UNDERSTANDING HEALTH NEEDS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN CENTRAL NORTHEAST, WICHITA, KS

A Thesis by

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Anthropology.

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ABSTRACT

From ethnographic fieldwork from June 2015 until February 2016, this research helps to create a better understanding of the felt needs of residents of the black community in Central Northeast, Wichita, Kansas. Interviews, participant observation, surveys, and spatial mapping using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), allow for a comprehensive assessment of the health needs of this specific community. Health researchers are becoming increasingly aware that the examination of health needs using a bottom-up approach is more effective than approaching this research from the top-down. This assessment uses anthropological methods to understand deeply embedded structural problems of health in the Central Northeast from the perspective of the community. Historical memory of segregation and institutionalized racism in Wichita contribute to current understandings of a deteriorating infrastructure, perceptions of safety issues, and unequal opportunities of African Americans in Central Northeast Wichita.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldsite</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Assessments</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Segregation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Universities</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>METHODS</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping &amp; Spatial Analysis</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OUTCOMES</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception &amp; Stigma</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting &amp; Community Policing</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritional Environment</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inequality and Racial Tension</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Historic Fairmount Community</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wichita State University &amp; the Central Northeast Communities</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast Black Community</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Opportunity</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Opportunity</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional &amp; Cultural Racism</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONCLUSION</strong></td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broader Impacts</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORKS CITED</strong></td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 1</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Protocol</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 2</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 3</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Data</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fieldsite: Central Northeast Wichita, KS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Administrative Regions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Historic Fairmount (Formal Region)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Map of Study Area</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Racial segregation in Wichita, KS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Landmarks in the Northeast Black Community</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Gender of Participants</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Race/Ethnicity of Participants</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Age Range of Participants</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Coding Frequency of “Safety”</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Crime Rates Wichita, KS</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. “How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?”</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Coding &amp; Survey Frequency on “Drugs” (*write-in on surveys)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Top five “most concerning behaviors”</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Coding &amp; Survey Frequency on “Lighting”</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Coding &amp; Survey Frequency on “Community Policing”</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Coding &amp; Survey Frequency on “Infrastructure”</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. How easy is it to use safe and maintained areas for recreation?</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. How easy is it to get healthy food in your neighborhood?</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Food Deserts based on USDA definition, 2010</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. Coding and Survey Frequency on “Boundaries”</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Coding and Survey Frequency on “Education” &amp; “Economics”</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Is your neighborhood a good place to get a job?</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Socio-economic Status (SES) in Central Northeast</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Educational Attainment: High School or below</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Educational Attainment: Associate’s Degree or above</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

I felt nervous pulling up to the apartment building for a meeting in a neighborhood west of Hillside. The president of the neighborhood association invited me—she said they meet every third Thursday in the evening and wanted me to see what is going on west of my usual fieldsite, directly adjacent to the south end of the university. I wondered if I was in the right place. I did not see other cars in the small apartment complex office lot, but I parked and got out to see if I could find someone to ask. Before beginning my research in the Central Northeast area of Wichita, Kansas, I would have been afraid to even park my car here, let alone get out and walk around by myself. My friends would tell me I was crazy “be careful, that area is dangerous,” they said. It was a beautiful evening. The sun was just starting to set and there was a golden light cast on everything around me. Deteriorated old houses surrounded the group of newer, affordable-housing complexes. One liquor store sat across the street on the corner, with two young black men standing by a car talking. I felt a profound sense of peace and calm wash over me. I felt safe.

Walking over to the other side of the complex, I saw three older women standing outside talking. I asked them about the meeting, which had been moved this month because of a neighborhood block party they excitedly told me about. I continued chatting, telling them what I was doing for my project, and they proceeded to tell me what needs they saw in the community. These included better healthcare options for people who are not on social security—one of them was a veteran—and transportation to doctor’s appointments. When I explained I was a student at Wichita State University, they asked why the university was only focused on the one neighborhood they were connected to. But the women were used to it, they said, “No one sends
resources here; they don’t care about our part of town. Things happen all around us but we don’t see any improvements.” At point, an ambulance sounded a siren several blocks away. The sound, a siren I have grown accustomed to tuning out, had these women captivated. All three stopped talking and looked towards the direction of the siren, “I think it’s going down Estelle,” one said. All three of their faces looked concerned. In this moment, I realized their reality was different from mine. A siren that fades into the soundscape in my neighborhood was a marker of pressing worry for these women. Illness and death came more frequently in their neighborhood. They were bound tightly to their community—caring to stop and wonder if someone they knew was taking a trip in the ambulance several blocks away.

My research in the Northeast black community of Wichita, Kansas, began in October 2014 with a pilot project that grew into research for my thesis from June 2015 to the present. I chose this specific research area because of health disparities in the communities surrounding the Wichita State University (WSU) campus and the easy access I gained through my status as a student there. I also was interested in how the growth of the university impacted the surrounding communities.

I went into this project thinking I could speak to informants in the community, get their perceived needs for health and well-being, and write a simple report based on these needs. This project became much more involved than merely assessing basic health needs. Informants’ insisted on a holistic understanding of social justice, race, history of place, politics, and other aspects known to shape health outcomes in minority populations. Further, they forced me to assess my understandings of “community,” “space,” and “place” when it comes to health. The result of understanding this important background is a more holistic, complex report of needs than I had originally anticipated. This being said, my subject matter naturally lent itself to
anthropological inquiry because health is deeply intertwined with not just the biological, but also the social, political, economic, and environmental aspects of life.

With recent efforts from WSU to intervene in the adjacent Fairmount Neighborhood, illustrated by stated goals of building a stronger relationship and assisting in achieving greater community health outcomes, one must ask what the primary need of the community is and build on this. Community health researchers say it is important to take a bottom-up approach and fully involve communities in interventions concerning their own health (Wallerstein 2006; Nichter 2008). An externally defined approach risks creating a greater social disconnect, which is the opposite of the university’s goals for this community. It is imperative that institutional and individual stakeholders hear the voices of those living in the community in order to create lasting results for the community.

To understand the unique experiences of people in marginalized communities today, one must delve deeper, to analyze specific histories, power relationships, and environments. In the last decade or so, the idea that “zip code is more important than genetic code” has become popular in the realm of public health and among researchers who seek to understand population health (Roeder 2014). This idea is a step in the right direction, though does not specify how health researchers should go about gaining a deeper understanding of place.

Fieldsite

This research took place in Wichita, Kansas, and focused on a group of neighborhoods in the Central Northeast area of the city. This area is where WSU and a large percentage of the black community of Wichita is located (see Figure 1). I initially focused my study specifically on
the Fairmount neighborhood because of my status as a student and the shared history the university has with the Fairmount Neighborhood Association (FNA).

Figure 1. Fieldsite: Central Northeast Wichita, KS

I quickly realized that using the FNA as an access point to the community created barriers to my research. Not only is the Fairmount Neighborhood restricted to administrative boundaries, African American informants frequently identified FNA with the student and academic communities residing closer to the northern edge of the neighborhood as opposed to the broader black community around WSU that I will call the “Northeast Black Community” for the purposes of this research. I chose this identifier due to the reiteration of the name “Northeast
Community” by African American informants in reference to the black community in the Central Northeast area of Wichita. I found that social and historical relationships and identifications of community in this area have an impact on current understandings of health by the black community of Wichita. Residents share a deep social memory of the historical context of place, which led me to problematize my preconceived understanding of this area and the concept of place and community in my research. These historical relationships are played out in current interactions between the black community of Central Northeast Wichita and the hegemonic institutions of the City of Wichita and WSU.

It is important to discuss the way spaces are understood in my fieldsite. There are several types of regions within my fieldsite, including administrative regions, formal regions, and functional regions (Schensul, et. al. 1999). Administrative regions are usually characterized by clear, legally-defined boundaries. Formal regions are recognized by one or more formal attributes, such as a group of houses that were built around the same year. Finally, functional regions are defined by flows of people and goods (Schensul, et. al. 1999). Administrative and formal boundaries do not necessarily define the communities within them, as communities of people can easily permeate boundaries.

Central Northeast Wichita makes up the broadest administrative region of my fieldsite. This administrative region contains the smaller spatial regions I focused on during my research that include the WSU campus and the surrounding neighborhoods of Fairmount, Ken-Mar, Northeast Central, and A. Price Woodard (see Figure 2).
The Fairmount Neighborhood is directly south of WSU. The neighborhood directly adjacent to Fairmount is the Ken-Mar neighborhood that borders the southeast edge of Fairmount. WSU’s administrative region is one large city block, and sits to the north of the Fairmount Neighborhood, though several of its buildings overlap into the first block or two of the Fairmount Neighborhood.

In addition to these administrative regions is the formal region of the Historical Fairmount, which lies within the larger administrative boundaries of the Fairmount Neighborhood (see Figure 3). Its boundaries are related to the original historic homes and buildings built in conjunction with the Fairmount College (1885-1926) and the Municipal University of Wichita (1926-1964), now WSU. This formal region makes up the northwest area
of the Fairmount Neighborhood that borders the WSU campus. The Historic Fairmount region is the primary focus of the new university coalition, the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition, and a $250,000 grant from the Kansas Health Foundation (KHF), which was received from the Hugo Wall School of Urban Studies at WSU to push forward efforts for improving community health and relationships.

Historic Fairmount (Formal Region)

Figure 3. Historic Fairmount (Formal Region)

Lastly, there is the functional region of the Northeast Black Community, which is the community I have focused on in this research. The Northeast Black Community, within the broader administrative region of Central Northeast Wichita, is defined primarily by the main census blocks surrounding WSU where most of Wichita’s African Americans live.
Over the last couple of decades, the neighborhoods south and west of the university have been perceived as unsafe by outsiders due to media coverage of several violent crimes committed in this area, which is in close proximity to WSU. Safety has been a frequently voiced concern, especially by university administrators in relation to student safety due to knowledge of these crimes. In November of 2014, an African American woman was assaulted, set on fire, and murdered in the Fairmount Park. This tragic event trigged the establishment of the campaign called “Enough is Enough!,” which turned into the previously stated Shocker Neighborhood Coalition put in place by the president of WSU to address safety issues and attempt to unify the campus community with surrounding neighborhoods.

The most prominent community surrounding WSU, I came to recognize while conducting interviews, is the Northeast Black Community of Wichita. I selected the Central Northeast area for my fieldsite due to the black community’s prominence here, with 60 to 85 percent of the population is ethnically African American (see Figure 4).
Figure 4. Map of Study Area

I am interested in focusing on the black community in Wichita because of the health disparities African Americans face. For example, infant mortality and low birth weight among births to black mothers in Sedgwick County is the highest in the nation in zip code 67214, just west of WSU.

The current effort of WSU to expand its campus to the south is another reason for my focus on the neighboring communities. WSU’s “Innovation Campus” is an effort of the university president to promote economic and university growth by expanding the fields of technology, business, and engineering. This expansion includes business front development
along 17th street, bordering the Fairmount neighborhood. This expansion is likely to impact the surrounding community. Rumors of gentrification have been circling among the community according to several informants, though some informants said they are hopeful the expansion will somehow aid in assisting the surrounding communities. Local developers have been purchasing homes in the Fairmount neighborhood for several years with plans to renovate, and recently homes along the edge of the campus expansion have been boarded up. The Fairmount neighborhood that borders WSU to the south is significant to the history of the university. With the new focus of the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition and the KHF grant on this specific neighborhood, along with separately stated plans of the “revitalization” of Historic Fairmount, one must understand the history of the relationship of this neighborhood to the university and the broader Central Northeast area of Wichita.

The Fairmount neighborhood was founded in the late 1800s in tandem with the planning of the first college on this plot of land, the Fairmount College, which is now WSU. Mainly white university professors, staff, and students from its founding until the 1970s when the neighborhood began to go through a transition occupied Fairmount. The black population in the area grew from eight or nine percent to 20 percent in the 1970s, which was twice the total black population of Wichita at the time. The political boundaries of Fairmount now contain 47 percent black residents, 30 percent white and about 20 percent international students. My fieldsite includes part of the Ken Mar Neighborhood, which has over 60 percent black residents, and my broader focus that extends into the Northeast Central and A. Price Woodard neighborhoods has upwards of 85 percent black populations (see Figure 5).
Previous Assessments

I first learned about previous assessments conducted in the Central Northeast Wichita area during one of my first interviews when I was met with hostility for being another person from an institution asking about the “needs” of the community without providing any solution. This sentiment ran through several of my interviews and interactions with people in the Northeast Black Community.

Over the last 40 years, several needs assessments were collected for the Fairmount Neighborhood and the broader Central Northeast area of Wichita. The FNA conducted the first needs assessment in 1976 (Kretzchmar 1976). The needs addressed in this document include lighting in the park and the rest of the neighborhood, housing issues, and other infrastructural issues. A follow up to this assessment was written in 1986, when authors declared several problems had been addressed, including cleaning up and painting homes, improving streets and sidewalks, improvement to the park, and installation of traffic diverters to cut down crime and traffic near the park (Van Milligan 1986). An assessment of the broader Central Northeast area of Wichita was completed in 1995 in conjunction with city officials and a follow up assessment was conducted in 2005 (Metropolitan Area Planning Department 1995, 2005). These assessments addressed issues similar to those found by the Fairmount Neighborhood Association’s primary 1976 assessment, namely issues with housing, infrastructure, and other environmental deterioration of this area. A study on food deserts performed by the Health and Wellness Coalition of Wichita found the Central Northeast area of Wichita is a food desert and has a significant problem with access to affordable, fresh groceries. This study was written before the Neighborhood Wal-Mart and the Quick Trip closed this year (2016). The most recent assessment of note is the one conducted in the Fairmount Neighborhood in conjunction with
WSU and its Shocker Neighborhood Coalition. This assessment is funded by a grant attained by the Hugo Wall School of Urban Studies from the KHF, focusing on community health and, specifically, community engagement.

The previous seven assessments were designed as “top-down” studies where experts compile data and independently make conclusions and recommendations. Little to no community involvement is sought in top-down studies. Researchers began with an institution outside of the community that designed and coordinated the study, and appointed one or two people from the community as access points or liaisons. While these assessments generated many useful recommendations, I found residents were unsure of the long-term utility of the assessment process. A focus on the qualitative and personal, perceived issues of those living in the community as a whole has been left out of every assessment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the beginning of African American’s forced residence in the United States, they have faced disparate living conditions based in racist ideology. For centuries, those in power have determined the liminal space this cultural group was forced into. Black neighborhoods often are located in places are less desirable to live. For example, many black people live by major highways, industrial sights with greater chances of environmental pollutants, and in areas of low elevation that are more likely to flood, in flood-prone cities (Colten 2002).

Black communities have faced environmental injustice in the form of deterioration and blight due to segregation and white flight, for centuries in the United States (Powell 2007; Williams & Collins 2001; White 2011). Black neighborhoods often are located in poor nutritional environments, in the form of food deserts and the increased advertisement of fast,
unhealthy, cheap, calorie-dense foods, and poor physical environments. These areas are deteriorated due to their stigmatization and lower socioeconomic status, which often puts them on the bottom of the list for upkeep and development in a city. Infrastructure in poor, black neighborhoods have blighted houses, high numbers of rental properties, and absentee landlords not held accountable for poor management of their properties. More immediately visible results include poorly maintained roads and sidewalks, excess brush, debris, and trash. It is clear in the literature that the more historically segregated a space is, the more disadvantaged and deteriorated it is. The Central Northeast area of Wichita is no exception to this rule.
Specific bodies of literature inform this study, including the history of segregation in Wichita and its influences on present conditions. Literature on the impacts of racism and segregation on health outcomes, institutionalized racism, and cultural racism in the United States provides a framework to apply to this smaller area of study. Scholarship on the role of urban universities within their surrounding communities is vital for understanding the WSU’s role in
my study. Finally, literature on social capital frames how opportunity and resources are connected to social status.

