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Increases in Mass Incarceration and the Efficacy of Community Engagement and
Outreach Program Project Safe Neighborhoods

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of mass incarceration in the United States, a term formally used in the 1970's, government and private funding has heavily poured into the prison system. The term "mass incarceration" describes a deeply rooted American system of oppression that disproportionately affects marginalized communities and communities of color. Because of the increase in enforcement throughout the last quarter of the 20th century, rates of crime increased, and state and federal funding continued to go towards prisons for upkeep. That harsh enforcement or crackdown on crime did not function the way it intended. Because of this, the federal government finally began to think about new approaches to the issues of crime. How can they prevent criminal activity? What are the underlying socioeconomic factors that lead to increase rates of crime?

These questions led to trial efforts to engage law enforcement with community members. In the 1990's, under the Bush administration, the Weed and Seed Program was launched through the Department of Justice. In effort to mitigate crime and create community relationships, the program began in a few major cities, eventually reaching over three hundred cities in the United States, which eventually ended formally in 2009, but in most states years before. In 2001, Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) began, with the intent to create a more integrative and comprehensive approach to community safety, the program would include partnerships with state and local governments, community leaders, and local stakeholders while working closely with social services in the area. The goal of PSN has remained the same- to increase community safety through engagement, prevention and intervention, and enforcement- yet the methods and practice of the programming has adapted to community needs over time. Community theory

describes the ways in which communities form and develop, which is critical in the overall understanding of how PSN functions and can improve its efforts. Additionally, the role of power and expertise is closely tied to the way in which programmers are able to connect and develop mutual respect with community members in the area.

The primary focus of this study is to explore the programming principles and practice in both Baltimore and the Washington, DC. It has shown that the effectiveness is contingent on the ability to for experts to develop trust with community members while decentralizing power and decision making.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

Incarceration in the United States began to dramatically increase in the 1970s, with government and private funding poured into what has come to be known as a system of mass incarceration. The term “mass incarceration” was first used in the 1970’s under the Nixon administration to describe the United States as being the country with the highest rate of imprisonment, which cannot be fully grasped without a deep understanding of the role of race. For some (white, middle or upper class) citizens, the crackdown on illegal activity was a government accomplishment. “Bad guys” were off the streets and law enforcement was cracking down on minor offenses like marijuana possession, driving without a license, or any activity that was considered suspicious. Officers were incentivized to act more aggressively, which is still something we see decades later. Preceding this crackdown under Nixon, which was later imitated by Reagan and Clinton, movements that advocated for justice like the Civil Rights Movement, Black Panthers, and women’s liberation movement, were often misconstrued as violent, radical, anti-government movements in need of government intervention. Nixon called a “war on drugs” as drugs became more accessible in cities, specifically communities of color. Rather than treating it as a health issue, the administration and those thereafter viewed drug addiction and use as an issue of crime, which led to a rapid increase in arrests even for minor offenses. At the beginning of the Nixon era in 1970, the US prison population was 357, 292. By 1990 after Reagan’s presidency, the population had increased to 1,179,000 (Duvernay et al, 2016). This rapid increase

and crackdown eventually led to a new approach for dealing with crime- using prevention, outreach programming and social services to mitigate criminal activity.

By the 1990's programs focused on community engagement had emerged. The Department of Justice's branch, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) was created in 1984 to decrease violent crime, form safer communities, and attempt to develop the country's criminal justice system (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2019). Under the BJA, there are several programs. In 1991, Weed and Seed was one of the prominent policing and community focused programs. A neighborhood or area would be studied and seen as a space of high crime. Once guns and people who committed a crime were "weeded out" and taken off the street, the program would try and "plant" something that would foster and assist the community such as a park, planting trees, or possibly cleaning up the streets. It partnered with local private companies who would sponsor some of the projects. The main programming components were intended to be law enforcement, community policing, prevention, intervention and treatment, and neighborhood restoration. The program would partner with local private or public organizations such as churches, local businesses, or youth programs as a way to develop and foster relationships in the area (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, 2004). While some areas were successful in this particular program, it became too widespread and there was not enough support for the hundreds of sites.

In 2001, the BJA funded a new project called Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), which built off some of the fundamental principles of Weed and Seed but added a more comprehensive approach to preventing and handling areas of high crime. The main distinction between the two programs is the way in which PSN focuses on using the tools to weed out crime that Weed and Seed practiced, but then is intended to also practice more prevention techniques. The program

itself is described as an “umbrella program” where numerous efforts fall underneath. There are state and federal partnerships that aim to increase local policing. School programs work to engage youth and young adults on leadership practice, education on community safety, as well as social spaces to interact with each other and people from local law enforcement. PSN strives to connect the local, state, and federal agencies together to collaborate on safety issues. However, in practice, it does not fully make itself able to best practice collaboration.

This research aims to answer the following lines of inquiry:

- In what ways does the organization of leadership influence the effectiveness of urban programming?
- How does the role of power facilitate or inhibit the development of a sense of community?
- What are the implicit functions of Project Safe Neighborhoods and where do personnel find spaces for improvement?
- How can this case study extend into other spaces of community engagement?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Various literature outlets provide a basis for the existing knowledge in this community study. This section will explore the existing literature that provides insight for this research approach, practice, and analysis. To begin, it explores community theories that guide the understanding of community and community development. This is especially important in understanding the program, Project Safe Neighborhoods. More specifically, it will provide a contextual framework for the way programs like PSN run. The section will then draw on literature related to democratic participation within community development and the principles that foster democratic practice. Furthermore, it will draw on the tensions that can come from practicing and engaging in communities- when we navigate with tension and difference. Finally, the review will explore the function and structure of leaders within institutions, with the agency to carry about the changes, and implement programming principles through democratic community engagement.

Community Theory

Communities have always been the groups that have bound humans together. Communities are the spaces and field of social interaction where people find common ground, security, and a sense of purpose (Pigg, 1999). Historically, the nature of communities has not changed, however, the inevitably complex ability to foster and develop the sense of community and security continually faces challenges. Kenneth Wilkinson, a rural sociologist and economist, discussed the nature and complexities of community and community development in his article, “A Field-Theory Perspective for Community Development Research” (Wilkinson, 1972).

Wilkinson describes the way in which community is a social field “through which actions expressing a broad range of local interests are coordinated. [Community] emerges from the institutional-interest fields and acts upon them” (Wilkinson, 1972). In this adaptive and evolving social field, members engage formal and informal institutions, while embracing spaces for leadership roles and opportunities to participate in local governance.

Community development, according to Wilkinson, is seen as improved well-being for the community through “configurations in ecological, cultural, social, psychological, and chance factors which figure in change in the local society” (Wilkinson, 1972). According to Wilkinson, by definition, community development should be a positive action as its intent is to improve a dimension of the community. However, as Wilkinson reminds the reader, success is really a “construct based in part on an abstraction from reality” where nothing “is ever finally ‘developed’ nor are there degrees or stages of a fully ‘developed’ state” (Wilkinson, 1972). Community development may have the intent to influence structure, however, rarely is development solely structure-based; typically, as the result of community development, there are changes in behavioral or social norms as well. A key quality necessary to community development according to Wilkinson, is the role of the people. Wilkinson views community development less as a goal oriented and achievement-based task and more about the effort of people using their capacity to make some form of change.

Within all communities, there exists conflict, which should be resolved through democratic behaviors and participation. Resilient communities experience conflict, since it is through conflict - which includes navigating differences among people - that communities are able to build resilience. Given that conflict and issues arise in community settings, there are

several theories and best practices that can be applied to settings of community engagement and outreach.

Community Engagement as Democratic Practice

What is democracy? There are many different meanings and understandings of the term. A common understanding of democracy is a government system that is composed of elected representatives who help make decisions. Yet, there are many meanings that help describe the complex term. Democracy is profound; democracy is inherently about the people. Deriving from the Latin word *demos* meaning “people”, it is about the way people share power, engage with others regardless of difference, and their ability to collectively make decisions. There are several different elements to democratic participation, which is central to community development work. Albert Dzur, an author and professor of democratic theory, reflects on democratic practices and their conceptual frameworks in his book, *Democracy Inside: Participatory Innovation in Unlikely Places*. Dzur’s *Rebuilding Institutions Together* (Dzur, 2018). He indicates that the purpose of democracy is not merely a form of political decision making, but a way of interaction between people. Democracy is an inclusive way of practice that is carried out *with* and *for* the people. This implies that practicing democracy is a collaborative process. Democracy requires active listening, opening up space for participation, as well as an ability and freedom to challenge the standard systems in place such as those set up for education and governance. Dzur steers away from the traditional and more academic understanding of democracy and emphasizes its social nature. Dzur writes that democracy is the process of “sharing power to shape a common public life with others who are not the same as us” (Dzur, 2018, p. 1). Dzur’s definition implies a few different elements of democracy. First, democracy involves trust. A leader will not share or

delegate power to someone she does not trust. The second implication is that democracy suggests an interaction between people. Moreover, it involves interaction where all parties are heard and can come together in a form of participatory democracy.

