DISSERTATION

LEADING WITH RESIDENT VOICES: FACILITATING RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

TOWARD INCLUSIVE, SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

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TOWARD INCLUSIVE, SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

The word "sustainable" has become a buzzword in environmental, social, and economic

development. However, as it relates to "community", it refers more closely to the way citizens

organize themselves and create social connections. Furthermore, *social* sustainability is more

closely linked to agency, self-efficacy, social capital, and engagement, with a view to enact

inclusive and equitable social change. The focus of this study was to examine how participants

residing in an affordable housing complex define inclusive community, what challenges to

creating an inclusive community they experience in their daily life, and what best practices they

believe exist in the community to work toward creating an inclusive, socially sustainable

community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield"

- Alfred Lord Tennyson

For the last three years I've referred to myself as "the accidental doctoral candidate". This doctoral program brought me hope and a purpose at a difficult time. I am grateful for this journey. In recognition and appreciation for their guidance and accompaniment, thank you:

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My sisters who challenged me to remember my upbringing and lovingly pointed out our shared history of *striving, seeking, finding*, and *not yielding*.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Stephen Joe Silva, whose love has carried me through life's many challenges. Thank you for your commitment, support, and patience throughout this doctoral journey and almost three decades of marriage. To my beloved Uncle Isaac John Michaels, R.I.P, who was my first teacher. To my birth and adopted children, Ashlene M. Silva Dybus, Mario F. Silva, son-in-law William Dybus, and Manuel Garcia, who inspire me to keep becoming a better version of myself. To my mother-in-law, Susan Silva, for cheering me on. To my siblings, Morajee Naik, Simone Hagfeldt, and Melissa Naik, and my extended family in South Africa for always remembering that *blood is thicker than water*. Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the Almighty God, by whose grace anything is possible.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research study was designed to facilitate a dialogue between residents and management to develop inclusive, socially sustainable community in a nonprofit administered affordable housing complex. In his theory of human motivation, Maslow (1943) presupposed human beings are continuously striving toward self-actualization – a "desire for self-fulfillment" by satisfying a hierarchy of needs (p. 382). Once basic physiological needs are met, human beings strive toward gratifying higher needs like increased self-esteem and the fulfillment of their highest potential. According to Maslow, after air, water, food, shelter, and clothing needs are satisfied, the third most important need is "affection and belongingness" (p. 380). Belonging in this context equates inclusion - to be integrated into the life of the community. For example, residents ideally fully participate in the care of the grounds, social events, and experience equitable access to available resources. In a community context, inclusion is a foundational element of social sustainability. Relational boundaries span the entire housing complex where residents from one unit block may relate to residents from blocks located across the parking lot, or even across the street. For residents in the complex of note to reach goals of self-actualization, efforts must be made to foster a deeper sense of inclusion.

In a socially sustainable community, residents believe they: (a) have agency, (b) feel a strong sense of connection, (c) share in communal activities, (d) participate in decision-making for the good of the whole community, and (e) support each other well into the future. Bandura (2012) contended people who operate in an agentic capacity, "create environments that enable them to exercise better control of their lives" and that agentic activity varies depending on the changeability of the environments (p. 12).

Since residents in this complex may lack direct control over decision-making, collective agency may be more effective than personal or individual agency. Therefore, residents can only achieve their collective goals through collaboration (Bandura, 2012). Residents can use social capital individually or collectively to bring about change. These individuals or groups can act as "nodes" or leaders in the community to achieve the goals of creating an inclusive, equitable community. Equity and inclusion means everyone in the complex being represented in decision-making regarding the good of all residents regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. However, while residents struggle to maintain the lowest achievement on Maslow's hierarchy, food and shelter, working toward inclusive, socially sustainable community may be a moot point.

A prevailing myth is that providing financial assistance alone to people in poverty will enable them to transition into home ownership and mainstream society. Historically, affordable housing development illustrates a glaring absence of the intentional institution of transformational social structures that enable people in poverty to self-actualize. People living in affordable housing can lift themselves out of poverty, but may need mindset adjustments and skill development in personal finances, social-emotional well-being, resource acquisition, and opportunities to explore and develop agency already present within the community. Together, residents in the affordable housing complex of note can explore how they react to their circumstances. They can identify challenges and implement best practices for sustainable social change. This study was designed to identify participants' perceptions of their affordable housing community with the intent of making recommendations for future participation in decision-making regarding community life, inclusion, equity, and social sustainability.

Significance of the Study

Over time, residents in the housing complexes administered by the above mentioned housing nonprofit have been perceived by the management as living in silos. As part of its five-year strategic plan, this affordable housing nonprofit organization lists resident engagement as a major goal with the expected outcome toward equity and inclusion by means of greater resident participation in decision-making. Some researchers contended the advent of technological advances have decreased the need and value of interpersonal social contact among people (Bandura, 2001; Misra et al., 2014; Shakya & Christakis, 2017). However, in impoverished communities, access to such technologies may not exist or are accessible by only a portion of the community. Human interaction is still preferable to virtual interaction and "for most people, place-based relationships are still an important feature of human existence" (Bridger & Luloff, p. 383). This research study is the first of several that will systematically engage residents in higher levels of participation in decision-making by facilitating a dialogue towards participation between residents and management. In effect, the primary aim of the organization is to lead with resident voices; therefore, having a representative sample of resident input in this housing complex is an essential step in working toward greater collaboration. While diverse individual and group interests may exist in communities, identifying and building on linkages in different social fields may lead to more inclusive decision-making processes (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In recent years, property managers in the organization's complexes have reported an increase in the numbers of resident complaints regarding noise disturbances, pet feces removal, conflict between neighbors about children, and criminal behavior. The board of directors recognizes the hierarchical organizational structure is counterproductive to creating housing communities where residents can settle disputes among themselves or have the kind of community where mutual

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respect is cultivated. In this relationship the Board acts in a paternal role while residents perceive their autonomy to be disrespected (Cornell, 2015). Ultimately, this study could impact future research by providing a model for how to engage residents in decision-making toward greater agency in their communities.

Since the inception of the National Housing Act of 1934, nonprofit housing providers have flourished in the construction of housing across the nation. Large nonprofit corporations can pool their resources to provide resident and community services, "beginning but not ending with housing" (National Affordable Housing Trust: Bridge Housing, 2020). For smaller nonprofits like the one in this study, grant funding is readily available for the construction of homes, but funding is lacking for the resources to turn housing complexes into inclusive, socially sustainable communities. For this organization, collaborating with a graduate student conducting a research project on inclusive sustainable community development was a win-win scenario. Furthermore, research literature is rife with studies about sense of belonging, equity and inclusion, and other socially sustainable issues, but very few studies have been conducted within small community based nonprofit organizations (Crowley, 2003; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Cunningham & McDonald, 2012; Engdahl, 2009; Gallagher et al., 2015). This research study could be used as a rationale for policy initiatives that include funding for supportive services in addition to capital investment in non-profit affordable housing development. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic has accentuated the need to have communities that are closely connected and have sustainable supportive structures in place. Most notably, with learning going 100% virtual for a significant portion of the school year, the need for close community networks cannot be underscored more. While this study is not about the effects of the coronavirus on community,

the researcher believed participants may respond differently from how they may have responded before the pandemic.

Purpose of the Study

Social sustainability researchers struggle to define assessment indicators or link causes and effects in problem-based approaches where stakeholders are trying to understand a particular social phenomenon or a concept such as community (McKenzie, 2004). The lived experiences of participants creates a vast array of perspectives of the community rooted in ethnicity, economic status, cultural upbringing, or religious beliefs. The purpose of this study was to understand how participants defined community in an affordable nonprofit housing complex, and to have participants identify challenges to and best practices for developing inclusive, socially sustainable community. Participants included adults, senior citizens, and middle school students from fifty households ranging in age from 11 to over 55 years. Findings from this study are used to present recommendations for resident participation an inclusive, socially sustainable community.

Research Questions

Approaching the development of inclusive social sustainability from the participants' perspectives utilizing focus group methodology, the research questions were:

1. How do participants define inclusive community?

2. What challenges to inclusive community do participants identify through their lived experience?

3. What do participants believe are the best practices to develop or strengthen community?

Context of the Study

Historically, residents living in affordable housing communities have found themselves to be economically and socially marginalized in their hometowns and cities. The following overview may help the reader understand the difficulties families with low-income experience in

obtaining housing while also struggling with feeling included and respected. The intent of this historical overview is to illustrate the financial and psychological impact stereotypes have on agentive behavior toward developing inclusive, socially sustainable community.

National Level

The quest for what was historically referred to as *low-income housing* and is now termed *affordable housing* has a longstanding history in the United States beginning with: (a) the construction of public housing projects after the Great Depression, (b) housing shortages experienced after World War II, (c) urbanization during the 1960s, and (c) the advent of government housing vouchers for low-income earners in the 1970s (Von Hoffman, 2012). Specifically, the National Housing Act of 1934 made it possible for nonprofit organizations to seek federal funding for the construction of large-scale affordable housing projects. In the last two decades, federal housing construction has remained virtually unchanged, while the nonprofit housing sector has usurped a significant percentage of the affordable housing construction in the United States (Swanstrom, 1999). Residential mobility is greatly impacted by the availability of affordable housing. A state-by-state analysis of low-cost rental units revealed that from 1990 to 2017, the number of low-cost rental units averaging $600 per month were reduced by four million, while units renting for more than $1000 per month increased by 10.3 million. In other words, based on the 1990 Decennial Census, affordable rental units for low-income families fell

21 percentage points from 46% to just 25% in that time frame (La Jeunesse et al., 2019). Of the available affordable units, only 1.5 million are eligible for housing assistance through public and private sources and federally funded housing vouchers. Unfortunately, housing vouchers are not an entitlement and "only about one third of families whose income makes them eligible to receive any housing support" (Institute of Medicine, 2010, p. 42).

While providing affordable units of quality construction is a noble venture, those who occupy them - bedrock essential service providers to society such as grocery store clerks, restaurant workers, janitorial staff, construction workers, childcare workers, and home health aides - experience increasing financial and social pressures in modern society. Ross and Bateman (2019), in a report on the low wage workforce, found based on their earnings of 150% below the poverty line, 38 of 54 million total low wage workers "face a greater likelihood of experiencing economic disadvantage than the 3% mid/high wage workers" (p. 9). From 1978 to 2007 alone, cost burdens for households with children more than doubled from 15% to 37%, with very low-income renters who are ineligible for housing assistance facing severe housing problems hovering around 36% (Federal Agency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2009). However, the focus of this research study was not so much about brick and mortar, but what happens between the walls to the residents of affordable housing projects in terms of inclusion and social sustainability.

Local Level

The following two sections describe the context of the study at the community level.

The Struggle for Affordable Housing: A Brief History in Excerpts

Before the researcher considers the issue of social sustainability, it suffices to demonstrate this city's long history of struggling to provide housing for its workforce. This overview emphasizes the imperative to accelerate a movement toward social sustainability in

affordable housing. The following excerpts were taken from the city's newspaper and other local

publications. They illustrate the longstanding need and advocacy for affordable housing on

behalf of vulnerable citizens who ensure that the citizens of this city have clean streets, safety,

food to eat, and educated children.

> The lack of affordable housing in ... has become a major social issue in the city, due in
> part to low vacancy rates for rental units in the city. Also, census information shows that
> half of the city's renters spend at least 30 percent of their income on housing (Baun,
> 1992).

> The working poor are often the last to be served. The Housing Authority meets the needs
> of the very lowest income people… What happens then is, often, the working poor don't
> get into housing simply because they're not the very poorest. We want to have (this
> complex) so we don't discourage people from wanting to work **(**Housing Nonprofit
> Founder, October 1993).

> This couple moved here from Charleston, S.C. looking for a better life. What they found
> was a city with sky-high housing costs compared with back East…and soon found
> themselves living with friends, unable to afford their own place (Porter, 1994, B5).

The following excerpt is from a report on the city council's debate about its role to provide

affordable housing:

> Complex situations – such as the availability of affordable housing in [this city] - do not
> have simple solutions. That was the consensus among city council candidates who
> appeared on Tuesday at the forum sponsored by the Affordable Housing Taskforce…"
> (Duggan, 1997).

> In a newspaper interview, the housing nonprofit founder reiterated that workforce

housing was designed for people who provided essential services to the community, but

prevalent stereotypes prevented them from gaining access to mixed residential development.

Addressing issues such as "Not in My Backyard (NiMBY)" syndrome and general ignorance

with regard to citizens living in affordable housing she stated, "The mental picture most people

have of (those in affordable housing) is someone on welfare who isn't pulling his weight. They

are teachers, nurses, social workers and retail employees – a wide range of people" (Housing Nonprofit Founder, 1995).

In a 1997 presentation to the Interfaith Council in a forum on affordable housing, nonprofit housing executives raised awareness of the plight of workers seeking affordable housing stating, "Affordable housing is disappearing in our community. Ninety five percent of those seeking help [are] working families and about 90 percent said they needed help finding affordable housing" (Nonprofit Housing Administrator). Another article published in 1999 decried rising rents, demonstrating while jobs in the city were readily available, wages were not commensurate with the cost of living. Already in 1999, "only 5% of the city's housing stock [was] available to low-income wage earners" driving up rents and causing most workers to spend upwards of 50% of their income on housing" (*The Coloradoan*, 1999). Fast forward two decades, and the affordable housing crisis is now a much more serious problem as the city's population has mushroomed from just over 145,000 to over 170,000 citizens (World Population Review, 2020). City officials are beginning to address concerns. In the last half of 2020, several affordable housing projects are in the proposal stages with varying levels of resistance from prospective neighbors citing concerns about increased traffic, lower property values and wildlife habitat (Ferrier, 2020). A recent ballot measure that could have increased the affordable housing inventory was defeated in favor of open space initiatives. Currently, city officials predict by 2024, there will still be a shortage of 800 affordable housing units after increasing existing units by 4,330 (Ferrier, 2020). While the city struggled with affordable housing as a problem with no easy answers, the founders of the nonprofit housing provider saw it as an opportunity to serve the community.

Housing Nonprofit Steps In

Rooted in their Roman Catholic faith and the belief in Catholic Social Teaching, one of the founding board members stated, "A group of private citizens [was] assembled by [the founder] to find solutions to what we think is a growing problem in [this city], and that is affordable housing, especially for the working poor" (T.F. as cited in Feeley,1993). Bringing together financial executives, philanthropic organizations, city government and private donors, the group established a housing nonprofit in 1992. The organization built its first affordable housing project in 1994, consisting of 20 two- and three-bedroom apartments featuring a playground, coin operated laundry, community room, storage units, balconies, and patios. Two decades later, the portfolio includes several housing developments across two counties, with ongoing remodeling projects to keep the properties safe and attractive. This housing nonprofit is still at the forefront of advocating for affordable housing while low-income wage earners still fork out too much of their income for housing, and the stigma of living in affordable housing has remained virtually unchanged. Commendable is the organization's ability to provide housing complexes that are of quality construction, situated in mixed residential neighborhoods. However, while the provision of quality housing was a primary goal, an equally important aspect of providing housing included the goal of social sustainability through community building and supportive services provision. Woodcroft et al. (2012) defined social sustainability as:

> …a process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote well-being, by understanding what people need from the places [where] they live and work. Social sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world – infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve. (p. 16)

The above definition of social sustainability reflects most appropriately the ideal towards which the organization strives. Ultimately, this research study is designed to address the goal of

including resident voices in the decisions that affect their lives. More specifically, the primary goal of the study was to discover, through focus group research and individual interviews, to what extent participants experience community and agency in establishing inclusive, socially sustainable communities. In other words, an emphasis was placed on the "systems for citizen engagement" in the social sustainability definition coined by Woodcroft et al. (2012).

Epistemological Lenses

Social Cognitive Theory

Ecological and economic sustainability deal with the hard assets of life, whereas social sustainability resides in the hearts and minds of people. Thus, social cognitive theory makes sense when considering the elements that comprise social sustainability, particularly agency, self-efficacy, and social capital. Social cognitive theory, developed by psychologist and Stanford University Professor Emeritus Albert Bandura, holds that agency - people's ability to exercise their will to bring about change in their lives - is an important aspect in effecting social change. From this perspective, "to be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning of life circumstances" (Bandura, 2002, p. 270). The primary element of agency is self-efficacy, which implies individual choice and actions taken to determine the course of one's own life. However, in communities, self-efficacy must be bound to collective efficacy, the collaborative implementation of self-efficacy, which is most impactful when groups of people strive toward a common goal. Bandura's (2002) tenets of social cognitive theory most relevant to this study are:

- People bring their influence to bear directly on themselves and their environment in managing their lives.

- People do not live their lives autonomously. They [must] pool their knowledge, skills, and resources, provide mutual support, form alliances, and work together to secure what they cannot accomplish on their own.

- The locus of perceived collective efficacy resides in the minds of group members. It is people acting in concert on a shared belief …that is doing the cognizing, aspiring, motivating, and regulating [of group behavior].

- People with resilient efficacy and strong prosocial purpose often subordinate self-interest to the benefit of others.

Considering social cognitive theory, the researcher's perspective on the study is residents in the community already possess the knowledge and skills to define for themselves and build what they perceive to be an inclusive, socially sustainable community. What is lacking is a process by which residents can explore the inherent agency, self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and other elements of social sustainability that is prevalent within the community.

Social Sustainability

Since the Brundtland report on global sustainability, "Our Common Future," was drafted, the global focus shifted from economic and ecological sustainability to include a stronger focus on social sustainability (United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED), 1987). Despite the prevalent use of the term *sustainability*, there is little agreement on what *social sustainability* entails in research literature. Most notable is the current understanding that definitions of social sustainability are as diverse as the practitioners thereof. Definitions of sustainability and social sustainability are discussed in more detail in the literature review section of this dissertation. The underlying assumption is residents in the affordable housing complex of note can decide what social sustainability means for themselves and their community.

Enter the Coronavirus Pandemic

In early February 2020 news of the COVID-19 coronavirus spread around the globe. By the second week of March, the entire country was under stay-at-home orders. For people already living life on a shoestring, the virus had an immediate impact. The housing nonprofit in this study mobilized its staff to address existing inequalities that would be exacerbated not only by infections, but unemployment, food shortages, and childcare concerns. At the time, the researcher was an intern with the organization with the intent to develop relationships with future study participants. Unfortunately, the virus prevented any in-person contact between staff and residents. In mid-March, an outreach team, including the researcher, made phone calls to each household in the portfolio to determine the impact of COVID-19. Seventy six percent of the portfolio responded to the five-question survey addressing issues such as: (a) having access to the internet, (b) childcare concerns, (c) access to food, (d) the ability to pay rent, (e) employment, and (f) access to healthcare. Forty percent of respondents' incomes had been immediately affected, either by furlough or direct layoffs. By the end of April, this number had increased to 50% of the portfolio and this percentage continued to rise as businesses continued to operate at lower capacities.

Single parents who were deemed essential workers struggled to find childcare when the school district shut down and all after school programs were canceled. At the start of the 2020-2021 school year, the local school district remained 100% virtual, presenting even more challenges to find appropriate supervision for children. Senior citizens who were previously able to acquire their own food now found themselves stuck inside their apartments without the know-how or means to order food delivery. Property managers and other staff scrambled to put systems in place to keep residents safe, locking down clubhouses and other common areas, sanitizing

public amenities such as handrails, benches, and other structures on a regular basis. Maintenance teams accelerated remodels to accommodate incoming residents on waitlists. Executive staff and board members met to determine how to keep residents in their apartments for the long haul by applying for all available grants and ramping up fundraising efforts. The organization teamed up with local restaurants to have meals delivered to the neediest families, and helped residents navigate resources through regular resource newsletter publications and ready access to property managers. It will take time to truly understand the social emotional impact of the virus on the residents. The researcher included questions regarding the pandemic in the focus group discussion and interviews. One could surmise the relationship between management and residents was impacted by the organization's response to residents' needs during the pandemic.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized in the following manner. The introduction in chapter one includes the historical context of affordable housing and an overview of the study. Chapter two consists of a theoretical model of social sustainability, followed by a literature review of different elements of social sustainability, such as self-efficacy, social capital, agency, engagement, sense of community, equity, and inclusion. Chapter three explicates the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the method of inquiry, the method of inquiry, data analysis methods, ethical considerations, researcher positionality, researcher bias, and criteria for judging quality. Chapter four comprises the findings of the study. Chapter five presents a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations, limitations, implications for future research and a conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

A review of the literature on community-based sustainability reveals that of the three dimensions, economic, environmental, and social sustainability, the latter is least clearly defined and understood by practitioners and researchers (Becker et al., 1999; Cuthill, 2009; Partridge, 2005). Dealing with hard assets, economic and environmental sustainability are easier to grasp than social sustainability, which is rooted in human experience. In other words, one cannot conceive of social sustainability as a singular entity. Social sustainability begins with people; in this study, participants were residents in an affordable housing complex owned and operated by a nonprofit organization which sought to engage residents in collective decision-making. In this chapter, the researcher reviews the literature on sustainable community development in general and a theoretical model of social sustainability. Subsequently, the researcher examines (a) agency, (b) self-efficacy, (c) social capital, (d) engagement/participation, (e) sense of community, and (f) equity and inclusion as foundational elements of inclusive social sustainability. A description of the research site follows the model explication. Finally, as a rationale for including youth in the data collection, the researcher addresses rationales for youth engagement as an important aspect of inclusive socially sustainable development.

Community and Sustainability: What Are They Exactly?

The concept of inclusive or sustainable community could be as broadly defined as the number of communities that exist in the United States. Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online defines community as "a unified body of individuals: such as the people with common interests living in a particular area, or a group of people with common characteristic of interest living

together within a larger society" (2019, p. 1b). On the macro level, a community can be considered a collective or neighborhoods combined with commerce centers to form a communal entity like a town or even a city. It can also be a group of similarly inclined individuals who are living, working, or recreating together on a regular basis, like a recreational, ethnic, or socio-economically defined group. As with individual identity, the definitions of inclusive or socially sustainable community can change with location, demographics, and time. Organizations striving to develop inclusive, sustainable communities struggle to define exactly what they mean by *inclusive*, *sustainable* as well as *community*.

The United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) (1987) defines sustainable *development* as, "development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 41). Some researchers contend keeping the meaning of sustainability "somewhat open" allows for multiple interpretations, thus implying that "sustainability is an ongoing process" (Robinson, 2004, p. 374). Gibson (2006) promoted a holistic view of sustainability that includes ecological, economic, political, social, and cultural pillars. This researcher advocated preserving socio-ecological systems "from the family to the global levels that are dynamic and adaptable, satisfying and resilient, and therefore durable" and further encouraged stakeholders to focus on the interconnectedness of said pillars (p. 173). Hughey and Speer (2002) stressed acknowledging "the challenging reality of conflict in communities" as a starting point for dialogue (p. 70). Socially sustainable development begins and ends with attempts to address conflicting interests within communities.

Social Sustainability Definitions in the Literature

The corpus of literature on socially sustainable community development is a fast-growing body of evidence that this world-wide phenomenon is an important aspect of life. In a review of the literature, Dutch social science researcher, Koning (2001) concluded social sustainability refers to, "a society that is just, where there is not exclusion of social groups, with a decent livelihood for all, and a society characterized by emancipation, freedom, and solidarity" (p. 22). Australian researcher, Partridge (2005), addressed the dimension of equity and inclusion as "…not only the creation of a just society in the present, but also the establishment of structures and processes that will guarantee lasting and continuing justice" (p. 8). McKenzie (2004) cited equity among generations as a sense of community responsibility. The above definitions identify themes of equity, social justice, inclusion, and engagement embedded in process rather than in product. When considering the multifaceted nature of social sustainability, one cannot take a myopic perspective, but must be willing to expand one's view to include all the most essential elements of socially sustainable community development. In the theoretical model presented below, the researcher visualized how elements connect to form a more holistic picture of how stakeholders engage in creating socially sustainable communities, specifically relative to this study. While each of the definitions presented in this literature review contribute to the overall understanding of social sustainability, the definition by Woodcroft et al. (2012) in chapter one is most in alignment with the purpose of this study, especially in reference to "…systems of citizen engagement…" (p. 16).

