define her. And she can say she is a good parent because she performs all the right activities and knows that she has the right intentions. Additionally, her child respects her and does as he is told within the home regardless

of what he does outside of it when he is with his peers. When I asked her to tell me about her son, her very first words were,

> He's very helpful. Whatever I ask him to do he has no problem doing it. He doesn't have no smart mouth. He not disrespectful.

The first thing she wants me to know about her child was that he respects her. His behavior outside of the home does not affect her identity as a "good" parent. Even though he hangs out with neighborhood youth whom she finds objectionable, has pictures of guns in his phone, and has gotten suspended from school for drug possession, she is a good mother because he respects her. She draws from her own experiences in which she "made mistakes" as an adolescent and sees that time in her life as being something that she did on her own, despite her parents' instructions.

> So, it's like I was in the streets. You know, you do stuff, make mistakes.

To return to Ms. Russell's response to her son's gang related murder which began our conversation, " ... all I can do is raise my child. I can't hold his hand 24/7 when he goes in the streets. I teach him right from wrong but ... I can't be there with him 24 hours" (Smithberg and North, 2012). In order to maintain a positive parental identity while simultaneously being blamed for outcomes that are beyond their control, and while absorbing media that constantly labels them as failures, Englewood parents' identity processes are fundamentally different from other parent groups who do not have to navigate their circumstances. Though Englewood parents may want similar outcomes for their children as middle-class mainstream parents do, they understand that their children have to inhabit their own world and make their own decisions. They cannot do it for them. They do not appraise their abilities in the same manner that middle class parents do.

In order to maintain their "good" parent identity Englewood parents conclude that good parenting is the provision of material goods, moral instruction, and maintaining respect for parental authority. Anything beyond that, is beyond their control and outside their responsibilities and are thus not factored into parental identity formation and maintenance.

Table 9.
Summary of Research Question Findings

	Research Question	Data Findings (Participant Responses)	Other Considerations (Critical Analysis)
Question 1	How do parents understand youth participation in criminalized behaviors among their own children, as well as among children within the same neighborhood?	• Youth are agentive beings who make their own decisions despite parental instruction • Peers are negatively influential • Youth are poor and the want of financial resources incentivizes participation in such behavior • Lack of community activities for out of school time • Some youth have poor role models as parents that lead them in undesirable directions	• Trauma • Adverse Childhood Experiences • Structural Inadequacies • Lack of psychosocial supports • Dominant Ideologies
Question 2	How, if at all does youth participation in criminalized behaviors inform parenting behavior?	• Avoidance v. Exposure Behaviors • Strategize to minimize youth victimization • Harnessing the carceral state to teach lessons • Conditional Positive Regard (Tough Love)	• Respect, Honor, and Parental Authority
Question 3	In what ways do parents think about their roles and obligations as parents given their environmental context?	• Maintain consistent physical presence ("Be There") • Provide Material Necessities • Maintain Parental Authority • Moral Instruction for situational use	• Positive Parent Identity Maintenance

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

Scapegoating Poor Black Parents

On April 20, 1999, the nation was jolted when the unthinkable happened. Two high school students opened fire into their middle class, primarily white suburban high school in Colorado, far outside an urban center. By the end of the encounter, the pair had murdered 12 students and 1 teacher, and additionally injured 21 others. At the time, the Columbine shooting was the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history. Unfortunately, it was the beginning of an era in which middle class male youth shoot guns inside school buildings, college campuses, shopping centers, and other public places. Since the Columbine shooting, there have been other major school shootings that have grasped the public's attention-- Sandy Hook, Virginia Tech, Marjorie Douglass Stoneman-- and schools now have "mass shooter drills" to prepare young children for the event of a mass shooter, something unthinkable a short generation ago.

Following these shootings, there has been much discourse about how schools and society can better understand this group's challenges and do a better job of tending to and supporting the disaffected "lone wolf" youth who perpetuate such harm on their communities. This discourse has resulted in a much-needed national anti-bullying campaign (Morgan, Hatcher, & Maschi, 2009), conversations about the role of white supremacy (Tonso, 2009), and the discovery of a toxic "incel" internet community (Maxwell, Robinson, Williams, & Keaton, 2020) that such youth seek out as a safe space to meet their psychosocial need to be validated and included. But what has been missing in the conversation is the wholesale condemnation of their parents. In

other words, their parents are not guilty of a comparable "ghetto parenting" practice and are not automatically thought to be the cause of their violence. To be fair, there have been some discussions that sought to blame specific parents of individual mass shooters (Melendez, Lichenstein, & Dolliver, 2016), but there has not been a rising contempt for suburban white middle-class mothers as a class of parent that "corrupts" their teenage sons. And even when these parents experience some blame, there are other media outlets that mitigate their image. Susan Klebold, for example, the mother of one of the Columbine shooters, has been profiled in national magazines, given a TED talk, and has become an "activist" for suicide prevention and mental health. Her memoir has been reviewed by the international press and called "brave" (Ellen, 2016) and "compelling" (O'Rourke, 2016).