**History of Segregation**

The Fairmount Neighborhood exists in a space of great historical importance to both the WSU Community and the Northeast Black Community of Wichita. Before the late 1960s and early 1970s, Hillside Avenue was the segregation line for black residents of Wichita. No black Americans were permitted to live anywhere east of Hillside. The western border of Fairmount neighborhood and WSU sits on that dividing line. Local historian Gretchen Eick describes Hillside as the “Maginot Line of Racial Tensions,” where for many years redlining, restructuring of school districts, and other policies allowed blacks to be segregated in the area just West of Hillside (Eick 2007).

This historical reference is key to understanding health needs in the Fairmount neighborhood as well as the broader communities surrounding the university. Until the 1950s, almost all of the African American population of Wichita was confined to one small area, now where the McAdams neighborhood sits, directly west of my research site and the university. This quote from a 45-year-old male leader in the black community illustrates one long-time resident’s experience of these policies of segregation:

Okay so you have downtown Wichita, that’s where all Whites lived, and on the other side of the tracks, which was Mosley and what we call Hydraulic, that was your Black neighborhood. So on the other side of Hydraulic [downtown] were the Whites, and they were moving into the suburbs. So for many years your black neighborhood was on the other side of the tracks near Hydraulic, that’s where it started…As a matter of fact, is shows you, you’re talking about the history, I-35 you know this where it's raised and where it comes back down, all the way through the black community, once you get past Pawnee it goes back down. No one wanted to go down in the Black community because it could be dangerous. I mean that canal route, from basically Central to 2nd street, it’s all up and it goes all the way out past 21st street and then it goes back down on to the
ground, you even noticed that?... Even the street names change. I mean, look at Douglas. On one side of Douglas... those streets are Cleveland, New York, Wabash— it shows you it was all the Black neighborhood. But across Douglas, it was all Lulu, Patti, those other names. To this day! I mean and Wabash don’t go no further than, what, 17th street? Because that was [the Black] area. So, downtown was predominantly historically White and then there were some Blacks, but then, what happens was this neighborhood [Ken Mar], and those neighborhoods, [east of Hydraulic] were at that time suburbs, where white folks lived. So as Wichita kept moving west, that line would move, and so [black] people would go over it, so they got to “move up.” So here is where the history is: When they got to Hillside, it stayed at Hillside for a long time. So, that’s why you had that issue with Fairmount. On that side of Hillside it was hard to get a house over there... So here we are now in 2015, and part of the whole desegregation of our cities, the red line was getting called out, but you still have we call the predominantly Black Northeast neighborhood.

Black Wichitans from different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds lived within two census blocks and had their own movie theatre, schools, churches, and businesses separate from the white community. The majority of those in the white community, at that time, likely did not know, or understand, the extent of what the black community of Wichita was dealing with. This is indicated in a quote from one of my oldest informants, Margaret, a white woman who lived in the Fairmount neighborhood for many years:

We owned a restaurant and we worked with black people in the kitchen- dishwasher and people who scrubbed the floors. They were excellent people they lived in that community too, west of Hillside, and we always saw that they got home safe and sound. We always shared anything we had and we enjoyed that...This was 1952-1960. Anyways we had a businesswoman who operated and ran a furniture store. She was so prejudice, it was a white woman, and she owned this furniture store but she lived about three houses east of Hillside and lived there all her life, and she’d eat in our restaurant because she liked it and she’d come there every morning and eat breakfast before she went to work. And she would sit down and she always was rude to the Blacks. And I always wanted to say to her “oh I think I served a black man coffee out of that cup” I wanted to say that so bad, or “a black man used that spoon or one just like that” she would have caused a fit. She’d say “is this place cleaned off? Did anybody sit here recently with dirty clothes?” I wanted to say to her, “why don’t you move out of this neighborhood you don’t even belong here.” She would run that through every darn time—and we had Blacks and Whites and we got along beautifully. We did have somebody in our neighborhood, I don’t know, this is about 1952-60, would plant knives in the top of the toilets. See, this is how close, see we never left them alone we always went out together. In the water closet – whoever would
use the toilet would do that. We never knew if they wanted to kill someone or injure them or what. We don’t know. We’ve had a Molotov cocktail and things like that- now that was in the 50’s. See, we were west of Hillside- our restaurant. And I never did understand it and I would go to high school with these black people and they never bothered me then, and they would clean the house or something where I worked and I never had any problems. They talked about it like the Dockum Drug sit-in and Chester Lewis and all these things. I didn’t even know it was going on but [Whites] would plant knives in the back of our toilets and we didn’t know if they were after our cooks or what. (Fairmount was kind of in the middle of it all?) Oh yes. One of the reasons I think they were disturbed, when they built highway 1-35, they uprooted a lot of black people. Right through [what we called] “Blacktown.” And that really… They had to move on because the highway’s coming through, because they probably can’t pay for it. I don’t know. So they were uprooted… Yes, but Fairmount was its own little clique. - Margaret

During de-segregation, black community members who could afford to move began an exodus from segregated boundaries into white communities with more opportunities. This movement was halted at Hillside Avenue. Eick refers to this feature as a line demarcating the location of various forms of institutionalized racism such as redlining and block busting by realtors, and the refusal of banks to grant loans to black individuals in certain neighborhoods (Eick 2007). These practices kept the community from moving past Hillside for many years. Interestingly, this demarcation is the western border of WSU and the Fairmount Neighborhood. After the 1960s, segregated boundary began to dissolve and black families began to move east.

During Wichita’s desegregation, white families rapidly left the city’s neighborhoods and moved to new suburbs, taking economic resources with them, and black families move north and east, and eventually to neighborhoods around WSU beginning in the late 1960s and 1970s. North of WSU was referred to as the “Iron Curtain,” where African Americans were heavily restricted through intimidation from white residents. An article from the [WSU] Alumni Magazine in 2000 describes this phenomenon, using one story of a professor who obtained a loan on a house north of WSU in 1968 by posing as a white family’s maid. After moving in with her family, neighbors
threatened and harassed the professor (Black & White 2000). Repeated restructuring of school zoning kept schools highly segregated due to white population’s resistance towards allowing their kids in schools with increasing black populations. This continued until the broader northeast area was 90 percent or more African American by the end of the 1970s. A group of like-minded people from the Fairmount Neighborhood attempted to promote Fairmount Elementary as an integrated school and to fight the white flight happening all around them, beginning in 1959. They tried integrating children from both sides of the racial Maginot Line. This attempt did not last very long, after the school board removed the accelerated learning program from the school, many people who were attracted to the idea because of this program left. Fairmount Elementary was shut down in 1971 and razed the next year (Eick 2007). A Fairmount Neighborhood resident said:

In this area all kids are bussed out of here and have been since 1974. I don’t like that, and I’m not encouraging families to come here. Kids don’t get to go to their neighborhood school. Since 1974…See, they didn’t want Blacks to come in and take over this community [Fairmount]—Hillside was pretty much the line—west of Hillside, goodness they would…But they don’t bother me at all. –Margaret

Today, this area remains highly segregated, with the majority of the black population of Wichita still living in eight or nine census blocks in the Central Northeast part of the city. Though the total black population of Wichita is around twelve percent, the census blocks west of WSU are between 47 and 85 percent African American. The media frequently portray this part of Wichita in a negative light. Additionally, students and officials on campus refer to it as “the ghetto” and slums, so people from outside of the community often perceive the neighborhoods surrounding WSU negatively. Those who live in Central Northeast Wichita generally feel safe with a strong sense of community and pride in their history, but they also feel the stigmatization
of their neighborhoods leads to the perpetuation of their oppression, disenfranchisement, and political-economic exclusion from the rest of the city.

Racism

Researchers of institutionalized racism and segregation describe how these factors impact health. (Carty et. al. 2011; Edberg 2013; Feagin & Zenobia 2014; Hearst et. al. 2008; White & Borrell 2011; Williams & Collins 2001). A history of segregation and current segregation, specifically of black residents, negatively impacts communities in a wide variety of ways. The basis of segregation in the United States originates in racist ideology by the hegemonic class. Forced segregation shaped black communities from the early 1900s until the 1950s, when it was abolished. White flight increased the condensing of black Americans to specific geographical areas. When black families were able to move further into white territory, white residents left and moved into suburbs or further from the city center. This fleeing of the hegemonic class stripped these communities of economic and educational opportunities as well. When white families left an area, they took white opportunity with them (Crowder 2000).

Researcher John Powell characterizes modern racism in the West as no longer individual or institutionalized, but rather structural (2008). He uses systems theory to show how the ongoing, complex interactions of institutions perpetuate racialized outcomes, and demonstrates how macro-level dynamics impact American citizens and create micro-level outcomes. This structural model of racism shows how we are all interconnected in structures, more than individual merit, shape life chances and how individual’s participation sustain and create these same structures that turn around and remake our identities. An important part of Powell’s discussion is when he mentions “the racialization of space,” where residential location is taken to
be a reflection of the values, attitudes, social norms, and behavioral inclinations of the “kinds” of people living there (2008: 793). This discussion is particularly important to this research where space is vital in the way the Central Northeast community views themselves when compared to the external gaze of Wichita.

Powell also talks about the effects of segregation and “racial isolation” in relation to social space. He describes the housing policies from the 1950s that creates disparity between low-income, largely black communities and predominantly white, middle-class communities. Federal subsidies, which enabled middle-class whites to move from the center of cities to the suburbs, created large gaps between the quality of schools, grocery stores, and opportunities to network and get better jobs. Housing policies that prevented integrated neighborhoods perpetuated these inequalities. Today, few think about the reasons African Americans live in areas of high poverty and low resources and attribute it to lack of achievement and employ a “blame-the-victim” attitude (2008). Powell argues these disparities between central city, predominantly black neighborhoods and suburban, predominantly white neighborhoods are getting even worse, especially in the Midwest, creating economic “sorting” of people and isolation of opportunities (2008). Powell touches on several key factors that preclude my research on health. His contribution helped shape my thinking about my fieldsite through consideration of the process by which racist ideology embeds itself in society in multiple ways that impact the lives of a population.

David R. Williams is one of the leading social epidemiologists researching segregation’s impact on community health. His research links segregation and poor health outcomes in numerous ways, even when controlling for other health variables. An article by Williams provides one of the main theoretical frameworks I will use in my study to understand racism as a
fundamental cause of other health outcomes in the Northeast Black Community. Using an epidemiological model he created, Williams explains the determinants of health on five levels, beginning with basic or fundamental determinants and ending with final health outcomes. He says that institutional and cultural racism is one of the three primary determinants of health, along with biological and geographic origins and social institutions (see Figure 6). All other pathways and behaviors contributing to individual health outcomes stem from these determinants, and without addressing them, there is no hope for a long-lasting change in health outcomes in a population (Williams and Mohammed 2013, 1157).

Figure 6. A Framework for the Study of Racism on Health (Williams & Mohammed 2013)

In their 2013 article, Williams and Mohammed describe the multifaceted reality of racism in contemporary United States. They outline three types of racism faced by Black Americans:
institutional, cultural, and individual. They explain how each type of racial discrimination negatively affects health. For example, institutionalized racism manifests through procedures and policies that minimize access to and opportunity for housing, educational quality, neighborhood, employment and other opportunities often afforded the hegemonic class. Cultural racism affects societal and individual levels and manifests through creating an environment that is not friendly to policies promoting equality. In turn, the creation of “negative psychological responses such as stereotype threat and internalized racism” impact minorities’ socioeconomic status and health (Williams and Mohammad 2013:1153). A high level of aversive racism, a type of contemporary racism where a person “lacks explicit racial prejudice… but has implicit biases that favor Whites over Blacks” (Williams & Mohammad 2013: 1154), demonstrated to exist on individual levels in America. Contemporary racism is threatening to minority groups, but also difficult to recognize because of its aversive qualities.

Another relevant article by David R. Williams and Chiquita Collins (2001) specifically addresses geographic segregation of blacks in the United States and health outcomes. They point to the residential segregation of blacks as one of the most impactful outcomes on health disparities in the United States. They argue that segregation remains high for African Americans and is a primary cause for inequalities in socioeconomic status due to its role in restricting opportunity. The authors examine the impact of segregation on health through multiple pathways such as the physical and social environment. Williams and Collins end their argument by saying if advocates want to change health outcomes in population’s facing health disparity they must address the issue of residential segregation as well (Williams & Collins 2001). This perspective helped clarify my understanding of the connection between health disparity and segregation
associated with the historical segregation of the Northeast Black Community of Wichita and the current level of segregation in my fieldsite.

**Social Capital**

The subject of social capital is something to take into consideration when analyzing the needs of a community and the health and well-being of a group of people. I focused on two types of social capital for the purpose of this research: bridging and bonding. Bridging is when a group of people, in a space or community, has relationships with people from different social backgrounds. Bonding is when people of similar social statuses most frequently interact. These bonds assist in providing social support in the form of information, resources, and emotional support (Wutich, et. al. 2015). Wutich, Ruth, Brewis, and Boone (2015) study stigma and its impact on the health of low-income, Latino neighborhoods with bonding social capital in Phoenix, Arizona. They report neoliberal reform policies that have stripped these communities of publically funded social support nets create an extra burden on the poor who are increasingly burdened emotionally and materially with assisting their neighbors. Recent researchers show these poorer communities with high bonding social capital now have worse health (Wutich, et. al 2015).

The authors also talk about the possible impact of stigma on the health of urban communities. They refer to several known impacts specifically of stigma on neighborhoods, separate from income and other variables. Neighborhoods that are stigmatized face worse self-reported physical and mental health outcomes. Stigma, which is defined as “the social process that allows labeling, stereotyping, status-loss, and discrimination and the related personal experience of anticipated or actual judgment- leading to self-devaluation of one’s moral
standing” (Wutich, et. al. 2015), is recognized as contributing to a wide variety of health problems through the mechanism of the stress-response. The high level of stigmatization in my fieldsite calls for the rethinking of standard variables of health and the consideration of social impacts on the health of populations.

Many low-income, urban neighborhoods become stigmatized through “discourses of vilification” (Wutich, et. al. 2015) reinforce beliefs that places are crime-ridden, blighted, dangerous, and blemished. Irresponsible media coverage that constructs, spreads, and spins information promotes these vilifications in cities. These perceptions give negative social meaning to those who live in these stigmatized places and hold so much power, residents do not escape these marks when they move.

Vicky Cattell (2001) does a wonderful job of analyzing social processes by doing a comparative study of two neighborhoods in London, both of which are embedded in poverty. Cattell examines relationships between poverty and exclusion, and neighborhood health and well-being by investigating a neighborhood’s influence on social capital and social networks. She describes social networks as being either dense or weak, and homogenous or heterogeneous, and how these factors impact health and well-being. Stigmas can cluster geographically instead of just socially and perceptions can reinforce geographical marginalization. Intersectional stigma or intersectional vulnerabilities create a compounding or layered effect on health due to different forms of social exclusion and inequality not yet widely studied or understood (Cattell 2001).