A Theoretical Model for Social Sustainability in Affordable Housing

Social sustainability is multifaceted, praxis dependent, and defies conventional scientific explanation. In a conventional scientific process, clearly defined variables, supported by evidence, can be observed in clinical settings to determine how participants are impacted or vice versa. However, regardless of individual background, the concept of social sustainability is predicated upon perception and interpretation of difficult to define characteristics such as self-efficacy, collective efficacy (Bandura, 2001), social capital, agency (Brisson & Usher, 2005; Lin, 1999), engagement/participation (Bergstrom et al., 2014; Palich & Edmonds, 2013), sense of community or belonging (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Schellenberg et al., 2017), equity and inclusion or social justice (Bridger & Luloff, 1999; Sutton, 2007). Figure 1 presents a model created by the researcher to illustrate the interconnectedness of the above mentioned indicators of social sustainability.
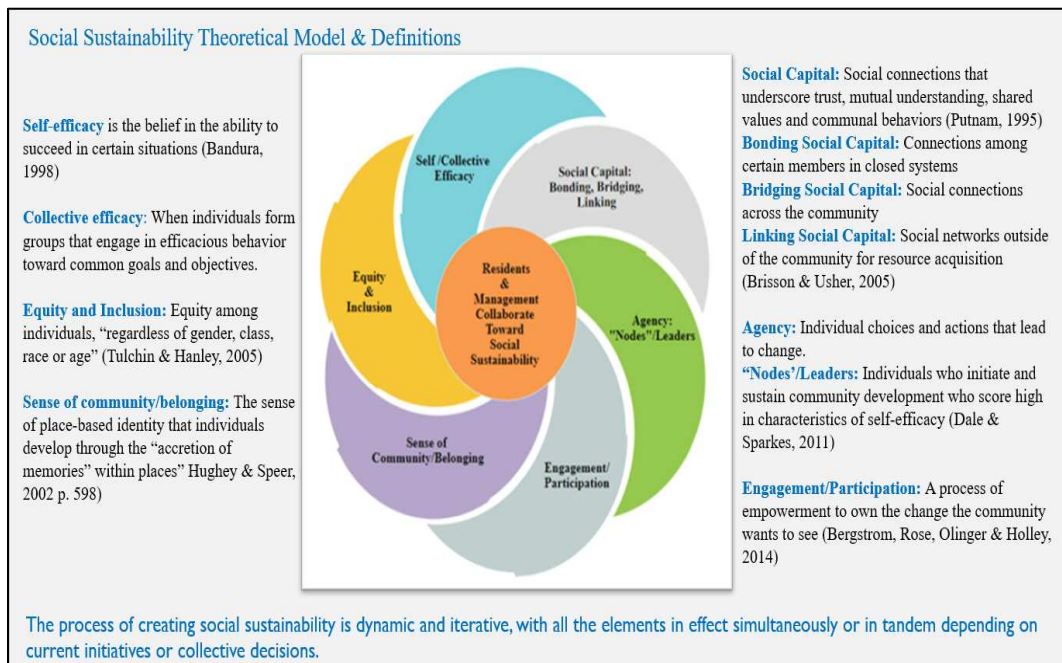
Figure 1

Social Sustainability Theoretical Model

Description of Research Site

Appearances can be deceiving. Situated in a low-density mixed use (LMN) residential

area, the two- and three- bedroom town house complex divided into thirteen alphabetically

organized unit blocks, is indistinguishable as "low income" from the surrounding properties. The

exception is a sign at the entrance to the clubhouse prominently displaying the name of the

nonprofit organization. Floor plans range from just over 850 to just under 970 square feet.

Matching paint colors allows this property to blend in with neighboring residential developments

that encompass townhomes and high-rise college student housing. The complex is bordered on

the south by one main thoroughfare through the neighborhood on which a popular community

park and two natural areas are located one block to the west, and a residential street that runs

north to south. The clubhouse is located at the intersection of the streets, with a small parking lot

located in front of the north facing entrance. Resident parking is available behind three-unit

blocks on the north side and two-unit blocks to the east. Additional parking is available between

two senior citizen unit blocks across the street. A vacant grassy catchment area is centrally

located on the south side, opening on the main thoroughfare behind the clubhouse. Community

garden plots bordered by a chain link fence and a storage shed are located on the southeast end of

the property line. A drainage area on the northeast side sports open space covered in natural

vegetation comprising mature trees and a grassy are approximately the size of a tennis court.

Residents can easily walk to nearby parks, entertainment venues, restaurants, recreation

facilities, public transportation stops and a local high school. The school district provides

transportation to nearby elementary and middle schools. However, the façade of prosperity

obscures the stark realities of economic hardship for families living in this complex.

From 1978 to 2007 alone, cost burdens for households with children more than doubled from 15% to 37%, with very low-income renters facing severe housing problems who are ineligible for housing assistance hovering around 36% (Federal Agency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2009). Families in these circumstances may spend more than half of their income on housing. In the mountain west state where this study is situated, a minimum wage earner at $12/hour must work 71 hours per week to afford a one-bedroom rental home at the "fair market rate [of] $1,103/month," while the average "fair market rent [is] currently $1375/month" (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2020). Recent Zillow estimates place the average home price in this city at $478,643 (Zillow.com).

Unit blocks lettered A-N except I, are home to fifty households which comprise 45 female and five heads of household. Of all the residents in the complex, 68% comprise single female parent households with an average Annual Median Income (AMI) of $28, 630. Male single parent households make up just under 2% of the resident population with an average AMI of $29,568. Combined, children in single parent households make up 76% of all the children in the complex, ranging from one to four children per family. Eleven percent of the residents in the complex are 55 and older with an average fixed income of $20,431. Married and cohabiting adults with an average AMI of $42, 850 account for the rest of the adult population and 24% of the children ranging in ages from birth to 17. Depending on the number of bedrooms, bathrooms and income levels, rents vary from 30% of AMI up to 60% of AMI. Reflective of the demographics of the city in which the complex is situated, 80% percent of the households identify as White Non-Hispanic, 10% identify as Hispanic, and 10% declined reporting race and ethnicity. To qualify for housing, residents must: (a) make at least two and a half times the amount needed for monthly rent, (2) are required to recertify annually for low-income housing

eligibility, (3) must pass a credit and background check and (4) have no outstanding debt to previous landlords. Once income exceeds the qualifying amount set by the organization, recertification is required to determine new rental payments based on increased income. Even though these housing complexes were designed as transitional housing with the goal of working toward homeownership, the average length of residency is approximately four and a half years, with some families having lived in their apartments for over a decade. For some children, this is the only home they have known.

Agency: Self-Efficacy and Social Capital

Despite the appearance of overwhelming economic odds, residents of affordable housing complexes still possess assets that can afford them a high quality of life through their exercise of agency. Bhaskar (1994 as cited in Dale & Sparkes, 2011), defines agency as "intentional actions and processes that result in a new 'state of affairs' that would not have otherwise emerged" (p. 476). An aspect of agency essential for successful sustainable community development is self-efficacy. Social Cognitive theorist, Bandura (1989), defined self-efficacy as our belief in our ability to succeed in specific situations. Bandura (2012), in a theoretical discussion on human agency distinguishes among three types of efficacy—personal, proxy, and collective. Most relevant to this study is the concept of collective efficacy, which is based on the interdependent interactions, shared beliefs, shared knowledge and skills, and collective goals of a group. However, these characteristics alone do not comprise collective efficacy. Group members must also believe in their collective efficacy to foster staying power when: (1) collective efforts fail, (2) they encounter adversity, (3) acquire and distribute resources, (4) expect certain time commitments from group members, and (5) creating a vision for the future. According to Bandura (2010), from an agentive perspective, people respond to three respective types of

environments: "imposed, selected and constructed" (p. 11). The participants in this study live, not necessarily by a choice of their own, in an environment imposed upon them due to their limited financial resources. However, Bandura (2010) argued "the environment is only a potentiality that does not come into being unless selected and activated" (p. 12). The author warns against a system where group members experience "nagging doubts" about their own self-efficacy as it can have a negative effect on collective efficacy (Bandura, 2001, p. 16). Self-efficacious choices and behavior determine the course people take to improve their lives. The researcher's assumption is giving residents an opportunity to discover to what extent they already possess self-efficacy, may indeed lead to acknowledgement of and confidence in their ability to exercise collective agency. For example, participants in this study can choose to improve their quality of life by practicing collective efficacy to establish a more inclusive, socially sustainable community.

While collective efficacy may drive community initiatives from concept to implementation, initial action generally begins with one person. Dale and Sparkes (2011) refer to individuals who are catalysts or agents of change as "nodes" who "weave a community together" and "span dialogues across networks" (p. 476). Individuals or "nodes" who initiate and sustain community development score high in characteristics of self-efficacy. Such individuals drive change within their communities through the effective use of social capital. Social capital, an essential characteristic of agency, was defined by Lin (1999) as the resources already present in social structures that are accessed and mobilized toward purposeful action, comprising three distinct elements: "resources embedded in a social structure (embeddedness); accessibility to such resources by individuals (opportunity); and use or mobilization of such social resources by

individuals in purposive actions (use)" (p. 35). In relation to this study is the contention that social capital, specifically in the form of expressive action, can lead to returns in "physical health, mental health, and life satisfaction" (Lin, 1999, p. 40). Furthermore, in closed systems like the affordable housing community in this study, "more intimate and reciprocal relationships among members may in increase the likelihood of mobilizing others with shared interests and resources to defend and protect existing resources/expressive returns" (Lin, 1999, p. 40).

Putnam (1995) views social capital as the social connections that underscore trust, mutual understanding, shared values, and behaviors that bind community members and enable them to cooperate. For effective agency, both the Putnam (1995) and Lin (1999) definitions of social capital must be active in the "nodes." According to Dale et al. (2008, as cited in Dale & Sparkes, 2010), "nodes" have a strong sense of place, and the willingness to engage other residents to "maintain or control the influences on the social and ecological character of their community, to protect their sense of place" (p. 486). Collectively, residents make meaning out of their lived experiences within geographic locations and share the meaning-making with each other and across neighboring communities.

Social capital in general terms is not enough to sustain initiatives within communities. Expanded networks of social capital provide strength and context for sustainability. Wellman and Frank (2001) discussed the concept of 'network capital,' as the ability to build bridges to other community networks as an extension of agency within a community. According to these authors, accumulated wealth across networks within and across communities contributes to community resilience. Network social capital that is successfully utilized includes the following three modes of engagement: *bonding social capital*, *bridging social capital*, and *linking social capital*. *Bonding social capital* or what Brisson and Usher (2005) called "intracommunity ties"

signifies a high level of trust and cohesion among members of a community in so-called closed systems (p. 645). This type of social capital is exercised when neighbors help each other out in emergency situations such as caring for a child when a single parent has a medical emergency. *Bridging social capital* refers to times when individuals who broadly share similar demographic characteristics create bridges or connections among social networks in what are considered open systems. For example, members from one housing unit blocks may connect with other similar housing unit blocks to form a collaborative to address a common issue. *Linking social capital* pertains to connections with people in power to leverage support in the form of resources, ideas, and information (Woodcroft, 2001 as cited in Dale & Sparkes, 2011; Brisson & Usher, 2005). These types of social capital help residents gain access to resources that improve infrastructure or services in the community. Members of the affordable housing complex in this study can exercise all forms of social capital within the organization's portfolio to strengthen residents' collective representative voice.

Engagement/Participation

It stands to reason the more people are committed to engage in democratic processes in their communities, the more they will feel a sense of belonging and ownership. However, research literature reveals a history of top-down mistrust between residents and management and/or governing boards create barriers to engagement (Arnstein, 1969). Bergstrom et al. (2014), defined engagement as "a process through which community members are empowered to own the change they want to see and that involves communication, problem-solving, governance and decision-making skills and strategies" (p. 192). Residents and governing bodies must be willing to identify and acknowledge root causes of past failed initiatives to launch new sustainable initiatives. Governing bodies must make it safe for residents to engage at the grassroots level,

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abandoning models of structural patronage and working toward inclusive models of engagement that begin with fair an equal representation at the highest decision-making levels. This includes recruitment practices that ensure governing boards reflect the diversity of the communities they serve (Silverman, 2009). However, one cannot conceive of community engagement solely from a management perspective. Foster-Fisherman et al. (2013), in a quantitative study on citizen participation, found that resident motivation for engagement is dependent on multiple factors such as:

- "sharing belongingness and interdependence with neighbors" [sense of community]

- the perception that a group of individuals can work together and achieve results [collective efficacy]

- a set of expectations for engagement in social justice practices – "neighborhood norms for activism" [equity and inclusion]

- "opportunities for involvement" for some concerned residents

- social issues that affect the whole community

- community building initiatives that are attractive to individuals with "higher level organizing skills" [grassroots level initiatives] (pp. 494-495).

In their analysis of the Making Connections Survey data of 413 neighborhoods across ten cities, Brisson and Usher (2005) found resident participation to be "directly stimulated by an influx of resources, … a strong determining factor in the development of bonding social capital, and a response to a crisis" (p. 646). Brisson and Usher's (2005) most relevant finding is that women, especially white women, experienced lower levels of bonding social capital. Relevant to this study is the fact that a significant demographic in this housing complex consists of white single mothers.

Belonging and Sense of Community

Quality affordable housing is a laudable but insufficient goal of the nonprofit

organization in this study. Cohen and Phillips (1997), in their analysis of nonprofit housing

developer Phipps Houses Group in New York Community housing projects found that simply

providing housing was not enough, but that a sense of belonging "acts as a strong defense against

environmental and social factors that prey on many residents…" (p. 471). As the lines between

community and society at large have become blurred, citizens are losing their sense of belonging

to a distinct community, or "sense of place" (Bridger & Luloff, 1999, p. 382). According to

Palich and Edmonds (2013), the recognition of cultural community values and respect of cultural

heritage are the factors that affect how inclusive and safe residents will feel. Kelly (2012)

conceded many people value social and cultural connection in terms of health and wellbeing as a

much more realistic path to a better life than increased income. Schellenberg et al. (2018), in

their correlative quantitative study between self-assessed community belonging, social capital,

neighborhood characteristics and rootedness, claimed "community belonging also reflect[ed]

emotional ties—the sense of place-based identity that individuals develop through the "accretion

of memories" within places" (p. 598). Hughey and Speer (2002), in a network analysis approach

to sense of belonging, underscored the importance of developing "interpersonal strategies that

highlight common purpose and emotional attachment" in the pursuit of social support and

community cohesion (p. 76). The authors also recommend increasing community cohesion by

filling the "structural holes" or gaps by pushing group boundaries beyond current contexts. By

doing so, participants can develop an expanded sense of community through resource acquisition

and social change initiatives (p. 74). Sense of community can also be linked to membership in

closed community social networks as opposed to outside social networks. For example, certain

families living in a unit block may have a strong sense of community among themselves as members of a closed social network, but not necessarily as belonging collectively to the housing complex. The challenge is to expand the networks to include all residents including groups in control of resources, such as management. Accomplishing this feat "should reduce network constraint thereby increasing sense of community" (Hughey & Speer, 2002, p. 75).

Sense of Belonging and Community Development researchers, McMillan and Chavis (1986), based their understanding of sense of community on four distinct elements: (a) membership, (b) influence, (c) integration and fulfillment (reinforcement) of needs, and (d) shared emotional connection. Membership is defined by commitment and investment in relationships within a certain group and contains geographical as well as social boundaries. Boundaries are designed to protect, but also to give members a community identity and strong sense of belonging to something greater than themselves. Community members exert influence over each other, which can be positive or negative. Members who prioritize the needs of the community above their own generally exert more positive influence over others than those who pursue self-interest. For members to experience a strong sense of community, belonging must be rewarding. Members seek reciprocal relationships based on shared values and common goals. Finally, shared emotional connection is based on intimacy that is developed through participation in community events, a shared history, and willingness to be emotionally vulnerable (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Equity and Inclusion

Decades of unfair and unequal practices in housing policy have left millions of Americans living in "affordable housing" despite the Housing Act of 1949 calling for "a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family" (Swanstrom, 1999, p. 29). Let alone quality capital construction, Partridge (2005) contended social concerns such as equity and inclusion are still glaringly absent from sustainable development decisions and that organizations routinely neglect reporting on the social impacts of sustainable development activities. Because the concept is rooted in human experience, moral and ethical considerations cannot be left out of consideration when applying principles of social sustainability. Bridger and Luloff (1999) contended a "one size fits all" approach to sustainability is not feasible, but social justice begins at the community level where residents can exercise "local control over a wide range of decisions" (p. 381). Equity and inclusion, or social justice must be judged as core tenets with respect to sustainable outcomes. Theoretically, social capital expenditure and rate of return depends on existing resources within a community, the extent to which individuals use social capital to contain or expand networks, network locations, the ability to form bridges, and the ability to maintain such connections over time (Lin, 1999). For example, in the referenced community, the extent to which social capital can have an equalizing impact depends on how nodes navigate various forms of social capital for the common good of all. Cuthill (2009) posited "high levels of social capital… does not alleviate the need for appropriate social infrastructure catering to community needs" (p. 367). In this regard, the availability and implementation of "soft infrastructure," the supportive services that meet the basic needs of stakeholders and allows them to enact social capital, is a must (Cuthill, 2009 p. 367). Examples of supportive services are

wellness programs, after school programs, access to onsite childcare, community mental health partnerships, etc.

Comparative Urban Studies Project Directors Ruble et al. (2005) advise that inclusive development must strive toward equity among individuals, "regardless of gender, class, race or age" and urge reforming existing participatory mechanisms, especially in the private sector, to be more equitable (p. 70). The authors reiterated the fact that the biggest impact on local governance happens at the neighborhood level. In the case of this study, decisions regarding active participation in decision-making occurs at the level of an affordable housing community situated within a neighborhood of a city. Inclusive social sustainability involves not only building relationships within communities, but also the ability to gain access to basic infrastructure and services. Residents in the named community should be recognized as "equal actors" in a "democratic and participative" framework by which they can acquire supportive services and distribute resources over time (Ruble et. al. 2005, p. 73). Those with the most unique experiences and insights are often overlooked in the decision-making processes, especially children and youth.

Youth Participation as an Issue of Equity and Inclusion

In issues of equity and inclusion, significantly underutilized human capital in socially sustainable community development is that of children and youth. Some researchers claim that engaging youth in sustainable community development is not uncommon as, "...most mixing across social groups takes place between children. It is these contacts – in nurseries, playgroups, schools and in public spaces – that provide opportunities for adults to meet and form relationships. Children provide a common ground and shared interest between people in different tenures" (Silverman et al., 2005, p.12). Others claim negative stereotypes regarding youth

participation in sustainable community development is a serious obstacle to inclusion. In a comprehensive study of 88 social justice-oriented community-based youth programs in the United States, Sutton (2007) explored the impact of youth development philosophies on the processes and outcomes of participation. Most importantly, the author's review of the literature reveals prevailing beliefs about youth that are predominantly negative, punitive, and stereotypical. In reference to immigrant, urban and youth of color, Sutton (2007) stated they are often "lacking in programs that welcome their diverse cultural identities and recognize the structural inequities these young people encounter, along with their boundless capacity for injustice (p. 617). This statement speaks to the status quo, meaning "youth participation remains at the margins of redevelopment efforts, unrecognized within a milieu dominated by expert planners and real estate concerns" (Horelli, 1998 as cited in Sutton, 2007, p. 617).

Kara (2007) in a phenomenological narrative, warns against adult initiatives in which youth interest wanes quickly, leading to stalled projects. Youth are often afraid of voicing honest sentiments to well-meaning adults; therefore, they are constrained from providing meaningful feedback. Inversely, adults often lack the skills to meaningfully engage youth in a way that allow them to receive feedback from youth. The scope of this work is narrow, because youth are often engaged on the shallow level of what Kara (2007) called "rubber stamping" decisions or just sticking to planning fun activities like ski trips, dances, etc. Youth are not generally invited to engage in long-term community consultations regarding advocacy on key social issues that affect them and their communities (p. 566). The author also referred to the way adults use youths as tokens in decision-making processes as "subtly squelched," as adults go about their business and give token acknowledgement to a revolving door of a few youth participants. Another way youth participation is undermined by adults is "subconscious subversion" where youth fall into the trap

of sticking to "what's always done" due to inexperience. Kara suggested youths and adult allies need to identify models of participation that could involve youth at higher levels of engagement (Kara, 2007, p. 566).

As evident in the literature, for the most part adult community leaders engage youth on superficial levels that lead to few sustainable outcomes. However, this need not be the case. Youth should be a considered an invaluable asset in developing inclusive, socially sustainable communities. One of the major outcomes of the Sutton (2007) study is the effect of youth participation on community improvement. Sutton determined youth improve their surroundings by among others, hands-on participation in the planning, designing and construction of space, planting and restoration of landscape, creating art, engaging in dialogue with community members, volunteering, and educational activities. As far as community improvement outcomes, youth participation encourages a sense of ownership and provides a stage for celebrating, having fun, getting physical and allows for opportunities to contribute to significant others (Sutton, 1996 & 1985 as cited in Sutton, 2007, p. 629). Youth participants can form the next generation of adults who are more socially sustainable-minded and better prepared to address serious issues in their communities. Of those surveyed, "21% of youth enjoyed being an active participant in democratic governance, enrichment experiences, and hands-on experiences and 19% of youth reported making a social contribution through activism, critical awareness, leadership, assertiveness and taking responsibility" (Sutton, 2007, pp. 630-632). Equity and inclusion in socially sustainable development should begin at the level of highest vulnerability – children and youth.

Summary

From research literature one can surmise that social sustainability is complicated. Practitioners and researchers alike have grappled for over two decades to accurately and comprehensively define this concept that is deeply ingrained in humanitarian activities. Strongly connected to moral and ethical issues such as social justice, equity and inclusion, social cognitive characteristics such as self- and collective efficacy, and praxis in various forms of social capital, social sustainability defies empirical scientific explanation. By viewing the concept through a kaleidoscopic instead of a myopic lens, the researcher attempted to demonstrate that social sustainability can be approached from multiple directions and through multiple levels of engagement, notwithstanding keeping the focal point on people as the movers and changers in inclusive, socially sustainable development.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter first presents a summary of the coronavirus pandemic's impact on the data collection methods, followed by the rationale behind the qualitative methodology used in the study. Subsequently, the research questions are presented. Afterwards, the setting and participants, data collection, criteria for judging quality, researcher positionality and bias ensue. A summary of overall insights into the significance of the study concludes this chapter.

COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Research Study Methodology

Originally the researcher intended to employ an ethnographic approach by embedding herself within the community of note and to develop a rapport with the participants over the summer of 2020. The researcher wrote the Research Proposal Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol with in-person research in mind. The plan was to host information sessions at the clubhouse, recruit participants in person, schedule multiple focus groups at three different age levels, and engage in data collection with the help of a research assistant (See Appendix A). The entire study was built on focus group research on the premise that in focus group interviews, "the information that is produced is more likely to be framed by the categories and understandings of the interviewees rather than those of the interviewer" (Montell, 1999, p. 50). Pursuant the dissertation proposal meeting, and in accordance with county health regulations regarding in-person contact, the research method suffered a dual blow: virtual data collection only and a stipulation that the focus groups must be conducted by a third party in order to ensure objective data. Recruiting participants virtually in a targeted sample of fifty households for focus group research became a momentous task. The original plan to recruit three different age-based focus

groups, youth, adults, and senior citizens changed to only recruiting two groups, high school students and adults. Deliberations to secure a third-party facilitator and funding put further constraints on the data collection timeline. Limited participation in the adult focus group led to an inadequate dataset. The youth focus group, which was originally designed for high school students, was cancelled due to a failure to recruit participants. Subsequently, the researcher filed IRB amendments to include individual interviews, and follow-up interviews with middle school students, adults, and senior citizens. The researcher sent multiple recruitment emails and electronic consent forms at regular intervals with built in reminders to increase participation. Ultimately, the researcher was able to recruit a representative sample of middle school youth, adults, and senior citizens, including individuals with disabilities. Notably, although the researcher attempted to stick to the original focus of inclusive, socially sustainable community development, participants framed answers within the context of the pandemic more often than not, often struggling to imagine a time before or after the pandemic. This historical event had permeated every aspect of their lives and attempting to be in denial of that lived experience caused the researcher great distress in ethical considerations regarding how the data should be analyzed and presented. It became evident that this research study must be defined not just in the context of inclusive community under "normal" circumstances, but the "new normal" of the coronavirus pandemic.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Rationale for Research Approach</h3>

At best when life is good and the economy is in full swing, residents living in affordable housing complexes can get by on their earnings and social services. However, when the mechanisms that support the economy were derailed, such as the pandemic, the aforementioned residents bore the tremendous burden of job losses and strained financial assistance structures.

They were most likely to need the social support of their neighbors. In this milieu, the need for inclusive, socially sustainable communities was greatly underscored. The question is, "where to begin?" The referenced affordable housing nonprofit organization's initial goals were twofold: (1) to provide quality affordable housing to low-income families, and (2) to provide supportive services that would engage residents in close-knit communities in which residents feel a strong sense of agency and belonging (See Appendix B). While the organization had measurable success in the former, the latter goal is still to be met. Resident engagement is one of the initiatives in its recently adopted five-year draft strategic plan. The plan specifically included engagement and support initiatives geared toward adults, senior citizens, youth, and residents with disabilities. Past survey research attempts conducted in-house by the organization had little success due to low response rates. In our initial conversations about doing a research study at one of the housing developments, management referred to residents' reduced capacity for filling out surveys as "engagement fatigue" and cited participation in numerous city-wide initiatives over the last couple of years as a cause. A quantitative approach to the research study could potentially produce lackluster results reflective of a negligible sample. Therefore, a qualitative constructivist approach utilizing analysis from a social cognitive theoretical perspective was selected as the most feasible since it allowed the researcher the opportunity to purposefully design a study that engenders "a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new and richer meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p. 51).

Constructivist Approach

According to Creswell and Miller (2000), "Constructivists believe in pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualized (e.g., sensitive to place and situation) perspectives"

(p.125). Lincoln and Guba (2011) classified the constructivist approach as "the presentation of multiple, holistic, competing, and often conflictual realities of multiple stakeholders and research participants (including the inquirer's)" (p. 73). As a vehicle for social change, the constructivist approach to the research was evident in the use of dual data collection methods, including focus groups and individual interviews representative of a diverse population. In the original plan before the coronavirus pandemic, the researcher had established an office at the complex and sent out an introduction postcard to each residence to begin building a relationship of mutual trust (See Appendix C). Virtual individual and follow up interviews allowed residents to speak more in-depth from their own homes about concerns they were not comfortable bringing up in the focus groups. A reminder of the postcard established a modicum of trust between interviewees and the researcher. Questions for follow-up interviews were derived from focus group transcripts.