An institution or group's ability to open space for people to be part of decision-making processes is essential to democratic practice. How do participants feel valued? Who gets a seat at the table? How does one obtain a leadership role? What is the role of power and power sharing? Albert Dzur argues that there are two primary components to a participatory democracy. First, collective decision making and joining public action makes people more respectful of one another and more apt in public decision making (Dzur, 2018, p. 36). When people are able to be part of the decisions that impact them, they engage with each other and practice inherent respect. Additionally, collective decision making prepares people to make collective decisions in the future. The second component of participatory described by Dzur is that collective discussion and decision-making should extend into spaces that we engage in daily, such as workplaces, families, school, or hospitals (Dzur, 2019, p. 37). This collective work is part of our everyday lives and constantly happening around us. By bringing this way of practice into other spaces, there is a higher likelihood for mutual respect and therefore people are more competent to make decisions democratically.

The practice of democracy in community efforts and efforts within community requires an exploration of the best practices for community engagement. How do we approach community work in areas different than our own? Whether there are racial, economic, cultural or social differences between the practitioner and community, community programs have the capacity to help shrink the disparities that may exist in community. In schools, there are opportunities for students to practice leadership roles or find spaces to engage with one another

and outside school into community. Additionally, when thinking about the role of democracy in community programs, in what ways do the institutional structures of the program impair or facilitate democratic practices? Further, what is the role of the programmer in practicing or facilitating the practice of principles such as collective participation and inherent respect? What does this practice look like in community programs? The following sections investigate these questions.

The Politics of Knowledge in Community

There are various types of knowledge that we engage with each day. There is experiential knowledge- a knowledge system that comes from learned experiences and practice. Local knowledge systems are the indigenous knowledge that we gain from being part of a particular culture, place, or group. In addition to local and experiential knowledge, there is knowledge that comes from having some form of formal study or position in a particular area known as expert knowledge. Expert knowledge is technical knowledge. These knowledge systems can also be translated and practiced into a hierarchy of knowledge. For example, expert knowledge is often obtained through a degree. Degreed knowledge is typically seen as top or the highest form of knowledge. Expert knowledge that has come through a specific degree can take on a form of knowledge and sense of power over knowledge systems that may not be seen as prestigious or valuable than non-degree or other forms of knowledge.

A key distinction in community development is the relationship between people who are considered experts and non-experts. There is seemingly limited literature that challenges or critiques the knowledge systems of experts. Specifically, it is common to find the typical notions of expertise reinforced through literature where expert knowledge holds more power and validity

than knowledge from people who are considered “non-experts”. Tensions between these two knowledge systems can arise if not carefully acknowledged or challenged. Who is considered an expert? Is only expert knowledge valid? Frank Fischer, a professor of political science, explores knowledge systems and the ways in which practitioners share their own knowledge while also learning and engaging with communities. Fischer highlights the tensions that exist between professional and local, or indigenous knowledge systems and explores ways in which we can integrate different knowledge systems into the way we approach community-based work and decision making.

Fischer makes the distinction between expert or technical knowledge and indigenous or local knowledge throughout his book. According to Fischer, “there is no such thing as a purely technical decision” in the real world (Fischer, 2000, p. 43), meaning that decision-making processes always contain some level of subjectivity where a person’s experience and local knowledge informs their decision. Even with a scientific study, we make decisions on what methods we choose to use. These decisions that we make are based on our own logic and what we see is most appropriate. Decision making is inherently subjective, regardless of whether the research may be considered objective. In community programming, our ability to listen to those personal experiences of local members enables leaders or experts to make better decisions. Experts can only provide technical knowledge; however, the knowledge from local individuals is critical in understanding community. Local knowledge teaches us about communities different from our own. There is infinite value in the way we make space for and bring local knowledge to the table.

When expert knowledge is valued over knowledge of local citizens, issues can arise between the translation of expert knowledge as well as the ability for the citizen participation to

be democratic. Fischer indicates some of these issues that can form between people with formal expertise and those who do not have that expertise. Fischer argues that “representation of a group by experts leads to an elitism that impedes the possibility of authentic membership participation” (Fischer, 2000, p. 39). This elitism can hinder the ability to effectively collaborate. When local leaders are not open to the input or insight of local residents or constituents, this leads to a sense of superiority and deters the ability to foster democratic change.

Expert knowledge is critical in finding solutions to issues, however the ability to translate and use that knowledge in a way that is effective can be a challenge. The translation of research and the sharing of knowledge can be an opportunity to bridge the power divide that exists between community and those with the formal expertise or research role (Giles, 2008). How do researchers or “experts” translate their knowledge to people in a way that demystifies the standard understanding of scientific research and encourages the public’s interest in participating in a specific effort? (Giles, 2008). In some cases, people who do not have a formal education in a particular area may feel disconnected from people who do have “expertise”. Fischer reflects on the way in which experts struggle to connect to their audience and how the main issue is “more a matter of the experts finding ways to relate their technical practices to public discourses” (Fischer, 2000, p. 45). In collective decision making, the way in which we use local or indigenous knowledge systems and expert knowledge systems has the potential to lead to a more rational and thorough solution. The two types of knowledge can be integrated together where both are valid. When both parties feel respected and able to use their agency, there can be a greater chance of collective participation as people understand that the knowledge sharing is mutual. Experts need citizens as much as citizens need experts. Citizen participation is a reflection of a democratic practice. Experts and those considered non-experts are able to navigate

the challenging relationship. They are able to develop trust and mutual respect, which are the foundations of developing relationships. It may begin on an individual level, but over time it will influence the institutions themselves.

The relationship between expert and local knowledge can be applied to the way in which researchers conduct their work. What is the role of a researcher? Albert Dzur describes the way a researcher can approach and conduct her work in a way that is democratic:

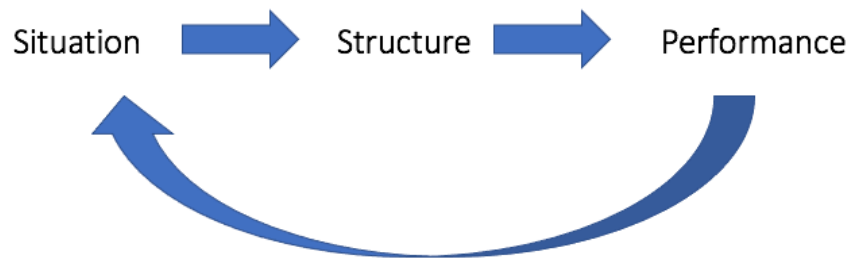
To face this problem squarely, I think, is to practice democratic theory as a catalytic rather than traditionally academic discipline—meaning that research is done with and for the people being studied. *With* means listening carefully to democratic innovators, correcting and adjusting conceptual frameworks as one goes along, and taking suggestions on other lines of inquiry. *For* means contributing somehow to the success of their work by broadcasting it, encouraging discussion, and making links across professional domains to grow and diversify networks. (Dzur, 2018, p. 70)

Researchers are in a position where they can be facilitators. In positions of expertise, researchers can guide and facilitate understanding within communities. When taking on the role as a facilitator and seeing oneself as someone who is also learning with others, space can be made for individual and collective learning. This form of mutual learning in itself is democratic as the researcher is open to new ways of thinking and people with different experiences. Additionally, as Fischer notes, researchers can work *with* and *for* the community they intend to serve. When experts and leaders go *to* the people, it is more likely that their interaction is seen with a level playing field, where no player is seen as more legitimate than the other. Additionally, when the researcher views themselves as someone who is working to serve, there is less of a focus on self and bringing expertise to others and more on the intention of being a steward who learns with others.

Institutional Structure

Institutions are interactions among individuals that reflect the relationship between theory and practice. Individuals create institutions, which shape our individual and collective action. That action may then again modify or influence formal or informal institutions (Schmid, 2008, p. 9). Institutions can be vehicles that translate knowledge and bring people together, but they also can create barriers to how we see and experience other people (Dzur, 2018, p. 33). This relationship between individuals, institutions, and the outcome can be illustrated using Alfred Allen Schmid's Situation, Structure and Performance (SSP) model, which diagrams and critiques the connections between issues, the structure of those situations, and the way in which success is measured. Figure 1 displays the relationship between the three.