Cattell argues there are three factors impacting social capital: social consciousness, neighborhood character and perceptions, and poverty and social exclusion. It is important to understand the particular history of a place, the resources available, and opportunities for participation and work, as factors contributing to the development of trust. The issue of trust,
feelings of social exclusion, and perceptions are all relevant in my research outcomes. As Cattell argues, these weaken social capital and directly affect opportunities (Cattell 2001). Areas, and peoples, with stigmatized reputations contribute to isolating residents from each other and blocks development and flow of information in a neighborhood. She concludes though participation in community organizations is important, the critical buffer against the effects of poverty and isolation are regenerated local work opportunities to help create ties and promote social capital (Cattell 2001). A need for inclusive social networks, which allow bridging those within the Northeast Black Community with those outside who can help provide opportunities for economic growth is the most impactful way to reduce poverty and deterioration. The further exclusion of the Black Northeast Community as a whole, by focusing attention on a small, historically white, academic area, creates more of a barrier between the university and the surrounding community.

Mark Nichter’s provides examples of how to approach communities through public health initiatives in his book Global Health (2008). He uses the terms representation and perception throughout the text. The former is seen as a way of understanding a group based on unifying ideas and ways of knowing formed by living within a culture and forming a collective identity. He points out as groups become more diverse, interventionists must look at these representations as more fragmented, though still useful. He also points out the dangers of using representations of groups to create an idea of an “other” or a negative stereotype. The latter, perception, is used as how people understand or experience the world based on history and past experiences. As a part of his paradigm, Nichter draws on Bourdieu’s habitus as a way of understanding specific ways of embodying and perceiving the world based on a number of social factors (Bourdieu 1977). Nichter points out that institutions often idealistically represent community as a collaborative, organized unit and do not identify power relations that are in
place. He stresses, communities are fluid, dynamic, and not homogeneous. He states there must also be an examination of stakeholder positions to pick apart certain statuses leaders in communities have that may cause a preference to certain factions while ignoring others (Nichter 2008: 127-128). These points highlight the political nature of public health initiatives. Interventionists must be aware of the politics at play when addressing health within a community, and the tendency to define a community from the outside, without considering internal ideas of community based on shared histories and experiences.

Nichter (2008) also describes the importance of place when considering population health. He says some places are seen as dangerous because of perceptions, not just because they are inherently dangerous. The presence of stigmatized groups of people, mistrust of people in power, and embedded memories of violence are among the factors that generate these perceptions. He stresses the need to analyze relationships between specific groups and places, how individuals and groups cross these spaces, and who groups feel is in control of the space (Nichter 2008: 54-55). Another vital point he makes is that labeling population as “at risk” contributes to a “blame-the-victim” attitude and does not address broader, structural factors out of the population’s control. Further, the author points out the need to look at what a population is doing to improve itself instead of only the negatives. Without a bottom-up examination of community, with social and historical consideration and sensitivity to past experiences, one risks perpetuating the exclusion of marginalized groups from conversations and solutions concerning their own health. This is relevant in the Northeast Black Community due to the specific history of exclusion through segregation and other forms of institutionalized racism still deeply embedded in this space.
Many of the issues Philippe Bourgois describes in his book “Selling Crack in El Barrio” (1995) about economic and institutional effects on the structure and agency of a group, and issues of poverty, are relevant in today’s analysis of marginalized communities. Bourgois points out the importance of understanding emic perspectives, and not ignoring the particular history of a place, especially regarding relationships of power and stigmatization in a community. He gives an emic view of the Puerto Rican community in Harlem and decisions made on a daily basis, allowing one to see underlying factors that play into these decisions. According to Bourgois, individuals manipulate their lives and make decisions in differing ways, despite a shared cultural background. He talks about the desires of some of his informants to be a part of the hegemonic system because of opportunities afforded to those working within this system and the struggle they have because of lack of cultural capital. He stresses anthropologists must talk about race and racism in the United States if they want to make a difference in outcomes embedded in a history of disenfranchisement of an entire group of people (Bourgois 1995).

Bourgois is a good point of reference for my study due to his strong consideration of history of place in an urban US city. His emic perspective of community allows readers to see different perceptions existing inside a community versus what one perceives from the outside. This reference is vital for my study in Central Northeast Wichita. Outsiders perceive this space as merely dangerous, or a “ghetto.” Employing an emic perspective allows me to see this space for what it actually is, a strong community based in a rich history of its own, suffering from decades of structural racism.
Urban Universities

Scholars have questioned the role of universities in urban settings for the past fifty years. This scholarship begins with C. Kerr’s “Urban Grant University” model (1968), and continues with many scholars following Kerr, arguing for an urban mission for institutions within cities, especially inner-city settings (Cisneros, 1996; Wallerstein and Starr, 1971; Nichols, 1990). A more recent article on the responsibility of universities within a black urban setting points out many issues that come to fore when low-income, black populations surround a university with a “sea” of hopelessness around an “island of affluence, self-importance, and horticultural beauty” (Rowley 2000, 45). Rowley points out problems with universities’ attempts to jump into surrounding communities with which they have no cultural awareness or similarity, and try to “fix” issues endemic to decades of historical oppression of African Americans. These “improvement” projects are often met with failure and even more frustration and mistrust from the community, rather than enhanced relations with the university (Rowley 2000, 46). Urban universities are expected to reach out to the communities surrounding them because they receive money from taxpayers. They also may be seen as “exploitive” due to university’s special legal privileges and status even though they remain a corporate and political entity with the capacity to employ many people in surrounding communities (Rowley 2000, 49).

Rowley continues by describing the unique relationship between an urban university and the surrounding community that must be fully understood before any social issues can be addressed. He states,

…the cultural realities of urban residents and universities are partially shaped by historical, economic, and political factors. By taking the historical connections between university and cities under consideration, many of the contemporary relationships can be better addressed. It is impossible to address the tensions inherent in these relationships
without truly understanding the developments over time, which have been contributed to these tensions (Rowley 2000, 49).

By extension, where there is a history of racial tension and a current reality of segregation, historical tensions between WSU and the Northeast Black Community must be fully acknowledged before an attempt to make changes in the community can move forward. Further, the author states the universities tendencies to “encroach on local urban space” creates further conflict due to the reality of indifference of the well-being and ownership of the local community (Rowley 2000, 50). This contribution to the literature on urban universities is helpful for understanding problems occurring in my fieldsite due to expansion of the university and further exclusion of the surrounding Northeast Black Community.

This relationship is inherent in my research in the Fairmount Neighborhood and the broader Northeast Black Community surrounding WSU. The issues Rowley describes in his article are issues reiterated by the local community during my research. The relationship between WSU and Historical Fairmount reflects disconnects between the university and surrounding black community in similar ways as these authors have found. One example of occurred in 1968 when the leader of the American Nazi party spoke at WSU drawing an audience of 1300 Wichitans. His speech boasted racist ideologies, promoted removal of all African American’s citizenships and suggested sending them “back to Africa” (Eick 2007: 120). This event clearly was not inclusive to adjacent neighborhoods and their largely black residents, and the university must consider and address historical tensions and exclusions such as this before moving forward with plans for expansion.
METHODS

My final goal with this project is to understand what support the Central Northeast neighborhoods within my fieldsite need to achieve greater community health. In order to accomplish this goal, I designed research around the following questions: how does the community define a healthy neighborhood and, based on that definition, what is the local assessment of the state of community health in the area? In order to understand the overall assessment of neighborhood health in Fairmount, I first needed to understand what the community subjectively felt contributed to their state of well-being and health. Two research objectives drove this research:

Objective 1: Determine the overall assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood’s health and well-being from the perspective of community members.

Objective 2: Identify factors that contribute to the overall health and well-being of the neighborhood and community.

Health research initiatives have used needs assessment models to describe community health for more than 20 years (Wallerstein 2006). Community needs assessments are defined as a description of factors that need attended if interventionists want to improve the overall health and well-being of a population (Billings 1995:721). Community health needs assessments cover a broad range of foci, from disease prevalence studies to health services distribution surveys focused on structural inequalities in a community. It is important researchers determine a goal for needs assessment research before moving forward, because it is impossible to cover all types of needs in one project (Bradshaw 1994).
Needs assessments can encompass both subjective and objective health variables, however research shows perceived subjective neighborhood health is strongly correlated with the actual health of a neighborhood as a whole. More recent population health needs assessments have focused on objective neighborhood characteristics such as socioeconomic status, nutritional environment (such as food deserts, prevalence of fast food, and liquor stores), or unemployment. Though these measures can be a good framework for achieving a snapshot of the neighborhood and may be easily obtained through census data, they do not account for ways residents are exposed to, maneuver between, or subjectively experience the structure of their environment and life situation. Subjective neighborhood measures typically are eliciting residents’ assessments of different aspects of their overall neighborhood environment, such as cleanliness, safety, social cohesion, and built environment (Weden et. al. 2008).

Data Collection

This research took place from June 2015 until February 2016. I was close to the research site during the data collection period, so conducting participant observation through community meetings and events, meeting for interviews, and collecting surveys was easily accessible throughout the data collection period. I focused my research on African Americans residents of the Northeast Black Community. Two informants were students of WSU and residents of the Fairmount Neighborhood and one was a long-time Historic Fairmount resident who is white. I performed participant observation between 2 and 10 hours a week at community gatherings and relevant meetings and events. I additionally conducted semi-structured interviews (n=15) and distributed questionnaires (n=20). I used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping to do a
spatial analysis of demographics in the census blocks surrounding WSU, with a specific focus on household income, educational attainment, and percent African American.

All participants were recruited for interviews using a convenience sampling method (Bernard 2002:184). Study participants were either a resident or stakeholder in the research area. I conducted participant observation by volunteering in the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition, attending neighborhood meetings in the Fairmount Neighborhood, and District 1 meetings at the Atwater City Hall for the Central Northeast Wichita area, and attending community events in Fairmount Park and several area churches (see Figure 7). I also collected anecdotal evidence as a student at WSU by occasionally speaking with fellow students about the neighborhood and learning their feelings about safety after the murder in the Fairmount Park. I was exposed to media related to my fieldsite through the campus newspaper and local news sites, and allowed these experiences to be part of my knowledge of the topic as well.
I had a difficult time making connections in my target community when I began collecting data for my thesis. Because of my status as a white, female student, I consistently was directed to connect with the student organizations in the neighborhood (i.e. Panhellenic organizations) to meet “community members,” and to the Fairmount Neighborhood Association. The WSU administration and the FNA believe there is a shared history between the university and the Fairmount Neighborhood and it was difficult for me to reach beyond this history and into the broader community. In order to overcome this barrier to community access, I worked diligently to identify and build trust with stakeholders and leaders, outside of these organizations, that were identified by the black community.
Participant Observation

Participant Observation Experiences (see Figure 7):

- Fairmount Neighborhood Association Meetings: Fairmount Church educational building
- Kansas Health Foundation (KHF) grant meetings: WSU, Fairmount Park, Fairmount Church
- Health and Well-Being subcommittee of the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition: WSU, E.C. Tyree Clinic
- District 1 Board Meeting and Breakfasts: Atwater Neighborhood City Hall and Community Center
- Roundtable Discussion with The Council of Elders: WSU campus
- School Supply Giveaway: Dellrose United Methodist Church
- Christmas Party: University United Methodist Church
- Free Lunch Giveaway: Dellrose United Methodist Church
- Block Party: Unity Temple Church
- Community Events in Fairmount Park
- Observation in Fairmount Park
- Volunteer work in Fairmount garden
- Student Experience at Wichita State University

I began data collection by attending the Fairmount Neighborhood Association meetings once a month, beginning in October 2014 and ending in May 2015 when had saturated information from this specific organization. I attended and volunteered at several meetings for the KHF grant, all focused specifically on the Fairmount Neighborhood. I volunteered on the “Health and Well-Being” subcommittee of the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition, attending several meetings on campus, and one tour of a clinic in the Central Northeast with this group. I attended the District 1 Advisory Board Breakfasts (an extension of the Sedgwick County Commission), held once a month at the Atwater Neighborhood City Hall that serves the Central Northeast Wichita area, from August 2015 through February 2016. Additionally, I attended a
roundtable discussion sponsored by the Council of Elders, a group of leaders in the Northeast black community, on the WSU campus.

In addition to these specific meetings, I attended three church community events, including a Christmas party, a school supply giveaway, and a block party, and two community events at Fairmount Park held in conjunction with WSU. I also volunteered four times at Dellrose United Methodist Church helping with a free lunch program for children. Finally, I spent several hours by myself in Fairmount Park, worked in the community garden for a minimum of 10 hours, and counted specific experiences and media exposure as a student on campus related to the neighboring community and diversity at WSU, as part of my participant observation experience.

*Interviews*

I performed in-depth interviews to learn about the emic perspective and experiences of people living in the Fairmount neighborhood (Bernard 2006:268-9). I conducted semi-structured interviews (n=15) with eight men and seven women. Thirteen informants identified as African American, one as Latino, and one as Caucasian (see Figure 9).
Most of my informants were active members in the Northeast Black Community, either as residents or both residents and stakeholders. I began my data collection by attending meetings of the Fairmount Neighborhood Association, but realized I should find another way to make
contacts who were more representative of my community of study by finding other venues for interaction. I began by calling and emailing churches, but did not receive any responses. I then went to churches and spoke with administrators and pastors who agreed to take an appointment with me. I did the same at a local clinic to see if the administrator would take an appointment with me. I learned about the District 1 Advisory Board meetings and the Atwater City Hall from one informant and made several connections through those meetings.

Six informants were stakeholders in the Northeast Black Community, either through leadership of a church, an organization, a clinic, or a business, serving the Northeast Black Community. Seven informants were residents active in the community through neighborhood, district, and church meetings. Two informants were students as well as residents in the area, one of whom also served on the WSU Shocker Neighborhood Coalition, Fairmount Neighborhood Association board, and the KHF grant. I did not collect data on the ages of informants, but most were between 40 and 65 years old, with the exception of a woman in her nineties, a student in her twenties, and a man in his twenties (see Figure 10).

Interviews lasted between one and two hours and took place at a time and location preferable for the participant. The main questions of my research guided these interviews (see
Appendix 1).

Figure 10. Age Range of Participants

Many informants talked to me about environmental and infrastructural issues and even personal health because they felt the term “health” was so broad when applying it to a neighborhood. Informants became more comfortable and trusting of me and brought up deeper issues of injustice, a need for better community policing, enhanced economic and educational opportunities, and historical examples of marginalization from institutions in the city as interviews progressed. The longer my interviews were, the deeper informants delved into the issues of health in the community. This showed how important it was to spend time embedding myself and building trust in the community, and then speaking with individuals privately instead of in group settings. One informant even told me this was the “right” way to get true information from people in the community due to their reluctance to speak up during meetings held with white officials or residents.

It is also important to do in-depth, open-ended interviews to document subjective thoughts, behaviors, and experiences of individuals within the broader structure of the
community. Interviews provide access to how informants give meaning to their experiences, which is important when dealing with issues of health and social ills. Interviews give more control and power to those who may be disempowered and provide a voice for the layperson (Low 2007). I found true in this research and my interviews provided the most important and unexpected data in this study.