Research Questions

1. How do participants define inclusive community?

2. What challenges to inclusive community do participants identify through their lived experience?

3. What do participants believe are the best practices to develop or strengthen community?

Setting

This research study was conducted in an affordable housing complex situated within a residential neighborhood located in a mountain west city of approximately 170,000 residents. The area sports numerous recreation facilities, a university, and top-rated public schools. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data (2019), the city in which this housing complex is situated constitutes 88% White and 11% Hispanic/Latinx residents with the rest of the

population consisting of a very small minority of African Americans, Asians, and Native Americans. Fifty five percent of the city's population older than 25 earned a college degree between 2015 and 2019. The research site was selected in collaboration with the Executive Director and Director of Resident Services as ideal due to the following characteristics: (1) several resident leaders' request from a prior community conversation conducted by the organization to be seen and heard by management and board members, (2) management concerns regarding conflict among residents, (3) concerns for senior citizens being disconnected from the rest of the community, (4) logistical consideration such as the availability of a meeting space for residents, and (5) the high number of single parent families that might need community support.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was employed to select participants based on the following criteria: Participants must be residents at the research site, able to read and understand recruitment informational material, consent forms, and assent forms, and be able to give informed consent or assent for participation. Participants included youth ages 11-13, adults ages 18-54, and senior citizens ages 55 and older. A street separates the majority of senior citizens' townhomes from the rest of the housing complex. Seniors were targeted in this study to provide insight into their lived experience as part of, yet physically separated from the rest of the residents.

Youth were included in this study as they are an integral part of the community. They were selected based on literacy level, i.e., their ability to read and understand the focus group questions as well as express their opinions without coercion. Case studies drawn from YouthPower (YP), a community service-learning program in Holyoke, Massachusetts, demonstrate that advocating for youth engaging in creating socially sustainable communities is not uncommon. YP encourages youth engagement in small initiatives to move youth beyond

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problem identification and helping to empower them to see themselves as agents of change

(Breitbart & Kepes, 2007). Youth were included more specifically to initiate steps toward

addressing the youth engagement initiatives that are included as part of the organization's draft

five - year strategic plan, stated as:

> Goal D: Foster an environment for residents to lead and create healthy,
>
> sustainable, and inclusive community.
>
> Strategy D.3: Provide a system of support to help residents thrive.
>
> Outcome D.3.i: Youth build skills and confidence.
>
> Key indicators:
>
> > •Participation in youth programs.
> >
> > •Assessment of youth programs.
> >
> > •High school graduation rates.
> >
> > •Pre-school enrollment.

It is the organization's long-term goal to engage youth in the planning and implementation of on-

site after school youth programs and school district collaborative efforts toward improving

graduation rates for high school students.

<div align="center">

Participant Recruitment

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Focus Group Recruitment: An Odyssey in Virtual Recruitment

While awaiting approval for data collection, the researcher opened a DocuSign account in

view of online participant recruitment and practiced how to send and manage consent forms.

Additionally, the researcher practiced mail merge formats in Microsoft Word for hard copies and

emails. IRB approval for data collection occurred on October 16, 2020. The first focus group

interview was scheduled for November 10, 2020, giving the researcher approximately three

weeks to recruit participants online. The researcher set a goal of 10 adult participants in the hope that five would attend the first focus group session.

DocuSign technical issues delayed the distribution of recruitment information and consent forms by two days. Fearing she would not have enough time to recruit participants for the first focus group, the researcher printed out letters and consent forms for each household, enclosed self-addressed stamped envelopes, and mailed them on the October 20. After upgrading to a higher level of DocuSign service and resolving technical issues such as importing bulk recipients, correcting file formats, and inserting document field icons, the researcher emailed copies of the information and consent forms to all households with internet with built-in reminders for every five days (See Appendix D1). One immediate problem encountered with DocuSign was that the checkboxes were not very obvious to participants; no check boxes were marked for anonymous quotes or follow up interviews for the first two respondents (See Appendices D2 – D4). The researcher deleted the initial mailing and spent more time with tech support to resolve the problem. A second email with revised attachments was sent two days after the first with built in reminders five days apart, expiring the night of the first focus group. At the end of the first week, only three participants had signed up. At this point, the researcher decided to make cold calls to households.

In conversations with potential participants, the researcher realized that there was an intense mistrust of her motivations as residents had not seen her or heard from her since March. The first two residents had questions about the study that could not be answered in a mass email. One participant indicated that the incentive was too low for the time residents were asked to commit to focus groups. The researcher was also able to identify three residents in the community whose influence may have prevented others from participating due to their lack of

trust in the organization and outsiders. The researcher established a relationship in a prior encounter with the residents and decided to call those residents first to gain their trust. Through honesty and transparency, she was able to recruit two of the three residents to participate in the focus groups. Those participants recruited two additional participants. Most residents did not respond to the cold calls, but those who did were amenable to participation. Some residents were concerned that they could not participate due work schedule conflicts.

By November 2, 2020, the researcher had received no high school parental consent or student assent forms. Fearing parents were reluctant to sign parental consent forms, the researcher drafted an email specifically to high school parents and students to recruit the high school students for focus group sessions with built in reminders every five days (See Appendix E1). This recruitment tactic failed. In deliberation with the third-party facilitator, the researcher cancelled the high school focus group and instead filed an amendment with the IRB to conduct individual interviews with middle school students and senior citizens to broaden the pool of potential participants. The researcher modified consent forms to reflect this change in plans. Going into the second focus group, 12 participants had signed consent forms. A final email reminder for the second focus group went out on November 17, 2020, the day of the second focus group session (See Appendix E2). Ultimately, out of the 12 participants who signed consent forms, five participants attended the first adult focus group session including one senior citizen. Three participants from session one attended the second focus group session. With a slim dataset of feedback from just five participants in a 50-household complex, the researcher decided to increase recruitment efforts for individual participation.

Individual Interview Recruitment

Pursuant to the second poorly attended focus group session, the researcher filed an IRB amendment to interview adults ages 18-54 to recruit adults who intended to attend the focus group sessions but were unable to do so due to unforeseen circumstances. To eliminate any confusion, the researcher modified the consent forms to state specifically, "I give permission" and "I do not give permission" for a follow up interview and anonymous quotes (See Appendix E3). Permission for individual adult interviews was granted on November 18, 2020. One follow-up interview was conducted with a participant from the first focus group. Subsequently, through the automatic reminder emails, as well as phone calls to schedule interviews at the participants' convenience, the researcher recruited five adults ages 18-54 for individual interviews. To recruit senior citizens, the researcher sent an email and a reminder email and consent forms requesting participation in senior citizen interviews to all seniors in the community who have access to email (See Appendix F1, F2). This communication resulted in three senior citizen interviews. To recruit middle school students, the researcher sent emails addressed to parents of middle school students and attached parental consent forms and assent forms (See Appendices G1- G3). Two parents reached out to the researcher to give permission for their children to be interviewed. The researcher scheduled back-to-back interviews with the adults and children. With the exception of one adult male participant and middle school students, all participants identified as female. To balance out the gender voice, the researcher made one more attempt to recruit men and additional middle school students by sending out a reminder email targeted to families of male heads of household only (See Appendix H). This attempt failed, leaving the researcher with two middle school student interviews. Altogether, the dataset consists of focus group and individual interview feedback from 15 participants ranging in age between 11 and 85, representing 10 of 13-unit blocks spread throughout the property. The most frustrating aspect of recruitment was

rescheduling multiple interviews when individuals failed to show up in Zoom meetings or when technology failed and alternative means of recording interviews had to be devised.

Focus Group and Interview Participation

Two focus group sessions were conducted by a third-party facilitator one week apart on November 10 and 17, 2020. Ten participants filled out consent forms for the first focus group and five showed up for the first session. Of the five participants in the first session of the adult focus group, two participants were single parents, one married, one living alone, and one a senior citizen living alone. Despite more consent forms being filled out before the second session, only one of the single parents, the married participant, and senior citizen living alone showed up for the second focus group session. One follow-up interview was conducted with one of the participants from the first focus group who could not attend the second session. Individual interviews were conducted by the researcher over phone or Zoom with four of the adults ages 18-54. Three additional interviews were conducted with senior citizens over 55 and two with middle school students. Four participants who signed consent forms did not participate in the study. For consistency, the interview questions for the adults were kept the same as the focus group questions. A different set of age-appropriate questions was used for the middle school interviews.

Data Collection

Focus Group Data Collection

Focus group data collection was conducted by a local impartial research institution and consisted of audio recording and notes. Facilitators were asked to read the dissertation proposal in preparation for an information session presented by the researcher via Zoom. Prior to conducting the virtual information session with the facilitators to discuss the data collection

procedures, the researcher raised concerns about not having questions regarding the pandemic. Upon advising, she decided to include two questions specific to the coronavirus pandemic, "Considering the current discussion about community, what were you looking for in a community before the coronavirus pandemic, and how has that changed since the pandemic?" and "How has the coronavirus influenced how you perceive this community?" Communication was strictly limited to virtual meetings, telephone conversations, and texts to schedule interview appointments. Participants were asked to join the Zoom meetings with voice only since the consent forms clearly stated that no video recording would occur. The lead facilitator conducted the focus group, and the assistant took notes. One of the participants in the focus group did not have audio-visual access to Zoom, but was able to participate through the chat feature. The lead facilitator read this participant's responses out loud to the rest of the group and asked follow-up questions where appropriate, leading to more in-depth responses. An electronic file with that participants' responses was added to the dataset. The two focus group audio recordings were sent to TranscribeMe, a professional transcription service. The researcher reviewed each transcript, reading along with the audio recording to verify the accuracy of the transcription and edited the transcripts to eliminate comments made by facilitators before and after the meetings. Once this was completed, the recordings were deleted from the recording device as well as the laptop hard drive.

Conducting the Focus Groups

The focus group facilitators sent out email invitations to the Zoom meeting space 24 hours before the actual focus group meetings with instructions for the participants to log in at the appointed time. The lead facilitator opened the virtual meeting space 20 minutes before to test audio and video and allow participants into the space. Once all the participants had logged on,

the focus group facilitators introduced themselves and allowed participants to do the same. This took about 20 minutes as participants entered the virtual meeting in a staggered fashion. Once everyone was introduced, the focus group script was shared on screen and read out loud to the group. The facilitator waited for verbal consent, and a "yes" in the chat feature before proceeding. The facilitator then went over the norms for participation (See Appendix I). The focus group discussion commenced immediately after verbal consent was received and the setting of norms was completed. The researcher received the chat transcripts and audio recordings from the third-party researcher the following day.

Adult Focus Group, Senior Citizen and Adult Interview Questions

Research Question #1: How Do Participants Define Inclusive Community?

- What does being an inclusive community look like to you?

- In your opinion, are most residents included in decisions about the community? How do residents generally respond when they are asked to give input?

- In the following list, what do you think are the most significant needs in this community? Why? Financial needs, physical needs such as food and clothing, social emotional support, academic or educational needs, residents with disabilities?

- When you think about the people living here, would you say that residents generally feel like they are welcome and belong to the community? Why? Why not?

- Would you trust members of this community to help you out in a time of need? What would that look like?

- Considering the current discussion about community, what were you looking for in community before the coronavirus pandemic, and how has that changed since the pandemic?

- How has the Coronavirus pandemic influenced how you perceive this community?

Research Question #2: What Challenges to Inclusive Community do Participants Identify Through Their Lived Experiences?

- Do people generally feel like they are welcome and belong to the community? Why? Why not?

- How does the community welcome newcomers?

- What might prevent some residents in this housing complex from feeling included in the broader community?

- A socially sustainable community is one where members of all ages feel connected and supported, where there are social and supportive networks in place for the long term. What holds residents back from developing a socially sustainable community in terms of the community's needs in the following areas? Financial, physical, social emotional support, academic or educational needs, personal needs or other needs not mentioned here.

Research Question #3: What do Participants Believe are the Best Practices to Create Community?

- If you think about social interactions among the residents, what would you like to more of and what would you like to see less of?

- If you were given the opportunity to represent the community in a decision-making structure, what main concerns would you bring to the table?

- If you had all the resources needed, how would you go about changing things for the better regarding the concerns you addressed in the previous question?

- Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share?

Individual Interview Data Collection

The researcher conducted individual interviews with adults, seniors and middle school youth via Zoom or phone between December 2, 2020 and January 8, 2020. Both youth interviews were conducted virtually with parents present in the room with the participant. The researcher transcribed the interviews herself and deleted audio files from her Zoom account. Aside from one focus group follow-up interview, no further follow-up interviews were conducted.

Middle School Youth Interview Questions

Research Question #1: How do Participants Define Inclusive Community?

- If someone asked you to describe the place where you live, what are some words that you would use to describe it? Can you think of three to five words?

- Do you feel like you fit into to the community where you live? Why? Why not?

- Are you proud of where you live? Why? Why not?

- Do you like to hang out with other kids in your community at home after school hours? What do you do when you hang out?

- Do you stick to yourself, or do you spend your out-of-school time, like summertime and weekends, hanging out with other kids in the community?

- How has Covid-19 impacted your relationship with other kids in the community?

- Do you see your community the same or different before and after Covid-19?

Research Question #2: What Challenges to Inclusive Community do Participants Identify Through Their Lived Experiences?

- What makes living in this place hard for you?

- If you could choose where you lived, would you choose to live here? Why? Why not?

- What do you wish was different about living here to make it a better place to live?

Research Question #3: What do Participants Believe are the Best Practices to Create Community?

- If you don't feel like you fit in your community, what would make you feel more connected to the whole community?

- What do you think needs to happen for everyone to feel like they belong to this community?

- What can kids do to make other kids feel more connected to the community?

- What can adults do to make kids feel more connected to the community?

Data Analysis Approach

The researcher adopted a grounded theory thematic approach to data analysis. Data transcription for the focus groups was outsourced to a professional transcription service, but the researcher conducted and transcribed all the interviews. Before conducting interviews, the researcher edited the focus group transcripts and removed any identifiable information. Concurrent to editing and transcribing, the researcher wrote memos and took notes on anything significant related to the research questions, future lines of inquiry, and overall insights about the social sustainability model created in the literature review. After completing each interview transcription, the researcher listened to the recording and edited the transcript to ensure accuracy and wrote observations on giant sticky notes and in her journal, bracketing her insights and feelings about her observations (See Appendix J).

Corbin & Strauss (2015), stressed the idea "At first, analysis is open and free, much like brainstorming" (p. 69). Initially, using this approach was difficult, but writing reflective memos, stepping away from the data and returning to it with an open mind helped the researcher recalibrate her approach. The researcher used qualitative analysis strategies to extract meaning

such as: content analysis (what was said), *in vivo* codes (direct quotes), word frequency, constant

comparison, writing memos and constructing graphic organizers from the data.

Analysis Procedures

Table 1

Excerpt from Initial Coding in Microsoft Word

Adult Interview Script	Possible Themes
Do you know what the dividing line is, like why would people not want to hang out with each other? Collectively, as a whole community?	
	"Us" and "them"
Yeah. I know that there's…On the side behind me **in the summertime there's** lots of people that like to sit outside and drink and party and talk**. You know I'm** a single mom with four kids**,** that's not my thing**, and then there's** my mom who's older **and** she doesn't do that kind of thing**. So, I think it's not even necessarily priorities, but** different interests, I guess.	Party culture Demands of family life Different Interests Age Different interests
Would you trust members of this community to help you out in a time of need? What would that look like?	

Note: Line by line in vivo coding based on what was said.

The first step in analysis was to determine which procedures would work naturally for the

researcher. After a failed attempt at utilizing NVivo software on a remote desktop, the researcher

decided to use Microsoft Word and Excel interchangeably for data analysis and journaling.

Using a Microsoft Word document divided into two columns with transcript text in the left

column and blank space in the right column, the researcher read through each transcript,

capturing in **bold,** responses that answered the question, "What is the data telling me? After

going through each transcript, the researcher felt that she was jumping too far ahead with coding,

often referring back to the model created in the Literary Review section (See Appendix J).

Fearing a-priori coding, the researcher subsequently bracketed her thoughts and started again

with fresh eyes. The first obvious pattern was the frequency of participants' use of "they" in

reference to each other and management. The researcher constructed an Excel spreadsheet to

delineate the contexts within which each pronoun "they" was used by all participants. Further

discussion about this spreadsheet is found in chapter four. Next, she used Excel to compile

answers to each of the questions (See Table 2).

Table 2

Excerpt from Adult Participant Responses to Question 1

Focus Group & Adult Data Analysis What does inclusive community look like to you?					
FG1	**#3**	**#4**	**#5**	**#6**	**#7**
Not assuming that your neighbor doesn't have problems	everybody together, friends and families and everybody being part of something,	That's awesome, I like it **when people are involved.** Yes. **Involving kids**.	where everyone is involved but also represented, **even the people who are the managers…**	That would look like people are neighbors	being able to know **that I can depend** on my community,

Note: After this step, the researcher started looking for patterns in the responses and created a

second Microsoft Word document with two columns labeled *Codes* and *Evidence* respectively

(See Table 3).

Table 3

Excerpt from Codes and Evidence Table

Definitions and Perceptions of Community	Evidence
Focus Group and Interview participants' repetition of "everyone" and "everybody" and inclusion of "all" indicate that they perceive community as an inclusive, concept collective.	"…everybody together, friends and families" "…everybody being part of something" "…everyone's living their own life" "…everybody is kind of in the same boat" "…everybody together, friends and families" "…everybody being part of something" "…everyone is involved but also represented" "…everyone has a voice" "All being on the same page."

Note: The researcher wrote interpretations of the data in the left hand column after reading through the evidence looking for codes that naturally seemed to fit together.

The researcher followed this procedure for each question, looking for patterns in responses, deriving *in vivo* codes as well as paying close attention to word frequency, tonality, and emotion. Upon reading through the entire dataset, the researcher combined the focus group and adult interview data and analyzed the senior and youth datasets separately. Halfway through the process of writing up the findings, she realized similar themes resonated in the senior transcripts. The researcher revised those themes to include evidence from the senior transcripts. The researcher considered the dataset for the youth to be sparse; therefore, she explicated themes from the youth dataset separately with rationales for including the data in the dissertation. Further explanation on the youth data analysis is presented in chapter four. The evidence tables revealed which themes contained more significant evidence, resulting in a process of elimination or combination of themes. Between the first and second step, the researcher constructed 23 initial themes (See Table 4).

Table 4

Evolution of Themes

Initial Themes	Subthemes	Intermediary Themes	Final Themes	Final Subthemes
1. Perceptions and Definitions of Community		Perceptions and Definitions of Community	**1. Perceptions and Definitions of Community**	Perceptions of Inclusive Community Awareness of Relationship Influence Awareness of Socio-economic Status Awareness of Equality Implicit/Explicit Behavior Expectations Assumptions about levels of intimacy with neighbors Youth perceptions of Community
2. Ignorance about rights and responsibilities				
3. Input in Decision-making		Input in Decision-making	**2. Perceptions of Input in Decision-making**	Sense of Powerlessness
4. Identity	Individual & Collective	Identity	**3. Collective Identity**	Socioeconomic Status Education Level Identification with Environment
5. Neighborliness vs. Community 6. Stratified View of Relationships: "Us" & "Them"		Neighborliness vs. Community "Complex" Relationships: "Us" and "Them"	**4. Neighborliness vs. Community** **5. "Complex" Relationships: "Us" and "Them"**	Lack of Welcoming Rituals Social Preferences & Interests Age Geographical Location Resident Mobility Trauma & Shame Conflict

7. Organizational Relationships	Org. Relationships	Maintenance Property Management Residential Services & Office Personnel	**6.Organizational Relationships**	Maintenance Property Management Residential Services & Office Personnel Upper Management
8. Communication	Among residents Between residents and Management	Communication: Among residents Between residents and Management		
9. Sense of Powerlessness 10. Apathy 11. Demands of 12. Family Life 13. Transience		Sense of Powerlessness Apathy Demands of Family Life Resident Mobility		
14. Welcoming 15. The Long Memory 16.Trauma & Shame 17. Conflict 18. Geographic Location 19. Age Differences		Welcoming		

20. Assumptions & Expectations			
21. Social Preferences			
22. Envisioning Community	Envisioning Community	**7.Envisioning Community**	Resident Relations Maintenance Property Management Capital Improvements Resources & Education Playful Community
23 Coronavirus Impact	Coronavirus Impact	**8.Coronavirus Impact**	Social & Emotional Well-being Community Life

Ethical Considerations

Protection of human subjects regarding confidentiality is the onus of the researcher. In that regard, all electronic files related to this project were kept on the researcher's password protected laptop accessible only by the researcher. The researcher carefully edited all transcripts to remove names and other identifiable information, including references to addresses, positions held, street names and property names to protect participants' privacy. The researcher assigned pseudonyms to each participant. A transcript number and alias were assigned to each participant's initials in an Excel spreadsheet containing a record of interviews. The researcher avoided references to specific incidences to reduce the risk of possible identification. Upon completion of the study, all relative files will be copied to CD-R and stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's advisor's office and will be destroyed within three years after the completion of this study. The original files will be deleted from the researcher's laptop immediately after the CD-R is created.

Researcher Positionality

In April of 2019, the Executive Director invited the researcher to join the leadership team of the housing nonprofit organization as a volunteer after they found out that she had started an after-school program at a local homeless shelter. Her role was to initiate a pilot youth program as an attempt toward creating a socially sustainable community in another one of their housing complexes. Along with the supportive Resident Services Director and a colleague from the homeless shelter, they launched the youth program in June 2019. The program was repeated during the fall semester. To learn more about affordable housing, the researcher joined the organization as a full-time intern for the spring semester of January 2020. As an entry into point

into the research site specifically, the researcher set up an office at the clubhouse the third week of February. She introduced herself to the residents by way of a postcard, which went out to residents the first week of March 2020. She walked around the complex and introduced herself to any adult she encountered. She also walked the grounds to familiarize herself with the setting. Unfortunately, COVID-19 stay at home orders cut short in-person contact. The hopes of becoming more of an insider to the community were thwarted by the coronavirus pandemic. Since the initial lockdown, the researcher has had no in-person contact with anyone at the organization, nor the research site.

Researcher Bias

Affordable housing is an issue near and dear to the researcher. She grew up under the Apartheid system in South Africa, where her mother's family was forcibly removed twice from their home to be displaced in racially segregated townships (ghettos) and her father's family suffered abject poverty in the interior. As a result of this historical event, her immediate family was doubled up homeless. As the firstborn, at the age of three months, she was given to her grandmother who lived in Bishop Lavis Township until her parents could secure jobs and adequate housing for their growing family. Her early childhood was traumatic, comprising all forms of abuse and violence. Her parents eventually secured three rooms in a house shared by two other families and she was able to rejoin them at age seven. She was 22-years-old when her parents were finally able to move into a house they had built through a government self-build scheme. Partially because of homelessness, the family suffered separation, financial struggles, addiction, and abuse. As the researcher worked with families in homelessness in this community, she was aware of the biases she holds regarding systems of power. She understands the effects of

trauma on those in transitional housing from the perspective of working with homeless families, but also as someone who lived in substandard government housing for her formative years. She sees shelter as a right, and the responsibility of providing safe shelter as a governmental obligation. The challenge for her in this study was to silence her own voice, and to create space for residents' voices to be heard. By engaging in reflexive practices such as journaling and talking about her own experiences helped her work through her own bias. Past experiences also primed her for empathy with the participants in their daily struggles. The biggest challenge was to diminish the researcher's voice and accentuate theirs. Subsequently, focus group data collection was conducted by a third party, allowing the researcher to approach analysis of the transcripts from an objective stance. She also used tried and true qualitative research practices to ensure the credibility, trustworthiness, dependability, and transferability of the study.

Criteria for Judging Quality

Credibility

Credibility is defined as the confidence that participants believe that the findings are true, credible and believable. One way of ensuring credibility is through "prolonged and varied engagement with each setting… a developmental process to be engaged in daily: to demonstrate to the respondents that their confidences will not be used against them…" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 303). While the coronavirus pandemic interfered with the researcher's ability to initially be physically present at the research site, as previously stated, she sent an introductory postcard to each household followed by an introduction by phone. Open-ended focus group questions posed in a safe focus group setting facilitated by a third party allowed for participants to share their lived experiences openly and with confidence. Peer debriefing with the focus group

facilitators provided another layer of insight into the credibility of the findings. Furthermore, the prevalent use of *in vivo* codes gave direct access to the voices of the participants. Finally, the researcher conducted member checking meetings with two participants to present the findings to them and seek affirmation for the dependability of the findings. Both participants affirmed the findings were accurate and presented in a way that is acceptable to them.

Dependability

To foster dependability, thick description is rich for interpretation, and distinctive feature of qualitative inquiry. In this study, the researcher employed Geertz' (1973) model of thick description which provides the reader with intimate details of a situation, revealing the setting, words, actions, and interactions among all the participants, including interpretations by the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher could employ different roles as observer, from being a disinterested "objective" observer to full participant (Spradley, 1980). The goal of this type of description is to be as true as possible to what happened in that particular moment so that upon revisitation by participants, the researcher can be as certain as possible that the interpretation of the event and the intended communication by participants represents the truth as closely as possible. Throughout the study, the prevailing focus was on participants' words and expressions in context, taking specifically intent and the emotion of the expressed communication.

Transferability

The intention of the organization is to duplicate this study at the rest of its affordable housing communities so that the entire tenant population can have input on how their respective communities function. Therefore, the methodology chosen for this study was intentional regarding transferability. While each community has its own demographic, the basic principles of focus group research methodology could foreseeably allow for findings that are unique to each

community, but also collectively throughout the organization. The original research design contains protocols for in-person research post COVID-19.

Confirmability

Reflexivity is perhaps the most obvious principle employed during this research study. Emerson et al. (2011) posit that "it is important to observe and minutely record the sequences and conditions marking …interactions"(p.123) between researcher and participants. To that end, the researcher kept an observation journal reflecting on observations and experiences, bracketing inner conversations about interactions with residents. Focus group interviews followed by individual follow-up interviews, are practices considered to increase confirmability.