Figure 1: SSP Model



(Gaventa, 1982)

According to Schmid, the “linkage between situation, structure, and performance is a function of cognition and behavioral regularities of people experiencing the situation and their structured opportunity set” (Schmid, 2008, p. 13). Our understanding of the world is a construct of the

information we have gathered, experiences, and what we consciously are ingrained to believe.

This framework can be used to understand the way we approach work in community, specifically our understandings and interactions with one another. Using the SSP model, the situation describes the nature of the environment in which people are interdependent. The interdependencies are the connections and ways in which we rely on each other -where every person has a role and some form of influence on another. Understanding interdependencies is useful in thinking about the way we may engage with community-based work. These interdependencies are full of conflict and reflect an element of power and expertise. The structure of the model refers to the institutional arrangements that shape human interdependence, which can be fostered in the situation branch of the model and then spark strategies on how to deal with the situation. The third branch helps us decide how to measure the outcomes or improvements of the variables? The performance branch of Schmid's SSP model can assist us in understanding which metrics matter. However, there are still questions of who gets to decide how we measure success, which closely relates to the role of power. Overall, the SSP model assists in our understanding of different phenomena and how different facets are connected. Specifically, it allows us to apply the community and leadership theory which we learn through literature and experiences. We can use them to better understand specific community situations. For example, if a school has an issue with retention of people in after school programs, how can the school leaders effectively reach the students? They will have to explore why students are staying involved in the school- work outside of classes, lack of interest, other commitments, situations at home. How is the absence of students influencing the way other students feel about attending? Given what the school finds out, they then can develop strategies to deal with the specific problem that is going on. As leaders, we can develop a sense of why something exists,

but ultimately, we have to decide what to do with the information, which can be a challenge in many leadership roles.

Within the institutions (second branch of SSP), there are people with formal or informal leadership roles that have the agency to implement change and put theory into practice. Leaders can take many forms. When people use the term leader, it is often referring to the formal, appointed leader with formal power. However, while they can be the appointed people of a group, they could also be people in informal leadership positions. What does an effective leader look like? One's philosophy of leadership is constantly working and changing. Yet, there are key principles to leading community-based work that have shown success.

Leadership Theory

Leadership and one's philosophy of leadership plays a critical role in community-based work. The way in which a leader carries out her practice can inhibit or facilitate the way we build and foster community. Kenneth Pigg describes community leadership as reflexive; a process that cannot be learned outside of practice, but that requires experience and learning through practice: "It is not the leader who creates leadership, it is leadership that creates the leader. Through influencing, compromising, and sacrificing, community members create a vision of a future good from their collective wants and needs" (Pigg, 1999, p. 200). The way in which a leader is able to embrace her role of influence and delegate or share power is central to putting theory into practice. Pigg argues that community leaders need to "rely on networks and influence, with relationships developed through extensive interactions with community residents usually representing many different points of view or interests" rather than their formal authority and the power assumed as a result of their position (Pigg, 1999, p. 197). A key characteristic of

community leadership is the reliance on social networks and being able to connect with people in order to build trust. Similar to navigating expertise in new spaces, stepping back as a leader and making space to listen to others is a useful way to build those networks and institutional norms.

The generation of institutions and networks are a result of balancing and navigating power differences. Whether through formal or informal measures, leaders obtain a certain degree of power. In order to delegate and share power, leaders can first acknowledge themselves as learners and also followers. When leaders make themselves accessible and demonstrate that they too are learners despite their potential expertise or perception of being of power, it makes space for others to share their own knowledge and experiences, which can lead to collaboration and trust-building.

Acknowledging the power differences and potential dangers of power can be useful in exploring the concept of leadership. In his book, *Power and Powerlessness*, John Gaventa reflects on the way in which wealth and major social and economic disparities stem from issues of power. He discusses three faces of power, which can help us understand the way in which we think about power systems and their potential to do harm. The first dimension of power explored by Gaventa is the standard impression of power where there is one “who participates, who gains and loses, and who prevails in decision making” (Gaventa, 1982, p. 5). One person has authority over another. The second face of power describes when “power is exercised not just upon participants within the decision-making process but also towards the exclusion of certain participants and issues altogether” (Gaventa, 1982, p. 9). It is the continuation of the first dimension but also implies the issue of exclusion, mobilization bias, and interests. The third dimension of power describes when the first two are at play, but the powerful are also able to

shape the perceptions and realities and consciousness of the less powerful. Each of these dimensions can help dig deeper into some of the implications of power.

Gaventa raises questions about power throughout his book, but one particular question can lead to greater reflection on questioning or challenging the role of power and expertise. At the beginning of his book, he poses the question: “What is there in certain situations of social deprivation that prevents issues from arising, grievances from being voiced, or interests from being recognized?” (Gaventa, 1982, p.1). In other words, why don’t people rebel? There are several reasons why people do not push back, but it comes down to one central phenomena-power. When there is some form of formal authority with its own institutions and rules, people without that or excluded from those spaces are less inclined to feel like they can challenge the person in power. Gaventa argues that lack of participation or feeling like one can participate leads to this tendency.

This is similar to the tendency for people to accept expert knowledge without skepticism. Why are we inclined to believe what we are told? Frank Fischer’s notion of expertise closely ties to a person’s perception of expert knowledge. What is considered expertise? Gaventa argues that our consciousness is shaped from an early age. When we are given information, we are told to accept it and less inclined to be critical. Additionally, our consciousness is shaped by our surroundings and the experiences we have. It is not until we are exposed to new ways of thinking and being that we begin to question our initial understanding of the world and way we behave and interact with others. The basis of urban programming should do exactly that. It should provide opportunities for people to have experiences they otherwise would not.

Chapter 3

Methods and Methodology

Methods

This research project was conducted using a mixed methods approach that included key informant interviews, a case study, documentary publications, and participant observation. Semi-structured key informant interviews were taken from six different law enforcement officials varying in position and department. Preliminary contact prior to the start of this study occurred with an experienced DOJ Public Information Officer. Following this initial contact, a list of potential subjects was created and contacted via email to ask for their participation in the study. Over 25 people in the DOJ or community members in PSN areas were initially contacted to interview. Of those, six responded and completed a formal interview. Each respondent worked for the Department of Justice. The researcher made participants aware that the study is completely voluntary. They were informed that they could choose whether or not to participate, which questions to answer and how to answer them, and they may choose to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason and request that any information given during the interview be deleted from the record.

Of the interviewees, they each vary by specialty, years of experience, and gender. In each interview, the participants were asked a series of questions that related to their work and experience in the Department of Justice. To recruit participants, the researcher used initial connections to law enforcement personnel and after consultative conversations, continued using the snowball sampling method. Of the participants, members worked in the United States Attorney's Office, U.S. Probations and Parole Office, Baltimore Police Department, and the

Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). All data and names remain anonymous and consent was obtained from the participants to share their insights. Using this case study, the research will shed light on some of the inner politics of community programming and ways in which PSN can best serve its intended people.

In addition to formal key informant interviews, data was collected based on participant observation. The researcher attended public neighborhood council meetings for DC neighborhoods as well as had separate conversations with community outreach leaders through phone and email. Additionally, she sat in on meetings in local schools held by the Community Outreach Coordinator for the US Attorney's Office in DC. The program leads school initiatives and opportunities for younger people to start building leadership and professional skills. The observations provided a glimpse of the community space and demonstrated ways in which the government makes themselves accessible to citizens in the area and opens space for public participation. The meetings are held virtually and available for the public to join via Zoom biweekly. During these meetings, people in the neighborhood can receive information from their elected neighborhood commissioner and also have a chance to raise any questions or concerns.

From the data gathered by interviews, the researcher completed thematic analysis and found similar themes throughout the interviews. Using the common themes from the experiences of people who work in law enforcement and also the data from community members in PSN areas, the researcher can analyze some of the trends and draw from literature about ways the program can better serve the community while adapting to the current justice system.

Another method used in the research is documentary publications and one unpublished research study. The research refers to two recent studies related to Project Safe Neighborhoods. In 2017, the University of Maryland's Institute for Governmental Service and Research

conducted a study on the effectiveness of PSN interventions in Prince George's County, MD. Their research includes information on the increase in collaboration within the program as well as ways in which PSN impacts gun possession and can potentially reduce gun related crime. In 2019, the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research conducted a study on community perceptions of law enforcement and experience living in Baltimore. The unpublished report was submitted to the United States Attorney's Office in Baltimore. The research team administered a survey door to door in the Baltimore Tri-State area and received 100 completed surveys, 36.1% of the total households approached. The survey provides information on local demographic, perception of law enforcement and a community perspective on issues in most need of attention.