Surveys

Surveys helped me to triangulate data (Bernard 2006: 233, Creswell 2003:211) and provided me with results not mentioned during interviews or participant observation. I used surveys to solicit opinions from a sample of people in the community on issues involving overall perceived health and well-being of their neighborhood (see Appendix 2). All survey respondents were residents of the census blocks surrounding WSU. I collected surveys at community events held at two churches and in Fairmount Park.

I had hoped to collect 50 surveys but had difficulties because many people at the events at which I gained permission to collect surveys did not live within the administrative boundaries of my initial fieldsite. I also felt somewhat uncomfortable collecting surveys data in certain circumstances. For example, I heard a group of people talking at a church event about how it was wrong for me to collect data for my project from attendees. I was sensitive to, and aware of my status as a young, white, student, at predominantly African American events, and felt awkward asking people to fill out surveys that may not end up resulting in any outcomes. Several people also told me the university, city, and neighborhood association had previously conducted assessments and many residents where rightfully “burnt out” on being asked what the community “needs.” This feeling of insecurity in my research may have slowed my survey
collection and factored in to why I was only able to collect 20 surveys. This being said, I feel more comfortable now, after meeting more people in the Northeast Black Community and identifying more access points, to know where to collect surveys in the future, if needed.

**Data Analysis**

My data collection methods primarily produced quantitative text including fieldnotes and synthetic notes from participant observation and transcriptions of interviews. I recorded and transcribed interviews. After my data collection and transcription, I went through the texts to pick out repetitive sentiments in the data to determine themes in which to use as codes. These repetitively mentioned strengths and weaknesses exemplified the problems and needs of the Northeast Black Community. I then coded the texts, beginning with broad codes, and then narrowed codes as themes emerged.

All textual data was managed in NVivo. This program functions as a platform for transcription of audio recordings, entry and management of multiple types of notes, detailed coding, and management of maps and other images. Outcomes from the data were then used to generate recommendations. GIS maps provide a visual perspective of variables in the community that contribute to neighborhood health and fit within my structural analysis of community health.

Several main codes emerged when analyzing and coding my data, followed by specific codes that fell within these broad categories (see Figure 11). Things like nutritional environment, cleanliness, housing and blight, lighting, recreational areas, drugs, and perception, were some of the specific sub-codes.
I extracted quotes from repetitive data and inserted them into categories that relate to my themes in my document. I then used these interview quotes, along with sentiments and observations in my synthetic notes and survey results, to write about each outcome of my data.

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<td>1 Safety &amp; Police Presence</td>
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<td>2 Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Economic &amp; Educational Opportunities</td>
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<td>4 Boundaries &amp; Tensions</td>
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<td>5 Racism</td>
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Figure 11. Summary of Five Broad Codes

**Mapping & Spatial Analysis**

I used ArcGIS Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to create maps to represent spatial data in the study area. GIS has been used by many researchers since the 1990s and is widely used in the sciences (Mennis 2002, Mohai & Saha 2006). I created eleven maps contained in this thesis (see Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 7, Figure 13, Figure 22, Figure 26, Figure 27, Figure 28) of the Central Northeast Wichita area surrounding WSU. One map shows the percentage of African Americans per census block, one shows the median household income per census block group, and the other two show educational attainment per census block group. I discuss these maps in the Outcomes section of this thesis. Mapping the variables related to health in epidemiological research allowed me to grasp the degree to which disparity in economic and educational opportunity affects specific areas in Central Northeast Wichita, and to see the impacts of historical segregation my fieldsite.
OUTCOMES

When I asked informants about what they defined as a healthy community, they indicated a wide variety of issues. Safety was most prominent especially from those representing WSU. This was followed by environment and infrastructure of the neighborhood, including issues with availability of fresh foods, and concerns about racial tension and inequality evidenced by a lack of economic and educational opportunities. Individuals in the community emphasized that a person’s health is more than physical and includes their mental, spiritual, and social health as well. Several informants state their definitions of health below:

I think there needs to be a well-rounded person, they need the soul, mind, and spirit and body need to line up to create a healthy person. Because if their body’s well and their mind is sick, you still have a very sick person. The environment that you are surrounded in as well—Lewis

It’s not just about your medical health, it’s healthy environment, healthy things that you can do. It’s how the neighborhood is surviving, is more how I feel about health. —Carla

Issues of communication, trust, respect, and feelings of deeply embedded institutionalized racism emerged after deeper conversations about community health. All were seen as contributors to the health or deterioration of the neighborhoods of Central Northeast Wichita. For example, one informant talked about how institutionalized racism prevented him and his friends from going to a healthy park in the area when they were youth in the late 1970’s:

We use to come and hang out there [at Fairmount Park]. But it was so many youth that would come, and everyone had mopeds, and the music was playing. And the neighborhood said, “hey we got to keep these kids out! They’re not actually from our neighborhood, they’re from across the street, across Hillside, the other side.” And so what’d they do? They went to the City and had the City block all that up with street dividers. So there are certain streets you can’t drive up. And what did that do? It immediately stopped kids coming to that park ... It was black youth, and so that means trouble. So again, perception. It was fun. It was something you could do. You had fun, you met up with people, met girlfriends, you played basketball, you played football, you swam in the pool. It was all very healthy. But it was not who the people in that community was looking like. So that area was, at the time, predominantly white
and most of them was teachers, professors, and people from Wichita State. There was just too many kids in one place. Again, perception.— Marvin

Another informant describes how the current lack of trust between the City and the black community prevents community members from attending meetings that directly influence the health of the community:

There’s not a lot of trust between the community and the City. The City sometimes tries to say that it’s the community’s fault because we don’t get together like we should. The problem is the City will sometimes set up meetings that they want us to come to, but they make sure it’s on the same day that we would probably be doing something else [like during an African American holiday]. – Loretta

These perceptions about how community health outcomes in the Northeast Black Community are shaped lead into more detailed problems and needs with community health that came out in interviews with residents of the Central Northeast area.

**Safety**

Safety was one of the most frequently repeated themes during my research and was the priority driving force behind the WSU Enough is Enough! campaign.
While safety was one of the most common problems stated by informants, the perceptions of what these problems entailed were different between the community residents and WSU administrators and students. When the WSU administrators and the Fairmount Neighborhood Association refer to safety, they focus on a need for lighting and patrolling in areas in close proximity to the university for student safety, rather than in the community as a whole. Many neighborhood informants agreed it was important to keep students safe, however, their personal concerns with safety were different. When informants spoke about safety, their focus was on the stigmatization of the Central Northeast by outsiders and a need for community policing to build trust. One commonality I found between informants and outsiders was the perceived need for increased lighting to achieve a greater feeling of security.

The consensus from WSU is the surrounding black community poses some degree of threat to students and outsiders, especially near the Fairmount Park. This sentiment was
expressed during meetings for WSU’s Enough is Enough! campaign and reported by local media sources. I also gathered anecdotal evidence for this sentiment through informal conversations with other students who consistently discussed concern about the safety in the neighborhoods surrounding the WSU campus. For example, a WSU student said his fraternity would help deliver newsletters but only to 15th street because of “safety concerns” with the southern part of the neighborhood. Another example includes WSUs Shocker Neighborhood Coalition’s use of the Fairmount Park murder of Letitia Davis as the launching point of their new campaign to reach out and help the broader community surrounding the university. Campaign leaders reiterated at focus groups for the KHF grant and neighborhood association and coalition meetings that the murder in Fairmount Park sparked their entrance into the neighborhood to assist in “much needed changes.” A WSU News story about the new campaign quotes the same official, who said:

The [university] president and I agree that these issues are of significant concern for the future of WSU and the surrounding area…We are part of the neighborhoods that surround us, and the future of these neighborhoods and Wichita State are inextricably linked. To the extent that we can collaborate efforts to stimulate positive changes (Wichita State News, December 4, 2014).

This message and others from WSU administration indicate they want to help the communities surrounding the university, but current actions of this coalition have come across to the community in different ways.

First, there was a voiced concern by informants that the focus of the WSU Shocker Neighborhood Coalition and the grant given to WSU have been directed to the Fairmount Neighborhood, directly south of the WSU campus which is adjacent to the site of the new Innovation Campus and expansion of WSU, rather than to the broader community. Further, much of what is addressed in the Coalition meetings has been more focused on students’ needs, rather
than the needs of permanent residents living in the area. A leader in the black community who had attended one of the grant initiative meetings best described this sentiment:

The issues that cause crime and sustainability and safety concerns are systemic. They’re not peculiar to a neighborhood. If you insist on creating a bubble…I mean the Fairmount Neighborhood, there needs to be a very blunt and open discussion about it. It would be so much better if WSU just came out as an advocacy group and said, “look our primary concern as a university is our students and their relative safety and their quality of life while they’re students at WSU. We’d like the surrounding communities to be safe for our students, and the byproduct of that is the relative health of the community.” It shouldn’t be we, to me, I hate to say it, it’s kind of like false advertising to approach this in the way that they are. If we really want to solve the systemic issues of the community—of course it is. —Joseph

Many of my informants and residents I casually spoke with at community meetings perceive WSU’s main motivation for involvement in the black community as related to attracting future students through an enhanced perception of safety and improvement of the physical environment. Some residents fear WSU is doing this by extending their boundaries south to fulfill a pre-conceived agenda of redeveloping Historic Fairmount, rather than making improvements for the benefit of the surrounding community. This fear is warranted. There exists social memory of past instances where the City and other institutions in the area have used the concept of “improvement” to push the black community further away from healthy spaces.

Exactly, [WSU’s development] is an excuse to push people away. People who have been a part of this NE area for years. [The people who committed crimes near WSU] were African American, so they want to make it like every African American is responsible for that incident in the park…Don’t blame me for something even my brother did, don’t blame me for something my sister did. Don’t blame me! I mean that’s been going on for years… I don’t want to get into a race thing, but African American’s have been put the blame on for a lot of stuff that they weren’t responsible for.—Carla

The KHF grant and the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition that coordinates initiatives have become a point of contention among residents in the Northeast Black Community. Along with
skepticism of WSU’s motivations is a feeling the university and the media are using the tragic murder of Letitia Davis in Fairmount Park as a way to further stigmatize the area and push forth their plans for “revitalization” of Historic Fairmount. One of my informants, a resident of the Fairmount Neighborhood, said he believed WSUs administration is using the crime in the Fairmount Neighborhood as a way to push their way in to recreate Historic Fairmount, rather than one supporting identified needs of the broader surrounding communities.

The safety issue that they’re attempting to address is not because of that black woman. They don’t give a damn about that black woman—they don’t care. But I tell you what they do care about; their enrollment’s down 500 people. They care about their students, and they should. They don’t give a rat’s ass about the other people in the community...When that plane fell down from the sky over here and killed all of those people in our neighborhood they didn’t put up no money. When the people were killed in the multiple homicide by the Church’s Chicken on 13th, nobody put up no money. It ain’t about the Fairmount Neighborhood and it’s safety...Don’t tell me you’re going to go out and develop a program and put it together for a bunch of people who ain’t going to come. Because I’ve already told you, the only way you get black folks to come out and participate in a program, and we are already fighting, is you have to do one of three things: You have to feed them, pay them, or give a damn...It ain’t nothing going to happen [with this grant]. – Leon

Several informants felt the media intentionally skewed this story and the university capitalized on the event to revitalize Historic Fairmount. They mentioned that there was a similarly brutal murder of a woman by her boyfriend just west of Hillside, just weeks after the Fairmount Park murder, which did not receive the same level of media coverage. They felt that tragedies such as these happen in other parts of town but are more heavily covered by media when they are in areas that are seen as threatening to the university or predominantly white neighborhoods. One stakeholder from the black community talked about his view that Historic Fairmount is more important to the city and WSU.

[The murder in Fairmount Park] was not random. I know they knew each other. They found her in the park, I mean it was bad, but it wasn’t random. They were people who
knew each other…To me, the Fairmount community has always been even biased to their immediate community. I say that because I was born and raised here in the 70’s and 80’s…Fairmount is a good example [of favoritism]. You saw the outrage when that happened in Fairmount. I mean everyone was like, “oh my God the world’s coming to an end! We had someone die in our park!” And everyone [in the Northeast Community] was looking like “what?” It shows you how the favoritism works.
— Marvin

Further, informants mentioned neither the woman who was murdered in Fairmount Park nor her attacker was from the Fairmount Neighborhood, but rather from the area west of the university. Several people mentioned that the woman and her attacker knew each other and the murder was not as random as media portrayed it to be. They also reiterated the attacker did not target the woman in Fairmount Park, but took her to his home, and she then ran to Fairmount Park to escape, where he pursued her. This is of note because one of the reasons WSU launched the Enough is Enough! campaign was as a response to the murder, and a call to help the community. The leader of the WSU Shocker Neighborhood Coalition states, “If you walk into my office you’ll see her obituary on my wall. She’s a landmark in a call to action for this neighborhood” (July 22, 2015). Sadly, the WSU Shocker Neighborhood Coalition is excluding the victim’s community currently from the KHF grant.

In addition to the feeling that the black community as a whole was being blocked out of the new grant’s and initiatives, a couple of people conveyed relief the murder was not directed towards a student. Several informants felt this was the point of the campaign: to prevent something like this from happening to a student, rather than assisting with safety for the community as a whole. One long-time resident of the Fairmount Neighborhood talked about residents’ feelings of safety in the Fairmount Neighborhood and this sentiment about student safety.
Always focused on safety, safety, safety, afraid, afraid, afraid. I love my neighborhood… I know the people in my neighborhood. It is because of things that have happened years ago—and after that lady was killed in our park… she didn’t even live in our neighborhood. Thank goodness that was not a university student, that would really hurt the university terribly. The parents wouldn’t want to send their kids to school there.
— Margaret

Following outsiders’ understandings of safety problems as exemplified with current university initiatives, were understandings of safety from informants from the Northeast Black Community of Wichita. Informants’ perceptions of safety issues were different from those I heard during meetings held by WSU officials.

Perception & Stigma

Several residents felt outside institutions, like WSU and media outlets, play up violent incidents that happen in their community to villainize the black community, and to indicate they are threatening to outsiders and university students. When residents spoke to me about safety concerns, their focus was more on the perception of safety from outsiders, rather than their own personal fears about safety in their neighborhood. Stigma associated with the Central Northeast seemed more impactful to residents than the actual prevalence of crime in the area. Several informants urged me to look at crime maps to see their neighborhood was not as high in crime as outsiders make it out to be. They felt this perception was due to the high number of African Americans living in the area, rather than crime rates alone. The crime map shows the Central
Northeast is not the most heavily impacted area by crime in Wichita (see Figure 13).

![Crime Rates in Greater Wichita and Study Area, 2010](image)

**Figure 13. Crime Rates Wichita, KS**

This phenomenon became clearer when I interviewed informants. Residents often stated they felt safe because they know their neighbors and felt comfortable in their community. They were concerned outsiders were afraid to come in to their community. One informant, Lewis, said, “The people in the neighborhood are comfortable with one another, we aren’t afraid. It’s more people on the outside do not feel safe enough coming over to this side.” This is a straightforward example of other sentiments expressed about safety by residents. Another informant talked about this external stigmatization of the neighborhoods near the university, explaining:

It doesn’t matter where you live; you have all types of people in every neighborhood, so it doesn’t really matter where you live. Of course, the percentage [of crime] may be
higher in some places. But just because this person over here commits a crime on the computer and this person, a different crime, it’s still a crime. People who live here don’t feel unsafe and people have the nerve to call it the ghetto! And I’m like, this is not the ghetto! And they say, “yes it is!,” and I say, well then why don’t I feel like I’m in the ghetto? I’m not in the ghetto! What is that? — Angela

**Surveys: "How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?"**

![Graph showing survey results for safety in neighborhoods.](image)

Figure 14. “How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?”