Summary

The researcher utilized a constructivist methodology to understand the lived experiences of participants residing in an affordable housing development. The aim of the study was to find out how participants define community, to what extent participants perceive themselves as having a sense of community, the challenges developing inclusive, socially sustainable community, and participants' perceptions of what they can do to create such a community. Participants engaged in focus group discussions and individual interviews, the primary sources of data collection. Additional data included facilitator notes, and reflective memos. The data analysis objective was to identify patterns and themes by means of content analysis, constant comparison, and by thematic charting. The overall goal was to produce findings that could lead to recommendations for resident participation in creating inclusive, socially sustainable community.

Introduction

The researcher used a constructivist grounded theory approach to discover how residents in an affordable housing complex define inclusive community. This chapter presents the findings and chapter five contains a discussion of the findings and implications for future research. Issues probed ranged from challenges residents face to what they perceive as best practices to create an inclusive, socially sustainable community. Findings are based on a dataset which consists of two adult focus group sessions of five (n = 5) and three (n = 3) participants respectively. The focus group dataset was compiled by a third party. Additionally, the researcher conducted eight adult (n = 8) and two middle school student interviews (n = 2) via Zoom in the fall of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter addresses the three research questions:

1. How do participants define inclusive community?

2. What challenges to community do participants identify through lived experiences?

3. What do participants believe are the best practices to develop or strengthen community?

Rationale for Separate Youth Dataset Analysis

The researcher analyzed the more robust adult and senior dataset separately from the underrepresented youth dataset for the sake of transparency and trustworthiness of the data. The researcher's decision to analyze the youth dataset separately from the adult and senior dataset rested on the following premises:

1. Protection of the identities of the two youth participants

2. Inclusion of a dataset that is not sufficiently representative of the entire youth population. The two participants between the ages of 11 and 15 make up 13% of the same age group in the complex and only 3.1% of the total children in the complex. Fear of coercion in recruiting tactics negatively impacting the data hampered the researcher's recruitment.

3. Presentation of a concern about trustworthiness, as each interview was conducted within earshot of a parent. Due to coronavirus pandemic health restrictions, interviews were conducted online in participants' homes with no ability to control for privacy. In one case, the parent interrupted the interview to remind the participant, "Yeah, so you can tell her the truth... She's not going to use your name so you can tell her the truth."

The youth dataset, consisting of two interviews, produced 117 codes in the initial line by line coding procedure. The researcher read through codes multiple times, looking for similarities and differences and categorizing into themes. Keeping in mind themes from the adult dataset, the researcher also noted words or phrases that resonated with adult responses to determine how children perceive their community life relative to their parents and other children. Youth participants will hereafter be referred to as Lucas and Timothy respectively.

Participant Profiles

To protect their confidentiality, a broad overview of participants must suffice. Focus group participants comprised single and married parents and single adults living alone. Participants included single parent adults, senior citizens, and middle school students. Participants' names have been changed to protect their identities.

<center>**Analysis Approach Revisited**</center>

The researcher utilized a grounded theory thematic analytical approach to all three

research questions. According to Charmaz (1996) grounded theory methods "consist of a set of

inductive strategies for analyzing data" (p. 28). This method of analysis entails initial, focused,

and selective coding whereby the researcher begins with repeated readings of the text, line by

line sifting and sorting of words, phrases, or sentences into meaning units (codes) that relate

directly or indirectly to the research questions and purpose of the study. Codes are compiled into

categories, or themes, which are selectively connected to tell the story of the data. Glesne (2009)

defines coding as "a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those

scraps of collected data …putting the pieces that exemplify the same descriptive or theoretical

idea together into data clumps labeled with a code… to create a thematic organizational

framework" (pp. 195-196). In the initial analysis of the data the researcher used line by line

coding, noticing repetition of significant words, phrases, and sentences, ultimately grouping

"like" meaning units or codes to construct themes. Content analysis, word frequency, intonation,

and *in vivo* codes further enhanced the researcher's ability to extract meaning.

Research Question 1: How do Participants Define Inclusive Community?

The researcher derived the first theme, "Definitions and Perceptions of Inclusive

Community," from the data in relation to question one. This theme explores how residents define

and perceive inclusive community based on their own past and present experiences. The research

site was an affordable housing complex comprising 50 townhomes situated within a residential

neighborhood in a city in the Rocky Mountain West. Approximately two-thirds of the dwelling

units are occupied by single parent female heads of households, one tenth by senior citizens, and

<center>61</center>

the remaining units are occupied by single adults, married couples, or cohabiting partners with children.

Definitions and Perceptions of Inclusive Community

Table 5

Definitions and Perceptions of Community

Theme	Subtheme	Emerging Codes
Definitions and Perceptions of Community **Definition:** Participants' opinions about what it means to be an inclusive community**.**	Perceptions of inclusive community	8
	Awareness of relationship influence	3
	Awareness of socio-economic status	2
	Awareness of equality	4
	Implicit/Explicit behavior expectations	4
	Assumptions about levels of intimacy with neighbors	3
	Youth Perceptions of Community	8

Noticing a pattern in repetition of certain words relating to community, the researcher used the "Find" feature in MS Word to search for repetitions of certain words in context to identify participants' definitions and perceptions of inclusive community. Participants repeated the words "everyone" and "everybody," and "all" in reference to their neighbors. Some participants were aware of **how their relationships with their neighbors influenced community development**.

One focus group participant, Ruth, emphasized, "having that connection with your neighbors and knowing that everybody is kind of in the same boat, whether each story be different…" Martha stated, "That would look like people are neighbors, so to speak. All being on the same page, being a community." Abby said:

For me with my family, I have two younger children, inclusive is being able to know that I can depend on my community, like the other parents in my community to come and tell me that my child is doing something they shouldn't be doing and know that I'm not upset with them for ratting out my child.

Veronica painted the following picture of an inclusive community, "I guess when I think about inclusive, I think about everybody together, friends and families and everybody being part of something…" Participants' concept of community also included an **awareness of their socio-economic status**; as Ruth declared," We're here because of just the one economics connects us all." In reference to the greater community, Portia empathized with fellow residents, stating:

We might all have different backgrounds. But, you know, um, the, the rent rates over here in [this city] -- I'm originally from [names state] And I so see the difference. It's pretty pricey. I feel like, um, from back home to where I am right now, um, people are nice. And it is more of a community here.

Participants perceive one another as **equal** and entitled to live life on their own terms. Deb remarked:

You get to meet a lot of different types of people, and you don't really know what anyone else is going through, so I don't know. I think that in a g-- in a way that, that is good because you're not assuming that your neighbor doesn't have problems, that your neighbor isn't assuming that you don't have problems like everyone's living their own life.

Elizabeth presented the following ideas about the role of equality in inclusive community development:

I think where everyone is involved but also represented, including even the people who are the managers, you know being inclusive in a different way as well, but also having sort of an understanding of what kind of community they're dealing with too. Just making sure that everyone has a spot in the community and has a voice in the community. And feels comfortable and allowed to say what they need to say. It's their home, I guess what I'm saying. Anywhere you should be comfortable saying anything at your house.

Three participants included in their definitions of community **implicit or explicit behavior expectations** and **a certain level of intimacy with neighbors**. For example, Veronica stated,

"Having neighbors that you can count on, that you can trust. Being there for each other when they need help, and just looking out for each other and each other's families." Sarah hunkered back to, "…being aware of neighbors needing a helping hand or an ear to vent to, a return of the front porch where you really know your neighbors." Esther stated the expectation of involvement in the community saying, "I like it when people are involved. Yes. Involving kids." Miriam summarized different perspectives on inclusive community in the following way, "Um, I think one aspect of inclusive community to me means that people are in the neighborhood with different, um, economic backgrounds and even different ages, um, and different ethnicities."

Youth Perceptions of Community

Due to limitations in sample size, the two youth perspectives on their community are presented below as a recognition of their individual perspectives rather than a representative sample of all youth in the complex. The two youth participants' perceptions of the community were based on their relationships with friends and other residents. Lucas described the community as "a great community, friendly" and "they accept people of racial color." Timothy described the community as "pretty friendly around", having "plenty of friends" and "There's always a lot of kids outside…always a lot of action." While Timothy stated that they "feel safe with [their] friends." Inversely Timothy referred to some adults in the complex as, "not the best people, some of them." In describing their perceptions of the community, Timothy also immediately expounded, "My strip is, we're at the bottom. We're northeast vs. southeast. My friends are northwest, [But the southeast is the part where the not so great neighbors live]. Yes." The parent's interruption in this quote, "But the southeast part is where the not so great neighbors live," calls into question the participant's freedom to fully express their true opinions.

Due to the interview being conducted online, there was no way to secure privacy during the interview.

Research Question 2: What Challenges to Community do Participants Identify Through Lived Experiences?

The table below represent themes that illustrate the challenges to inclusive community development that participants identified in the focus group sessions and interviews.

Table 6

Themes Related to Research Question 2

Theme	Subtheme
Perceptions of input in decision-making	Sense of powerlessness
Collective identity	
Neighborliness vs. Community	Lack of welcoming rituals
"Complex" Relationships: "Us" and "Them"	Social preferences & interests Age Geographic location Residential mobility Trauma & shame Conflict Impact of adult behavior & relationships on children
Organizational relationships	Relationship with maintenance Relationship with property management Relationship with resident services & office personnel Relationship with upper management

Perceptions of Input in Decision-making

Table 7

Perceptions of Input in Decision-making

Theme	Subtheme	Emerging Codes
Perceptions of Input in Decision-making **Definition:** How residents perceive their role in decision-making in the complex.	Perceptions between residents and management	14
	Resident response to input requests	11
	Sense of powerlessness	7

Participants presented participation in decision-making as a challenge to developing inclusive community based on past experiences, their own accountability in responding to communication, and their understanding of their capacity to participate. Except for one long-term resident Abby who stated, "they [management] do look a lot for including the residents in their decision-making process", other participants stated contrasting opinions about their perceived participation in decision-making. As a focus group participant, Miriam stated:

> Um, I think—I'm sort of new here and I—some things, I don't think we are, like when they took all the water hoses out of the spigots or whatever. I think I went to check on a sick family member and came back, and they were gone. Um, and some other things. I think-- it doesn't mean we should be or shouldn't be. I'm just saying, I don't think we are.

Ruth seconded that opinion with the following statement:

> I agree. I don't think we are. Um, I think—a lot of times, our voice goes unheard. Uh, for the ones that do, um, have their voice heard, it's because, practically, you're screaming, [laughter] screaming till everyone's being like, "No, this is what our community needs!"

Martha claimed, "I haven't personally been asked anything about decisions that are being made for the community here." Yet another focus group participant, Portia expressed the following, "I feel like sometimes, even if we do have a voice, uh, to what extent or what point will it-- you

know, will something actually be done about it?" Elizabeth, a long-term resident, provided

insight into past decision-making recalling:

> …there's been ownership change and that kinda thing and so previously there was absolutely none. They [Management] didn't ever ask the residents at all and then a few times it was more about culture items like what do you guys wanna participate in if we had some type of community event. All the way down to... they would not even, you know they don't care even what we have to say. If we don't have the room to store our bikes on the porch or not, that's just the way it is.

While participants reported they are excluded from decision-making, the same participants

admitted that they have the option but often don't. The following statements reflect participants'

reactions to requests for participation. Miriam admitted, "I'm not always connected. So, I know

that's-- you know, we have a choice. And sometimes I don't always know what's really going

on." Deb stated that residents, "… have the option to be, whether they are or not." Ruth cited

apathy as a reason for lack of participation, stating:

> Most people are just like, "Don't bother me. I'm working. I have the kids. And, um, we're busy. We're very, very busy here." And so when we do pipe up and say something, it's like, "Okay, my voice isn't heard. I don't have time for this. Move on."

Portia gave the following reason for lack of participation:

> I, I, I wanna say I'm new but I'm not new just because I hardly come out of my cave… Like, I'm a single parent and I take care of my little son. And I try to figure out many ways to, you know, make my every day, uh, life work. So, like, with that, like, maybe what options I would be able to have in order for my voice to be heard.

Esther, who acknowledged ignoring email communications from the organization also stated,

"I've never even heard of the decision making or anything like that. I'm always in the dark about

that." When asked about participating in decision-making, another participant claimed, "That's

something I honestly don't know. I wanna say no, I don't hear much from property management,

so to speak, so I would say no." Elizabeth, who presented a historical overview of the decision-

making process, made the following statement about current efforts to include resident voices:

> And then more recently I feel like they've been trying to have community involvement in,
> you know letting us know about these interviews for example, but also I feel like they've
> had a few more community meetings than they used to and that kinda thing. So, I feel
> like they're doing a little bit better with this management or whatever they're doing better
> than some for sure, so.

> However, Elizabeth also admitted to attending only one community meeting, claiming

that, "[they] haven't seen a lot of [their] neighbors there either." Participants cited mistrust of

efforts at inclusive decision-making due to a lack of management follow-through. Some believe

that the organization has the right to make whatever decisions they please because they have no

recourse.

Peter put it this way:

> And decisions that are made are made by fiat from ____ Housing. And they just concern,
> I don't know what to call it. They have rules. They have a lot of rules. They have to have
> a lot of rules because the IRS makes them have a lot of rules. It's only through the IRS
> and conforming to the rules the IRS wants to set out that they are able to create affordable
> housing.

A Sense of Powerlessness

A subtheme that flows from perceptions on participation in decision-making is a sense of

powerlessness. The American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology defines

powerlessness as "a state in which individuals either lack or believe that they lack control or

influence over factors or events that affect their health (mental or physical), personal lives, or the

society in which they live" (dictionary.apa.org). Participants claim over time, residents become

apathetic to attempts at inclusion in the decision-making process when they don't see

improvement in their lives. Ruth and Deb alike quoted other residents to prove their point, "So

they're just like, "Why waste my time? I'm not gonna go to another meeting." and "…there is the

option but it doesn't necessarily mean anything's gonna happen once you do it." Finally, "if we

do have a voice, uh, to what extent or what point will it-- you know, will something actually be

done about it?" In trying to recruit fellow participants, Ruth relayed this resistance to their

request, "I had spoken with a couple of people. I'm like, "Hey, go tonight." And they're like,

"Why? It's a waste of my time. It goes on deaf ears. I'd rather spend that hour with my kids or

making dinner or doing something else because no one listens to us." Additionally, Ruth

declared, "So that [pest control] was something that I feel like the community could have had—

[input on] cause we're the ones that live here with the wasps. We're the ones that see where the

trash goes. Um, we're here." Abby addressed the problem of pest control in the following

manner:

> We have a real wasp problem. Usually, we just go around as a community and deal with
> it ourselves because you guys don't seem to want to or you never have in the past. When
> someone says, "hey, we have a wasp problem" they should just get an exterminator out
> here and deal with it instead of waiting for children to get stung repetitively.

Regarding a decision about safety that reflects a sense of powerlessness, Elizabeth described the

impact on the community.

> Before too we used to have... the whole community was gated so we had gates we could
> close for the younger kids so they couldn't get out. Once a large windstorm came and
> broke some of that they didn't try to fix any of that they just took them off so it was just
> unfortunate. It compromised some of the safety features that we did have.

Regarding the removal of water spigot handles, a Miriam lamented,

> …it would have been nice if they would have voiced it to everyone to get an opinion or
> made a different way for us to be able to use it cause it's hard to water flowers and
> cleaning out trash cans and, uh, going in and out of the bathroom and places to get water,
> period.

> In bemoaning a perceived lack of notification of landscaping maintenance, Abby stated,

"They spray weed killer and they kill my flowers, my really pretty tulips [Laughter] 'I didn't

even plant those but I love them and you kill them every single year.'" Taken together, these responses encapsulate a sense of powerless that is rooted in feeling left out of decisions that impact the community.

Collective Identity

Table 8

Collective Identity

Theme	Subtheme	Emerging Codes
Collective Identity	Socioeconomic status	10
Definition: Participants identify	Education Level	5
themselves in terms of their socio-	Identification with Environment	3
economic circumstances, educational		
level, and environment.		

When referring to their place in the community, participants seem to express a collective identity rooted in their **socio-economic status, their education level, and their relationship with the environment.** Their collective identity is most obvious when participants are responding to questions about management. The use of the collective pronoun "we," "we're," and "us" in the following statements express their collective identity as **people in poverty**. Ruth, in referring to how city officials may respond to people in affordable housing stated, "Okay. Um, I guess a lot of the times, people aren't heard in our economic, uh, status and whatnot…This city is not for the poor." Agreeing with Ruth in recalling a past interaction with property management, Deb stated:

> …yeah, they treat us like we're poor. They treat us poorly. I just felt very-- I felt very poor. I felt, "Okay. Yeah. This is how low-income people get treated." That was my experience. I would agree with kind of the you end up feeling very poor. You're above homeless and that's about it in their eyes.

Magdalene framed their identity and the identity of those around them in this way, "I know, speaking for myself and others I know around here too, I mean we're low income." As illustrated in the exchange below, participants collectively perceive themselves as being ignored because of **a lack of education**. The person referenced in the conversation is the researcher. Deb stated, "You definitely kind of have to be a Carron about it before anything actually gets done. [laughter]" Portia responded, "Right. She's right about that. [Laughter]" Retorting, Ruth chimed in, "Agreeing with that, with the Carron. Also, you have to be educated Carron, too. They [management] wanna see any certificates or graduates-- it helps if you have those pieces of paper behind your name." Ruth's statement below reflects a sense of identity rooted in the perception of being looked down upon due to education level.

> Please hire the appropriate people for those positions that will help people with the financial needs and have those answers, other than just your typical grad student, "Here is your pamphlet." I find it very offensive with the social and emotional -- support and academic and educational, it, it does go into that again, where, um, a-agreeing with that it is uppity. Uh, you feel uneducated.

Some participants' strong **identification with the environment** as a source of identity also indicated a perception of being "less than" as demonstrated in a statement made by Elizabeth, "…we know where we live." Veronica, expressing the effect of having to direct guests to the property expresses the perceived assault on their dignity in the following manner.

> Like I said, every time we'd rent the clubhouse, O God there it is. We're having to ask people or giving people directions to our get together and "It's at the [Name of Organization] Housing sign and once it's in your face all the time it makes it worse. Well, I feel a little bit…less than

Seeking to support neighbors wishing to experience a sense of pride in their complex, Miriam reiterated:

> They said that they've been told that those weren't. they were going to redo the landscaping. It's been three or four years and it still hasn't happened and so we still have this and aesthetics is important to some people.

Both youth participants' identification with the environment is evident in that, without being prompted, they described the layout of the complex, made judgments about its appearance, and expressed regrets about features that make it less desirable. Lucas lamented, "There's not that much space to play around the neighborhood…It's just everyone's so close to each other…the walls are super thin, so we can hear each other through the walls. It's kinda weird." In the close living quarters, Lucas felt aware of always being watched or overheard. Timothy regretted that "…they [organization] used to have like a playset in the field, but it's all just grass now." Despite saying that "The apartments are kinda run down and old." Lucas commended the organization for the solar panels and fresh paint, commenting, "They keep their rules tight, so the appearance is good, and they paint so the buildings look better." Lucas's answer to the question about where they would choose to live if they could, was "We want a bigger house. We'll get a dog. More space and privacy."

Neighborliness vs. Inclusive Community

Table 9

Neighborliness vs. Inclusive Community

Theme	Subtheme	Emerging Codes
Neighborliness vs. Inclusive Community	Neighborliness	10
	Community	7
Definition: Participants distinguished between behavior that constitutes being neighborly – helping each other in need vs. community, social cohesion among residents overall.	Lack of Welcoming Rituals	21

The theme of neighborliness vs. inclusive community is best exemplified by Miriam's words, "…it's almost like there's neighborliness and then there's community. If there was some dire need, somebody would be more neighborly" She challenged Ruth's use of the collective pronoun "we" about the community stating:

> She always uses her inclusive language, which is nice. It seems like she says we, we, we. I'm not at that level yet cause-- not that I hate people. But I don't feel the we part. I don't feel like I'm we with the-- a lot of the people here. There's one or two people who I communicate with.

Ruth paused when stating, "…I'm with the – a lot of people here." Ruth's hesitation possibly implies she identifies with a particular segment of the community and thus changed her vocabulary in reference to them. Participants claim that residents in the complex are neighborly, extending a helping hand or receiving help from their neighbors in need, as demonstrated in the following scenarios. Ruth claimed, "I could pretty much go to any door in this neighborhood and ask for a cup of sugar. They may or may not have it but they—I, I would feel comfortable doing that." Deb seconded that notion with, "Yeah. I can agree with that just kinda go door to door until someone was like, "Yes, I can help you." Martha stated, "I definitely would be willing to give a helping hand. I've given a ride to a kid before to school or something like that." Portia, a relatively newcomer to the complex stated, "…if I need a helping hand, somebody would eventually help me out." The most telling example of neighborliness was given by Deb in this memory:

> …the first really bad snowfall - I got my car stuck in the parking lot. And, like, I had, like, people from every little, uh, uh, uh, unit right next to me coming out and giving me their shovel. I tried, like, every type of shovel Walmart had by the time I got [laughter] unstuck.

Ruth, in considering the difference between neighborliness and inclusive community, made the following statement:

> We're all on the s-same boat that, at the end of the day, when it comes to community, we really don't have that much energy left to give to the community. Um, a-and I, I agree with you. Um, um, I do use we a lot.

When challenged to explain the incongruency between the definitions of community and the conversation about neighborliness, Ruth elaborated, "in that time of need, yes, we will come to whatever rescue you may or may not need. However, in that same thing—we're double-sided—don't bother us…it's just really one way or the other" Deb had this take on it:

> …the people that are willing to help, yeah, everyone's got their own issues and everyone has the, the two faces, you know? They're like, "Come to me if you need help. But at the same time, I've got a life.

A vivid illustration of the separation of groups in the complex was Deb's reiteration:

> I would just, again, echo back the—just kind of, like, the group feeling, you know? It's, it's kinda the same as going into high school and being the new kid. Like, sure, you're welcome. But everyone still has a cafeteria table to sit at.

Peter, a senior participant representing an anomalous voice stated, "To cope, I have a lot of volunteer groups out there, and local government agencies. They are the ones I turn to in times of need." Simultaneously, Peter regularly passes on extra food to a neighbor, demonstrating acts of neighborliness as defined by fellow participants.

Lack of Welcoming Rituals

Participants unanimously agreed there are no protocols for inviting new arrivals into the complex. When asked how the community welcomes newcomers, the most common response was, "They don't." Veronica explained:

> I know that when somebody new comes in everybody gets a little nervous, like, "Oh what are we gonna have now" type of thing. How are these people gonna be and …but there's not any... as far as I know anyway like, introducing yourself until maybe they do first.

> Amongst the few neighbors that I'm closest to. We all come… we probably gossip a little bit…"Did you see 'em" and "How old are they" "Do they have kids?"

Unlike the adults in the complex, children are the first to welcome newcomers into their space. Magdalene, a recent arrival to the complex stated, "… a bunch of kids said "Hi" to us." Esther stated, "… my three-year-old, she makes friends." Abby agreed that, "The kids really are a big part of parents getting to know each other." The role children play in developing inclusive community will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

"Complex" Relationships Among Residents: "Us" and "Them"

This theme illustrated ways in which relationships within the complex present challenges to inclusive community development. Factors such as social preferences and interests, age, geographical location, residential mobility, trauma and shame, adult behavior and relationships and conflict may have a significant impact on inclusive community development and relationships among residents.

Table 10

Complex Relationships Among Residents: "Us" and "Them"

Theme	Subtheme	Emerging Codes
Complex Relationships: "Us" and "Them"	Social preferences and interests	12
	Age	5
Definition: Complicated	Geographical Location	6
relationships among residents	Residential Mobility	5
and between residents create	Trauma & Shame	2
divisions that challenge	Conflict	5
inclusive community	Impact of Adult Behavior and	21
development.	Relationships on Children	

Note: Though fewer in number, some in vivo codes summarized the overall perceptions of the participants that wove through multiple interviews.

Social Preferences and Interests

Socially, participants perceived a three-way split among established residents. Deb's

perspective exemplifies the relationship dynamic:

> One of the people that, like, again, drink all night or crazy and, yeah, that group. And
> then there's the other group that's kinda like the, the complainers, the-- again, excuse the
> term, the Carrons. And it doesn't really leave a lot of middleman room. [laughter]
> Or you get the party group or you don't have anything. So there really is n-no clubhouse,
> some other, "Hey, let's get together and learn how to bake pies," or some other outlet for
> us to go ahead and congregate together than USA party.

First, the "old timers" have lived in the complex for five or more years and perceive the complex

as a close-knit community dependent upon each other. These "lifers" socialize in a certain part of

the property during warm weather months. Abby opined, "those of us who have been here for a

while, I feel like we do feel like that [a community]. We've been here for a while and we talk to

each other and it doesn't matter whether [Name of Housing Organization] is talking to us." Ruth

remarked, "these are my ride or dies," Magdalene delineated the social differences in this way,

"So, it's almost cliquey, in the summertime there's lots of people that like to sit outside and drink

and party and talk…" Magdalene and Veronica complained about after hours smoking and

drinking on weekends and during weekdays. Elizabeth cited that social preference is how

residents determine how to interact with each other saying, "If they're the type of family that

comes and hangs outside, cause in the summer we all come out and hang out in the common

area, but some people just don't."

The second view was held by those who are opposed to a "party" lifestyle and have

established a community where they interact with each regularly, problem-solve and share

resources. Wary of engaging in a "party" culture, Veronica pointed to a geographical distinction

between the groups as well:

> Those people in those buildings over there are all very cliqueish and tight and they get together. And they're the ones in the summer outside drinking and playing with their pools and everything as a group. Whereas our side, we're kind of the more mellow people. Even though we socialize, I mean a lot of times we'll sit outside just in a group and talk, especially in the summer. But we kinda hang out with our own groups if that
>
> makes sense. I don't see any way of getting the two groups together because they're just very different.