The methodological approach for this research is rooted in the philosophy and practice of *phronesis*. As described by Bent Flyvbjerg, "*Phronesis* requires an interaction between the general and the concrete; it requires consideration, judgement, and choice. More than anything else, *phronesis* requires *experience*" (Flyvbjerg, 2014, p. 57). This experience is what the research intended to explore. What is the experience of DOJ personnel who engage with Project Safe Neighborhoods? What is the experience of residents living in DC or Baltimore PSN areas? Phronetic research engages with these questions, keeping in mind the way in which values influence and drive human behavior and experience (Flyvbjerg, 2014, p. 130). It goes beyond questions of technical knowledge and leans into questions that relate to the values that shape one's understanding and experience. In conducting interviews or analyzing data, questions of these values are evident. What are the values of the practitioner? Whose values matter? Additionally, what are the epistemological politics at work? In order to answer these questions, this research also explores the role of power. This particular set of methods and philosophical underpinnings are valuable in answering the research questions because in their nature, they are a

form of praxis. The philosophical underpinnings of this research are inherently a form of praxis.

We engage with people to learn about their experience and perception of Project Safe Neighborhoods in a way that encourages participation and sparks reflection.

Strengths and Limitations

Through these methods, this study attempted to better understand how Project Safe Neighborhoods operates and function within community. Without formal interviews with community members, it is difficult to gather the lived experiences of people. Through the lens of DOJ officers and personnel, we can learn about the organizational structure and culture of the program. However, there is little that can be drawn related to community perspectives. Further, the interviews are a small sample, so it is not certain that the results could be applied to a larger sample. However, the information gathered is still valid and useful. Additionally, the interviews were conducted based on a set of broad, open ended questions, which made space for them to reflect and perhaps provide a more thoughtful and reflective response.

Given that the sample size is small and is composed solely of people who work in the Department of Justice, this research provides information on one sector of the program. It does not paint the entire picture of the programming of Project Safe Neighborhoods. With this frame and lens, there still exist space for better understanding of what people in the government see as important for the program. Additionally, there space to explore ways that the community sees the program could be more engaging and alter their way of practice. The community perspective can allow for the more comprehensive approach that PSN strives for in its programming.

The Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) meetings and school leadership meetings were held on Zoom, which limited the amount of people who could share their input in

the meetings. Given that they are remote and require internet, there are issues of exclusion. Further, the ANC meetings were held in the early evening, which could be difficult for residents with other responsibilities at the time to attend. These issues of access also limit the sample population and information that was shared in the meeting.

The unpublished final Hopkins report that I was granted access contains response bias. There were 400 households chosen and after no response, vacant lots, or ineligibility, there were 100 respondents who completed the survey. It is possible that the time in which the researchers recruited participants was less inclusive where residents could have been at work or on holiday. For example, the results show that a large proportion of the respondents' highest level of education was high school. It is possible that those with a college degree were working during the day if the study was conducted during work hours. The report does not have detail of the times in which the participants were recruited, but it certainly poses a weakness to the study in terms of who could respond and whose voice was heard.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Case

The purpose of federal programs under the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is to provide leadership and administrative support in criminal justice policy development in order to

provide support for government branches in strategizing ways to make communities safer. The BJA has supported hundreds of programs since it began in 1984 and while some have been able to thrive and succeed, others have struggled to keep up. Over time, programs have developed into more comprehensive approaches to dealing with crime. This research was inspired by interest in the termination of the former program, Weed and Seed which was a program that began in 1991. The program would invest in an area of high crime and first work to “weed out” the criminal activity. Police would crackdown in the area and the goal was to make it safer through increase in investigations and ultimately making arrests. The second phase of the program would be “seeding” portion where the program would bring in prevention, intervention, treatment and partner with private companies to bring in revitalization to the area such as a park, cleaner streets, or brightening up a street (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, 2004). At first, there were three pilot sites for the program and after ten years, there were almost 300 sites across the country. Based on evidence of the program, there were several very effective sites where the neighborhood areas became safer. Because it was successful in some cases, the government funding grew for the program over time. However, too many sites were in operation and it eventually lost effectiveness. It lost funding in 2009, but several sites had already come to a close.

Toward the end of the Weed and Seed era, a new crime prevention program began that was intended to provide a more comprehensive approach to community safety. Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is a federally funded outreach program with presence in hundreds of major cities across the United States. The program began in 2001 with the intent of improving law enforcement and community relationships while reducing criminal activity. Ultimately, it strives to lower the recidivism rates in the specific areas. The program would collaborate with

local and state officials with hopes to make a more lasting print on the area, which Weed and Seed was struggling to do. PSN has adapted and evolved since it began over twenty years ago. The program itself covers a broad range of areas and has proven to be successful. However, like most programming, there is space for improvement.

Chapter 5 Findings

Based on the data collected through interviews and data from an unpublished report, there are several common themes that illustrate the organizational structure of PSN from the perspective of law enforcement personnel in different agencies. The surveys provide a useful

background of the demographics of PSN areas, which is critical in understanding the experience of community members in order to better understand their views.

Johns Hopkins Community Survey Baltimore, MD

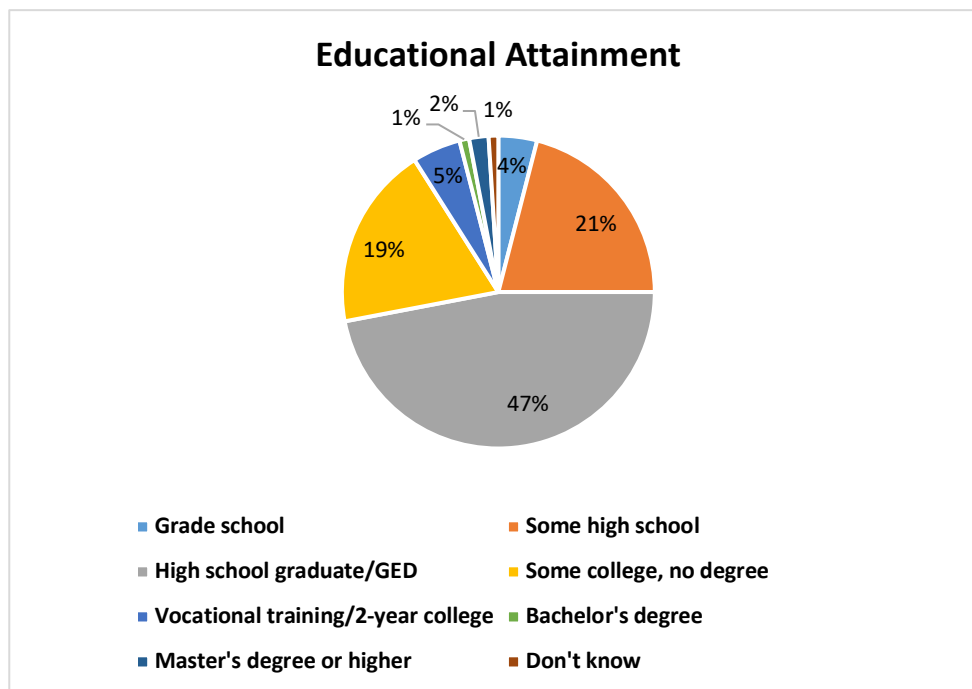
Researchers from Johns Hopkins University's Center for Gun Policy and Research conducted a study in 2019 that assessed and gathered information from residents in the Baltimore Tri-District area. The group gathered information on demographics, perceptions of the neighborhood, neighborhood safety, and the police. It can also provide insight related to trust building and respect toward law enforcement in the area and a general understanding of the areas that the community sees the government should focus its efforts.

Demographics

After 409 doors were approached (some unresponsive or ineligible), there were 100 completed surveys. Of respondents, 52% identified as female, 45% male, and 3% identified as neither male nor female. 94% of the respondents most closely identify as being Black/African American, 2% as White/Caucasian, 2% more than one race/identity, and 2% other or did not answer. Demographics of the survey population can be useful in how we manage and interpret the data.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of educational attainment for the 100 survey respondents. The highest level of educational attainment for almost half of the respondents (47%) was a high school or GED degree. 21% of the respondents complete some high school. 19% completed some college but did not have a degree. 3% of the respondents had completed a bachelor's degree or graduate degree.