Philip Bourgois writes about (1995) “racist common sense” and the perception of danger in neighborhoods. He describes the idea that persuades whites, and all middle-class members, that poor black neighborhoods are dangerous and news reports creating a “culture of terror” around the campus, which exaggerates the reality of the threat in the area (Bourgois 1995: 32). A student and resident in my fieldsite referred to this using an example from her own life:

My other roommate who has been there for a long time… She said people always tell her, like, “why do you live there, it’s very scary, it’s very dangerous”… that’s one of the unattractive ideas that white people have is they don’t want to live there because it’s dangerous. It’s like, no you don’t want to live there because there’s black people there. Like, let’s be honest here. — Sophia
Several informants also mentioned they were surprised the new assessment from the grant did not address drug problems, as they saw this issue as one of the biggest in their community. Though drug addiction, as a behavioral outcome of other factors and stressors on community health, was a big concern on surveys and in a couple of interviews, the problem with drug houses was more prevalent. Community members perceived known drug houses as a threat because of their presence and association with possible violence in their neighborhood. This threat coupled with the concern of vacant houses in the neighborhood. Informants also mentioned that people in the community were “afraid” to report these houses for fear of backlash from drug dealers. One informant actually called and begged me to report to the police a house he knew was a drug house in the Fairmount Neighborhood. He was afraid to give his name to the police for fear of repercussion. That same informant told me it was not only residents buying drugs in these houses at Fairmount Park but he frequently saw students, as well. One resident of the Fairmount Neighborhood discussed some of the failed attempts she has seen over time to curb drug use in the neighborhood.

Fairmount park, the south side of Fairmount park, dealers use to sit there and exchange drugs. In order to stop it they put those diverters in so they couldn’t cruise the park. Drug dealers, or anyone driving around, and if you couldn’t catch them doing it, you couldn’t do a thing about it. So we would have policemen around all the time. … It was drugs that caused people to be scared. And we have had drug houses in our neighborhood. One was right east of our church. …The students too. I guess they have the university students around here too. I don’t know I wouldn’t know. But why would they hang around the neighborhood if… I don’t know, but I know the students don’t have money but they may have friends. –Margaret
Another important point made by several informants was that random acts of violence are not the most prevalent crimes, as outsiders may perceive. Burglaries of cars, sheds, and sometimes homes were much more frequent than violent crimes. This matched up with police updates given during the neighborhood meetings I attended. Most of the shootings that happened near the university were isolated incidents known to be between people who knew each other and were in a conflict. This understanding of a skewed perception from outsiders was stated by one informant, Marvin, below:

Most of the problems that we see are perception. I mean I feel safe here I can walk through this neighborhood. I’m not fearful for my life. I mean I’m smart, you need to be aware of your surroundings, but I’m not you know more concerned about someone’s going to do something to me walking out here. Granted, I’m not going to be out here at two in the morning walking in the streets out here. Overall, I’m not afraid. The perception that you get on TV— for instance we’ve had three shootings, then you had two more Sunday... Man, if you live in Vickridge, in east Wichita, and you’re looking at that you go “oh man it’s crazy over there! It’s a warzone over there!” It’s not a warzone, these are people who knew each other. These are not random. This is a personal argument—I’ve seen too many of them. —Marvin
One unexpected outcome of survey data was the high concern with domestic violence in this community. “Domestic Violence” was the most selected option in the category of health issues on the survey, with 50 percent of respondents recognizing it as one of the most problematic health issues in the neighborhood. Nobody in my interviews or during participant observation brought up this concern, even though it was highly indicated in my surveys. This specific survey outcome was of interest to me because the two recent violent murders of women in the Northeast Black Community were known to be by men whom they knew, one of which was a boyfriend.

**Lighting & Community Policing**

While the perception of safety was not the same between outsiders and the residents of the Central Northeast, both sides reiterated a need for lighting in their neighborhoods. Though most residents stated they felt safe, they indicated they would have a greater feeling of security
with increased lighting in their neighborhood, as it may stop burglaries and other crimes from happening. One informant stated, “There’s one thing I’ve been noticing for years; if the community had more lights, you know, then that would stop a lot of crime that goes on in the neighborhood.”

![Figure 17. Coding & Survey Frequency on “Lighting”](image)

A longtime resident of the Fairmount Neighborhood talked about the continued need for lighting in her neighborhood, saying:

> They’ve tried putting lights on the park, trying to flush out whoever or whatever it is that may be causing trouble. And they have had airplanes showing lights down. The trees are so grown that we are going to have to put lights down lower for pedestrians and have those up above too.—Margaret

When mentioning this common discussion about lighting that I heard during FNA meetings to an informant and former community police officer in the Central Northeast, he told me that other institutions had already identified this need, but never addressed it. He stated:

> There’s always a need to provide lighting and improvements like that. We’ve done surveys before. We’ve gone door-to-door and found out these same things years ago-10 years ago. There was always a concern about lighting, housing, weeds, trees, trash, all of
these things. And one of the key factors was police presence, they wanted more community policing. - Dewayne

Figure 18. Coding & Survey Frequency on “Community Policing”

Along the lines of informant’s perceived need for more lighting to provide better feelings of security in their environment, there was a similar reasoning for community policing. Rather than just having police surveillance around their neighborhood, they saw community policing as a potential solution for enhancing a sense of security and, most importantly, trust. During university initiative and Neighborhood Association meetings, policing frequently was brought up, especially after the murder of Ms. Davis in Fairmount Park. The main difference, however, was the stated type of policing that each group wanted. Those in the university coalition and the FNA pushed for generally more police presence and surveillance in the Fairmount Neighborhood area near WSU, especially in areas students live and walk. However, when most informants from the black community talked about policing, they emphasized a great need for community policing. When discussing police presence with an informant, he clarified this for me.
When I say law enforcement, I mean the City has to do a better job with their community policing efforts. They haven’t done very well with it lately. And I think WSU could certainly do a better job with their law enforcement efforts because they know that so many of their students park off campus and walk that block or two in Fairmount. They have to do a better job getting off campus and becoming more engaged.—Dewayne

This difference in the type of policing lies in the different perceived needs of these social groups. When the topic of policing came up in my interviews with black informants and informants of color, it often was coupled with references to fears of police harassment and even violence. One informant declared these fears of police violence in her community.

The police violence. Something to stop so much of the violence through the police towards the people in the community…Sometimes the police don’t take time to hear people out. The first thing they do… I mean sometimes it takes them too long to get there and it’s a serious matter. And they don’t care too much about a community. Then sometime I believe there’s always a prejudice person among the cops.—Rose

They strongly emphasized community policing as a way to combat these embedded problems. The university and student community has likely not had to face negative experiences or interactions with police officers, which explains why their focus is on the general surveillance of the area. Members of the black community in the Central Northeast, however, have experienced the same police violence and mistrust many black communities face in the United States, which is why they need police officers who care about the community and attempt to communicate with them. A pastor of a church in the area talks about this real concern in the community and what he does to help youth with the issue:

It’s like, respect goes both ways from the police officer and the person’s end. It’s a shame I even have to talk to my kids and educate them in a sermon about this here. “I’m a former police officer, this is what you do when you get stopped, here’s your rights.” Constantly educating myself, and trying to educate them. I mean, even if you do it right and know your rights you could get in trouble.—Marvin
Three informants also mentioned they would like the police officers to be specifically from their community so they truly understood and shared similar experiences while working to prevent people from being incarcerated, rather than just making arrests. They indicated a huge need for building communication and trust with the police force and felt this could be achieved through community policing. This was articulated by an informant, Marvin:

> I was a police officer for five years— that’s when I got really big on community policing. I was one of the first ones. I rode bicycles and walked neighborhoods, like I would drive my car to one end and park it and walk the block. That’s another thing I said about community policing, you got to know the people you’re policing. You’re not just there to put them in jail. I mean, most of the officers, I mean there were officers that would be like, “Oh man, I can’t wait to get up North where all the drugs are!” They were in it for the wrong reasons. They wanted to arrest. Like, let’s put people in jail, let’s keep them oppressed rather than how can you help that kid not get arrested? What happened was officers that lived in Augusta and Andover and Derby—they wanted to come and work here. – Marvin

I observed one example of this disconnect in understandings of police presence during a stakeholder’s meeting for the grant on the WSU campus. Police mistrust was discussed and a young, white student from outside of the community voiced an opinion on how to rebuild trust. His solution was for youth in the neighborhood to be encouraged to be trusting of police officers from a young age. He described a picture he saw on social media of a young, black child who was hugging a police officer. The other officials in attendance agreed happily and referred to an instance at one of the community events when the children from a family who had just moved in to the Fairmount Neighborhood went right up to the visiting firefighters due to their excitement to see them. They exclaimed how great it was to see, and how we should push for this type of interaction between law enforcement and young children in the community.

These were not black youth, but middle-class white children. One of the three black gentlemen in attendance at this meeting, who is a resident and leader in the community,
responded by stating, “For African Americans in this neighborhood, police are the cruelest, most harassing people to this community.” He spoke with me after the meeting and voiced his exacerbation with the skewed perceptions those from outside of the black community have during meetings like this. He pointed out how disconnected those in the stakeholder’s meeting were from real issues, like that of police violence, that the black community is extremely familiar with.

**Infrastructure**

Another main problem I learned about from informants, surveys, and during participant observation opportunities, were problems with the environment and infrastructure of the neighborhoods in the Central Northeast. Almost everyone I spoke with brought up problems with cleanliness, brush and excess trash and debris in public areas, the condition of streets and sidewalks, deteriorating recreational spaces, a lack of nutritional environment, vacant homes and absentee proprietors, and other “code violations” from residents. This is not surprising if one has reviewed the many assessments that have been done in the Central Northeast neighborhoods, discussed at the beginning of this thesis.

Issues with deterioration of infrastructure are likely tied to a long history of white flight in the Central Northeast area of Wichita. Though the neighborhoods west of Hillside (the segregation line) have been facing these problems for many years, the main part of my fieldsite just east of Hillside and south of WSU, has only begun to see these issues in the last few decades, when white flight really began to take hold of previously, strictly all-white neighborhoods.
Figure 19. Coding & Survey Frequency on “Infrastructure”

One of the most widely discussed problems with the infrastructure and physical environment of these neighborhoods was the condition of the streets and sidewalks. Several informants mentioned that the City rarely came in to their neighborhood to fix problem areas on the streets, and if they had, they merely patched it, rather than fixed the real problem. For example, one informant said:

Let me tell you something else I see: I see that when they fix the streets over here it just looks a raggedy mess, have you noticed? It’s a horrible mess. They patch it yes! And then I’m going to tell you they do such a sloppy job that I don’t know if it’s summer or winter it ends up being just a big hump in the street and then someone has to call because they won’t be coming over here but I don’t see the streets looking like that in other places. When they patch the street, it looks like a quilt. It’s a mess. — Angela

Some informants aligned the lack of attention to their community from city institutions, as a metaphor for other issues that were largely ignored in the black community. Four informants used the metaphor of “patching” and using a “Band-Aid” during interviews. One describes the
environment of the neighborhoods in my fieldsite, and the frustration he felt with this frequent disparity in the Northeast Black Community:

Of course, the roads are just terrible and every time you see them fix the road you see a patch. You see, everywhere else you see they actually fix the roads— why are we just patching these areas? It falls right in line with everything else, you know what I mean? We are just going to patch this thing up and get to the next thing. So that’s frustrating and to be able to see it being done and you’ll drive down the streets and there are certain sections they are just patching and it’s just sad. —Sean

Along with a lack of care in this area for the structure of roads and sidewalks, there was a concern for the prevalence of trash, debris, branches, and other brush in the public spaces, as well as vacant homes and private residences. Many people in the neighborhood association and district boards referred to these common problems as “code violations.”

Starting out with City Code- if the City of Wichita was doing what it’s supposed to do in our neighborhood, we wouldn’t have so many abandoned cars. Abandoned cars and residences, untagged vehicles sitting on the street, we wouldn’t have vacant houses with the grass knee high, we wouldn’t have unkempt yards and dead trees and tall grass, we wouldn’t have parking on the lawns. Code violations with neighborhoods out here, in Fairmount I mean you can park anything...The City needs to take responsibility in the neighborhood for those things that are code violations and enforce them.—Leon

There was a back and forth in my interviews, as well as during meetings, of where to place the “blame” for these issues with infrastructure and cleanliness. Some argued it was the fault of residents or absentee proprietors, who are responsible for maintaining their properties and keeping them up to code. Others argued many people cannot afford the upkeep of home ownership; especially added expenses like having large trash items hauled away, exterior home maintenance, or tree and brush removal. There also was the issue of the large number of elderly residents in the area who are not physically able to maintain their homes came. Lastly, several people in meetings and during interviews felt the City did not maintain this part of town because
they simply do not care about it due to its status as low-income and predominantly African American.

We all have a perception about things but the reality is, we are all people. We are all humans and we all want better, we all seek better. We all want better jobs. We all want manicured lawns. And that is another thing they need to do—they need to trim these trees and limbs over here in these neighborhoods. I mean what they do is they do the minimum, but why don’t they care to make it look nice? They don’t do it because they don’t think we care. It may not be that we don’t care. There may be some people who don’t care, but we do care. We care! —Angela

Another popular subject was the condition of the homes, and the prevalence of blight in the Central Northeast area. Residents pointed a finger at vacant and poorly maintained homes as a factor contributing to the problems in the environment; one informant contributes this to the number of rental properties in the area:

I think it depends, some people keep their house nice but their neighbors may look bad but they may be too scared to talk to their neighbor and ask them to cut their grass. I think it depends on whether the person actually owns the house of if they rent. I think, I don’t know I haven’t ever done a survey so I don’t know what the percentage is owner and which are rentals. But you can kind of tell which are rentals or owned, because when you own the home you’re more likely to take care of it than if you are renting because you are just calling the landlord telling them what’s wrong. —Lewis

Residents also communicated a concern of the high number of vacant homes. Vacant homes were seen as not only an added eyesore, but also a safety issue due to the concern of squatters or people entering the homes and performing illegal activities. One long-time resident of the Fairmount neighborhood states, “So there’s a lot of renters- the owners have sold or moved on or died. I don’t like that because, like, the houses west and east of me no one’s lived there for years.” Another informant refers to this problem and suggests it is an issue with economic opportunity for residents in the Central Northeast area:
That’s why I like the whole idea of trying to get affordable housing so you can actually become a home owner, not just a renter. That’s how you become a healthy community because if I own my property, I’ll cut my grass and take care of my house. Most people who rent are very transitory they’re just there and if they miss rent they have to move.
— Marvin

Along the lines of the deterioration of the infrastructure comes the deterioration and neglect of recreational spaces in the neighborhood. When the subject of recreational spaces came up, there were different areas of focus. Those who were in the Fairmount Neighborhood Association and the university initiative meetings focused attention specifically on Fairmount Park. The park is just two blocks from WSU, and is within the Fairmount Neighborhood boundaries. During the Fairmount Neighborhood Association meetings as well as the KHF grant meetings, the topic of improvements to Fairmount Park was widely discussed. I noticed there was a large focus by those in these meetings on making students feel welcome in the park, rather than the residents in the Central Northeast area, especially if they did not live within the official Fairmount boundaries. A concern was even voiced by someone during a neighborhood association meeting those from the outside would come in and “ruin” the park, stating he was sure people from outside of Fairmount were the ones who threw trash on the ground and messed up the park. Improvement of infrastructure, like remodeling the tennis courts and adding a cricket field for international students and even a suggestion from an FNA board member to put wireless internet in the Fairmount Park, dominated discussions during neighborhood association and grant meetings.