Deb explained, "It's not that I am not wanting to be friendly or whatever. I just-- I can't drink every single night, okay? [laughter] Like, I'll die." Veronica asserted, "So, some of us just tend to be more family focused, others are more fun focused I guess." Abby commented on the social divide stating, "the few people who choose not to interact with the group as a whole they're really just like homebodies and there's nothing wrong with that." Megan stated their personal preferences about not associating with the other group relating, "I find it hard to go out and socialize with other people my own age and actually make those personal connections" and Martha claimed, "…that's not my thing." Focus group participants and some participants concurred that the third group of residents comprise those who prefer to disengage entirely. Portia cited concerns about safety, alleging:

> …you know, some of the times that I've actually came out and spoken to some of my neighbors, um, you know, later that night, I would see, like, random things-- uh, random people, um, either drunk or, you know, I don't know what they were on.

To illustrate the difficulty of integrating into the community, Esther surmised, "it's just so cliquey already." Martha simply does not engage with either group, "I've actually lived here for a long time. I've just never really gotten along with anyone, so I would say no. I see people out, hanging out and having a good time." Martha also demonstrated the wariness of established residents about where new tenants will fit in speculating:

…we have someone that moved in catty corner to us, I wanna say they've been there about six months. I don't think we've ever, you know had more than a three word conversation. So, they're very quiet and keep to themselves, and yeah, you just never know.

On the topic of welcoming, Esther declared, "…like a lot of people seem really stuck up."

Age

Senior citizens are perceived as separate from the complex. A street separates all but two senior residences from the complex. This physical barrier creates an "us" and "them" mentality between the seniors and families. As Ruth pointed out:

And on our side of the community is more children, children based 0 to 18. Whereas the senior side community is more senior based. And we've actually seen a couple of seniors being placed over here on the family side, and it just doesn't work. Yeah, they've had kids. They're just done with that part of their life. And I could see where it doesn't fit in. And they do have a hard time connecting with the community.

In identifying separating factors between groups in the community, Veronica stated, "... I'd say age. I mean I'm unusual in that I'm older. They're just very different in what they're… more are parent focused, at that time in their life…I've been there years ago so I understand it." Not everyone wants to be included in community life. Peter commented on the location of their apartment, "It's quiet. Wonderfully quiet. Silent. [Laughter]" I love it. The occasional crossover occurs between the families and seniors. Peter observed:

A family from the other side kind of came and adopted for a time one of our people who lives at the other end of my row. The children were there too, until there was a bit of a community feeling between them.

Geographical Location

Nine out of fifteen participants concurred geographical location could be a cause for social divisions. Several participants referred to different areas associated with social groups like the grassy area, northeast area, and the clubhouse. Ruth explained:

It really just also depends your, uh, location within the complex, uh, what kind of interactions you will have if you choose to have them the people that are more in the

middle, um, tend to have more interactions and communications with each other, whether it be positive or negative. You will see each other more than as if you were on the outer ends or had your own doorway.

Deb concurred, "Yeah. I can agree. That's probably where I get some of that black and white cause it's like party in the back, conference in the front." Hannah, a senior citizen participant claimed that, "there has been no effort at inclusion among the different residents on this side of the property." Peter agreed, "My side has three apartments. The other side has three apartments, so it would be easy for us to get together if we wanted, but we don't." Peter expressed a longing to be a part of the community, but claimed they "had never had any interaction or conversation with any of them."

Residential Mobility

Residential mobility refers to "the frequency with which individuals change their residence" (Oishi, 2010). Deb, who is relatively new to the complex remarked:

So…there's just kind of this feeling of, okay, we'll talk more when you've been here for five years or whatever. Like, I literally had one person tell me that. And it's just like, what do I do for five years then?

Elizabeth, a long-term resident participant representing an opposing viewpoint observed:

Those of us who have been here for a while, I feel like we do feel like…this is our community kinda taking ownership and responsibility there, but also I feel like some residents look at this as a temporary living situation and so they don't really try to engage or care.

Ruth speculated, "maybe that's part of what contributes to the, like, separation of the two side, I guess, is that, um, you know, you don't know how long anyone's gonna be here." Hannah, for whom resident mobility is compounded by death lamented, "I had several best friends in those residences who have either moved or died."

Trauma and Shame

Abby's reflection on their family's move into the complex revealed the potential impact

of trauma and shame on relationships:

> Even though you have a roof over your family's head and you've got that stability there's that really deep seated concern that if someone finds out that you came from a hotel because you couldn't make ends meet that they're gonna judge you harshly or they're gonna judge your children harshly. That can definitely put a huge, huge damper on how you even start to create relationships with people and build trust with people. But it's just a source of deep shame for me to be completely honest, and for my [spouse] as well. We talk about it occasionally and even if we look back and say "Okay, we made it, it doesn't make it any less shameful for us."

Miriam echoed these sentiments saying, "I think a lot of us have been through things where we

are closed off, uh, community-wise."

Conflict

Veronica, recalling a past conflict with a neighbor that now precludes this participant

from attending any community functions, reflected, "So, when we have community gatherings

like that, I don't want to be around those people who will also be at the community gatherings."

Martha described open conflict among residents stating, "I've seen some people outside get into

arguments before… The cops have showed up here plenty of times. Cussing in front of your

child…I just don't think that that's appropriate." Regarding conflict over children, Veronica

observed, "A lot of these kids are just thrown out of the house to do what they want, and to play

as they will." Miriam suggested, "something that might help is people kind of keeping an eye on

their own children… you shouldn't have 20 or 30 of the children congregating around the same

four places all the time…" Veronica claimed, "There's been other residents that will yell at the

kids when they're out playing because they're riding their bikes too fast or they scared [the] dog

when they went by."

Impact of Adult Behavior and Relationships on Children

Analysis of the youth dataset illustrates a theme of adult behavior having a negative impact on the relationships among and welfare of children in the complex. Children may experience a sense of powerlessness over adult behavior that they perceive as impacting their safety. For example, Timothy expressed a desire for adults to "try to stop smoking and drinking around the kids" and concern about the fact that "Some people smoke pot and things like that." Another concern Timothy expressed was how adults handle conflict, asking for adults to "not argue with other people. Adults between blocks, and "people's opinions about other people" to stop. In answering a question about how adults can make the community better for children, Lucas implied communication was definitely a concern, citing "Better communication with the neighbors", and "Maybe making us more comfortable around the adults so we can… maybe saying hello and making us feel more comfortable." Resonant with adult participant responses, Timothy gave examples of direct conflict with adults, stating, "I've had experiences with them." Timothy also cited incidences about adults who "…get really mad" and "yell at you a lot."

Organizational Relationships

Table 11

Frequency of Residents' Use of "they" in Reference to Other Residents and Management

Group	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Other Residents	127	42.9
Maintenance	27	9.1
Property Management	41	13.9
Resident Services, including Office Personnel	54	18.2
Upper Management/Board of Directors	47	15.9
Total References to Upper Management	142	47.1
Total Use of "They"	296	100

Note: Property Management and Resident Services play a significant role in decision-making regarding everyday life issues. Upper management excludes Maintenance.

Evidential data prompted the theme of complex relationships among residents, property management, maintenance, and the Board of Directors. The theme of organizational relationships is demonstrated by the frequency of participants' use of the word "they." With the exception of direct references to the property manager and on-site caretaker, participants used "they" in reference to all management. In context, "they" represent different levels of management. "They" is used 169 times in reference to management versus 127 times in reference to other residents. References to maintenance, which could include the maintenance manager and technicians are 27, property management appears 41 times, upper management 47 times, and resident services including office staff 54 times. "They" represents how participants perceive the residents in the complex' relationship with the organization as a whole. A pattern of "us" and "them" emerges throughout the focus group discussions and interviews.

Table 12

Organizational Relationships

Theme	Subtheme	Emerging Codes
Organizational Relationships **Definition:** Strained relationships between residents and management create divisions that challenge community building.	Relationship with Maintenance	27
	Relationship with Property Management	41
	Relationship with Resident Services and Office Personnel	54
	Relationship with Upper Management	47

Relationship with Maintenance

Focus group participants and participants expressed either frustration or gratitude about their relationship with Maintenance. Ruth stated, "But along with the poop, the dog poop, yes, thank you for the doggie bags, but they haven't put any trash connectors with them." Deb expressed frustration:

> But specifically for me, maintenance, the, the relationship with maintenance has just been ridiculous. Uh, when it first happened, our sink exploded. And it was like, "Okay. Well, that's not an emergency." But then it's like, okay, so when the exploded sink starts causing stuff to mold and water damage, I'm gonna be the one who's-- who-- like, my money is gonna be taken out of the deposit.

In contrast, when asked about any concerns to take to the board, Peter stated, "No, no, just maintenance. [Name of Organization] are extremely good with maintenance. From big to small." Indifferent about the issue, Miriam challenged other participants' concerns about wasps stating, "I mean I live on a planet with animals and insects. I think that's useless. I mean it's not important enough to complain about."

Relationship with Property Management

Regarding the ability to stay in affordable housing and receiving assistance from the property manager, participants expressed gratitude toward the property manager for rental assistance support. For example, Peter, concerned about higher income leading to possibly

having to move, said, "my property manager told me, "no, no, no" we're not going to push you out." You know they're extremely kind, caring, serious about serious things and I am very happy to be in one of their residences. Alone or not [Laughter]." Portia pronounced, "I wanna say, uh, still, with everything that's going on, um, I wanna say we're still blessed, uh, to be here. You know, and, um, I just wanted to say that, being thankful and blessed, well, yeah, overall." Again, Miriam reported, "the [Name of Housing Organization] community has been a stellar community to be during a pandemic compared to what's going on across the country."

Three participants hunkered back five years to the once vibrant community facilitated by a former property manager. Hannah reminisced, "She knew everyone, she knew everyone by name. She would knock on your door and say, "How are you doing?" and each of us knew each other." Ruth recalled, "She really went above and beyond. She really worked each property as if she was a caseworker, "What does that property need? What's going to benefit that?" And she just killed it…" Past memories set expectations for future property managers to facilitate inclusive community development as illustrated by the following examples. Hannah stated, "…it would be wonderful if we could have a participatory community again. But that has to happen at the level of the property manager." Likewise, Miriam suggested "…it would take some organizing and somebody to spearhead it but I don't think the residents need to spearhead it." Again, Elizabeth recommended:

> I think property management could also have an effect in that in the sense that not favoritism but if they're not facilitating programs, if they're not facilitating things that will bring the complex together to feel included, then I think that would be something.

Sarah reported, "no custom feeling" in their interactions with a prior property manager. The

walk-through process, speed of the lease-signing process, and perception of being treated poorly

are exemplified in the following two focus group responses given by Deb and Ruth respectively:

> Same with the walk-in stuff where we asked to do a walk-in, and we have rented before, and they pretty much were like they didn't even give it as an option to us. They just said we don't do that.

> And we signed the lease real quick…they were nice to us at first when we first started signing stuff, but as time went on, it felt like they were just kind of bothered. And they didn't really want to explain the rules and all of the stuff that no one ever tells you about. They just wanted you to sign it and get it over with.

In recalling these past events, these participants' tones changed from congenial to serious.

Relationship with Resident Services & Office Personnel

Participants reported different experiences when interacting with office personnel or

resident services representatives regarding resource needs or lease signings. For example, Ruth

stated, "If you're needing community assistance anywhere, they say, "Go to [Resource

Providers]. Um, so…why ask them when you know they're not gonna be able to help you, and

they're just gonna give you whatever you could Google?" Miriam relayed the following about an

initial encounter with a front desk employee regarding a lease-signing:

> But that person felt like they had to be a guardian or watch dog or something that the-- I wasn't, I guess, good enough to come in there. And I was ready. I was supposed to-- I

> was one step to signing my lease and, and-- but she didn't have that information. And instead of caring and compassionate and wise, she was too busy trying to be, whatever, I don't know, snobby or something. I don't know.

Deb observed, "I would at least say that the times that I've gone into office, it's definitely there's

one reaction or the other. They're either super rude or you almost get the feeling of they're being

impractically nice." Contrarily, several participants recalled times when they have appreciated

past efforts by Resident Services to build community, such as an annual BBQ, Christmas Party, and Easter Egg hunt. Ruth recalled:

> And then also this family-oriented picnic that was just awesome. That is kind of an example of where they took the initiative…And we were a stronger community after that I would say. And it gave an appropriate setting for the kids to get along.

Magdalene shared their gratitude for educational support provided by Residential Services with the following statement:

> I know that recently they started homework help provided by [Name of Provider] here at the [Name of Complex], so I think that's really awesome and goes towards the schooling. My kiddo participates in that and then they also got us set up with the [Name of Provider], so I think that that was really awesome as well.

Several participants cited sparse attendance or apathy toward these efforts on the part of residents. Peter concluded, "They discontinued meetings I think because there wasn't a lot of people who wanted to join in." Ruth relayed the following reaction when residents felt that the event was poorly organized, recalling, "They got annoyed because they were overwhelmed because they didn't expect that many people. A lot of the people actually just ended up getting their food and going back to their houses."

Relationship with Upper Management

In a discussion about past attempts by the organization at creating an inclusive community, Ruth shared a memory about a barbeque attended by several board members and staff:

> This was like, "Okay. No, I want to go back home. Give me the free food. I'll go back home." So, what was the icing and the cherry on top was that the employees were standing off to the side talking to the Board of Directors, a few of them, and it was very disgusting. It really was. They just stood there, and they were like, "Oh, yeah, these are the poor people." I mean they didn't say these are the poor people…They did not engage with us whatsoever. It was them and it was us… And me being me, I was like, "Hi, who are you?" And she's like, "I am on the board. I'm this. I'm that." And I'm like, "Well,

that's nice. You guys could have worn name tags. You guys could actually talk to people within the community. Go sit down at a table. You're on a board for us. You're supposed to be representing us, hello, and yet you snob." …It felt very uncomfortable. I was very sad and ashamed by it that I'm like, "Really, guys? Wow."

In relating the event, Ruth's tone changed from conviviality to indignation. It is important to note they were referring to former members of the board and staff.

Research Question 3: What do Participants Believe are the Best Practices Exist to Develop or Strengthen Community?

Envisioning Community

Through analysis of the data pertinent to research question three the researcher identified one major theme, *Envisioning Community*, and five subthemes, *Building Community, Changes in Property Management and Maintenance, Capital Improvements, Education and Resources and Playful Community*. Themes were constructed based on codes derived from responses to the question, "If you were given the opportunity to represent the community in a decision-making structure, what main concerns would you bring to the table?" These themes reflect ideas and best practices that could be implemented in collaboration with management to work toward creating an inclusive, socially sustainable community.

Table 13

Envisioning Community Theme and Subthemes

Envisioning Community Definition: How residents envision creating an inclusive community in collaboration with Management				
Building Community	**Changes in Property Management & Maintenance**	**Capital Improvements**	**Education & Resources**	**Playful Community**
Communication Conflict resolution Social emotional support Welcoming rituals Sense of Ownership	Cultivate Inclusive Community Collaboration Discontinue stopgap measures Equipment Upgrades Landscaping	Safer play areas Privacy measures Laundry Facility Security Cameras	Financial Resources Housing Education: Rights and Responsibilities Ed. Partnerships to complete certifications Other resources	

Building Community

Participants commented on **communication, social emotional support, conflict resolution**, instituting **welcoming rituals** and developing **a sense of ownership** to build community. To work toward stronger communication one participant stated:

It would be awesome to have maybe- we don't even have to do weekly, like have monthly meetings at the community house; talk about what's going on or is something bothering us, or let's all get on the same page.

Magdalene thought it would be a good idea, "…just collectively seeing what everybody thought and trying to make a place where everybody's thoughts and opinions and ideas were able to work together." As to the method of communication, Hannah suggested, "And that could be

done on… like you and I are doing it together on Zoom right now, or it can be done in person

when it's a small community." The youth participants respectively emphasized strengthening the

community through improved communication between adults stating, "Better communication

with the neighbors" and "If they planned to hang out and to talk more..." Magdalene made the

following observation regarding community meetings, "It is to begin to see where there are

commonalities and where people will feel safe enough to take risks." Miriam echoed their

sentiment stating, "Some people, if they knew somebody who was around who was interested

they could learn how to be together." In reference to conflict resolution to improve resident

relations Timothy recommended, "Try to connect both of them, yeah or at least try to connect

with the people and become friendly with them." Martha suggested, "…if there's an issue it's not

like it's gonna be a fight when you go talk to the person. It's gonna be a calm thing and you guys

are on the same page." Participants envisioned a more inclusive community where social

emotional support is provided by residents and outside agencies. Abby stated, " I think that's a

big one…if there were better resources for mental health." Magdalene believed that the

community needs support, "Socially and emotionally [for] the transitions and such." To help

establish welcoming rituals, Sarah also mentioned creating a "sort of welcoming committee"

cautioning, "We need to move slowly so we understand their problems or personality…" Hannah

lamented the abandoned practice of issuing a directory of residents stating, "We used to have a

list with members here, with phone numbers, their birthdays, who they were, what unit they were

in and so forth." Martha mentioned, "It would be cool if there was more of... an announcement

board or something. I know they used to have an announcement board by the mailbox and maybe

if they announced a new resident coming that would be cool." In advocating for ownership of the community, Elizabeth stated:

> Have it be a social norm that we don't leave dog poop here and we don't leave our trash everywhere and we try to care about our community around here. I think that would be
>
> the only priority that I would have - just trying to have some ownership. It's not just the fact that we have to follow these rules, but we want to some of them.

Changes in Property Management & Maintenance

Focus group participants advocated for changes property management and residents can implement to help cultivate inclusive community. Articulating property management should initiate community building, Ruth stated, "Management definitely sets the tone for the environment, for the property that it's going to create." To initiate these changes, Ruth proposed the following:

> Give the kids something to play with. Give our smokers something to sit on. Take away the wasps. And get some more people that are willing to work with our community, again, like a case management more minded person that can access more of this type of stuff for this community… a clothing swap, or a garage sale.

Sarah mentioned, "little house-type gatherings" and suggested "a square dance would be a fun mixer." Deb stated, "Even if it's not age-based, some interested based stuff would be nice because I love hanging out with some little old ladies, They understand me in a way that people my age cannot." Finally, Ruth concluded with "extending garden opening time, increasing gardening space and play area for the children" which expanded the focus group idea list for building community.

Lucas suggested implementing a tutoring program "for all ages" in the clubhouse explaining, "I would have six-foot-apart desks and one or two adults walking around and helping kids all ages with math or things they're struggling with." Sarah hoped to "set up or join with

groups that interest them, so social interaction, crafting, gardening…" Miriam echoed, "in the community center…once in a while, you know, to do different things. And it might bring people more into a real community mindset, in my opinion." In support of the idea, Deb concurred, "I don't really even think there's much funding needed for a service like that other than having some chairs in the community room." Focus group participants and interview participants commented on a desire to improve the complex itself. Deb, expressing a desire for maintenance to discontinue stopgap measures asserted, "Additionally, just keeping up with the maintenance, not necessarily the maintenance, but the remodels or if there's a leaking sink actually fixing it and not just sending the guy to kind of stop it. I mean like actually getting it fixed." In the same vein, Abby stated:

> There's definitely little maintenance things that could be done within each apartment, upgrades of the kitchen equipment and basic need things that probably haven't been changed in a really long time. "It's not broken, we're just replacing it cause it's time."

Participants repeatedly raised concerns about landscaping and overall property maintenance. The Deb's statement summarizes the overall sentiment:

> The main theory is that something's not taken care of, then the others will follow in its steps, it will deteriorate, it will go down. You look at our property, I'm not kidding you, there's a tree that has fallen from the first snow, which was, what, two months ago now? That really bad storm that we had. It's still there hanging. I could send you the pictures that I took the other day. And I'm like, "Well, but yet you expect us to keep our property, our bikes and stuff labeled and whatnot, but this tree, which is a safety hazard, has been sitting here for two months." You go and look at our newsletter bulletin board, and you can tell a lot by a property by that bulletin board of newest forums of people-- just any updated information. I can show you the picture. The paper is crumpled and sunburned. I think that was last summer. So, our property also reflects what you're wanting back from it. I mean it all just goes hand-in-hand."

Lucas stated they would like to see an improvement in "the overall look of the community". A participant reiterated, saying, "You want to be proud of it,…It's not a secret or anything but at least make it as nice as it can be."

Capital Improvements

Participants reiterated the need for safer designated play areas for the children. One participant stated, "We would definitely have more places for them [the children] to play and grass areas." To problem-solve the playground dilemma, Sarah expressed the following, "We could help build a playground with materials that are donated." Veronica has a dream to have "A skate park, a mini skate park, something with little railings, little concrete, they would love that here" and "… a basketball hoop for the kids." Timothy recommended, "Probably, they need to redo the field into a Gazebo, and with a grill or something so that people could all just hang out there, and stuff like that." Concerned about privacy, Elizabeth stated, "We're always facing each other so I would kind of rebuild or redesign them [the apartments] so that we could have our individual homes while also being a part of the community." Regarding a defunct laundry room, Martha stated, "we're supposed to have a laundry room...it's locked and there's a bunch of storage stuff in there. So, it's really sad that it's gone downhill." Participants mentioned a laundromat is advertised on the organization's website. In comparison with other nonprofit organizations' security measures, Ruth stated:

> We have so much crime here, so much just stolen bikes, property damages, but we only have two places that come in and out…I would like them to follow more of a format that I've seen at other properties here in town like the [Other Nonprofit]. They actually do have cameras at a lot of their properties to help with crime.

Educational Opportunities and Resource Acquisition

In addition to social emotional support, participants identified needing resources in financial assistance and education. In general, participants agreed residents are not utilizing the clubhouse. Miriam summed it up with, "If I was part of the financial thing I would post phone numbers and places where people can get financial aid and I think also the academic needs to be spearheaded by the schools." Deb emphasized "financial need, moving on to other housing or home ownership, um, [inaudible] further financial resources." To dispel myths about affordable housing, Elizabeth suggested educating residents on the inner workings of the organization, requesting:

> Education as far as, "where do they get their funding", and "who makes decisions" and "what are those decisions based on" and just those kinds of qualifying things so that people understand, and are able to show what they know rather than guessing…Maybe that's just my own curiosity. If I knew how certain things worked or where, I know this sounds kinda bad, but where to add pressure to actually get results.

As a rationale for bringing educational support to the housing complex, Miriam stated, "a lot of times people have challenges and they might be in this situation because they never completed high school, they were in college and they dropped out before they graduated." She offered up the following solution:

> They could have something where people could have an 18-month program to finish what they never completed in their degree, and they could come there once a week. I think it needs to be a collaboration amongst the whole community. I think having some outposts from [The Local College] or I think they have a program at [The Local College] that kinda does a little bit of that, or the community college in town.

Building on the prior statement, a focus group Ruth added:

> …mentoring for adults would be awesome. I mean, if someone came to me that had [inaudible] like, "Oh, yeah. Now I live in this big house and I--" I'd be like, "Oh, how did you do it?" Like, I would love to have that conversation, [laughter] or somebody who is an older adult, graduating out of [Area College] or [Local College] and saying, "Okay, this is-- in my life, when I was in your shoes, this is what was happening with me."

Veronica stated, "There's a lot of boys here and they need direction, supervised sports would be awesome…a coach or program that came in and did sports." Participants also referred to other resources that could be made available. Ruth and Veronica respectively suggested, "offer Wi-Fi for low-income family, everybody, not that we have to go sign up ourselves on contract," and "Free anything is worthwhile, especially in low-income housing unless it raises our rent cause that's what we struggle to pay. I think... Again, I think if people had access to the internet." Furthermore, Miriam reflected, "And there's so many people here who are unemployed or people that are needing papers for their schooling. There's a printer in there. Why can't we access that?" Another suggestion by Ruth was to turn a section of the clubhouse into a mini-food bank, stating, "And I had mentioned in that small area there's shelves built in there. Why don't we put a food bank in there that would be for us here, just dry goods? You could put dry goods on there."

Playful Community

Derived from the youth dataset, this theme illustrates how informal norms about welcoming, inclusion and acceptance among children can demonstrate to adults ways of creating an inclusive community. Children in the complex form relationships with each other through play. Lucas stated that they, "…hang out with all ages.", while Timothy stated, "There's always a lot of kids outside. There's some older kids, like, high schoolers, elementary schoolers, and a couple of middle schoolers. They're all nice…" Both participants have "best friends" who live within the complex. Despite comments about the "not so nice people" in "the other strip", Timothy crosses over the cultural and geographical divide to interact with, "one of my best friends [who] lives up there and then one of my friends lives in our strip, and only like one or two of my friends live in the other strip." Lucas stated they've "lived here for most of [their]

life" and that their neighbor is their "best friend." Play takes different forms and varies from individual activities to group games. Children utilize every available open space within the complex and their play area extends to a nearby city park and natural area. Together, participants A and B listed the following common activities:

- video games and outside play

- Play at the closest park

- riding bikes around the neighborhood

- skateboard and scooter

- going to the pool

Timothy added the following group games:

> Yeah, we play kickball, soccer. We play some other ones; we play volleyball or beach ball sometimes. Those are pretty much the main ones, or we go over to [Name of Park] we play basketball when they put the basket hoops back up, and that's fun."

Both participants reflected on their lack of play space within the complex. Lucas stated emphatically, "They don't really have any playgrounds in the neighborhood", while Timothy lamented, "There's two different grassy circles that used to be sand, which I'm sad they took out the sand…" As also referenced in the adult dataset, Lucas directly illustrated children are the first to welcome newcomers to the community by an invitation to play, stating, "We go knock on their door and ask them if they wanna play." Lucas also pointed out they did not observe adults knocking on newcomers' doors. In referring to children being excluded from play, Timothy remarked, "some kids don't go outside…their parents don't allow them to participate in the activities." When asked about the inevitable conflict that arises among children, Timothy stated they, "just walked away" and Lucas stated, "We ask our parents for help."