Figure 2: Educational Attainment Baltimore Tri-Area



Source: Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research

The average age of respondents was 49.5 years with a standard deviation of 16.8 years. The youngest respondents were 18 and the oldest was 98, which creates a large spread of data points. This spread of data can impact the way in which we interpret the educational data. All respondents were at least 18, but the age could greatly impact the results of the data where there likely is no 18-year-old with a master's degree. The data is less reliable given that it does not show the ranges of ages and their highest level of education completed.

The neighborhood surveyed mostly contains residents who rent the space in which they live (62%). A quarter of the respondents own their homes and 9% live with a family member.

Key Survey Findings

Based on the survey, it is evident that the survey respondents feel like there are major issues in the area that need to be addressed: **crime (65%), drug use (65%), jobs (35%), vacant lots (32%), housing (32%), policing (19%), and schools (10%)**. Regarding the issues of housing and vacant lots, the survey did not explore either category except the question of living situations. No questions helped investigate employment or household income as the overall intent was to focus primarily on policing.

65% of respondents marked crime as a problem in the area, which can be related to several different areas of crime. When asked whether they feel unsafe or safe walking in their neighborhoods at night, the responses varied. 34% of respondents felt safe, 35% felt somewhat safe, 12% felt somewhat unsafe, 17% of respondents felt unsafe, and 1% of respondents did not know. The feeling of safety can also be related to race and gender. For example, women may find themselves more threatened walking by herself than a man would (Dugan, 2014).

Additionally, Black men and women are more likely to be seen as a threat than a white person or in certain areas and could even feel more threatened. Further, the feeling of safety could come from whether a person carries a weapon or not where a weapon provides a sense of security and protection if danger were to appear.

Understanding crime is complex, but one way of exploring the issue is studying the pathways of getting involved such as the use of guns and drugs. The survey asked questions related to both. Of the respondents, 74% felt concerned about the illegal gun carrying in their neighborhood. Additionally, 52% felt like if more neighbors had guns, the area would become less safe while 41% felt like it would stay the same. Additionally, 26% of the respondents had been a victim of a gun crime. 8% had carried a gun outside for self-protection. Relating to drug

sales, within 6 months of the survey, 3% had sold drugs. However, 23% had sold drugs in their lifetime.

The survey's intent was to gauge the way in which the community felt like they were supported by law enforcement and the general perceptions of the police. There were several questions that facilitated reflection about how the respondents felt about the police and calling the police if they felt unsafe. The responses imply the trust or lack of trust between community members and law enforcement.

The survey showed mixed responses for general perceptions of the police. Many people feel as if the police are doing too much in the area and are too forceful, while others feel like they are not doing enough. 64% of respondents felt like if the police were to terminate stop and search in their neighborhood, their perception of the police would either stay the same (41%) or improve (23%). Below shows some of the notable responses about perception of the police from survey respondents and their agreement with specific statements:

Figure 3: Perception of Police

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	Refuse to Answer
Baltimore Police Officers are stopping the people most responsible for crime in my neighborhood.	13%	31%	41%	12%	3%	N/A
Baltimore Police Officers are respectful when they interact	14%	39%	32%	11%	4%	N/A

with people in my neighborhood.						
Baltimore Police Officers use force only when necessary.	11%	28%	33%	20%	7%	1%
Baltimore Police Officers stop and search too many people on the street in my neighborhood.	15%	31%	39%	9%	5%	1%
A formal complaint against a Baltimore Police Officer would be investigated fairly and objectively.	9%	27%	40%	20%	4%	N/A

Source: Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research

The respondents' perception of the police is rooted in their experience with them. The survey noted that 52% of respondents claimed that they do not know the patrol officers in their area at all. Given that over half hardly know their officers, general distrust can exist as there is very little interaction between community members and their local officers. The general sense of distrust between respondents who live in the particular area of Baltimore and law enforcement is also evident in the way in which people feel toward the criminal justice system. For example, 83% of respondents would be unlikely or very unlikely to believe a Baltimore Police Officer's testimony without video evidence. What does this mean?

Implications of Hopkins Survey Findings:

The survey results reflect a variety of sentiments toward the BPD in the particular neighborhood that was surveyed. Generally, there is a distrust in the way in which people perceive the police in their neighborhood. For example, the question about serving on a jury is clear testament of the way in which an officer's word would not be trusted where 44% of the

respondents would most likely not believe their word. Additionally, 60% of respondents do not believe that a formal complaint against a BPD officer would be investigated fairly and objectively. Historically and with reoccurring situations of police brutality, law enforcement has struggled to bring the sense of trust to communities, so it is understandable that these sentiments exist. However, while many residents do not trust the neighborhood BPD and the motives of their work, some feel that they are doing a sufficient job and do trust them. The data above is reflective of this variety.

The lack of relationship building to build the trust is central to these findings. Only 19% of the respondents felt that they knew their patrol officers in the neighborhood. 78% felt like they did not know them very well or at all. Additional data from the report also displays very little officer interaction in the community. For example, 79% said that the patrol officers did not attend community meetings. At a recent ANC meeting for a DC district, the commissioner introduced the patrol officer in the Zoom meeting in order for the residents on the call to raise questions or concerns, however he was not in attendance. This is one example in another district where there was little engagement within the community by the officers, which creates more of a barrier between those who are in law enforcement and the community members they intend to serve.

There are several factors that could impact the response in this survey. First, over half (52%) of the survey respondents identified as female. Women are more likely to feel unsafe when alone at night than men which has been confirmed through multiple studies and surveys (Dugan 2014). In addition, there is a possibility for responses to be dishonest. While the responses are anonymous, the questions ask for personal information people may be hesitant to reply truthfully such as involvement in gun crimes or drug use.

Engagement Meetings

For this research, I sat in on two meetings related to PSN engagement. First, I attended a neighborhood advisory commission meeting for a local D.C. Ward. Second, I sat in on a meeting run by the Community Outreach Coordinator for the U.S. Attorney's Office also in Washington. At each meeting, I was able to better understand some of the specific programming that falls under the broad program of Project Safe Neighborhood and learn about some of the institutional norms and structure in the way each was run.

The meeting held by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) in Washington, D.C. demonstrated a few working practices of local democracy as well as exposed some of the structural barriers to participation. First, it reflected the structural composition of local D.C. government. Washington, D.C. is broken down into 8 different wards and each ward is broken down into their own specific neighborhood divisions. These 40 different neighborhood divisions each elect their Advisory Neighborhood Commission. For the case of this research, I was particularly interested in the structure of the meetings and the ability for residents to participate. Every month and potentially biweekly, the ANC holds a public meeting where members of the community can attend and raise concerns or ask questions. The meetings are structured formally where there is an agenda that the commissioners follow and a secretary who takes notes and does the minutes. For the ANC meeting I attended, there were about 20 people on the Zoom call. Of these 20, no law enforcement officer was in attendance. When a citizen raised a concern about the safety at a local convenience store, the head commissioner answered based on her knowledge and understanding, which did not lead to a solution. However, if a local officer was present, the issue could have been resolved quicker.

In addition to the ANC meeting, I virtually attended a leadership meeting for high schoolers run by a PSN program called Leadership Academy, which is coordinated by the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) in Washington. The program had run in the particular school for a few years, so there were current college students who returned to share their experience with Leadership Academy. The program aims to engage young students toward political participation through education on laws and policies, practice with legal writing, job fairs, and opportunities for advocacy. During the particular meeting I was able to attend, students were able to hear from past participants in the program about their career or college path. After talking to an alum as well as the coordinator of the program, it is evident that the students involved gain a deeper understanding of the law and develop an interest in studying government or pursuing opportunities they learn about through Leadership Academy.

The way in which the engagement coordinator from the USAO approached her work was one of compassion and service. While she did not want a formal interview, I was able to have conversation with her about how she sees her work and what it means to serve. As she started her work as a lawyer, she was eventually drawn her current role with a new group of people and more of a direct form of service. Her ability to connect with the students she works with is extremely unique. Her students look up to her and respect the way in which she treats them like adults. In the meeting for example, one could hear the excitement and pride she felt in hearing from one of her former students continuing law. It is clear that her ability to connect and build trust with the people she serves is powerful. The way in which she sees herself as a steward and one who is there to serve is essential in community development work as highlighted through literature.

Key Informant Interviews

The key informant interviews were conducted with personnel within the Department of Justice. Participants reflected on their involvement within PSN and their work with agencies such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO), U.S. Probations and Parole, and the Baltimore Police Department (BPD). Three of the interviewees work in the Tri-Area where the Hopkins study was conducted, and their highlights can also connect to the survey results. During each interview, participants shared specific insight on their understanding of PSN and the way in which their section of the program functions and could improve. They also provided information about their approach to their work and how they see their role in their agency. There were several common themes throughout the interviews that provide a sense of the program and ways in which the people working in the program see space for improvement.