Separate from the Fairmount Park, many informants focused on problems with having clean and well-maintained areas in the Central Northeast for young people to go and engage themselves physically and mentally, especially during the summer months when there was often nothing to do. There was a consensus that spaces for youth to play sports, especially basketball
courts and swimming pools, were very poorly maintained and have been progressively
deteriorating in recent years. One informant spoke about this deterioration in an interview:

   A lot of our parks are just terrible the basketball hoops are run down. I was looking at the
   basketball courts at Robinson and I was thinking, when I was little I use to play and
dream of being in the NBA, and you can’t even see those dreams anymore. The goals are
   bent. I have seen a decline and I mean especially the pavement out there… there’s no
   nets. I mean to a kid shooting a basketball without a net… I mean, it’s terrible. You want
to hear the swoosh.—Sean

   Informants indicated McAdams Park as a strong resource in the black community for
many years. McAdams Park formally was the only segregated park in Wichita, located West of
Hillside in the historic McAdams neighborhood. This park sits just east of a heavily industrial
area, with a major highway, I-35, now cutting through the neighborhood to the west side of the
park. This park has been a gathering space for the black community for many years, but has
slowly deteriorated in the last few decades.

   Other than these two parks, informants told me other community recreational and
educational buildings such as Lynette Woodard, were not used often because of their
deteriorating condition as well. They frequently said kids do not have things to do during the
summer, other than sit inside and play video games or watch TV, or find trouble to get into out
of boredom. Though informants talked about parks needing to be improved, only 25 percent of
those surveyed said it was “not easy” to access safe and maintained areas for recreation in their
neighborhood (see Figure 20). This finding is not clear, but could point to a couple of things:
first, most of the people who took my surveys lived in or near the Fairmount Neighborhood,
which has a large park that, though needs improvement, is not in terrible condition.
Those whom I interviewed, however, live in a broader scope of the fieldsite, further from Fairmount Park. Secondly, though there are parks that have options for recreation, informants declared they wanted more options for more engaging recreational and educational programs for youth. An informant, Dewayne, referred to this when talking about previous assessments in the Central Northeast, saying, “They wanted jobs and programs for the kids over the summer. That has gone away over the last 10 years, and without those key elements you will be in the same predicament as you’ve always been.” Another informant explains this deterioration of McAdams Park and the great need for healthy outlets for kids in the Northeast Black Community:

There’s no reason that McAdams can’t be as good as it was once. I mean there use to be a building— maybe it was a community center. It’s not even fun over there anymore. You drive by and it’s just not the same. People use to go there all the time and the community was there, and football, basketball, baseball was there. But now there’s not hope and that’s why you don’t see a lot of kids make it out of here. Now kids are just playing video games and on the internet… I mean, it’s just only getting worse for the kids in that community, too. … There’s parents who want to put their kids in sports, but they aren’t affordable. The YMCA is affordable but it’s far from here. If they can’t do that… Everything is a decision. They lay out five things, all which are very important, but they are only able to pick one. I mean, if it’s lights on, food on the table, my kid in soccer, um, my kid’s dental needs, they’re probably going to pick food on the table. And that just breaks a kid’s heart, I mean telling a kid they can’t play a sport they watch their role models play on TV, and he can’t even go play basketball?? I don’t think gangs are as prominent as they use to be now, but it’s just more that [kids] don’t finish school… Some parent’s will allow [kids to stay home] because they don’t want to see their child do bad things. In any community there has to be some type of hope for kids. I am telling you now, there’s absolutely no way, if I lived here, to get out here and see hope. There’s a lot of powerful people here in Wichita. I don’t know how we can reach out to them and say, “hey this is the need!” But to be honest with you, I don’t know. Go outside and look at the houses, look at the cars in the yard, look at the streets, the street signs, the tagging, I mean that’s what they’re use to.—Sean
Figure 20. How easy is it to use safe and maintained areas for recreation?

One informant mentioned a perception that though there are places that kids could go for recreation, they do not have the same opportunities as other places in “better” parts of town. She mentioned this in reference to the public library in the area, saying it does not have programs other libraries in Wichita have for kids:

You only have the Maya Angelou Library, or the one on Edgemoor and Central, east of here. So, I go into those only two in the area close by that the kids can go to. And I was thinking, okay so what do you offer here? Because my grandchildren came to stay here in the summer and there is nothing that the Maya Angelou offered that other libraries did; not at this one we can walk to. They offer things at the surrounding, more upper class neighborhood libraries, but they don’t offer things in the Maya Angelou!—Angela
Informants mentioned many programs that once existed for youth and young adults either do not exist anymore, or were suffering due to funding. A topic that came up during two District One meetings was programs helping youth were only accepting people that were on Social Security or declared Section Eight. People voiced this excluded an entire section of youth in the black community who may be from households with working parents who were trying to stay off government assistance and out of poverty, but wanted their kids to have opportunities to stay out of trouble and learn through programs. Informants mentioned though sports programs through the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club exist, it is hard to find transportation to these places and paying for these programs is not in the budget for most households. One informant said many households have to make a regular decision to keep their lights on, or buy milk for their child, so paying for an educational or recreational program was at the bottom of their list. One informant talks about the need for youth programs:

I believe if you put more things in a community, you have more things for people to do. Not just to sit and have idle time to think of something wrong they can do, when they can have something to do. We need more stuff in a community that would benefit a person who doesn’t have anything to do. You know how they have The Boys and Girls Club? They should have recreation for adult teenagers. Something like that where they can go and play basketball, pool, ping-pong, and all that kind of stuff. Give them something to do that would educate the mind instead of just out here walking up and down the street.
—Rose

The subject of the closure of neighborhood pools was also common, and talked about by four informants during interviews and in casual conversations with residents during participant observation. According to informants, the McAdams pool has been under threat of closing by the city for many years, but the black community has fought to keep it open. The condition of the park is poor and rapidly declining, especially because of cuts to public funding in recent years, yet remains open. Over the years, several public pools have closed including Riverside and
Fairmount Pools, and most recently, Edgemoor Pool. One informant suggests re-opening a pool and adding nicer amenities to her neighborhood, suggesting officials use instances of one person doing something wrong in the neighborhood to neglect recreational areas:

So, what can be done for the community around WSU is find some activities that we can all be a part of. Not just African American, not just Hispanic, where we can all be a part of. Build a community pool, build a community center, put up nice basketball courts so these young men who love to play sports can go just do basketball. Allow these other football teams to give them somewhere to practice so they don’t have to drive clear out to Cessna Park. I mean, granted you are going to have problems because you're always going to have that one person, that one person who doesn’t care about stuff come and destroy it. I mean why should we let one monkey spoil the whole show? —Carla

Two informants pointed to an issue of racism as a perceived reason from the black community that these pools shut down. They felt the white community feared there were too many black kids at these pools located in predominantly white areas of Wichita, on the edge of minority areas.

As part of these findings about needs surrounding the physical environment, the data also show issues with environmental pollutants. Other than the more overt and visible manifestations of environmental problems in the Central Northeast area, there were a four specific mentions of concerns with environmental pollutants in the Central Northeast. One informant, when asked what he thought a fundamental need was of the neighborhood was, expressed his concern with lead in and around homes in the area, and in public spaces. He was very animate about someone doing lead testing with the KHF grant money received by the university. He associated high levels of lead and other pollutants to some of the behavioral and health problems seen in children in the Central Northeast area. He talks about his perception of the problem with lead in homes in the black community:

The City Commission cannot and will not address a lead program in the City of Wichita because guess who the people are who live in these houses that are contaminated with
Another informant told me people in her community were concerned about the quality of water, especially after the highly publicized Flint, Michigan water crisis. They see their community as an area similarly embedded in injustice and segregation and feared they could be next in the crisis of unclean water in their area. She said the word “fear” did not quite describe it as of now, but more “caution.” She mentioned that though people in her neighborhood were somewhat concerned about the quality of their water, they often could not afford to buy bottled water on the budget that they had for groceries.

One informant told me because of the condition of the neighborhood and the streets, there were sometimes puddles of oil and other chemicals sitting on the streets and near sidewalks. He described one area where he saw kids playing on the sidewalk next to a large puddle of oil. He seemed very upset about this and mentioned this was just one of the instances something like this happened. Another informant told me that one of the specific health issues she saw in people in the black community was “lung issues.” She described high occurrences of asthma and bronchitis and said she was not sure why, but she suspected it had something to do with the air quality or excess brush in the area.

Nutritional Environment

Another echoed problem with the infrastructure of my fieldsite was the lack of availability of fresh, affordable groceries to the community. Eleven informants said lack of adequate places to get fresh foods and a need for more grocery stores in the neighborhood were important for community health. I performed data collection in this area even before the recent closures of the
Neighborhood Wal-Mart and the Quick Trip in February of 2016, which were two of the only three shops with fresh produce in the Central Northeast area. The other stores selling food products are Dollar General, tiny convenience stores, and Liquor stores. These stores do not carry fresh food, but instead have calorie dense, junk foods, canned foods, bottled drinks, and liquor. There are also two fast food restaurants, McDonalds and Popeye’s Chicken, but no sit-down restaurants. The only grocery store with fresh produce in this area now is the Save-A-Lot, which, according to one informant, runs out of fresh produce quickly because it is such a small store serving such a large area.

Figure 21 shows survey and interview data on how easy informants thought it was to get healthy food in their neighborhood. These data may look much different now, because my research tool place before the closure of the Neighborhood Wal-Mart and Quick Trip. It also shows why it is important to collect qualitative data to explain survey results. Although informants recognized there were places to buy food, several indicated they felt the produce was not good, prices were not low enough, or that they did not prefer the store near them because they thought it was “dirty.” These micro-level understandings of preference need to be understood when studying nutritional environments, as shown by other researchers on food inequality (Hilmers, et. al. 2012; Kumar, et. al. 2011; Lewis et. al. 2005; Wetter & McNeill 2014).
A problem of walkability and proximity to food is also a documented issue (see Figure 22). An informant, Loretta, discusses this problem with a lack of food in the community below:

They took the grocery stores out of our area you know. I mean they claimed that they gave us something with Wal-Mart but the stuff in there is higher than it should be. They took those two Dillon’s away…I mean they, the City, they act like their doing a favor for this area when they put a Wal-Mart, Neighborhood… Just like when they put the Save-A-Lot up on 13th, they say we are going to put a grocery store in there, but, I mean, half the food isn’t fresh. It’s not like it should be, so they’re not really giving this area quality food. It’s like they’re making people want to move out of the community, they’re taking stuff away from us and we have to go to 29th and Woodlawn to get to a store. You know, they’re taking things away. There’s no gas station anywhere close other than Quick Trip. —Loretta

Two informants also recognized that, though there are almost no options for fresh foods in their community, there were several nice, affordable, and natural food markets in the higher socioeconomic areas east and west of their neighborhood. There are six grocery stores, five of
them “natural foods” grocers, within about one square mile east of the Central Northeast. One informant states this fact below:

There are a bunch of grocery stores east, and like, do you see the natural foods stores? They are right next to each other…Grocery stores open in nice areas and they shut the ones down over here. Are you from Wichita? This is how it is. [White] people move out as people move out of this area and others move in. It’s the same with the businesses, they move further east or further west, wherever is building up. So they move out as well. —Angela

Figure 22. Food Deserts based on USDA definition, 2010

**Inequality and Racial Tension**

One of the most prevalent issues voiced by informants from Northeast Black Community was the City, WSU, Historic Fairmount, and other hegemonic institutions in Wichita, have
systemically created boundaries between predominantly white areas, and the black community in the Central Northeast. Informants strongly felt this exclusion was based in structural racism enacted by hegemonic institutions in Wichita. Though segregation and racist policy can no longer be instituted outwardly, research shows structural racism creates more subtle and covert forms of exclusion from healthy environments (Powell 2007; Williams 2001). Black informants identified areas they were intentionally excluded from through physical barriers and social blockades, between the black community and hegemonic institutions in Wichita.

Figure 23. Coding and Survey Frequency on “Boundaries”

The Historic Fairmount Community

When beginning this research, I discovered the exclusivity of the label of Historic Fairmount, and the tendency of the university and the Fairmount Neighborhood Association to associate it with a nostalgic image of what the Fairmount Neighborhood once was, rather than its current status. This frequently reiterated nostalgic tone, from WSU and the neighborhood association, that “Historic Fairmount” has a special, shared history with WSU, set the tone for
problems informants indicated related to its exclusive status within the broader Central Northeast. One official for the KHF grant, and member of the Fairmount Neighborhood Association, states this in an article from Wichita State News:

The early development of the Fairmount neighborhood parallels the founding of Fairmount College, which became Wichita State University. The neighborhood and WSU share the same DNA. We are mutually dependent, and I agree with President Bardo that enough is enough. Our residents look forward to working with WSU on these issues (December 4th, 2014; Wichita State News).

This disconnect from the broader community is reinforced with the Fairmount Neighborhood Association’s (FNA) current status as the face of Fairmount and main access point of the university to the broader surrounding communities. Though the Fairmount Neighborhood has become much more diverse in recent years, its neighborhood association appears more closely tied to Historic Fairmount, rather than the current demographic of the neighborhood. Today, Fairmount Neighborhood is about 47 percent African American, within its administrative boundaries, and around sixty percent if you include the small part of the Ken-Mar neighborhood that is within the same city block south of WSU. Only one African American member, who moved to Wichita ten years ago from California, serves on the board and was hired by the KHF grant as the “community liaison” between the neighborhood and the university. The rest of the board members are white, with one international student from Bangladesh.

WSU has been stressing its shared history with Historic Fairmount, in the media and meetings, and boasting it as a reason for its current alliance with this neighborhood. During a FNA meeting I attended, the leader of the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition even stated that WSU is ready to come and make “much needed changes” in this neighborhood because, “enough is enough.” Informants from the broader black community, however, have questioned this laser-like focus on the Fairmount Neighborhood, reiterating a view that WSU is coming in to this area
with an agenda. Informants have indicated the black community does not see the FNA as a representative for their community, and several did not even realize the association was still active. Speaking with members, I found this association is greatly struggling for members, as is the Historic Fairmount Church of Christ, which it is closely tied to. Both organizations within Historic Fairmount are having trouble staying afloat due to a struggle with funding because of a lack in membership. One informant told me he felt this was because the Historic Fairmount area was reluctant to “transition” as other organization’s in the area have, post white-flight. A long-time resident and member of the board explains this struggle:

   Yes, over the last 15 years there’s been a lot of change. Things started going downhill and you can’t get anyone interested in participating. Our [neighborhood association] dues are only five dollars a year now, and they don’t join. They don’t want anything to do with us, even if they’re rich. — Margaret

   This reluctance with transitioning showed up in the data through interviews and observations. Two informants explained the FNA lost several key members and became divided a few years ago. A few board members were pushing the organization to reach out to the broader community outside of the Historic Fairmount area, even to the southern part of the administrative boundaries of the Fairmount Neighborhood, but faced backlash from more established board members who did not want to see changes take place in the institution. The members who were pushing for less exclusivity in the institution left and have not returned to meetings.