COVID-19 Impact

As discussed in chapter one, it was not the researcher's intent to use the pandemic as the focus of this study. However, focus group participants made unsolicited comments about COVID-19, and participants were asked how the pandemic had impacted their lives. Analysis of the data revealed two major themes regarding the coronavirus: impact on social and emotional well-being, and impact on community life.

COVID-19 Impact on Social and Emotional Well-being

Participants' views on social interaction and emotional well-being differed depending on the length of residence, social connection with neighbors, and health restrictions. Esther, who moved in during the pandemic, expressed the following, "[Moving in] It was stressful…I'm just inside with my kids and I don't go out, or you know…the whole time has been...a mess." Deb, who moved in several months before the pandemic reflected, "…when the whole coronavirus stuff started, I w—I was super stressed out." Ruth and Abby, who are long-term residents with close connections to neighbors stated the following:

> But everybody here-- pretty much, we social distance together, like, as a crew. Our kids play together. Everybody touches everything here. Like, there's not too many people here within the community wearing masks, um, when they're out with each other in the neighborhood.

> It hasn't changed a whole lot just aside from we don't socialize as much as we used to. It's just changed our communication style. Communication with other parents about what's going on in your household as far as health goes. There's a lot more texting and video chatting going on.

Lucas commented on their inability to play with other kids as they used to, stating, "It kinda sucks. There's not as many kids outside there's only like two kids that'll go outside those days.

And I don't really get to see much of the people I used to see around the neighborhood."

Timothy stated:

> So, my life it's kinda sucked, because you can't go many places that I want and you have to have a mask. Nobody really wears them outside here, especially the kids. I've probably only seen one person wearing a mask and that's getting home from work.

In reference to the pandemic, Peter stated:

> The next three years we'll still be living with this plague. Isolating yourself is the best thing you can do…The lady next door to me used to have a five minute chat when we met in the parking lot…We used to have a short chat at the same time, but now what with

> the cold and what with COVID she just wants to get the box and get the door shut as quickly as possible.

Three participants who are parents expressed concerns about their high-risk children getting exposed to the coronavirus. Magdalene, who complimented the organization on bringing educational support to the clubhouse, stated, "I didn't sign up my kids because I have a high-risk kiddo and I didn't want him exposed."

COVID-19 Impact on Community Life

Participants made several comments regarding maintenance during the pandemic, claiming that, "They've stopped doing small maintenance jobs and they'll only do emergency maintenance jobs in this Covid crisis" and "…with Covid it's only emergency things can be fixed right now so that is kind of unfortunate." Other participants expressed concerns about the lax attitude of some residents due to a lack of rule enforcement by property management. Veronica reported, "Management has been far less involved… a lot of our standard rules and regulations for the community are being ignored by tenants because they know that management isn't coming around." On the flipside, participants were grateful to the organization for how they handled the initial fallout of the pandemic. Miriam stated, "…they did a marvelous and are still

doing a good job. Keeping people updated and safe and even in the summer having meals coming around. I thought that was just awesome." Elizabeth stated, "…actually making phone calls and getting people engaged was a good idea. So, I appreciated that." Martha expressed appreciation for plans to have community events, saying, "I know before they had planned doing BBQs and stuff like that. We were able to do all that stuff before the pandemic and now it's a little bit harder."

Summary of Findings

The focus of this study was to examine how residents in an affordable housing complex define inclusive community, what challenges to creating an inclusive community they experience in their daily life, and what best practices they could implement in the community to work toward creating an inclusive, socially sustainable community. After receiving focus group data from a third-party focus group facilitator, the researcher conducted 10 interviews with adults, seniors, and youth respectively. The discussion and interview questions focused on their lived experiences in the affordable housing complex described in chapter one. The researcher analyzed the more robust adult and senior dataset separately from the underrepresented youth dataset for the sake of transparency and trustworthiness of the data. This chapter addressed definitions of inclusive community and challenges to inclusive community participants perceive residents may experience based on the three research questions:

1. How do participants define inclusive community?
2. What challenges to community do participants identify through lived experiences?

3. What do participants believe are the best practices to develop or strengthen community?

Utilizing a grounded theory thematic analytical approach to address the research questions, the researcher identified the following subthemes to the theme Definitions and Perceptions of Inclusive Community: (a) Participants' awareness of how relationships neighbors influence community development (b) Perceptions of Equality, (c) Awareness of socio-economic status (d) Implicit or explicit behavior expectations, (e) Implicit or explicit behavior expectations, and (f) Assumptions about levels of intimacy.

The researcher used the following themes and subthemes to illustrate challenges that prevent inclusive community development: a) Perceptions of Input in Decision-making with the subtheme Sense of Powerlessness, (b) Collective Identity, (c) "Complex" Relationships Among Residents: "Us" & "Them" with subthemes: Social Preferences and Interests, Age, Geographic Location, Residential Mobility, Trauma & Shame, Conflict, and Impact of Adult Behavior and Relationships on Children, (e) Organizational Relationships with Subthemes: Maintenance, Property Management, Residential Services and Office Personnel, Upper Management. One major theme, Envisioning Community, with subthemes, Building Community, Changes in Property Management and Maintenance, Capital Improvements, Education and Resources, and Playful Community represent ideas for best practices presented by participants to develop inclusive community. Finally, the researcher included a section on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings in this chapter will inform a presentation to be delivered to the participants for feedback and revision before presentation to the Board of Directors.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how participants residing in an affordable housing community defined inclusive community, to identify the challenges they experience, and what they believed were the best practices to create an inclusive, socially sustainable community. Chapter one introduced the reader to the context of the study, research questions and rationale. Chapter two explored relevant literature within the context of a social sustainability model. Chapter three described the methodology, data collection procedures and methods of analysis. Chapter four addressed the findings regarding all three research questions: How do participants define inclusive community? What challenges to inclusive community do participants identify through lived experiences? What do participants believe are the best practices to develop or strengthen community? In this culminating chapter, following a discussion of the theoretical shift from model to framework, the researcher will discuss: (a) the findings relative to the social sustainability indicators presented in the framework, (b) implications for practice, (c) rethinking the affordable housing model, (d) recommendations, and (e) implications for future research. A summary concludes this chapter.

Discussion

Transforming a Model into a Framework

As stated in the literature review, social sustainability is a multifaceted concept. It comprised multiple elements such as agency, self-efficacy, collective efficacy, social capital, engagement/participation, sense of community/belonging, and equity and inclusion that work in

tandem or concurrently to effect change over time. The researcher grounded her study on two fronts. First she created a social sustainability model derived from research literature. Second, she constructed theory utilizing grounded theory analysis strategies such as in vivo codes, and reflective memos, "… detailed records of the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and intuitive contemplations" (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p.4). During this process, the model presented in chapter two became a theoretical framework transforming social sustainability elements into indicators. Therefore, the model will subsequently be referred to as a *social sustainability framework.* The researcher used the social sustainability framework as a lens to explore social sustainability indicators present within the research site by aligning themes with indicators through a process of constant comparison. The benefit of viewing the findings from this perspective is that the organization can prioritize initiatives based on the elements within the framework which they believe to be foundational as a starting point toward building community. Figure 3 summarizes the major findings regarding each indicator in the social sustainability theoretical framework.
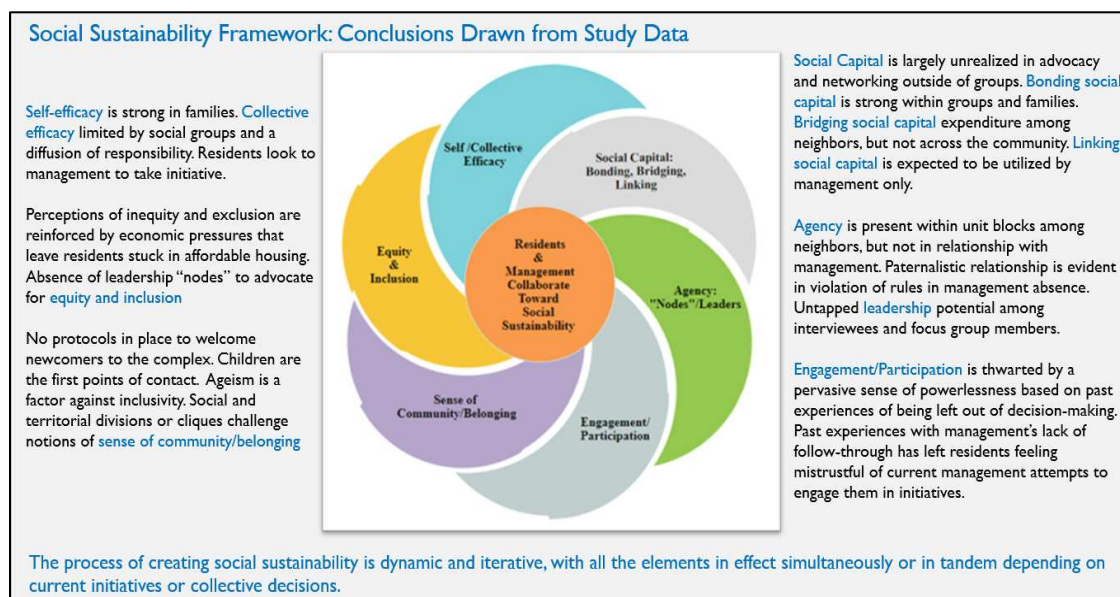

Figure 3: *Social Sustainability Theoretical Framework: Major Conclusions Drawn from Study*

In the ensuing discussion , the researcher states whether elements are present, but not the degree to which they exist. Further research will need to be conducted to develop the social sustainability framework into a more accurate instrument of measurement.

Discussion of Major Indicators for Social Sustainability

Evidence from the data suggests that self-efficacy is strong in families. Collective efficacy is limited by social groups and a diffusion of responsibility among residents. Residents look to management to take initiative in inclusive community development. Perceptions of inequity and exclusion are reinforced by economic pressures that leave residents stuck in affordable housing. There is an absence of leadership "nodes" to advocate for equity and inclusion. There are no protocols in place to welcome newcomers to the complex. Children are the first points of contact for newcomers. Ageism is a factor against inclusivity. Social and territorial divisions or cliques challenge notions of sense of community/belonging. Social Capital is largely unrealized in advocacy and networking outside of groups. Bonding social capital is strong within groups and families. Bridging social capital expenditure among neighbors, but not across the community. Linking social capital is expected to be utilized by management only. Agency is present within unit blocks among neighbors, but not in relationship with management. A paternalistic relationship between management and residents is evident in violation of rules in management absence. Untapped leadership potential exists among interviewees and focus group members. Engagement/Participation is thwarted by a pervasive sense of powerlessness based on past experiences of being left out of decision-making. Past experiences with management's lack of follow-through left residents feeling mistrustful of current management attempts to engage them in initiatives.

Agency

Bandura (2012), in discussing the functional aspects of cognitive theory, posited people are agents in their own lives, "[bringing] their influence to bear on what they can control directly" (p. 12). The extent to which agentive action is a reality within the nonprofit affordable housing complex of note is greatly dependent upon how participants define and perceive their community. Participants' definitions of inclusive community were in stark contrast to their perceptions of the reality that exists within the complex. Agentive action is strong within families and closed social circles. From evidence presented by participants, relationships among residents and between residents and management greatly impact the way residents practice self-efficacy and expend social capital. Participants' references to their neighbors further revealed a keen awareness of how their relationships negatively or positively influence inclusive community development. This intuitive understanding of the importance of relationships underscores Kelley's (2012) findings people value social and cultural connection and McMillan and Chavis' (1986) contention members seek reciprocal relationships based on shared values and common goals.

Communal norms are predicated upon assumptions about agency. A common assumption was residents familiarize themselves with the lease agreement and abide by the rules. However, the demands of everyday life take precedence over procedural knowledge. Where to collect mail and packages, how to set out mail for pickup, and how to install additional appliances are included in some procedural information that is passed on among residents, which opens the door for misunderstanding, miscommunication, and conflict. In reference to the social isolation they experience, two senior citizen interviewees stated emphatically, "It isn't a community."

Children have a keen awareness of strained relationships among adults in the community. Like some adult participants, both youth participants lived in the complex long enough to have memories of features that were lost to the complex and made it a better place to live. Unlike the adults, these youth participants did not seem to have the sense their identity were connected to their living environment, but rather that their living environment infringed on their freedom to live and play as they would like. However, children develop trusting bonds with some adults outside of their families. In that sense, they are agents in relationship development.

Self-Efficacy

How residents employed self- and collective efficacy greatly depended on their perception of input in decision making. Many participants believed they lacked control over the decisions regarding the housing complex, and therefore they had no means of employing self-efficacy or collective efficacy toward positive change. Other participants believed they did have the ability to participate, but chose not to for a number of reasons. Collective efficacy, the ability

to engage collectively to exert control over decision-making, is undermined by residents' "nagging doubts" about being able to enact change in their community (Bandura, 2001, p. 16). Residents' lack of confidence in their collective efficacy could also be the result of past failed collective efforts, adversarial encounters with other residents or management, or a lack of commitment from residents, and no opportunities to create a collective vision for the future (Bandura, 2010).

As mentioned in chapter two, self-efficacy enables individuals to achieve success in specific situations (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy is most evident in how single parents provide for their families. Several participants made references to their efforts at securing childcare and educational resources for their children, sustaining employment, and putting food on the table.

For these individuals, self-efficacy is limited to their homes. Self-efficacious choices are limited by other constraints such as divisions among neighbors, mistrust of management, ignorance about rights and responsibilities, lack of communication, and fixed mindsets about their ability to change the status quo.

Collective Efficacy

Having a collective perception of their identity as "poor," "uneducated," and "unheard" and therefore presumably disenfranchised, participants fail to recognize the extent to which they can indeed exercise collective efficacy to bring about change. The lack of collective efficacy coupled with problems with communication creates a tug of war scenario in which blame is levied multiple ways and community development suffers. Residents blame each other and management and vice versa for the lack of engagement and inclusive community. Residents' beliefs about not being heard in the past has created a fixed mindset about what to expect in the future rather than a growth mindset that could enable them to rise above their current circumstances. Dweck (2006) referred to the fixed mindset as the "belief that your qualities are carved in stone" and a growth mindset as "the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts" (p. 7). Participants repeatedly expressed a sense of powerlessness over their circumstances. A case in point is participants' repeated complaints about the closing of the laundry facility, but reluctance to advocate for the reopening of the facility by working with management in a collective, systematic way. Advocacy in this instance would require breaking through the mindset that they are powerless to change unilateral managerial decisions. In a member checking meeting with the researcher, a focus group participant reiterated, "that ship has sailed" about possible efforts to bring back the laundry facility. The facility is being utilized as a

maintenance storage room and the idea of reverting it back to a laundry facility appears to this participant to be infringing on maintenance's territory.

The fixed mindset that people in poverty are ignored can be replaced with the growth mindset that despite one's circumstances, one still has the power to advocate for oneself, regardless of the outcome. Some participants have failed to take initiative for fear of not being sanctioned by the organization. One interviewee specifically addressed this concern, stating that they would take a leadership role if they had "… maybe the property manager standing behind [them] and making it more of a real thing instead of just this [person] from [unit #]. I think that that would help a lot, to see that _____ housing is actually backing [them]." Potential "nodes" or leaders hang back and wait for the property manager to take the lead (Dale et al., 2008).

Social Capital

Putnam (1995) makes the case that communities in which citizens are more actively engaged in public life experience more successful outcomes. However, among other factors, the author cited the advent of single parent families as one reason for the decline in the use of social capital. Most families at the study site are made up of single parents, which supports the low utilization of social capital toward the development of inclusive community. The way participants expend different forms of social capital in the housing complex is antithetical to the development of inclusive, social sustainable community. Bonding social capital or "intracommunity ties" is present but limited to close neighbors and only under certain circumstances (Brisson & Usher, 2005). Neighbors are helpful, but only to certain people in close proximity. They do not appear to extend assistance to anyone outside of their closest social circles. For example, participants distinguished between behavior that comprises being neighborly versus having an inclusive community. They purported neighbors either behaved one way or another, preferring to be neighborly, but avoiding intimate connection to a collective.

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There was one exception. The dichotomy between neighborliness and community was seemingly subverted by the children's interactions with newcomers. Children expend bonding social capital with much more alacrity and generosity. Children were reported to often be the first residents to welcome newcomers and cross over from one dominant group to the other. However, the youth participants had a keen awareness of the separation between groups. The biggest losers in this dearth of social capital expenditure are senior citizens. They reported experiencing high levels of social isolation. In a follow-up interview, a focus group participant revealed a prevailing belief that senior citizens were seen as "snitches" who called the cops on the "party" group and report alleged illicit drug use and domestic violence incidences to the police or the organization. Their value as a collective treasure trove of life experiences and knowledge goes unrecognized by most. Instead of seeking social connection in the complex, many rely on outside agencies to fill the void.

Bonding Social Capital

Bonding social capital is strong among those who engage in certain behaviors, like smoking and drinking in designated smoking areas. However, it is a closed system that operates by its own set of norms. For example, complaints about blatant disregard for noise ordinances and quiet time rules by this group deters others from wanting to join them. One participant referred to them as, "Those people in those buildings over there are all very cliqueish and tight and they get together. And they're the ones in the summer outside drinking and playing with their pools and everything as a group." The inverse is true. Non-smokers and non-drinkers or "mellow" group members prefer to associate only with each other. As one participant contended, "Whereas our side, we're kind of the more mellow people. Even though we socialize, I mean a lot of times we'll sit outside just in a group and talk, especially in the summer." For the status

quo to change, members of each group must employ bridging capital through the sharing of resources and space. Adults can follow the lead of children who cross over from one group to the other. In this complex, white single mothers comprised a significant percentage of the population demographic, which supports Brisson and Usher's (2005) findings that white single mothers experience lower levels of bonding capital, meaning developing close relationships with others in the community.

Bridging Social Capital

As referenced in chapter two, "some individuals or "nodes" are better placed to lead the community forward in relation to making the transition from bonding to bridging social capital" (Dale & Sparkes, 2011; Leonard, 2004, p. 938). Identifying and engaging these community leaders will be a step toward developing bridging social capital. Participants in the focus group represented both the outsider and insider perspectives. By virtue of participation in the focus groups and interviews, members of the community have, in some manner, engaged in self-efficacious behavior and taken risks to be identified as potential leaders. A lack of engagement in activities that promote "recognition of cultural community values and respect of cultural heritage" suggests that residents do not feel safe or inclusive in developing bonding social capital (Palich & Edmunds, 2013). Because there is a lack of emotional ties through the "accretion of memories" that are pleasant and hopeful, residents tend to isolate themselves and only make surface commitments that rarely stray beyond niceties (Schellenberg et al., 2018).

Linking Social Capital

Linking social capital is hampered by a severe lack of trust of people in positions of authority. Linking social capital refers to the ways and means by which participants gain access to external resources and resource providers, ideas, and information (Brisson & Usher, 2005;

Woodcroft, 2001 as cited in Dale & Sparkes, 2011). Participants did not believe they could have direct access to resources or improve infrastructure or services in the community. Their sparse employment of linking social capital is hampered by their mistrust of management. The relationship between the property manager, on-site caretaker, and the residents varied depending on past or present interactions. Participants expressed their greatest frustration with Property Management when relating their moving in experiences. Depending on the situation, participants either expressed gratitude for the property manager, or frustration with the way they were treated at the lease-signing process or lack of initiative to promote inclusive community development.

A pattern of either frustration or gratitude emerges again when participants refer to Resident Services and Office Personnel. Frustration seemed to occur when participants recalled seeking assistance, but receiving referrals for service rather than being accompanied in their efforts to secure resources. Encounters between participants and office staff leave long-lasting impressions of "us" and "them" as participants related their perceptions of feeling either patronized or treated as inferior by office personnel. Resident Services and office personnel were either lauded for their attempts at bringing the community together, judged on how well they planned an activity, or criticized for their perceived bias in office encounters with participants. To reiterate, participants expressed bias against college graduates in favor of someone with life experience to provide proper assistance and acquire resources. As with Property Management, participants vacillated between frustration and satisfaction depending on their interactions with Maintenance. Frustration was based on a perception of being ignored when residents made suggestions for how to handle problems with maintenance including, but not limited to, dog feces removal and trash containment. However, participants recognized and appreciated efforts

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to improve and maintain, to a certain standard of acceptability, an aging complex which they believed needed updating.

Engagement/Participation

Arnstein equated citizen participation with power or more specifically, the "redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens…to be deliberately included in the future" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). Arnstein's *Ladder of Participation* is divided into three categories which fall into eight rungs from bottom to top (See Figure 4). On the lowest rungs of the ladder, citizens were at the mercy of the powers that be. For example, in affordable housing communities such as the one in this study, board members and staff had the power over residents' rights and responsibilities and decision making about all aspects of community life. To increase participation, interactions between residents and management must move from therapy and manipulation to partnership, delegated power, and citizen control in certain agreed upon areas of inclusive community development.

Citizen Control	Degrees of Citizen Control:
Delegated Power	Full collaboration between citizens and
Partnership	Leadership built on trust
Placation	Degrees of Tokenism:
Consultation	Tokenistic approach to participation
Informing	Appears collaborative
Therapy	Nonparticipation:
Manipulation	Top-down initiatives

Note: Image adapted from Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation. Arnstein, S. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of American Planning Association*, *35*(4), 216-224.

Figure 4. *Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation*

Foster-Fisherman, Collins, and Pierce (2013) named sense of community, collective efficacy, expectations for engagement, social concerns, and grassroots level initiatives as areas for engagement in community development. Putnam contended even in diverse communities, the use of social capital can decline because citizens have less faith that they can actually make a difference (Putnam, 1995). In this complex, senior citizens' voices go unheard because they are geographically separated from the rest of the community and believe they are left out because of their age and the suspicion that they report their neighbors to the police. Youth voices are not included because children have not been given a voice in the decision-making process in the past. Children experienced anxiety and frustration when adults are in conflict and exhibit behaviors they considered unhealthy.

Perceptions of being treated "less than" in the past by staff or board members have influenced the manner in which some participants will engage with the organization. For some participants, the standard set by a former property manager who implemented community building initiatives had not been met by current staff. Therefore, they lost faith in the organization's ability to recreate "the good old days" when residents did engage in collective activities and feel a sense of ownership in the community. Participants understood it was the property manager's job to initiate community building initiatives, and residents' responsibility to participate as they see fit. In contrast, while participants reported they are not included in decision-making, the same participants admitted that they do have the option to participate in the decision-making process but often do not. Participants cited ignoring email newsletters, surveys, and door postings, not being connected, not talking to their neighbors about community concerns

or just being apathetic altogether. It is important to note participants were clearly aware

participation in decision-making is an option, but that each individual has a choice in how they

want to engage. Residential mobility may also be a factor in how engaged residents are in

community life. Some residents may be reluctant to participate due to the perception that

affordable housing is a step toward more permanent housing. They may set short term goals for

residency and avoid becoming too socially connected to neighbors they would soon have to leave

behind.

Belonging and Sense of Community

Another challenge to developing inclusive community is newcomer integration. A key

factor in how quickly newcomers will integrate into the community is how they navigate the

expectation of residential mobility, bias, and mistrust. The reality that exists in this complex is in

stark contrast to the ideal presented by Hughey and Speer (2002) whereby all stakeholders,

including management and residents engage in strong social networks, based on "common

purpose and emotional attachment" (p. 76). In direct contrast to the recommendation that

members seek reciprocal relationships and share values and common goals, established residents

adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude when new tenants arrive (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The effects

of residential mobility impact the time frame within which newcomers integrate into the

community and develop a sense of belonging. The longer they stay, the more likely newcomers

are accepted into the community, unless they choose to isolate themselves from the dominant

groups. Newcomers are not welcomed by any of the adults in person, but are watched from a

distance by all established residents for a time before they are secretly expected to choose

between the "party" or "mellow" group.

Newcomers also make assumptions about established residents, which deters them from making the first move to engage. Fitting into the community seems to be a challenge for newcomers based on their own bias and perceived bias by established residents. This is situation is exacerbated by a complete absence of welcoming rituals or introductory protocols for new arrivals. Trauma and shame may have an impact on developing trusting relationships with neighbors. Additionally, the stigma of moving into affordable housing may leave residents feeling mistrustful of others, especially when moving into a community of existing closed social networks. Established residents, concerned about emotional and physical safety, may take their time to assess whether newcomers can be trusted before inviting them into their circle.

Divisions among social groups may pose a real threat to developing inclusive community. They fly in the face of the residents in this community acting collectively in defense against predatory social and environmental factors prevalent in the affordable housing industry (Cohen & Phillips, 1997). A sense of community can be linked to membership in closed community social networks as opposed to social networks outside of community members' everyday lived experience. For example, certain families living within a block of town homes may have a strong sense of community among themselves as members of a closed social network, but not necessarily as belonging to the housing community overall.

Another important aspect of inclusive social sustainability in community development was how residents expend social capital. Social divisions based on longevity, culture, and territory impact residents' sense of belonging to a greater community. Participants who had lived in the community for more than four years seemed to have formed stronger bonds. They purported that members of the group referred to as the "party" group by the more "mellow" group acted as memory keepers. They also acted as gatekeepers. Past negative interactions with

management are shared freely and indiscriminately, perpetuating mistrust of management that persists beyond changes in property management employment and maintenance.