Trends of Crime

A key theme that reoccurred through the interviews related to the way in which crime is a cycle. Baltimore has one of the highest homicide rates in the country, so there is a greater need for collaboration among agencies to tackle the issues in front as well as the underlying socioeconomic factors that are at play and causing a rise in crime. Depending on the different roles of the interviewees, they each had their own unique perspective about crime and the way in which it has changed since the beginning of their career. In general, based on responses from personnel, crimes are becoming more violent and the age of first arrests are younger, which changes strategies of enforcement. One interviewee from the U.S. Attorney's Office described the status and trends of joining local crime:

I think that these kids have seen the prestige, the accolades, the fun of being a criminal in these neighborhoods and they've grown up with it. And now they never even had the chance. They just went right into this line of work. So that is one of the biggest trends that I've seen is actual killers at the age of 16 and above... Since I started working two of the biggest trends I've seen is first, the defendants are younger and younger and violent.

Breaking the law is seen as a form of "prestige" for young people in certain areas of the city. From an early age, children are surrounded by the ability to join gangs or get involved with drugs and firearms as a career option. They see the nice cars, clothes, or community status as being something to strive for, which can lead them into getting involved earlier. One way in which PSN works to prevent some of this involvement was described by a person from U.S.

Probations and Parole:

Criminogenic risk factors are a set of applied across the criminal justice field as things that if you do not address these risk factors, then the likelihood of an individual who has committed criminal acts will continue to engage in that kind of antisocial behavior. We target criminogenic risks factors...Family is another one...if you continue to work at those, the science behind it says that you can reduce the likelihood of an individual engaging in the type of behavior that got them in trouble in the first place.

As the interviews continued to show, instability in the home was a common characteristic of crime related activity. Children who lacked a stable family income, housing, or had parents who were involved in drugs or firearms, more likely joined in the activity. What does this imply for prevention strategies?

Mission and Perspective of Work

Based on the interviews, the interviewees felt called to the service part of their work and acknowledged the challenges they face when working with individuals who likely will become incarcerated. Their backgrounds, in a few cases, motivated them to do their particular work. A few felt called to restore justice and do part in making differences in other people's lives.

A person from U.S. Probations and Parole described their initial call to their work: “I thought it always appealed to my overall sense of what I thought justice could be, and how I could impact a sense of social justice.” The call to serve is evident in the way in which they see their work. Another interviewee from the U.S. Attorney’s Office felt particularly compelled to engage in his own community with his close ties to the area he serves: “with respect to caring for this community and giving a damn about what happens here, my own family and everything, I think are pretty strong.” This connection to the space in which they serve can make it both motivating and also challenging for the interviewee. They raise their family in close proximity, yet it can feel a world away.

This notion of restoring justice relates to some of the existing literature on community engagement. How does the practitioner approach her work? What is her role? One particular interviewee from the U.S. Attorney’s Office reflected the programming principles of compassion, empathy, and trust while seeing the value in the “other”:

To not assume that they’re the worst person and to understand that but for the fact that my parents stayed together, and my dad was employed most of the time I was growing up and I have a really awesome husband. I could be in the same position. You just have to have that perspective.

The interviewee did not separate her work from herself. They feel compelled to acknowledge their existing privilege and understands that they do not need to perpetuate the sense of dehumanizing people who get involved in crime. More specifically, they feel drawn to acknowledge their humanness.

Having a sense of why a person engages in their work is helpful in understanding their practice. Several interviewees indicated that they had some law background or interest. One found that they were really good at their job and stuck with it. Another indicated they liked the

way in which they had a “direct impact on people’s lives”. Given their call to work, they felt obliged to share their experiences and personal narratives during the interview. The same interviewee from the U.S. Probations and Parole Office reflected more on the way in which they interact with people who are recently indicted:

When you walk into an individual's house and you're going to talk to them about maybe their methamphetamine use, and you see where they live and you know their background, because we all have all that information. It humanizes the person and it should. In some ways, it's stressful. Those setbacks that are tough, but it's part of the process.

Seeing where someone lives, their struggle to stay sober, or their family upbringing brings the interviewee closer to the issue they work with. This close proximity to the issue, as also described by a member of a different U.S. Attorney’s Office, generates a deeper call to the particular issue. The work becomes more personal and potentially more challenging where relationships can form or find common experiences with the other person.

An interesting discussion that circulated in three of the six interviews was the description of the crime or person committing the crime is the worst possible. Three of the six interviewees described the types of people who they arrest as being the worst possible people. There were three flagged phrases to describe the crime or people related to their work include. First, a member of the Baltimore Police Department described the crime “absolute worst of the worst and really violent”. An interviewee from the U.S. Attorney’s Office described the people they target where “we go after only the worst of the worst.” Third, the interviewee from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives described the activity as “the worst crimes in society.”

An interesting piece to these responses is the way in which some of the people who are being indicted have severe, underlying psychological issues that are the result of their upbringing. As some interviewees noted, there are several social and economic factors at play

here, which is where the community engagement, crime prevention and support services are critical in combatting the trends and cycles of crime that exist in many major U.S. cities.

Socioeconomic Underpinnings Fueling Crime

There were a few common themes related to the sources or facilitation of crime that reoccurred through the interviews. First, a few different people discussed the lack of stability at home or from an early age. The role of family was brought up in a few different interviews where the families had parent in the prison system whose child got wrapped up in similar activities. One interviewee from the U.S. Attorney's Office reflected on the way in which family and education can influence the likelihood of people engaging in criminal activity. They explained the way in which people need to hear that they are valued. They describe the practice of saying "Look, you made a terrible mistake, but I know you're a good person" and where "people need to hear that and that goes back to because they don't have a family that's telling them." They continue to reflect on the role of family in fostering a sense of purpose:

I am talking about any sort of family support, whether it be one mom, two moms, two dads, a dog, just something that gives these kids love and attention. So that's where it starts...quite frankly, don't have a stable household, however you want to define a household...You've got to have a stable home and you also have to have an education. And I don't think that those are a readily available in certain areas of our city and in a lot of major cities.

This sense of "love and attention" is what brings people to feel like they belong and are part of a stable, resilient community. When people feel like they can trust the people around them, find spaces where they can pursue their interests while feeling safe in school or public, they would be less likely to engage in behavior that would steer them the wrong direction. However, a different interviewee from the U.S. Attorney's Office reflected on the way in which some people never

have that chance to succeed. They are brought up in a system that already had their future set up for them:

But I really believe that a lot of the people that come into the criminal justice system. We talk about rehabilitation, right? A lot of these individuals never rehabilitated. They never had an opportunity or a chance to succeed maybe like you and I. They didn't have an intact family.

One example of this lack of opportunity and search for identity can be seen through the lens of gang membership. Gangs provide a sense of belonging and purpose that often lacks at home. Children join them in order to have a group to share experiences with. Additionally, if a family member is part of one, they can join more easily. In Prince George's County Maryland, for example, there is a large presence of MS-13 gang activity where there are often family links. An interviewee from the USAO relates upbringing to the close ties of gang formation, which facilitates the development of younger people getting involved:

When it comes to violent crime around here...MS-13 is associated with a specific set of countries, so you're only going to see exclusively folks that are of Hispanic and Latino origin. In the Black community and particularly communities that are under resourced and impoverished, that is a huge, huge percentage. A cycle, frankly, of people coming in. Their fathers, their kids, they are second and third generation.

The cyclical pattern of crime makes it challenging to mitigate and prevent. Because the ties are so deeply rooted, the solutions are complex and call for a deeper understanding of what lies beneath the issues. Why can't residents maintain their homes? How does the government assist community members in maintaining a stable household housing? What does the school system look like? Are their opportunities for youth involvement in the community? Is it easy to access transportation to these resources? Do people feel like they have the agency to speak up about these particular issues? There are endless questions that come with trying to prevent criminal behavior, which makes the work more challenging and complex.

As they discussed personal experiences dealing with families, emotion became a part of conversation, which displayed the sense of humanness that the interviewees felt toward their work and the people they serve. From talking to different practitioners and engaging with some of the literature on community, emotion can be a valuable asset to bring into a person's work. Much of the challenge is navigating or finding the balance between permitting emotion to pour into one's sense of purpose and providing space for rationality and less emotion driven decision making. Can the imbalance of subjectivity and objectivity in the context of this research challenge the validity or credibility of practitioners?

Project Safe Neighborhood Critiques and Improvements

As a program, how can PSN better serve the communities and families whose children are thrown into this cycle? The interviewees each had their own unique understanding of PSN and therefore, each felt differently in the way the program falls short. There were four main critiques of the program.