Why is one demographic of mothers implicated in her child's violent outcomes, while others are not? I suspect that these parents are being scapegoated through moral panic. Cohen (2011) defines a moral panic as such,

> Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to society values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to: the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way the society conceives itself.

Hall et. al (1978) argue that moral panics operate by transforming collective anxieties onto already stigmatized society groups, essentially scapegoating such groups into the cause of the problem. In scapegoating already stigmatized groups, society at large does not have to implicate itself for a larger social problem. Poor black parents have historically been a convenient site for

ignoring and maintaining widespread societal problems. But as things becomes harder for all, the more society relies on scapegoating and moral panics.

Raising children in the current neoliberal postindustrial economy is a difficult endeavor for most because of increasingly widespread economic instabilities. Due to growing inequalities, groups that have traditionally enjoyed economic security are experiencing unprecedented levels of uncertainty. The result is a shrinking middle class who enjoys a lower quality of life as the gap between the very wealthy and the very poor widens. Beginning in the late 1970s, the same wage stagnation and shifting labor demands that ravaged black communities in the U.S. inner cities, began to affect working class and lower middle-class white communities as well, but the effects were slower to emerge (Wilson, 2011). These shifts left the once comfortable white middle-class with an unprecedented precariousness. Additionally, the contemporary U.S. government offers few social safety nets or public policy solutions to support and accommodate contemporary working families. As a result, the contemporary white middle and working classes of mainstream America are experiencing the same social ills that were once only relegated to those at the social margins. For example, as the wages of working-class men have declined and their job prospects have become less secure, white males have become less desirable marriage prospects and this affected marriage rates as a whole (Coontz, 2018). Also, the rate of white children currently born to single mothers is about the same as the rate that alarmed Moynihan when he was looking at black families in 1965 (Acs, Braswell, Sorensen, & Turner, 2013). And for the first time in U.S. history, the overall life-expectancy for whites without a college degree is steadily decreasing due to "deaths of despair" fueled by chronic alcohol use, opioid overdoses, and suicides (Case & Deaton, 2015).

But instead of grappling with the present realities that all Americans face in a hostile economic landscape and developing ways to support families and ease common burdens, current policies and mythology continue to place the blame for widely held misfortune on individuals who must find ways rise above their individual hardships (Harvey, 2005). And in addition to being responsible for individual hardships, U.S. policy makers have chosen to idealize a nuclear family type which gives priority to an intact married couple. This family structure, which enjoyed a relatively short heyday in the mid-20th century, was predicated upon the widespread availability of high paying jobs, which could support a family with one wage earner, affordable housing in city suburbs, and low fuel costs to make daily auto mobile transportation from the city center to the suburbs feasible (Coontz, 2000). None of these conditions exist in the present day.

Yet, the nuclear family remains the hegemonic standard by which present society judges all families. “Single mothers” and “absent fathers” become convenient ways to assign blame for the social ills that affect black communities because they have chosen to deviate from the ideal type, but such categorizations are too inadequate to describe family relationships and functioning. Much is missed by this shorthand. Richardson (2009), for example, discusses the undiscussed role that extended familial networks play in mentorship and guidance for male youth, particularly, uncles. And Jones and Mosher (2013) conclude that 60% of unmarried black fathers are involved in their children’s lives even when they do not reside in the same home as their children. And these black fathers are more likely than their Hispanic and white counterparts to be involved in the actual day-to-day care of their children.

Mainstream middle-class America blames poor black parents-mothers by their negligent presence, and fathers by their irresponsible absence- for undesirable outcomes experienced by their children in order in to help manage their own parental identities and anxieties. By pointing

to the ineptitude of other types of parents and by prioritizing a narrative about the dysfunction within black families located at the bottom of the social hierarchy, other groups can feel better about their own parenting abilities. As economic anxieties arise for all, those who are already stigmatized, become convenient scapegoats upon which society can manage its anxiety. Meanwhile, as expectations for parents becoming increasingly more demanding, they coincide with growing income inequality and a shrinking middle-class. Recent years have seen the rise of "helicopter parenting" and "overparenting" in order to manage a collective parenting anxiety (Segin, Woszidlo, Givertz, & Montgomery, 2013); (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011). Consumption of images in popular media, then become a source of affirmation for other parental identities.