   From observations at the FNA meetings, and driving through Fairmount, I saw that there were divisions within the neighborhood, rather than one homogenous residential community. First, there is a large student population, especially international students, who live mainly on the northern edge of the Fairmount boundaries, which is the southern edge of WSU, where several WSU buildings and fraternities also overlap. This area, and a few blocks south, is what I
identified as the formal region of Historic Fairmount (see Figure 3). Within this space is the historic Fairmount Church, which consists of a majority of older, white members, only four of which live in the neighborhood according to a church member with whom I spoke. There is also another church building, one informant told me WSU was considering buying, a community garden, and the Fairmount Park. The rest of the area within my boundaries, extending to the eastern and southernmost parts of Fairmount, is not included in my understanding as Historic Fairmount, but more representative of the transitional part of Fairmount, with the majority of residents African American.

During an interview, a long-time resident of Fairmount, agreed with the perception that there were several separate parts of Fairmount. She also did not identify the students as “residents,” but agreed that students are transients, rather than residents, not invested in the neighborhood beyond their short stay. She also confirmed my understanding the residents who lived on the south end of the neighborhood were not as closely identified with the community that she felt represented Historic Fairmount. Another informant who owns a small church just on the western edge of Fairmount told me that he has not received Fairmount Neighborhood Association newsletters or invitations since the old president was in charge several years ago, which indicates the communication of the association with the rest of the stakeholders in the area may be lacking. This idea was further confirmed when one of the neighborhood association meetings, an association member stated his frustration at the board, saying they should have the “courage and decency” to venture past the Fairmount Park and communicate with the rest of the neighborhood. He also said the Fairmount community garden was not shared, as it was in the “one square block” with the church and the rest of the Historic Fairmount area.
The focus on the student area of Historic Fairmount is important as well, due to the perception from informants that students are priority over residents of the broader Central Northeast area surrounding WSU. Though students would normally not be understood as permanent residents in a community, the university initiative and KHF grant have greatly stressed the importance of prioritizing this population during meetings. They have put forward the statistic that the students make up thirty-three percent of the population of the Fairmount Neighborhood’s administrative boundaries as one reason to shift much of their focus on students. Though this statistic may be technically true, one must consider this percentage within the broader communities surrounding WSU that the university has claimed they want to reach out to, becomes much smaller. This is just another facet of issues that informants pointed to with WSU using such a small and specific area as a focus point for current initiatives.

This observation of a lack of communication from the FNA with the broader community, and a focus on the Historic Fairmount community in current initiatives, is likely not intentional by the FNA because of the above stated problems the organization is having with staying afloat. However, the use of this organization by WSU as a sole access point to the broader communities around the university, and even within the Fairmount Neighborhood, is what poses a larger problem. A stakeholder in the neighborhood expressed his concern with the new initiatives from WSU focusing too pointedly at Historical Fairmount. Though invited to meetings for the KHF grant, he felt the process of “community inclusion” was not done in an academic or inclusive way by the initiative:

On what grounds can you say the Fairmount Neighborhood Association is the spokesperson of the community? [The man leading the meeting on campus] was very dismissive to me, too. It’s very interesting that those guys… I must admit the treatment of this is very non-academic to me. I am an academic and that showed me they don’t understand—what does the research show us? –Joseph
This same informant goes on to describe why using the Fairmount Neighborhood, especially Historic Fairmount, as an access point to the broader community is such a big point of contention to the black community, who make up the majority of the Central Northeast area:

The near Northeast area of Wichita has been where, quite honestly, the vast majority of Blacks have lived for years. I was born in 1954, it’s where all African Americans were gerrymandered into that area. Literally, you could not live any other place, and to me, to be sophisticated you just need someone to bring that to bear. To me, they should say, “hey let’s just take a look at the near Northeast area, of which Fairmount is a part, and let’s just look at that community and see how it has evolved.” So, you look at that, and based on that you can ask, “what are the implications of that research on Fairmount Neighborhood? Does it swallow it? Is Fairmount Neighborhood insular—it hasn’t been affected by the larger community questions? It really has been in a bubble? It is its own environment?” I think there’s a lot of nostalgia in these meetings it’s just horrible nostalgia.— Joseph

The fact that the FNA is the main access point the university is using to reach out to the surrounding communities is a huge disadvantage to the Fairmount Neighborhood as a whole and the broader Central Northeast communities. Using this access point furthers the top-down approach the university has been using to accomplish its goal of “reaching out to surrounding communities.”

Wichita State University & the Central Northeast Communities

Other barriers that informants talked about included that between the spaces of the WSU campus, and the surrounding Northeast Black Community. Though the neighborhoods surrounding WSU are facing many problems with maintaining a healthy infrastructure, the WSU campus is very well maintained and well-funded. Its environment is clean, with beautiful, lush landscaping, and constant upkeep of grounds. There is fresh, affordable food available to students and faculty at several locations, and a recreation center with high-tech equipment and an
indoor pool. Though this oasis of beauty and resources exists within the Central Northeast and uses taxpayers’ money as a state university, the community surrounding WSU suffers from a continually deteriorating environment. Aside from the blatant difference in the health of these two environments, informants expressed feelings that they are unwelcome on the campus even targeted by campus police if they venture over:

The community, the pedestrian and resident community feels like this campus doesn’t embrace them, partly because of the subliminal message. There are no crosswalks saying come over here. The few adults that have come over [to WSU] for whatever reason have been pulled over by the police saying, “what are you doing over here?” So they don’t feel comfortable. The students feel that the community is hostile towards them. — Miles

Several informants gave examples of how the university is creating a blockade between the Northeast Black Community and its campus, through boundary making. When speaking about the relationship between the black community and WSU, several informants referred to the western border of the university, which is Hillside, and the beautification the university did several years ago. After improvements to the Charles Koch arena on campus, the university bought up homes across from Hillside on the western border and tore them down, creating a median with trees and landscaping, a berm, and a winding road. Residents felt they were hiding the deteriorating neighborhood west of WSU to make students feel “safe” near an area that was seen as threatening to them.

Koch spent their money, so when Koch Arena gets filled up with ten thousand people… it’s mostly my White friends, my Black friends, the only reason why they’re in there, they’re selling popcorn. Alumni, they’re my White friends, they’re comfortable driving their car down 21st street on to Hillside and say, oh, it’s okay, it looks nice. It’s got berms and grass and trees. I don’t see too many things that will scare me and my kids and my grandkids that I’m taking them to this basketball game to see all these Black kids play. — Miles
An informant told me “beautification” was done because there was a shooting several blocks northwest of the university, where an out of control bullet accidentally hit a student who was driving to campus. They understood the fear of the university, but both indicated they felt continually pushed away because of the actions of a few “bad” people.

…one of the students was driving down 21st and someone three blocks over shot and he hit someone in a car on 21st and he killed the person driving. But they were a student on the way to WSU and that makes a difference. It’s understandable, but don’t just forget about the people who you are separating, doing the separation from, you know? They are still human they still have lives, and it’s like somebody over here matters more than we do over here. It’s not fair. The ignorance of some...it should not, we all should not suffer because of the ignorance of some. Every time you see something, about the Northeast area…Things can only get better they can’t really get worse...—Angela

Several residents used this example of the separation of the university from the surrounding community using this blockade to refer to the new improvements of Innovation Campus on the south side of WSU, bordering 17th street and the Fairmount Neighborhood. They said they knew the intentions to come into Fairmount were related to the similar intention of “beautifying” and creating a similar boundary along 17th street. Another informant reiterates the previous two sentiments about the “beautification” of Hillside, and relates it to the current plans for Innovation Campus:

But, when Wichita state did the beautification that they did, it really didn’t say to me, “you are welcome.” It’s like, “you keep that mess that’s going on, on that side of the street because we don’t need it over here.” So the incident in the park at Fairmount, that’s not… I mean it’s happened. It’s happened at other parks. It’s not just happened close to Wichita State, and then there’s other incidents that have happened that go unreported. So, I mean c’mon. We need to stop picking and choosing when we are going to get all, when we’re going to get all hyped up about, “well what should we do? Should we revitalize the area? Oh, how about let’s put a fort up? Let’s just fence it all in! Let’s buy all the houses in the neighborhood so then we won’t have problems, because I know that’s the plan.”
—Carla
Shocker Neighborhood Coalition members have adamantly denied these rumors of gentrification while progress and development grows along the southern edge of the university. Interestingly, Koch Industries is building the largest project facing the Fairmount Neighborhood largely through donations. Recently, several homes along 17th street in the Fairmount neighborhood that sit directly across this building, have been purchased by a company and boarded up with plans to raze them, just as the homes along Hillside to the west of WSU several years earlier. Though resident’s fear losing their property, these acts of boundary making were dismissed from the beginning, this is another example of how residents possess a social memory of past events makes them experts on reoccurring outcomes in their community. During one of the KHF grant meetings, one man from the neighborhood showed me a map of the plans for the new Innovation Campus. He insisted the university was not interested in including the surrounding community and pointed to the rows of trees on the map of the new campus that created a blockade between WSU and the surrounding neighborhoods. Another informant voices this concern during an interview:

With all of the new development that the college is doing, is that to run the people or get the people’s to move out the area so they can expand on down and make this a college city or make it like a little inner town by itself? (Is that how people feel?) Yes, I think it is… It’s cheaper to go that way [towards Fairmount] than to buy all these houses all outright. That’s what I think they’re trying to do. I think they are saying to us, on one hand, they’re trying to add more value but in reality, it’s making our property go down. Because the City just comes in and says, ‘well I think this is worth that, and I think this is worth that’, and they’re not really helping our community like they’re saying. And when they get through pushing this way, this is my voice okay, I think they’re going to do the same thing that you hear about people doing in other cities. They get in a high crime area, so the people move out, and once you move, they take the house. You know what I mean? I mean, I think they’re trying to promote crime so people won’t want to be here and they can lower the prices of the house so they can buy them. If it’s run down, I mean, if they get apartments here rather than home ownership then property is going to go down. So if that happens, people will have to move—it depends on their ethnic background— they either go further west [back across Hillside] if they’re black, or that way [east] If they’re white.—Lewis
Another resident who is a member of the Council of Elders spoke with me at a round table held by a social work professor on campus. I told him about my project and he said, though there are people in the neighborhoods south of WSU that are in need, there are many more in the neighborhoods west of Hillside. He voiced his concern that WSU was not reaching out to the broader black community, but only focusing on part of the Fairmount neighborhood. As a leader in the black community, he signed off on the grant with the understanding it would help his neighborhood, which is west of the university, only learning afterwards the grant would only focus on the Fairmount Neighborhood and will hopefully be a “pilot project,” in which improvements can later be addressed in surrounding communities. His one request from my research was to help the community express that the grant ignored a large group of people, while the Fairmount Neighborhood was being favored.

Another informant stated that if the university truly intends to reach out and help the broader community, rather than create a university neighborhood, they need to be on the ground, communicating with the community:

It’s about perception. That’s why it’s so good for you to reach out. I think the coalition has to be communicating with people in the neighborhood that [gentrification] is not going to happen. That needs to be said over and over. I don’t have—me, personally— we don’t have distrust. I mean, honestly, anything that’s going to improve the area, I’m with it.— Marvin

This reiterated perception of boundary-making and a lack of communication between the university institution and the broader black community will continue to create tensions if intentions are not made clear by WSU, and backed up with actions towards stated intentions. The
Northeast Black Community has learned that institutions have the power to create boundaries that block their community out of healthy spaces through historical memory.

**Northeast Black Community**

Informants spoke to me about other forms of institutionalized exclusion through infrastructure they have historically faced in the broader City of Wichita. The first concern was traffic diverters put in the Fairmount neighborhood by the city in the late 1970s per request of residents. Informant’s perception of the installation of these diverters was that the white community did not like the number of black youth that were gathering at the park because they felt threatened, and put these diverters in to deter black youth from coming. It worked, according to informants who were around at the time of installation.

I don’t know if you noticed but they have dividers so you can’t just come straight to Fairmount [Park] and they did this in the 70’s. The University did that because neighbors were complaining that blacks were driving around the park and constantly driving and buying drugs and buying sex and driving and playing basketball. Black people. So, they put these dividers in so you can’t drive around it…It worked. But that’s really just a “Band Aid.”—Miles

Another informant talks about these diverters when they were first installed when he was a kid:

I mean perception. I mean you’re a menace to society ... There wasn’t no gang members [in Fairmount Park]. I used to go to the park, play in the park, sit in the park, ate in the park, until… And then, we were all kids, our parents are not going to go shout. So we had no voice. ‘Why you taking our park away?’ Because you had grown adult people, white people, who had way more authority and say than young, black kids. You can’t go in the City Hall and say ‘you had better fix this we’re taxpayers.’ I mean…and we were a “menace” a “danger.” I mean they did the same thing at Riverside Park. They took the pool away. Riverside Park was another place where black kids congregate at the park and what’d they do, they changed that whole thing up [street dividers] so it made it harder for you to go to the park. I mean even here [with the dividers in Fairmount]. I mean, it’s institutional. —Marvin
These perceptions that the black community has historically been blocked-out of health-promoting spaces by the hegemonic community through boundary-making, furthers the feeling of exclusion this community harbors. Residents feel this exclusion beyond the physical environment, in the form of economic and educational exclusion.

Needs

The outcomes of my research on the systemic problems with neighborhood health in the Central Northeast area point to several fundamental origins within political, economic, and social structures. All informants declared a need to address these basic causes for some of the poor outcomes of health in their community. Most informants recognized that economics, education, and deeply embedded social issues, precluded deteriorating neighborhood health in Central Northeast Wichita.

A common theme outside the tangible or visible needs in my fieldsite was the lack of economic and educational opportunity in the Central Northeast. Most informants expressed a need for more opportunities to make money, excel in a meaningful job, and have a stable economic environment in their community in the form of new businesses and local banks that could provide reasonable lending to those in the community. A need for more educational opportunities was important as well. “Educational opportunity” encompassed tutoring programs for children in the community, job and skills training for young adults, and those seeking better job opportunities, more accessibility to WSU for those in the black community, and basic life-skill building.
Economic Opportunity

Socioeconomic status (SES) is recognized as an important variable of health outcomes by researchers in the health field. Informants said economic opportunity is directly related to the health of the community, and foundational to the infrastructure and environment of their neighborhood. In interviews and participant observation during the focus groups for the university initiative and KHF grant, many people talked about the need for more economic opportunities in the community as a way to improve community health.
Figure 25. Is your neighborhood a good place to get a job?

The need for economic opportunities was clarified during interviews, where it was more vaguely discussed in public forums. When informants talked about economic opportunity in the Northeast Black Community, they focused on three main things. The availability of jobs, followed by a need for skill-building and job training opportunities for young adults, and then a need for life-skill training, such as financial management and household-level skills, like caring for children for young mothers. There were also several mentions by informants of a struggle to pay utilities in their community, which was confirmed in a District One meeting by the councilwoman, who said keeping utilities on was one of the number one problems in the area.