First, one interviewee brought forth the program's lack of **research**, which was also implied through some of the additional conversations. The practitioners believed that PSN strategizing could use some more data in order to adapt to the needs of the community. One interviewee from the BPD alluded to the usefulness of the Hopkins study and could not recall other instances where research was accessible:

I think there should definitely be some more research. I'd like to see a lot more, probably, research partners and projects involved in it...Because from my lens, it feels like the quality of the cases is improving, things are getting better, but unfortunately, the violent crime numbers are still really, much higher than I think any of us would like.

As someone who is doing the fieldwork, they would find it particularly useful to have more studies that explore what the community sees fit.

Second, responses showed the lack of **collaboration** within the program. PSN is a large umbrella program and it attempts to combat crime in a comprehensive way by working with other services in addition to policing. However, as a few interviewees suggested, if you are not on the executive level, there is very little collaboration with other sectors and personal interaction on the ground.

I try to stay in my lane and sometimes, frankly, I try and block out stuff that isn't relevant for me to hear...because it's like, that's your lane, that's your lane, that's your lane. And my lane is plenty busy.

If employees feel like they cannot overstep or collaborate with other agencies or departments, how will they tackle a multidimensional issue? There is no one solution that will suit every community. It would be beneficial if there were space for people to work with one another and not feel as if they are overloaded in one particular task that it prevents them from engaging with other people in the program.

Another respondent from the ATF reflected on the way in which they do not hear about people they arrest after they are in the hands of the Bureau of Prisons. After making an arrest, their agency has “no involvement from that point forward”. Unfortunately, years later, they may see the name again in the arrest record for a crime they committed after being released. Last year, the interviewee had one of these experiences with someone they arrested years before. Further, they described the way in which federal or state programming more broadly could do a better job in using resources to guide people back into the community:

And it's not just PSN program. I think it's just the recidivist rate in inner cities is high for a multitude of social and economic factors on the back end, especially post-release. And if more can be done on that, it might stem the flow of these repeat offenders that we see.

Their experience in ATF is extensive and they have been able to see the development of PSN as a program, as well as the way in which crime has risen in their particular region.

A third area where interviewees suggested improvement is **prevention**. When neighborhoods are being heavily policed and people are taken off of the streets, there is a greater need for different forms of support in the area. For example, one interviewee discussed the way in which after a takedown, their agency will use the space that was raided and turn it into a spot for job employment before it's turned back into a space for criminal activity. This approach to changing the characteristics of place does not happen very frequently. Further, the ability to people to access the resources provided by the state is difficult with unreliable public transportation.

One interviewee from the U.S. Attorney's Office believes that transportation could be more useful than some may initially presume:

Personally, I'm not sure the community outreach can be really as effective as maybe improving some of the other areas like schools and supporting families. I mean, frankly, even better transportation so that people can get to jobs. I'm not discounting community outreach. I think it's very important. I think that that could also improve.

This interviewee suggests that there are more tangible, specific ways to assist in preventing crime in addition to larger, preventative measures such as community outreach. Some of the smaller or more specific ways could be adding a light to a street or fixing a street sign in bad shape. Some of the simpler ways to increase community safety can ultimately prevent crime and do not require an immense amount of time. Another interviewee from the BPD also noted the call for more engagement on the community side: "But I think that really is probably one of the areas where it falls short... And that's a really hard thing, especially for these really complex

agencies, where a lot of things are top secret, to go out and do a lot of that backend stuff.” The way in which outreach is conducted has also seen improvement already, where in the Baltimore Police Department, they are aiming to improve the transparency between law enforcement and community members. The interviewee from the BPD described the way in which their agency is trying to do a “better job of messaging what we can to the community, to at least let them know that there was a take down, we arrested X amount of people, this is what they were involved in. And just showing a little bit more transparency to the process”. The interviewee acknowledged that this is a recent priority to their agency, and it has not always been the practice. They are attempting to gain the trust of their community and make people feel like they are part of the decision making and also aware of what may be going on behind the scenes.

Another piece of the prevention component is the ability for community members to access the resources. There is small supply for a very high demand. This shortage has led to longer lines and people left without any form of support. The BPD officer interviewed acknowledged the situation and provided an example of what his agency has done in the past, independent of PSN:

There's certainly a shortage of wraparound services for people. There's waiting lists for people to be able to get in to get help. That certainly is a problem. And that's why a lot of times, we try to take the services to the community.

In cases where accessibility is an issue, the program tries to bring the services to the community. One interviewee discussed the way in which the program has tried to turn abandoned or recently seized properties where criminal activity used to be active, into a space that is useful for the people such as a housing or job assistance site.

The decisions to include or exclude people from gaining access to services like housing or job assistance reflects the power within the institution of PSN. Who decides which residents to accept or reject? Is there equal access to the resources?

The fourth reoccurring theme from the interviews is the call to **build trust** between community and law enforcement. In three different interviews, people talked about the way in which trust needs to be built as it will create a greater capacity to make positive change in the particular area. If residents feel like their officers are fair and truthful, they will be more likely to confide in them and be open to their resources. However, if people are skeptical of the officers and their intentions, they likely will withhold information. A person at BPD discussed the way in which “the relationship between the community and law enforcement could always be better. A good way to gauge that is by the amount of information that we’re getting for homicide and shooting cases.” When people trust in their officers, they are more likely to report suspicions or information that they have. A person who works at the USAO also reflected on this idea of trust where prosecuting a case “was to have trust in the law enforcement agency that was communicating with me and the individuals involved.” There is a sense of transparency and respect between both parties, which today and historically is not entirely in practice. The interviewee from the U.S. Probations and Parole Office described the trust that exists or fails to exist in minority communities as a “huge issue right now”. Yet, this has been an issue since the police force emerged.

The Role of Choice

Three different interviewees discussed the role of individual choice. The government or program can provide the best resources for people, but ultimately, it is up to the individual to

decide whether to utilize the support. One U.S. attorney highlighted the idea that “you have all your services and then it’s just kind of up to the individual.” In addition, because people may not have access to the support they need, it can be the responsibility of the program to “go where they [people in the community] are”. By bringing resources to the people who need them, they will be more likely to utilize them and also develop a sense of trust for the people who are serving. Yet, they decide whether to use what is provided. The interviewee from the Baltimore Police Department discussed the importance of making it clear that they are conscious of the potential threat that a person may pose to their community:

“contact with them early on and say, ‘Hey, we know about you. Here’s the resources that are available to you. If you want to take this olive branch, here’s how to do it. We’ll help you do it. And then if you don’t do it, we are going to arrest you. There is a consequence of your activity’”.

By being clear about the extent to which they will provide support, there is a clear set boundary and opportunity for prior offenders to get out of their situation. The person from U.S. Probations and Parole summarized the way in which the individual has the power to decide where “there’s a lot of programmatic opportunities. But if somebody doesn’t want to do them, they’re not forced to do them.” The services may be accessible, and the individual could have all of the information about what their life could look like if they commit another felony, but in the end, they have their own capacity to make the decision.

One element that was not explored during this interview process was why communities would steer away from accessing resources in front of them. Given the survey data and the general understanding of some interviewees on the current relationship between the public and law enforcement, there is very little trust between underserved communities and people with formal authority. While they answered questions of improvements to the program, they failed to

acknowledge the systemic issues that are facilitating this relationship, which historically and still can be built on distrust, violence, and racism.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusion

Community based programming is focused on the people and the places they live with the potential to tackle community centered issues. The problems they try to combat are complex, multifaceted and require solutions of the same nature. No one solution works for every area, as communities are unique and have their own structural, cultural and socioeconomic components that distinguish them from one another. The program structure of Project Safe Neighborhoods and the practicing principles reflect the theories of development introduced in this paper. The theories of community and leadership can be applied to enhance our understanding of PSN and the way in which the program navigates power relations and attempts to complete its goals and mission.