But such an interpretation leaves out the role of inherited privilege and disadvantage. This interpretation lies upon widely held American values of personal agency, responsibility, and individualism (Bobo, 1991). For example, conservative pundits and think tanks espouse the "success sequence". The success sequence proposes that one should graduate high school at minimum, obtain full time employment, and then have children. If one does all of these things in this order, theoretically one should be able to avoid raising children in poverty (Wang & Wilcox, 2017). These beliefs allow for the over-reliance on using personal choice and characteristics to explain social behaviors and discount environmental constriction of choices. This allows for the continued support of hegemonic beliefs about how society operates and minimizes the role of societal structures in reproducing social inequality. Worse, these mythologies guide public policies and tax payer money toward programs that do not end up alleviating the burdens that families face, but instead only further buttress myths that exacerbate social hierarchies (Cohen P. , 2018).

Implications for Family Practice and Policy

This study has implications for practice and policy. A key finding is that poor parents whose children participate in criminalized behaviors do not base their parental identities on their children's outcomes. Such parents are able to maintain a positive parental identity based on the synthesis of their own parenting experiences and realities, as well as on the performance of a discrete set of parental duties. If practitioners design interventions that do not affirm these parental realities and the behaviors already practiced by parents, it might not resonate with parents. Many parenting interventions begin with an assumed priority of children over adults, which essentially force parents to choose between their children's needs and their own. This is not an effective long-term strategy. Development continues throughout the life course and we all look for ways to meet our psychosocial needs. Parental interventions must prioritize parental needs as a mechanism to encourage behavior.

The theme of substance use runs throughout many of the stories shared by participants. Through the information provided by participants, we can see how community wide drug use greatly affects all residents of Englewood, not just those who are actively using. Substance use has caused children to lose their parents much too soon, and it has provided youth eager for economic opportunities, an efficient path towards incarceration. We need better public health approaches to address substance use disorders. The United States primarily addresses the problem by relying almost exclusively on law enforcement. Over the past 40 years, law enforcement's "War on Drugs" has only served to exacerbate problems and empowered police departments, swelled prosecutors' offices, and vastly expanded the arms of the carceral state. Substance use is a public health issue and should be addressed accordingly without criminalization. Through current policies, people are disincentivized from seeking help because

they will be penalized for doing so. This is especially true for parents who fear the loss of their children through state intervention. When people are not able to seek help, problems can worsen. While the opioid epidemic has helped people understand the need for more responsive approaches, not enough has been done. We need better understanding on the causes of substance use disorders, prevention, and treatment that affirm people's humanity.

While, interventions at the individual level can helpful, what is truly needed is a dismantling of societal structures which only serve to exacerbate inequality and the social issues that accompany it. The refusal to recognize the power of these systems to reproduce inequality on macro level contributes to anxiety for all. The result is psychological distress as individuals must do significant cognitive labor to negotiate widespread structural problems.

Federal and local governments must seriously investigate ways to support families. Such policies and programs must acknowledge the difficulties of all families, while also creating policies that do not stigmatize those families which do not comply with the Standard North American Family Unit ideal or rely on an outdated Family Wage model. The more these families continue to be stigmatized the harder it is to provide support. A policy such as universal basic income, for example, provides support to all families without stigmatizing any one group who may rely on it more as a larger percentage of their family income. The same can be said for providing universal child care and better funding for public schools. Universal programs would work to reduce anxieties felt by all families.

Limitations

This study has limitations. As discussed above, the judgment of one’s parenting is entangled with issues of anxiety, personal identity, and self-esteem. Additionally, this study

investigated the parenting of a set of parents who have been extensively marginalized and vilified. I asked these parents to assess and judge their own parenting skills in the midst of media portrayals of them as problematic social actors. These factors increase the likelihood of social desirability bias in which respondents are less likely to divulge unflattering information about themselves (van de Mortel, 2008).

The study's sample selection is another limitation. While snowball sampling is an effective way to gain access to a community of people who have the variables that are being studied by accessing personal networks, this sampling method is non-generalizable to other populations and not representative of all the variety of opinion and thought within the studied population. (Browne, 2005).

Another limitation of this study is in the data analysis. Inter-reliability processes were not used. Though questions remain about the utility of such processes and the extent to which qualitative researchers should employ them, the analysis of the present study would have been more robust if it included an inter-rater protocol (Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, & Marteau, 1997).

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