Social divisions in the complex are not just cultural, but also territorial. Participants frequently referred to unit blocks located in a certain direction to refer to the "party" and "mellow" groups. Senior citizens are excluded from the concept of community because their dwelling units are separated from the main complex by a street. Thus, seniors' insistence on the complex not being "a community" is understandable. Additionally, age appeared to be an important factor in inclusivity and community relationships. Participants alluded to the fact that mixing seniors with parents does not work out as the former set seeks quiet and peace while the latter is in the throes of raising children and seeking social connection with peers. Participants living on the family side of the complex who identify themselves as "older" expressed both understanding and frustration with the constant barrage of active children in their space, and the need for a quieter environment relevant to their stage in life. Within the senior section of the complex, isolation is a fact of life as residents wait in expectation for property management to make the first move at initiating social integration. Seniors who have memories of bygone close social relationships have abandoned the prospect of rekindling the kind of community they once enjoyed. More importantly, retired seniors on fixed incomes may have untapped intellectual resources that may enrich educational opportunities for children through volunteerism in community programs. Although senior inclusion is crucial, failing to appreciate their potential contributions may rest on what Leonard (2004) proposed is their perceived "inability to reciprocate" in relationships with hidden expectations of a return on social capital investment (p. 934). In other words, residents of the community may not engage with seniors if they perceive their investment in the relationship to be a one-way street.

Both youth participants confirmed adult participants' allusion to the complex as "a community of children" in their descriptions about what children do in their free time. They played together. In this complex filled with children, conflicts about personal boundaries are inevitable. The assertion of a lack of adequate play space seems to create a point of contention between single adults and parents whose children infringe on neighbors' perceived territorial boundaries. However, not all children are included in this community of children playing together. Weller and Bruegel (2009) posit the extent to which parents will connect with other parents greatly depends on the connections between their children and other children. Participants contended the same residents who choose not to engage with the rest of the community also prevent their children from connecting with others. This playful community of children may present a source of conflict, but overall participant responses point to a sense of camaraderie and loyalty among young friends in the complex.

Equity and Inclusion

On the one hand, in their definition of inclusive community, most participants alluded to everyone in the community having a voice. This definition underscores the participants' understanding of the need to be treated equitably and included in the decisions that affect their daily existence. Participants' references to being accepted on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender point to equity an inclusion. On the other hand, being aware of their low socio-economic status and a lack of resource acquisition seem to create a pervasive sense of economic inequity and exclusion. Perceptions of inequity are reinforced by economic pressures that leave residents stuck in affordable housing due to the inability to attain private homeownership. Participants feel excluded on many levels, from groups in the complex, management decisions, and the broader community within which the complex is situated. Woodson (2020) in recalling grassroots efforts to address the problem of toxic drinking water in Flint, Michigan stated, "The situation in Flint is

a critical reminder that the power to change is in the people affected by the problem" (p. 38). It would behoove the organization to seek assistance in identifying and empowering grassroots leaders who understand the community, are willing to be vulnerable, and take risks for the betterment of the community. By the mistaken assumption that linking social capital is the sole responsibility of the organization, residents deprive themselves of the opportunities to gain access to resources themselves that may improve their chances at equitable outcomes in society. An absence of "nodes" who are willing to expend linking social capital for the good of all exacerbates the situation.

An interesting finding in this study was the pervasiveness of stigma surrounding affordable housing and how it presents itself in the appearance, location and signage identifying the property. Housing providers should make efforts to reduce the stigma by being aware of how properties are named, where they are located, and unintended biases inherent in signage. All efforts must be avoided that intentionally or unintentionally create enclaves of poverty where role models for upward mobility are rare or absent and a collective identity rooted in poverty can arise.

Youth Participation as an Issue of Equity and Inclusion

Kara (2007) contended youth often fail to voice honest sentiments about their lived experiences for fear of reprisal or not being given equitable tenure in decision-making processes. An illustration of this is the example given in chapter four, where a youth participant was reluctant to give a straight answer to the researcher's question and was prompted by the parent to be truthful. Children and youth are an untapped resource in community development. Regarding the right to participation be included in decision-making, children have historically been perceived as "having limited competencies and as being incomplete in comparison to the adults they will become" (O'Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 2) In the housing complex in this study, children

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are seen as a nuisance by some, and a source of conflict by others. Their insights into community life are not taken into consideration when decisions are made concerning play areas, safety, and community social events. Weller & Bruegel (2009) purport "…children play an important role in enabling the development of community cohesion and social capital, either directly via their own actions… or indirectly by providing connections and networks for their parents and other members of the community" (p. 631). This study confirmed Silverman et al.'s (2005) findings that children are the most likely to mix across social groups. In this study, children were exemplary in how they expended bridging social capital to create connections between the "party" group, "mellow" group, and senior citizens within the complex. They are models for welcoming and helping to integrate newcomers to the community. As children play together, they form social bonds that have the capacity to expand social networks beyond their neighboring unit blocks to the "other side" of the community. On the flipside, children may experience anxiety and frustration when adults are in conflict and exhibit behaviors they consider threatening. For children and youth to safely take risks in participating in community conversations, adults need to resolve conflicts in healthy and productive ways. Likewise, for children and youth to participate as equals, they must be taught how to resolve conflict among themselves instead of depending on adults to resolve conflicts for them.

Implications for Practice

This study, conducted during a pandemic, amplified the need for developing inclusive, socially sustainable communities in which residents can support each other through extraordinarily difficult times. In her grounded theory constructivist approach to the study, the researcher's assumptions were: (a) residents inherently possess the capacity to develop agency to

enact the elements of social sustainability if given opportunities and training, (b) the existence of a paternal relationship between residents and management, (c) the importance of including youth in building an inclusive community, and (d) residents and management have the capacity to co-create a vision for the future of the community. The data, as evaluated against the social sustainability theoretical framework presented above, support the theory that through their cognitive capacity to exercise agency, efficacy and social capital, residents engage in the elements of social sustainability to create inclusive communities. The extent to which this ideal can be achieved was another question. The findings were in some ways in stark contrast to the ideal theoretical framework presented in chapter two. Theoretically, in the status quo reflected in the significant gaps in the elements of social sustainability discussed above, residents and management in this particular housing complex and others like it will likely continue to operate in a stalemate of "us" and "them." Benefits such as an increase in self- and collective advocacy, equity and inclusion, a stronger sense of belonging and autonomy over daily decisions would not be realized. However, it is not too late to turn this divided complex into the ideal participants described in their own definitions of inclusive community. It must begin with open communication, building trust, and intentional planning and design with resident input at the grassroots level. Additionally, this study provided evidence that youth have unique insights into their lived experiences that could benefit community development.

Rethinking the Affordable Housing Model

Developing an organizational culture of inclusive, socially sustainability is a monumental task for the organization of note. As evidenced by the findings, elements of social sustainability

are present in the complex, but there is more work to be done. Most importantly, this study cannot underscore more the importance of looking beyond brick and mortar and presenting the case for supportive affordable housing, what Cuthill (2009) deems "soft infrastructure." As the affordable housing industry moves to stem the tide of affordable housing shortages, housing providers including this one, must consider the humanitarian aspects of building communities that strive toward attaining the higher levels of Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow, 1943).

Housing organization staff should include trained professionals who understand the psychology and economics of poverty and trauma. They must build into housing project proposals staffing for social workers or caseworkers trained in crisis management and conflict de-escalation strategies to reduce contact with law enforcement agencies for non-emergency calls. Transitional support must be in place for residents upon entry to orient them to the existing community culture and upon exit as they transition into homeownership. It would behoove housing providers to research and visit models of socially sustainable communities in practice such as Community Housing Works (CHW), a nonprofit housing provider in California, which was established in 1988 as an initiative to provide affordable apartments for homeless families. Serving 9000 working families, children, and seniors in 42 communities, CHW offers not just a place to live, but a community with programs, services, and connections to resources. Some of the communities completely comprise supportive housing for individuals who are unable to support their families, such as at-risk mothers and children, homeless families, or families in which the parents are reuniting with children after receiving substance abuse treatment. CHW residents participate in financial well-being counseling and workshops, health and wellness, and Diabetes prevention and management programs, as well as senior services and activities that encourage independent living and community connections.

Addressing Psychological Impacts

To alleviate psychological impacts of living in affordable housing, the relationship between management and residents that reduce residents to children who merely follow rules or face the consequences must be transformed into collaborative relationships where organizational leaders act as guides and mentors to autonomous adults. Over time, being stuck in a situation over which residents have little or no control takes a toll on identity and psychological well-being. Competitive housing markets like the one in this study result in limited options for upward or even lateral mobility. The constant tension of being in violation of rules or being at risk of eviction is traumatic in and of itself. Situations in which residents are constantly living in fear of "getting written up" or receiving a "notice on the door" without a face to face conversation reinforces a paternalistic relationship that encourages rebellion and disrespect. This fearful dynamic feeds into residents' perception that they have less value because of their economic status. Fear of retaliation is a major factor in lack of participation in community meetings intended to garner resident input. Rumors of past retaliation remain, making residents reluctant to take chances with their living situation. Some may have ended up at this housing complex because of retaliation in prior rental situations.

The Way Forward

Participants understood there are no simple solutions for the social, cultural, and territorial divisions that exist in their complex. One thing is clear, participants recognized the status quo must change. Working toward the ideal of an inclusive, socially sustainable community will take courage, vulnerability and risk-taking on both sides. Social sustainability depends on characteristics like trust and altruism, and when people are in a survival mode, they are not in a position to be able to trust. In this complex, trust is undermined at every level and

community development suffers. Goodwill must be extended on all sides before the work can even begin to change a toxic culture of mistrust, judgment, and suspicion. Creating a safe space for residents to speak freely about their lived experience was just the first step in addressing the initial concern that residents live in silos and have no direct input into how their communities function. Subsequent steps must be taken strategically and transparently to begin the process of building trust on both sides.

Recommendations for Creating Inclusive, Socially Sustainable Community

Recommendations are presented in no particular order of priority. Priorities for how to proceed with implementation must be determined by the stakeholders.

Recommendations at the Management Level

- Institute regular community meetings outside of normal business hours facilitated by a third party to begin a process of open dialogue between residents and management to create a common vision to promote resident engagement.

- Build trust with residents by implementation of collaborative learning walks. Adapted from a practice in the field of Education, the Learning Walk is a strategy where management and resident representatives walk through their communities with a specific focus to observe certain aspects of the community that align with strategic plan goals (See Appendix K).

- Research and decide on a resident representative structure to liaise with leadership.

- Train or hire property managers or community liaisons to act as community guides to implement initiatives geared toward inclusive community development.

- Institute newcomer orientation and welcoming rituals that connect newcomers to families in their unit blocks.

- Train property managers in crisis management and conflict de-escalation strategies.

- Implement consistent reception practices by all frontline staff, including interns.

- Utilize the free and confidential local Community Mediation Program to assist in conflict resolution among residents.

- Affordable Housing 101: To promote transparency, offer information sessions on the rights and responsibilities of the nonprofit organization and tenants to clarify misunderstandings and assumptions based on hearsay.

- Health and Safety 101: Offer health and safety training through community partnerships. Foster closer connections with the Police, Fire Department and Health Service Agencies by offering onsite information sessions and demonstrations during which residents can ask questions and seek solutions together.

- Network with employment agencies to regularly promote job/career growth opportunities.

- In collaboration with residents, identify areas in need of improvement such as playgrounds and landscaping and create a strategic plan for resident participation in resource acquisition and project completion.

- Develop partnerships with local educational institutions to offer on-site or remote educational opportunities such as completing graduate equivalency certificates and other certifications.

- Institute a biennial needs assessment survey to adjust services as needed.

- Develop partnerships with local mental health agencies to provide onsite mental health support for individuals and families.

- Implement on-site educational and extracurricular support for children and youth.

- Identify and train community leaders or "nodes" who are willing to initiate community development projects.

- Recruit and train youth leaders to participate in mentoring programs for younger children.

- Offer youth leadership workshops and assist them in implementing youth-led community initiatives.

- Increase social interaction through regular use of common spaces such as the clubhouse and grassy catchment area.

- Update website regularly to avoid unintended false advertising that could lead to mistrust among residents. Case in point: Defunct laundry facility.

- Provide internet access at low cost to residents.

Recommendations at the Resident Level

- Be willing to be vulnerable in sharing honestly and openly about concerns and hopes for the community in third party facilitated dialogues with management.

- Be open to collaborate with property management in organizing, promoting, and participating in events designed to develop an inclusive community.

- Collaborate with other residents to establish norms for common courtesies regarding cleanliness of common areas, dog feces removal, animal care and control, quiet hours and play spaces.

- Help identify committed community leaders willing to lead committees or resident representatives who can act as liaisons to organizational leadership.

- Commit to respond to e-newsletter and hard copy newsletter communications from management and respond accordingly.

- Be open to welcoming newcomers to their unit blocks upon arrival.

- Collaborate with property management in organizing, promoting, and participating in events designed to develop an inclusive community.

- Parents commit to enrolling children in youth educational support programs offered by outside partners.

- In collaboration with Management, identify areas in need of improvement such as playgrounds and landscaping and co-create a strategic plan for resident participation in resource acquisition and project completion.

- Advocate for and collaborate with management toward the restoration and reinstatement of laundry facilities.

- Encourage youth to participate in youth leadership initiatives and youth-led community improvement projects.

- Participate in services offered through partnerships with outside agencies.

Implications for Future Research

This study set a precedent for research studies which focus on small nonprofit housing organizations seeking to examine underlying causes that prevent the establishment of vibrant communities that exemplify inclusion and social sustainability. Areas for future research include but are not limited to:

- **Assessing social sustainability in affordable housing contexts.**

  o Indicator scales for each element of social sustainability in the Social Sustainability Framework presented in this dissertation can be developed to assess more accurately the degree to which social sustainability and inclusion are present within affordable housing complexes. The results can be used as a baseline to determine which initiatives to implement first and to assess growth over time.

- **Youth as agents of change in affordable housing communities.**

  o The relatively small representative sample of youth in this study underscores the importance of expanding youth voices in community decision-making. Further studies need to be conducted to determine how best to recruit youth in the "new normal" of a pandemic and how to obtain data that is trustworthy, reliable, dependable, and generalizable.

- **Ageism as a barrier to inclusion in socially sustainable community development.**

  o More research can be conducted in small integrated affordable housing communities to determine the effects of ageism on the senior population in terms of social-emotional health, isolation, and longevity.

- **Senior citizens as agents of change in socially sustainable community development.**

  o Senior citizens carry with them lifetimes of experiences and knowledge that could benefit younger generations and provide opportunities for seniors to find value and meaning in their declining years. Research must be conducted to discover ways in which seniors can contribute to inclusive community development and retain a voice in the community for as long as is possible.

- **Awakening latent self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and agency toward ownership in developing inclusive, socially sustainable communities.**
    - Residents in affordable housing complexes have vast amounts of latent knowledge and skills. They are the cogs in the wheel that turns society; they care for our children, nurse our elderly, keep our towns and cities clean, prepare and serve our food, and serve in our most essential businesses. This human resource remains vastly untapped in terms of self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and agency in uplifting their own lives. Research into how to help people in affordable housing recognize their own value can go a long way in changing the way housing nonprofit organizations relate to their tenants and how residents can become "agents of their own uplift" (Woodson, 2020, p. XX).
- **Paternalism as a constraining factor in developing inclusive, socially sustainable affordable housing communities.**
    - Research into the paternalistic relationship dynamics between the management and residents in small nonprofit housing organizations can help researchers discover ways to encourage stakeholders to work toward more collaborative relationships.
- **Partnerships for inclusive, sustainable affordable housing community development.**
    - Research can be conducted into the types of community partnerships that best support residents and management in developing inclusive, socially sustainable communities.

Limitations

By far the greatest limitation to the scope, sequence and depth of this study has been the COVID-19 Pandemic. The researcher believed she would have been able to recruit many more participants for focus groups if there had been an opportunity to knock on doors and interact with potential participants face-to-face. The results of this study depended solely on the personal opinions of participants and their level of trust and comfort may have been compromised using unfamiliar technology. Several participants expressed concerns about being interviewed online. Due to time constrictions, the third-party facilitator omitted key questions in the first focus group session that could have increased the robustness of the dataset.

Likewise, conducting the interviews in person in their own homes might have allowed the researcher to have a better insight into the dynamics of relationships among residents as well as the relationship between residents and their environment. The results of this study relied totally on the spoken word without the benefit of observing non-verbal cues such as facial or other gestures. Furthermore, the underrepresentation of youth voices in the study may call into question the researcher's findings. Although the number of participants in this study was five times the usual attendance at community meetings held by the organization, only 30% of all households in the complex are represented in the study. No participants who identified as male heads of households and no youth who identify as female participated in the study.

Conclusion

The significance of this study is that it provides the reader an understanding of how participants living in an affordable housing community define and perceive an inclusive community, the challenges they experience in creating such a community, and the best practices they believe will help them achieve their goal. It also presents insights into the lives of residents

in the complex. Against all odds, participants in this study have spoken the truth about their lived

experience with honesty and boldness. They have demonstrated that memories have power, and

how past interactions can carry mistrust to the present. They have made themselves vulnerable to

be the voices of the unheard. It is the researcher's hope that this study will provide the

foundation upon which all stakeholders in this affordable housing nonprofit organization can

build an inclusive, socially sustainable community.

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What will the study entail?

1. Hold information meetings about study. Recruit residents at information meetings for participation in focus group interviews - possible in-person follow-up recruitment ⭐(We are here.)
2. Schedule focus group sessions based on resident feedback
3. Hold Focus group meetings with residents - adults and youth respectively. Timeline: July 1, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2020
4. Analyze data, write up findings
5. Present findings to residents for resident feedback and verification.
6. Construct framework for resident participation.
7. Present findings and framework to Board of Directors
8. Schedule follow-up meetings for implementation of resident initiatives.

Focus Group /Community Conversation Research

- **Who can participate?**
  - Residents only
  - Adults 18 and older
  - Seniors 65 and older
  - Youth 9-17

How many?
- Groups of 6-10 residents

How often?
- Adults: Two sessions of 1-1.5 hours each
- Youth: Two sessions of 1 to 1.25 hours each

What will happen?
1. Researchers will guide conversation with questions about life at this housing complex.
2. Conversations will be audio recorded.
3. Recordings will be transcribed.
4. Researcher will verify accuracy of transcription with follow-up if needed.
5. Recordings will be destroyed.
6. Identifiable information will be left out of transcripts
7. Participant names and identities will be kept confidential.

What will I get out of it?
- An opportunity to give input on decision-making regarding your community.
- Adult participants will receive a $30 Visa gift card for each session of participation.
- Youth participants will receive snacks, drinks and a token of appreciation.
- Dinner and/or snacks and drinks will be available at each session.
- Childcare upon request.

Consent

- **Handouts:**
  - Adult Consent Form
  - Parent/Guardian Consent for Minor Participation in a Focus Group
  - Minor Assent for Participation Ages 9-13
  - Minor Assent for Participation Ages 14-17
  - Focus Group dates and times

APPENDIX B: EXCERPT FROM FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN-AT-A-GLANCE PDF

Goal D: Offer resident services that foster healthy, sustainable, and inclusive community.

Strategy D.1: Successful facilitation of housing retention services.

Outcome D.1.i: At least 70% of Eviction Prevention Program (EPP) participants successfully complete the program within 6 months.

Outcome D.1.ii: At least 80% of Sister Mary Alice Legacy Fund recipients remain stably housed 3 months after receiving assistance.

Strategy D.2: Offer engagement opportunities that align with resident input and needs.

Outcome D.2.i: Bring people together and provide a sense of belonging.

Strategy D.3: Provide a system of support to help residents thrive.

Outcome D.3.i: Youth build skills and confidence.

Outcome D.3.ii: Working families will increase their independence and quality of life.

Outcome D.3.iii: Seniors and persons with disabilities will preserve their independence and quality of life to the maximum extent possible.

APPENDIX C: POSTCARD INTRODUCTION TO RESIDENTS

Dear _____ Residents,

My name is Carron Silva and I recently joined CARE Housing as an Executive Director Intern. I am a fifth year CSU student pursuing a Ph.D.in Educational Leadership and Human Resources. My research interest is in the development of inclusive communities and the relationship between educational institutions and affordable housing providers.

I am a veteran English Teacher and Instructional Coach, Homeless Family Advocate, an urban farmer, avid trout fisherwoman, backcountry hiker, cook, co-beekeeper with my husband, mom to two adult children, and a new son-in-law. I'm mom to two "unofficially adopted" adult children and grandma to four "unofficially adopted" grandchildren.

As part of my intern duties, I will have **Open Office Hours** at the _____**Clubhouse** on:

Tuesdays 8:30-11:30 am and 1:30-3:30 pm

Thursdays 8:30—11:30 am and 12:30 –3:30 pm

Second Thursday of Each Month: 8:30—10:30 am.

Stop by for information and/or applications regarding:

Eviction Prevention Program (EPP)

SMA Fund

_____ Resource Packet

Housing Resource Info

Curious? Stop by just to say hello too!

Fun Fact: My last name is deceiving. My first language is Afrikaans!

APPENDIX D1: INITIAL FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Resident:

You are invited to participate in a focus group conversation facilitated by the Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) in collaboration with Education Doctoral Student Carron Silva, to understand how residents in affordable housing complexes define their own communities. The CPD will be asking residents about their participation in community decision-making, personal and community needs, and general questions about living in the community. We also hope to determine what challenges to inclusion and connection that residents may feel exist. Additionally, we hope to discover opportunities by which residents believe they can be included in decision-making in the community. Participation will be completely online and is voluntary.

Who: Resident Adults 18+, Seniors 65+ and Youth ages 14-17
Where: Online via Zoom
When: Adult Focus Group: Session 1: Tuesday, Nov 10 and Session 2 Tues, Nov. 17
                Youth Focus Group: Session 1: Wednesday, Nov. 11 and Session 2 Wed, Nov. 18
Time Commitment: 90 minutes

Upon completion, A $30 gift card will be mailed to each participant.

Please see the attached DocuSign documents for consent forms to participate in the focus groups.

Why is This Important?
Outcomes from this discussion will help us to make recommendations for how residents can become more engaged in future decision making at the Windtrail community. It will also be used in a doctoral dissertation by Carron Silva, which will be published by Colorado State University so that others can learn about inclusive community development.

Voluntary Participation
At any point during the conversation, you may choose to withdraw your participation. Your personal information will be kept confidential. Your participation in the focus group will not impact your living situation. The Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act prohibits retaliation against residents for any reason.

Thank you,

Carron Silva
Education Doctoral Student
carron.silva@colostate.edu

Colorado State University School of Education

Research Study: Leading with Residents' Voices: Facilitating resident participation toward a more inclusive, socially sustainable community
Researchers: Donna Cooner, Ph. D. (Advisor), Carron R. Silva, M.A.T. (Student)
Focus Group Facilitation: CSU Center for Public Deliberation

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM: Adult Participation in a Focus Group

What is the Purpose of this Research?
The purpose of this research project is to understand residents define community, to identify challenges to, and discover opportunities for how residents believe inclusive, socially sustainable community can be developed. Information gathered from this discussion will help us make recommendations for how residents can become more engaged in the community and to make it a place where everyone feels more connected and included.

Why have I been asked to take part?
As a resident, your experience and insights into how to make your community a more welcoming and inclusive place to live is valuable. Your input will used to help the residents figure out ways of working together to create a more inclusive, socially sustainable community.

What will I be asked to do?
You are being invited to participate in two focus group discussion sessions to take place online. Specifically, we want you to tell us about the joys and challenges of living in this housing complex and what you think is needed to make the community more inclusive. There will be 5-10 participants in the group discussion, and you do not need to answer any question that you would prefer not to answer. With your permission, your comments will be audio recorded. Only the research team will have access to the voice recordings, and no names will be on the recording. Once the recording has been transcribed, it will be destroyed. Any identifiable information will be left out of transcripts. Your time commitment is no more than about 1 to 1.5 hours per session.

Voluntary Participation:
This discussion is voluntary—you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do not take part, it will have no effect on your current resident status. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. You may leave the group at any time for any reason. There are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. We want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone. We hope you can be honest even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. In respect for each other, we ask that only one individual speak at a time in the group.

Risks:
We do not think any risks are involved in taking part in this study. This study may include risks that are unknown at this time

Benefits:
Your participation may benefit yourself and members of your housing complex as well as your housing organization by improving communication between residents and the organization, allowing opportunities for residents to have more ownership of their community, and for future opportunities to support families' educational needs. Each participant will receive a gift card of $30 for participating in the focus group discussions.
Each participant will receive a gift card of $30 for participating in the focus group discussions.

Who will see my information?
Your participation in this study is strictly confidential Your name will not be used in any report that is published. While your responses are confidentially held by the researchers, please keep in mind there will be other focus group participants present during any comments you make who may or may not share information outside of the focus group, including information that you may feel is sensitive or private. We may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board for auditing purposes.

What if I have Questions?
If you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator Carron Silva at (970) 344-9985, carron.silva@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

Permission to Participate in Focus Group

Please write your name and sign below and check YES or NO if you agree to take part.

_____Yes, I would like to take part in the focus group.
_____ No, I would not like to participate in the focus group.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Audio Recording Permission
- I have been told that the discussion will be audio recorded.
- I have been told that I can state that I don't want any part of the discussion to be audio recorded and it will not be. I can mute my microphone at any time during the discussion.

I agree to be audio recorded ___ YES ___NO

Permission for Follow-up Interview

Do you give permission for the researchers to contact you again in the future to follow up on this study?

Please check YES or NO to your choice below.
____YES   ____ NO

Permission to use Anonymous Direct Quotes: For example, "One participant stated, '…'"
Do you give permission to use anonymous direct quotes in the research study?