In relation to community theory, as Pigg notes, communities are the spaces and field of social interaction where people can find common ground and interests, security, and a sense of purpose (Pigg, 1999). In the communities of DC and Baltimore, the neighborhoods that PSN focuses on are seeking a greater sense of security. While the data was limited, the interviewees suggested that residents were concerned of safety. The way of increasing safety collectively can make space for people to find spaces of social interaction grounded in common interests. They can go to the stores and feel safe walking alone to meet a friend for coffee. This general improvement connects to Wilkinson's understanding of community development, where there is an improvement for community wellbeing, which is instituted through "configurations in ecological, cultural, social, psychological, and chance factors which figure in change in the local

society” (Wilkinson, 1972). The cultural and social ties within the areas PSN serves are deeply rooted. For example, in the neighborhood surveyed by Hopkins, the average number of years the resident had been in Baltimore for an average of 41.9 years. Like many urban areas, people tend to stay in the city if they have social or cultural ties to the particular area. In the case of PSN, there is an issue of safety as part of wellbeing in the community, so the federal and state governments aim to tackle the issue through programming and an attempt to collaborate. In addition to safety, the program helps guide community members to resources that could help with job searches, school programs, or housing support, another element of community wellbeing. PSN does not directly provide the support but can be a guide for people towards services that can directly help. Like Wilkinson describes, there is no final state of “development,” yet PSN can be seen as a form of development where it intends to foster positive action in the community with the overarching goal of increasing community safety and wellbeing.

The leadership theories as discussed by Pigg are reflected and also challenge through the practice of PSN. For example, Pigg discusses the way in which leadership is reflexive and emerges from experience. In the case of PSN, the people with formal leadership roles have been in law enforcement or their agency for over 15 years. Yet, there is also an absence of some of this experience for leaders to emerge. PSN is a relatively young program and in D.C., for example, it is beginning to collaborate with other agencies like the U.S. Probation and Parole Office. This relationship is new, so there is no one with experience on how the program will fit with the work of the agency. Additionally, leaders in higher positions may not have experience with working in the community engagement piece as these programs kicked off and gained strength in this century.

In addition to the experiential component of leadership, there is also a social element. Pigg describes the way leaders “rely on networks and influence, with relationships developed through extensive interactions with community residents” (Pigg, 1999, p. 197). The leaders who engage with PSN programming need to be able to work with one another. It cannot be a “stay in your lane” relationship. Rather, regardless of position, personnel should feel like they can work with other departments. Many of the personnel had their networks, but most were within their particular agency.

Many of the interviewees felt called to their work as an act of service. As DePree describes, leaders can also be stewards (DePree, 1987, p. 12). They can provide their own knowledge and also be opened to learning from community-embedded knowledge. This way of leading or practicing a particular role enables space for trust building between leaders and community members. According to DePree, by stepping back and taking on the role of a learner, the leader or practitioner is able to demonstrate that there is space for other people to share their own knowledge and take on a leadership role of their own. Yet, the structure of PSN appears to be very top-down. There is not necessarily the community embeddedness that it intends to meet. There may be collaboration and space for inquiry among PSN personnel, but very little with the people they serve in the community. This lack of collaboration could be a result of the structure of PSN as it is one large program with several smaller efforts underneath. Yet, based on the survey, meetings, and interviews, it appears there is space for the program to really engage with those it serves.

The principles of democratic and collective participation are present in aspects of the work that PSN does in community. For example, the Advisory Neighborhood Commission meeting is one example of democratic participation. The meetings are designed to be spaces

where residents can come together into an open forum and provide insight of their experience living in the specific area, raise any concerns, and have the chance to ask questions to their local leaders. Additionally, there is opportunity for residents to share ideas and collaborate with each other. The meeting is run in a way that has formal structure, where minutes are set aside for local leaders followed by an open space for the public to participate. While it can be successfully democratic, there are also inhibitors to full collective participation. For example, the time of the meetings could conflict with people who work in the evening or have other responsibilities. It would be interesting to explore how the times of the meetings were decided and whether residents had input in that decision.

Like with the ANC meetings, PSN navigates tensions between knowledge systems and implications of power. The relationship between expert and local knowledge systems are seen between people who have formal authority (DOJ personnel or programmers) and those they intend to serve (residents). The way in which knowledge is translated from people with formal knowledge to the people that could benefit from the program is important in understanding the relationship between the two parties. How accessible is the information? How do people in the DOJ take in data and make decisions with or for the community? Whose voice matters? One reflection of some of the power dynamics are between individuals in the DOJ who work in the field versus members who may sit at a more formal, higher position. There is much more collaboration on the higher levels than people doing the field work. Why is this the case?

Part of navigating the power dynamics between experts and people considered non-experts is the capacity to build trust. As discussed in the interviews, trust between community members and law enforcement lacks. Some people do feel like their officers are providing sufficient support, yet others feel like they do too much or are not engaged enough. The

program's ability to foster a sense of connection with community members will shape its outcomes. When people feel like they are treated fairly and their voice counts, there can be more space for engagement and opportunities for the program to grow.

Leaders are the ultimate decision makers and can influence the perception of people, movements, or phenomena. In the 1970's when Nixon declared the "war on drugs," drug addiction was treated as a crime, rather than a public health issue. Fortunately, over time, the understanding of crime and factors that impact the behavior became more widespread. The potential solutions developed into alternative ways of combatting crime. Rather than putting all energy towards locking people up, prevention and treatment became a strategy. Programs were formed to help people return to their community after they were released from prison or engage with youth before they could be encouraged to participate in gangs. These programs develop a sense of humanness in the way we support one another as they sought to meet people where they were and provide resources that could change someone's circumstances.

The interviews, survey, and community meetings demonstrated the presence of numerous community programming principles within PSN. Yet, above all, they reflect the tension between structure and agency. We can better understand a particular individual and their actions when we know about the structure that puts them in a particular situation. The role of race, socioeconomic status, culture, and upbringing shape a person's consciousness which guide our decision making. As multiple DOJ personnel described, individuals have their own choice. Yet, while they individually are able to make decisions, they are part of an overarching system that influences their individual choices and behaviors. Once we explore and learn about the structure, we can understand agency in a different light.

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Education

The Pennsylvania State University 2018—Present

(B.S.) Community, Environment, Development *College of Agricultural Sciences*
(Minor) Spanish *College of the Liberal Arts*

- Schreyer Honors College
- Presidential Leadership Academy

The Academy of the Holy Cross (Bethesda, MD) 2014-2018

- Sancta Crux Scholar
- National Spanish Honors Society
- Washington College Environmental Stewardship Award

Professional Experiences

Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education

Research Assistant, *January 2021-Present*

- Work closely with Dr. Justine Lindemann and Dr. Ted Alter, professors in Sociology and Agricultural Economics, on projects related to community engagement and translational research
- Projects focus on programs in PA related to youth, distributive justice, and the translation of knowledge between those considered experts and members of the local community
- Contribute to literature reviews, interviews, qualitative data analysis, as well as project planning and design.

Economics 104: Introduction to Macroeconomics

Learning Assistant, *August 2020-December 2020*

- Facilitated small group discussion during class by answering questions from students and providing feedback for the professor.

Asherah Foundation, Washington, D.C.

International Development Intern, *June 2020-August 2020*

- Designed collateral development projects with my team that would increase constituent engagement
- Conducted research on women's health clinics in Latin America to partner with the organization

M.C. Elite Lacrosse Club

Youth Lacrosse Coach, *Summers 2017-2020*

- Had primary coaching and supervisory responsibilities for first and second grade girls; taught skill basics with a focus on sportsmanship and enjoyment.

Catholic Charities, Washington D.C.

Social Services Intern, *May 2018-June 2018*

- Coordinated volunteers at various Catholic Charity sites in the D.C. region
- Assisted in organization of events at local homeless shelters.

Leadership and Service

Penn State Athletics Department

Member and Captain of Women's Lacrosse Team, *August 2018-Present*

- Recruited member of the varsity Women's Lacrosse Team managing full academic course load and 20+ hours of training each week
- Voted captain to help facilitate leadership on the team and influence others during the year and be liaison between the coaches and administration and my teammates

Presidential Leadership Academy

Program Member, *April 2019-Present*

- Participate as one of 30 of the 2022 class to participate in three-year seminar taught by the university's president and Dean of the Honors College to hone leadership, critical thinking, debate and problem-solving skills

Athletic Director's Leadership Institute

Group Member, *August 2021-Present*

- Selected by coaches to be in group that focuses on fostering our own leadership skills to be more effective teams and leaders while collaborating with other athletes.

ESL Farming Engagement, Penn State

English Teacher, *August 2021-December 2022*

- Completed course that taught us strategies to teach English as a second language
- Weekly visited Latino migrant dairy farm workers in rural PA to teach English and participate in a shared cultural learning and language experience.
- Planned lessons, practiced Spanish, and learned about dairy farming

EarthDNA Ambassadors

Ambassador and Teacher, *May 2020-March 2021*

- Applied leadership skills to engage and inspire local grassroots movements related to climate change.
- Taught negotiation tactics to new program participants in the context of leadership practice.

Awards

All Academic Big Ten

Big Ten Distinguished Scholar

All Sportsmanship Award

Provost Scholar

Dean's List all Semesters