____YES   ____NO

For **audio-recording, follow-up interview and/or anonymous quotes**, please print and sign your name below:

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D3: PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT FOR MINOR PARTICIPATION IN A

FOCUS GROUP

Colorado State University
School of Education

Research Study: Leading with Residents' Voices: Facilitating resident participation toward a more inclusive, socially sustainable community
Researchers: Donna Cooner, Ph. D. (Advisor), Carron R. Silva, M.A.T. (Student)
Focus Group Facilitators: CSU Center for Public Deliberation

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT: Parental/Guardian Consent for Minor Participation in a Focus Group

What is the purpose of this research?
The purpose of this study is to understand how residents of an affordable nonprofit housing complex define community, and to have residents identify challenges to and opportunities for developing inclusive, socially sustainable community. Information gathered from this discussion will be used to make recommendations for how residents can be more engaged in the community decision making.

Why have I been asked to give permission for my child to participate? In order to have a more complete picture of community life in your housing complex, the researchers believe that children should be able to give input on their experiences living here. Children may have unique ideas that adults may overlook.

What will your child be asked to do?
Children will be asked to participate in two focus group discussions with 5-10 others in their age range of 14-17. The group discussions will be about one hour to seventy-five minutes long and children will be asked to answer some questions about what it's like for them to be a part of this community. The questions we will discuss will be about what children do when they are not in school; for example, after school hours, what they think about the place where they live, how they get along with other kids in their age range. There isn't right or wrong answers to these questions.

What about confidentiality?
 Only a voice recording of the discussions will be made, so you don't have to worry about anyone capturing your child's face on a videotape. Since the discussions will be held via Zoom, participants will be able to join the discussion with voice only. Once the researchers have transcribed what everyone has said, the voice recording will be destroyed. Any names that are used during the recording will be left off the typed version so no one will know who made the comments.

Voluntary Participation:
This discussion is voluntary—you do not have to give permission for your child to take part if you do not want to. If your children do not take part, it will have no effect on your current resident status. If any questions make them feel uncomfortable, they do not have to answer them. They may leave the group at any time for any reason. There are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. We want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone. We hope they can be honest even when their responses may not agree with the rest of the group. In respect for each other, we ask that only one individual speak at a time in the group.

Confidentiality:
To maintain the anonymity of all the participants, we ask that children not share other's identities or responses from the focus group with anyone outside of the group. This consent form will be kept separate from the data records to ensure confidentiality. Participant names will be stored with code names known only to the researchers under protected password, then destroyed at the end of the study. Transcripts of the audio tapes will not include participant names or any other identifiers and will be kept electronically under protected password. Master lists of identifiers will be stored separately under separate passwords.

Risks:
Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

Benefits:
Your participation may benefit yourself and members of your housing complex as well as your housing organization by encouraging communication between residents and the organization, allowing opportunities for residents to have more ownership of the community. Each participant will receive a gift card of $30 for participating in the focus group discussions.

Who will see my child's information?
Your child's participation in this study is strictly confidential. Their name will not be used in any report that is published. While their responses are confidentially held by the researchers, please keep in mind there will be other focus group participants present during any comments they make who may or may not share information outside of the focus group, including information that they may feel is sensitive or private. Information provided by your child may be included in a doctoral dissertation. We may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board for auditing purposes.

What if I have Questions?
If you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Carron Silva at (970) 344-9985, carron.silva@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As Parent or Guardian, I authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of this research project is clear to me and I am satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

Permission to use Anonymous Direct Quotes: For example, "One youth participant stated, '…'"

Do you give permission to use your child's anonymous direct quotes in the research study?
____YES   ____ NO

To give permission for **minor participation and use of anonymous direct quotes**, please sign below.

Print Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Today's Date: _____

Mailing address to receive gift card:

_____

_____

Colorado State University
School of Education

Research Study: Leading with Residents' Voices: Facilitating resident participation toward a more inclusive, socially sustainable community

Researchers: Donna Cooner, Ph.D., Carron R. Silva, M.A.T.

FOCUS GROUP ASSENT: Assent for Minor Participation in a Focus Group Ages 14-17

Dear High School Student:

Students from the Center for Public Deliberation will be having focus group discussions about how people get along with each other in the places where they live and how much they feel like they belong to their community. This is part of a research study that Carron Siva, a doctoral student in the Colorado State University Department of Education in conducting. The research study is to find out how residents view their communities and how they make decisions about community life.

You are being asked to be a part of a group discussion with other students in your community. The group discussions will be about one hour to seventy-five minutes long. I'm asking if you would be willing to answer some questions that I have about what it's like for you to be a part of this housing complex.

The questions we will discuss will be about what you do during your free time at home. They will also ask how you connect with others your age living in the same community, and what you would like to see improved in your community. There isn't right or wrong answers to these questions; it's just what you think about living here.

There will be only a voice recording of the discussions, so you don't have to worry about anyone seeing your face on a video. Once the discussion is written down, the recording will be destroyed. Any names that are used during the recording will be left off the typed version so no one will know who made the comments. You do not have to answer any questions that you don't feel comfortable answering. To protect everyone's privacy, please do not share outside this group what we talked about or name any names.

Agreeing to this project cannot be harmful you. It won't help you either. You will be sent a gift card of $30 once the focus group discussions are completed. You are not obligated to participate.

If you say "Yes" now, but later change your mind, you can stop being in the research anytime by just telling the group facilitators.

I am asking your parents to sign a consent form for you to participate. If you agree to be in this research study, please sign your name and write today's date on the lines below.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Researcher Name: *Carron R. Silva*   Date: 10/20/2020

Address to send Gift Card:

_____

_____

APPENDIX E1: EMAIL TO HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS

Dear

As you are aware, I am conducting a focus group research project on community at WT. The focus groups will begin very soon and at this time I am still in need of high school participants.

Every youth participant will receive a $30 gift card of their choice to one of the following places: Amazon, iTunes or Starbucks. I will need parental consent as well as permission from your child(ren) to participate.

My research study is based on strategic goals in the 5 Year Strategic Plan. Below is an excerpt from my dissertation proposal stating **why I believe youth voices should be included in this beginning phase of addressing this goal.**

Goal D: Foster an environment for residents to lead and create healthy, sustainable and inclusive community.

> ***Strategy D.3: Provide a system of support to help residents thrive.***
>
> ***Outcome D.3.i: Youth build skills and confidence.***
>
> *Key indicators:*
>
>> *•Participation in youth programs.*
>>
>> *•Assessment of youth programs.*
>>
>> *•High school graduation rates.*
>>
>> *•Pre-school enrollment.*

It is the organization's long term goal to engage youth in the planning and implementation of on-site after school youth programs and school district collaborative efforts toward improving graduation rates for high school students.

Youth are often afraid of voicing honest sentiments to well-meaning adults; therefore, they are constrained from providing meaningful feedback. Inversely, adults often lack the skills to meaningfully engage youth in a way that allow them to receive feedback from youth.

If your child is interested in participating, please fill out the attached consent and assent forms. Thank you.
Carron Silva
Doctoral Candidate, Colorado State University Department of Education

Dear

Thank you for giving your input to help us understand more about community life at Windtrail in order to better serve the community in the future. No matter your station in life, YOU MATTER! Please click on the link below to join the last focus group session for adults at 7pm tonight. I know that this is a sacrifice of your time and energy, and I promise to work toward positive outcomes. Together we can make a difference.

https://zoom.us/j/98105301944

If you have not yet done so, please reply to this email to let me know which $30 gift card you would prefer:

____ $30 King Sooper gift card
____ $30 Walmart gift card
 ____ $30 Amazon gift card

Thank you!
Carron

Colorado State University
School of Education

Research Study: Leading with Residents' Voices: Facilitating resident participation toward a more inclusive, socially sustainable community
Researchers: Donna Cooner, Ph. D. (Advisor), Carron R. Silva, M.A.T. (Student)

ADULT AGES 18-54 INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

What is the Purpose of this Research?
The purpose of this research project is to understand residents define community, to identify challenges to, and discover opportunities for how residents believe inclusive, socially sustainable community can be developed. Information gathered from this discussion will help us make recommendations for how residents can become more engaged in the community and to make it a place where everyone feels more connected and included.

Why have I been asked to take part?
As a resident, your experience and insights into how to make your community a more welcoming and inclusive place to live is valuable. Your input will used to help the residents figure out ways of working together to create a more inclusive, socially sustainable community.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to participate, I will conduct an interview with you via phone or Zoom at a time that works for you. The interview will be about the perceptions you have of the community. It will also focus on challenges and opportunities for resident participation in decision-making in the community. It should last about an hour. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for research purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time. If you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you may pass. If you say "Yes" now, but later change your mind, you can stop being in the research anytime by just telling me that you no longer want to participate. Agreeing to this project cannot hurt you. It won't help you either. I won't use your name or image in the write up of the research.

Voluntary Participation:
This discussion is voluntary—you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do not take part, it will have no effect on your current resident status. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. There are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions.

Risks:
We do not think any risks are involved in taking part in this study. This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

Benefits:
Your participation may benefit yourself and members of your housing complex as well as your housing organization by improving communication between residents and the organization, allowing opportunities for residents to have more ownership of their community, and for future opportunities to support families' educational needs.

Compensation
Each participant will receive a gift card of $30 for participating in the interview.

Who will see my information?
Your participation in this study is strictly confidential. Your name will not be used in any report that is published. Any names mentioned during the interview will be left off the transcripts. Consent forms will be kept in a separate file from the data. Once your responses are no longer identifiable, they may be used for future research without additional informed consent from you. We may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board for auditing purposes.

What if I have Questions?
If you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator Carron Silva at (970) 344-9985, carron.silva@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

Permission to participate in a research interview.

_____ I GIVE permission to participate in an interview for this study.
_____ I DO NOT give permission to participate in an interview for this study.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Audio Recording Permission

- I have been told that the discussion will be audio recorded and that I can ask to turn off the recording at any time during the interview.
- I have been told that I have the option to forego audio recording in favor or notetaking during the interview.

Permission to use Anonymous Direct Quotes: For example, "One participant stated, '…'"

_____I GIVE permission to use anonymous direct quotes in the research study.
_____ I DO NOT give permission to use anonymous direct quotes in the research study.

For **audio-recording and/or anonymous quotes**, please print and sign your name below:

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Choose **ONE** of the following incentives:

_____$30 Walmart Gift Card   ___$30 King Soopers Gift Card   ___ $30 Amazon Gift Card

APPENDIX F1: SENIOR CITIZEN RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear «Name»

You recently received invitations for focus group meetings as part of a research study on community relations and resident participation in decision-making. However, due to a lack of Senior Citizen voices in the conversation, I am reaching out to senior residents so that everyone is equally represented. Would you consider participating in a one-on-one phone or Zoom interview at your convenience? To ensure equal representation, a minimum of three senior citizens is needed to participate in interviews.

Each interviewee will receive a $30 VISA Gift card.

The research study is centered on the following goals in the 5 Year Strategic Plan:

Goal D: Foster an environment for residents to lead and create healthy, sustainable and inclusive community.

   Strategy D.3: Provide a system of support to help residents thrive.

To participate in the interview, please reply to this email or call Carron Silva at (970) 344-9985 and we will set up a time.

Thank you,

Carron Silva

Doctoral Candidate, Colorado State University School of Education

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Education

Research Study: Leading with Residents' Voices: Facilitating resident participation toward a more inclusive, socially sustainable community
Researchers: Donna Cooner, Ph. D. (Advisor), Carron R. Silva, M.A.T. (Student)

SENIOR CITIZEN INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

What is the Purpose of this Research?
The purpose of this research project is to understand residents define community, to identify challenges to, and discover opportunities for how residents believe inclusive, socially sustainable community can be developed. Information gathered from this discussion will help us make recommendations for how residents can become more engaged in the community and to make it a place where everyone feels more connected and included.

Why have I been asked to take part?
As a resident, your experience and insights into how to make your community a more welcoming and inclusive place to live is valuable. Your input will used to help the residents figure out ways of working together to create a more inclusive, socially sustainable community.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to participate, I will conduct an interview with you via phone or Zoom at a time that works for you. The interview will be about the perceptions you have of the community. It will also focus on challenges and opportunities for resident participation in decision-making in the community. It should last about an hour. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for research purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time. If you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you may pass. If you say "Yes" now, but later change your mind, you can stop being in the research anytime by just telling me that you no longer want to participate. Agreeing to this project cannot hurt you. It won't help you either. I won't use your name or image in the write up of the research.

Voluntary Participation:

This interview is voluntary—you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do not take part, it will have no effect on your current resident status. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. There are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions.

Risks:
We do not think any risks are involved in taking part in this study. This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

Benefits:
Your participation may benefit yourself and members of your housing complex as well as your housing organization by improving communication between residents and the organization, allowing opportunities for residents to have more ownership of their community, and for future opportunities to support families' educational needs. Each participant will receive a gift card of $30 for participating in the focus group discussions.

Who will see my information?
Your participation in this study is strictly confidential. Your name will not be used in any report that is published. Any names mentioned during the interview will be left off the transcripts. Consent forms will be kept in a separate file from. We may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board for auditing purposes.

What if I have Questions?
If you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator Carron Silva at (970) 344-9985, carron.silva@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

Permission to participate in a research interview.

_____ I GIVE permission to participate in an interview for this study.
_____ I DO NOT give permission to participate in an interview for this study.

Print Name:_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Audio Recording Permission
- I have been told that the discussion will be audio recorded and that I can ask to turn off the recording at any time during the interview.
- I have been told that I have the option to forego audio recording in favor or notetaking during the interview.

Permission to use Anonymous Direct Quotes: For example, "One participant stated, '…'"

_____ I GIVE permission to use anonymous direct quotes in the research study.

_____ I DO NOT give permission to use anonymous direct quotes in the research study.

For **audio-recording and/or anonymous quotes**, please print and sign your name below:

Print Name:_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Choose **ONE** of the following incentives:

_____$30 Walmart Gift Card   ___$30 King Soopers Gift Card   ___ $30 Target Gift Card

APPENDIX G1: MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT EMAIL

Dear «Name»

Thank you for giving me your precious time. It is much appreciated. Due to a lack of response from high school students, I am emailing you to ask if your middle school aged child(ren) would be willing to participate in an **individual interview** that I will be conducting as part of my research study on community at Windtrail. **Every participant will receive a $30 gift card of their choice to one of the following places: Amazon, iTunes or Chick -fil-A.** The interview would take place at your family's convenience via phone or Zoom. **I would need parental consent as well as permission from your child(ren) to participate.**
If you are interested in participating, please **reply to this email or call Carron Silva at (970) 344-9985** and we will set up a time that is convenient for you.

My research study is based strategic goals in the 5 Year Strategic plan. Below is an excerpt from my dissertation proposal stating **why I believe youth voices should be included in this beginning phase of addressing this goal.**

Goal D**: Foster an environment for residents to lead and create healthy, sustainable, and inclusive community**.
      Strategy D.3: Provide a system of support to help residents thrive.
      Outcome D.3.i: Youth build skills and confidence.
      Key indicators:
            •Participation in youth programs.
            •Assessment of youth programs.
            •High school graduation rates.
            •Pre-school enrollment.

It is the organization's long-term goal to engage youth in the planning and implementation of on-site after school youth programs and school district collaborative efforts toward improving graduation rates for high school students.
Youth Participation as an Issue of Equity and Inclusion
In issues of equity and inclusion, the most underutilized human capital in socially sustainable community development is that of children and youth. Some researchers claim engaging youth in sustainable community development is not uncommon as, "...most mixing across social groups takes place between children. It is these contacts – in nurseries, playgroups, schools and in public spaces – that provide opportunities for adults to meet and form relationships. Children provide a common ground and shared interest between people in different tenures" (Silverman, Lupton, & Fenton, 2005).
Thank you,
Carron Silva
Doctoral Candidate, Colorado State University School of Education

APPENDIX G2: MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Education

Research Study: Leading with Residents' Voices: Facilitating resident participation toward a more inclusive, socially sustainable community
Researchers: Donna Cooner, Ph. D., Carron R. Silva, M.A.T.

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINOR INTERVIEW

What is the purpose of this research?
The purpose of this study is to understand how residents of an affordable nonprofit housing complex define community, and to have residents identify challenges to and opportunities for greater participation in community decision-making. Information gathered from this discussion will be used to make recommendations to encourage residents to become more engaged in the community and to make it a place where residents feels more connected and included in decision-making.

Why have I been asked to give permission for my child to participate?
In order to have a more complete picture of community life in your housing complex, the researchers believe that children should be able to give input on their experiences living here. Children may have unique ideas that adults may overlook.

What will your child be asked to do?
Your child will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher via phone or Zoom at a time that works for your family. The interview will involve questions about what it's like for your child to live in your housing community, how they get along with other kids who live there, and what they do with their spare time. It should last about an hour. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information your child will provide and will be used for research only. If you agree to audiotaping but your child feels uncomfortable or changes their mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at their request. If you and your child choose for the interview not to be audiotaped, I will just take notes instead. The interview can be stopped at any time upon you or your child's request. If your child is uncomfortable answering any of the questions, they may pass. If you say "Yes" now, but later change your mind, you can withdraw your permission to participate in the research anytime by just telling the researcher that you no longer want your child to participate.

What about confidentiality?
Only a voice recording of the interview will be made, so you don't have to worry about anyone capturing your child's face on a videotape. Once the researchers have transcribed what has been

said, the voice recording will be destroyed. Any names that may be used during the recording will be left off the typed version.

Voluntary Participation:
This interview is voluntary—you do not have to give permission for your child to take part if you do not want to. If your child does not take part, it will have no effect on your current resident status. If any questions make them feel uncomfortable, they do not have to answer them. There are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions.

Confidentiality:
This consent form will be kept separate from the data records to ensure confidentiality. Interviewees' names will be stored with code names known only to the researchers under protected password, then destroyed at the end of the study. Transcripts of the audio tapes will not include participants names or any other identifiers and will be kept electronically under protected password. Master lists of identifiers will be stored separately under separate passwords.

Risks:
Please be advised that the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data. Interview notes and recordings will be handled with the strictest confidentiality. This study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

Benefits:
Your participation may benefit yourself and members of your housing complex as well as your housing organization by encouraging communication between residents and the organization, allowing opportunities for residents to have more ownership of the community.

Compensation:
Each participant will receive a gift card of $30 for participating in the interviews.

Who will see my child's information?
Your child's participation in this study is strictly confidential. Their name will not be used in any report that is published. Information provided by your child may be included in a doctoral dissertation. De-identified data may be used in future research. We may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board for auditing purposes.

What if I have Questions?
If you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Carron Silva at (970) 344-9985, carron.silva@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As Parent or Guardian, I authorize _____(Child's Name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to me by Carron Silva and I am satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

Print Parent/Guardian Name_____ Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Today's Date: _____

Permission to use Anonymous Direct Quotes: For example, "One youth participant stated, '…'"

_____ I GIVE permission to use my child's anonymous direct quotes in the research study.

_____ I DO NOT GIVE permission to use my child's anonymous direct quotes in the study.

To give permission for **minor participation and use of direct quotes**, please sign below.

Print Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Today's Date: _____

APPENDIX G3: MINOR ASSENT FOR INTERVIEW

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Education

Research Study: Leading with Residents' Voices: Facilitating resident participation toward a more inclusive, socially sustainable community
Researchers: Donna Cooner, Ph.D., Carron R. Silva, M.A.T.

MINOR INTERVIEW ASSENT FORM: AGES 11-13

Hi!

My name is Carron Silva and I am a student at Colorado State University studying community relationships. This is called <u>research</u>. My research is about how people get along with each other in the places where they live and how much they participate in making decisions about the community. I am interested in learning from you what it's like for you living in your housing community.

Would you be willing to participate in this research study? If you decide to participate, I will conduct an interview with you via phone or Zoom at a time that works for you. The interview will involve questions about what it's like to live in your housing community, how you get along with other kids who live there and what you do with your spare time. It should last about an hour. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for research only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time. If you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you may pass. If you say "Yes" now, but later change your mind, you can stop being in the research anytime by just telling me that you no longer want to participate. Agreeing to this project cannot hurt you. It won't help you either. I won't use your name or face in the write up of the research.

You will get a $30 gift card for participating in the interview. Your parents will be notified of the time and date of your interview.

I am asking your parents if it's OK that you participate too. If you agree to be in this research study, please sign your name and write today's date on the lines below.

YOUTH PARTICIPANT NAME: _____ Date: _____

YOUTH Email: _____

PARENT Phone #: _____
Choose ONE of the following:

_____$30 Amazon Gift Card _____$30 iTunes Gift Card _____ $30 Starbucks Gift Card

Researcher Name: ___Carron R Silva_____ Date: _____11/18/2020____

APPENDIX H: EMAIL TO MALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD

Dear <<Name>>,

As you may be aware, I am conducting a research study regarding community life at Windtrail. So far, I have only interviewed female heads of household. I would like to have input from a male perspective as well.

Would you please consider participating in a 30 – 40 minute interview? I am also looking for one more middle school student to represent the youth voice.

I've attached the consent forms for adults and middle school students. Just let me know what day and time will work for you. I am free on weekends, weeknights and during the day.
I hope to have these interviews completed by December 21st.

Each participant will earn a $30 gift card of their choice to one of the following: Amazon, King Soopers, Walmart, iTunes, or Starbucks. Parents/ Guardians and middle schoolers from the same household can participate.

Thank you,
Carron Silva

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT & NORMS

Thank you for being here to participate in this focus group session today. I am a focus group facilitator with Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation conducting research in order to understand how residents in affordable housing complexes define their own communities. We are representing Carron Silva, a graduate student who is doing research on what to challenges to inclusion and connection that residents feel exist. Additionally, we hope to discover opportunities by which residents believe as many residents as possible can be included in decisions about the community and creating a community where the residents feel a strong sense of connection, share in community activities, participate in decision-making for the good of the whole community, and support each other long term. As a current resident, your experience and insights into your community is most valuable. Outcomes from this discussion will help us to make recommendations for how residents can become more engaged in the future of the community. It will also be used in a doctoral dissertation which will be published by Colorado State University so that other researchers or interested parties can learn about social sustainable community development.

Do you understand the purpose of this study? Please unmute and say "yes" Facilitators waited for each participant to express verbal consent before continuing to the next segment.

This focus group will be audio recorded. Any identifiable information captured on the audio recording today will be left off the transcripts, and once we have verified the accuracy of the transcription, the recordings will be destroyed. You will not be videotaped. If you are using

your laptop for this focus group session, we ask that you silence your cell phone. If you have an emergency, please notify the facilitator before stepping away, but please return to the discussion as quickly as possible. While we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of everyone outside of this group, we ask that each participant respect each other's confidentiality.

Participation in the focus group discussion is voluntary and will not affect your ability to live here. If at any time, you are not comfortable participating in this focus group, you may leave the group for any reason. You may skip answering any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. You may ask that the recording be stopped during the interview. You may ask that the interview be stopped at any time.

The facilitators of this focus group will guide the discussion through questions and follow up questions.

Please put your microphone on mute while someone else is talking to avoid disruption. Unmute your microphone when you are ready to participate in the conversation.

Do you have any questions? Do I have your permission to continue with this focus group interview? Do I have your permission to record audio?

Focus Group Norms

- Share at your own comfort level

- Be honest and respectful

- Participate fully

- Disagree with curiosity, not hostility

- Share "airtime" so everyone's voice is heard

- Respect confidentiality

APPENDIX K: LEARNING WALK STRATEGY

Learning Walks Adapted from Education to Affordable Housing Community Development

Essential Elements	Education	Affordable Housing Community Development
What is a learning walk?	A collaborative professional development strategy where teachers observe other teachers teach at multiple levels of instruction over a short period of time. Learning walks focus on one to three areas of focus for each observation	A collaborative community development strategy where management and resident representatives walk through their communities with purpose driven goals to observe certain aspects of the community based on strategic plan goals.
Purpose	To improve instruction by sharing instructional strategies, classroom climate and culture building techniques, aligning teaching practices with vision and mission.	To build trust with residents by giving residents opportunities to be seen and heard. To improve relationships between residents and management. To narrow the divide between residents, management, and the Board of Directors
Who should be involved?	School Leadership, Teachers, Pre-service teachers	Board Members, Executive Directors, Resident Services Directors, Property Managers, Maintenance Personnel, Residents
What are possible areas of focus?	Instructional strategies, classroom climate and culture, student engagement, student-to-student interaction, teacher-to-student interaction, context, verbal communication, non-verbal communication etc.	Resident actions, reactions and interactions, Condition of facilities and grounds, community culture, utilization of common areas and play spaces, impact of environment on community life, current events, community concerns, community garden spaces
Focus of Inquiry	A focus of observation is established beforehand. Clear expectations are established as to what evidence will be collected. Evidence must align with school and district improvement plans.	Observations can be built around strategic plan goals or concerns brought up by residents. Clear expectations must be established about what evidence will be collected and align with strategic plan goals.
Focus of Observation Guiding Questions	What aspects of the school vision and mission statement do we hope to see represented in the classroom? What aspects need attention?	Into what areas of concern do we want to gain insight regarding resident engagement? What evidence points to root causes for resident concerns?
Observation	Learning walk leaders brief groups before observations and	Property managers coordinate learning walks between upper management and

	debrief after observations. Each observation takes place for 5-7 minutes. Observers take notes on templates provided.	Resident leaders. Areas of concern are briefed before learning walks, and debriefed after learning walks.
Noticings	Teachers write down what they notice other teachers do regarding the focus question of the day.	Participants take note of observations on their learning walk. For example, state of landscaping, interactions among neighbors, etc.
Wonderings	Teachers write questions about what they are curious about – instructional strategies, classroom protocols etc.	Management writes down probing questions that dig deeper into concerns or root causes, resident leaders write questions about their own concerns moving forward
Action Plan/Next Steps	Based on what they have learned, teachers decide on one action step they can take to improve their own instruction.	Management and resident leaders determine next steps together.