Interviewees recognized the need for more economic opportunities as one of the basic ways to help other neighborhood health problems. Several people recognized the poor economic environment and high number of unemployed residents in the Central Northeast, especially
young men, contributed to deterioration of infrastructure, increase in crime in youth, and drug use and sales. One informant, Marvin, explained the foundational need of economic opportunity in his neighborhood:

I mean you talk about economics, there it is—jobs. Jobs by far I mean jobs create a place...okay when you have a job, you take care of yourself, you take care of your family, you take care of your community. Jobs, it’s right up there. That’s one, and then from that, the food part and housing and I mean that’s the whole piece to it. — Marvin

Most community members recognized the economic climate of the Central Northeast has been in decline for many years. They acknowledged a lack of businesses in the community, especially owned by people from their community. This disparity was frequently associated with a lack of opportunity for African Americans, specifically. Getting jobs, accessing reasonable loans, and starting their own businesses, was seen as a systemic problem in the black community today, rather than a personal problem. One informant, Caroline, even referred to the community before de-segregation, saying there used to be more black professionals who owned businesses in this community then than there are now. After de-segregation and white-flight, however, business owners and professionals left due to deterioration and lack of opportunity, which has progressively become worse over the years.

In addition to the absence of economic opportunities, one informant declared a concern about the inability to advance or work in a meaningful job, even when one was able to get a job. Caroline told me she has a Master’s degree and has been working at the same job for several years, without a raise or any upward movement. She told me one of her white co-workers told her the boss did not want to give her a promotion because he did not like how she dressed nor did her hair. She also said she has several friends who hold Master’s degrees who are currently unemployed. She felt it is even harder finding a job as a person of color in this city, even with the
right credentials. Though this is anecdotal, it is believable given the aversive racism many informants expressed exists in the city, and it shows how some may feel about economic opportunity in this community. This sentiment also exemplifies how institutional and cultural racism may be working together to prevent economic opportunities.

Community members identified a lack of lenders with stable interest rates in their neighborhood as a barrier to economic opportunity. Residents at community meetings and in interviews pointed out the large number of predatory loan and check-cashing businesses, like “Payday Loans” and “Speedy Cash,” that prey on desperate people in need. They said no local banks were open to giving out loans to people from their community. One informant told me this was because many banks considered those from the black community, “high-risk.” She felt the historical reality of restriction of lending to African Americans was still prevalent in the Central Northeast. An older informant who lives in Fairmount talked about the history of discrimination in lending. He said it was difficult for him to buy a home across Hillside in the Fairmount neighborhood in the early 1980s:

> You couldn’t get no loan across from Hillside in Fairmount, I knew the guy when I bought my house [in Fairmount] I just assumed his payments then ten years later I took over the loan. Intrust Bank…I did everything I could to qualify. A white lady who worked there I met one evening and she told me all the things that they were doing to keep me from getting that loan. This happened to me.—Leon

In addition to jobs and economic opportunities, informants identified a need for economic skill building, and life-skill building, especially among young adults in the black community. Several informants told me most youth from their community not have the skills or life-knowledge they need to function successfully in the real world. These needs for skills included job training, to learn how to get jobs and how to possess the more practical skills it takes to hold
a job and move up in a job. One informant told me many people do not know how to properly
budget their money and this is a problem when the finances are tight for many in this
community. She gave an example of people who own homes who need to be taught to save for
unexpected expenses, like if their furnace breaks and they need to replace it. One informant
describes this need for more job opportunities and skill building in the neighborhoods:

Give [young people] something to do that would educate the mind instead of just out here
walking up and down the street. There’s not enough jobs. Yes, jobs! Not enough jobs in
the community, especially on this side of town. when they do hire someone it’s, what, six
dollars an hour? They need more than that. You have lights, gas, water, and if you’re
walking you got to pay bus fare or cab. You know? Something needs to be done in areas
like this. You have poor people, young girls with all these babies and don’t know how to
budget here and there, and money goes all over because they don’t know how to manage
it. You need someone to help teach manage money for people.—Rose

Two informants, Caroline and Loretta, told me that new state tax changes removed
certain household refunds many households in the Central Northeast area depend on. Loretta
explains this in reference to her friend:

One of our members in the church, she got ready to file her taxes and there are new tax
forms that she had to write down. What she got as child support, what she got in SRS,
and everywhere on the Kansas side, and that determined her Homestead. I thought, this is
really ridiculous! Because Homestead was supposed to be there for people who didn’t
make enough, or had children, or the disabled. For them to get something back for having
a home in Kansas and the taxes they paid, or whatever. Well, making them write down
everything that you got, I mean it even said “did you get money from your family?” I
mean is this ridiculous or what? I said oh my god. I looked at it and she got fifteen dollars
back for Homestead, when normally you’d get 500 or 600 back in Homestead. The
federal was fine but the Kansas one is bad. I think this is affecting people’s health
because the more you have to worry about this, it’s not good for your health. If I’m
worried about how I’m going to pay my rent, my electric, gas and water. Are my kids
going to be able to get to school? Are they going to have clothes? Then of course my
blood pressure goes high and of course I eat the wrong stuff, because I can’t afford the
good stuff, you know? So you are going to stay home and you’re going to get fatter, and
you have all of this happening.—Loretta
One thing that I noticed when comparing views about the economic environment, between the university officials and developers at the stakeholders meeting, and the actual residents, was a difference in interpretation of what “economic opportunity” and development’ meant for the Central Northeast community. One example of this difference played out during my attendance at the community focus groups lead by the KHF grant and the follow-up meeting with “stakeholders” at WSU. In the first and largest focus group at the Fairmount Church, there were at least 100 Fairmount residents in attendance. As a volunteer, I wrote down what community members were calling out as potential improvements in the neighborhood. One thing that stood out was the stated need for increased economic opportunities and support of local entrepreneurs in the Central Northeast. Several people from the Northeast Black Community referenced areas along 13th street, on the south side of Fairmount Neighborhood, and west, near Hillside, as a place that was in need of business development assistance for local entrepreneurs.

When these ideas were brought into the stakeholder meeting several days later on the WSU campus, I saw them shaped into objectives that were more in-line with the pre-conceived agenda for development along 17th street (the northern edge of Fairmount Neighborhood), where Innovation Campus lies. Two of the stakeholders who attended this meeting were developers who have been buying up homes and property in the Fairmount neighborhood for several years prior to the grant, along with several university staff members, a few members of the FNA, a couple of graduate students, and a few residents, only three of whom were African American. The same man from California who was brought in by KHF lead this meeting, as he had the other focus group meetings for the grant, along with the head of the university initiative. I watched as they took the needs voiced by residents during the large focus group, and made them into an “actionable list.” When they got to “economic opportunities,” they began listing off ideas
for business development along 17th street bordering the university, while throwing out names of heads of businesses and development companies they were friends with who could come from outside the community and bring businesses in. I was profoundly amazed at this as it unfolded before my eyes, though I felt powerless as a student in a room full of older, white, stakeholders and university leaders, to say anything in disagreement with their ideas. One of the only black stakeholders in the meeting mentioned his feelings about the selection of “stakeholders” for the grant during an interview:

The stakeholders are all prefabbed. It’s like a game but it’s not really fairly played. That is what’s significant about this initiative. I think, looking at their list I bet there might be some formative difference on maybe the priority of addressing certain needs with economic availability and crime and liaisons with the police and safety—all of those things. But I bet that the lists, when they are finally done, will look very much alike. Even if you got both spectrum people in the same room and talking about the objective needs, value neutral, I bet the list won’t be that different. But the results will be dramatically different because it will have been forged by the people who actually said I was heard and I was able to disagree with them and I wasn’t kicked out of the room. The actual solution I’m a part of. That is where the sustainability comes in—that is literally what I said in the meeting I said any solution that you guys choose in this meeting that don’t involve the other side won’t be able to sustain it. They had no concern about that. —Joseph

While black community members stated a need for assistance in areas seen as more accessible to their community, the university was focused on the area closest to them and their students. Further, they did not bring in those seen as active stakeholders in the black community to participate in the outcomes of this list. This is the point where I realized how top-down and removed this process was from the actual communities surrounding WSU. Another informant declared this disconnect in relation to accessibility of economic opportunities for his community:

There’s no business up there. Not in the neighborhood directly… It would be nice if there was something there in the neighborhood along Hillside, but there just is not. Most citizens are not going to have the benefit or the luxury of accessing businesses on 17th that are part of the university’s initiative.—Dewayne
Another disconnect mentioned with the understanding of economic need by the grant leaders, was declared by another informant and stakeholder in the community, Terrance. He told me he was present for some of the later meetings for the grant and indicated a concern with how the university was using census data on the Fairmount Neighborhood to back up their reasoning for certain focuses of the grant. One example was a statement from grant officials that the lowest income was along the edge of the neighborhood, along 17th street and near the park. He was upset about this statement and felt this was not true because the most need he saw was towards the southern and western edges of that neighborhood. When I looked at the map of income by census block group, I saw how the grant initiative was interpreting the data on income.

The lowest socioeconomic status in this small area is in fact the census block group along 17th street that consists mostly of the university campus and a few blocks of the Fairmount neighborhood. This represents the area where mostly students live, as I explained earlier when I talked about how Fairmount is divided. Students have very low incomes because they are attending school and do not yet have a career. Most receive financial aid or scholarships to make ends meet. You can see in Figure 26 and Figure 28 (below) that this same census block with the lowest income in the Fairmount area also has the highest educational attainment, with 61 to 80 percent of residents in this block group possessing an associate’s degree or above. This shows that Terrance’s concern was valid, as it may seem that data is being skewed for the benefit of a preconceived agenda. On the other hand, one can see that the other lowest median income is west of WSU in the historic McAdams area, the historically segregated neighborhood, where not only is the median income very low, but educational attainment is one of the lowest as well. Census block data by median income is shown in the map below (Figure 26). The maps showing
educational attainment are in the next section (Figure 27 and Figure 28). This shows that it is important to look at data like this in a critical manner.

Figure 26. Socio-economic Status (SES) in Central Northeast Educational Opportunity

Another commonly expressed need was access to educational opportunities by people in the Northeast Black Community. Educational opportunities that were mentioned as needs included tutoring, especially in math and reading, strategic educational opportunities directly
related to getting a job rather than solely for education’s sake, and for more felt accessibility to WSU for the Northeast Black Community.

Disparity in educational attainment in the Central Northeast is spatially demonstrated on the maps (Figure 27 & Figure 28) below. In both of these maps, and the map of median income, the historically segregated neighborhood to the west has the lowest educational attainment as well as the lowest income, especially the census block group containing the McAdams neighborhood. This shows, spatially, how historical segregation impacts current health disparity.

![High school degree or below](image)

Figure 27. Educational Attainment: High School or below
Three informants specifically related poor educational outcomes in the disparity of the school system in the area (USD 259). A lack of funding in these schools due to the low SES in this area was understood by informants as a contributor to poor educational outcomes in children who were stuck in this system. Several informants mentioned a struggle in math and reading in the community and linked it to the need for tutoring in these areas to catch children up in these specific subjects. I found there are several tutoring programs available, but a lack of communication of the availability of these services throughout the community.

This lack of communication of available resources points to another “educational” need in this area, which is education on already available services that may help the community. Though there seemed to be many resources already available, many residents were not aware of
them. One informant who worked at a local clinic suggested a need for a place that community members can go to receive this particular type of education on social resources:

I mean, even parents with children like first time mother classes like we have here. To get access to baby wipes, diapers, those type of programs we try to put into place. I mean where do you go to get that education? There is no place in this type of community that is a resource center for people to go. If to just be able to walk into and say “I need help.”—Sean

Another informant, Caroline, focused on a need for “strategic educational opportunities” rather than just the broad statement of a need for “education”. She insisted this was different because strategic educational opportunities would lead directly to a means for living, rather than just receiving a diploma. She pointed out many people in her community do not have the resources to stop their lives and go to college full-time. Many of them worry about putting food on the table before things like college. Her idea of economic opportunity, then, was to gain tangible skills to create more opportunities and financial security, rather than getting a degree that may not help in securing a job and may create more debt.

When discussing the educational opportunity of attending WSU, many informants stated a barrier between the college and the black community. There often were mixed responses to the presence of WSU from community members, which one informant, Joseph, described as a “love/hate relationship” the Northeast Black Community has with the university. Several people I spoke to told me though they knew people who went to WSU, or they themselves went there, they did not view it as a particularly welcoming school for African Americans. Carla, an informant from the community voices this concern below:

There’s people. If they want more business s for teaching? I mean how about develop some programs that may draw in African Americans. I know there are a lot of smart African Americans out there… I mean give the community some reason that they really want to go to Wichita state because I really want to go. But after the treatment I got. It’s like they don’t really care whether you go to school or not. —Carla
An informant told me about her friend’s sons who both achieved 4.0 grade point averages and were very bright and talented. She said they went to WSU their first semester, but could not get scholarships, and they did not feel they were getting enough direction or assistance from administration. She said it was so bad that her friend took them out of WSU and sent them to a college in Atlanta, where they got full-ride scholarships. She, and the other woman that was present during the interview, told me many people in the Northeast Black Community send their children to several specific colleges outside of Wichita, one of which is the school in Atlanta. Those from the black community choose to send their children to these other colleges outside of Wichita because of how welcoming they are to black students and because of more opportunities for black students, in contrast to WSU.

One informant, Caroline, told me about her personal experience attending WSU. When she took classes there, she was often the only black person in the entire class, and rarely saw any black faculty. She mentioned it felt very isolating and uncomfortable, and if she was a younger student, she was in her thirties at the time, she would not want to be there. She also stated she thought WSU had been intentionally pushing African American students away for years. She cited the removal of the football program many years earlier, and the more recent removal of the ethnic studies program, as ways her community felt WSU was pushing them out. She and her friend stated that these were examples of why her community felt un-welcome.

Another informant, Leon, talked about this same mistrust between WSU using the context of the current KHF grant. He described the barrier of trust that is seen by him, as well as fellow black leaders in the community, whom he is referring to:
My friends know what people will do like they’re doing to WSU right now... We, as in the black community, the Northeast Black Community, and this whole thing has been put on the sleeves of the minority community under false pretenses of a grant... —Leon

Though some informants saw WSU as a positive presence in their community, many felt they were not fully welcome there. Students voiced this sentiment at a diversity forum the university president held on the WSU Campus in the fall of 2015 that I attended. Many students of color stood up during this forum and told the president that WSU was not particularly accepting of African Americans, due to the low number of faculty of color, and the lack of opportunities for African American students. One thing that I have observed along these lines, is the boasting of WSU as welcoming and promoting of diversity on campus, but only a specific type of diversity. This diversity is connected to the high number of international students, rather than to African American students. I feel that WSU has not acknowledged that welcoming international students is not equal to welcoming African American students from the community surrounding them, who have an entirely different history, background, and set of opportunities than some international students. This fact is linked to the stated sentiments of informants that WSU does not reach out to the youth in their community to attend the college.

ANALYSIS

Institutional & Cultural Racism

“We are the Invisible People—the people of the Northeast community. No one cares about us.” – Caroline

The deeply embedded history of place has a significant impact on these systemic problems with health in the Northeast Black Community of Wichita. When I began interviews, I
was surprised to find the subject of historical segregation and mistrust of institutions in Wichita came up as a topic in almost every interview. Informants often alluded to the exclusion of the black community from the political economic sector, as one of the main causes for the deteriorating state of the area. This sentiment is seen underlying comments in previous sections on problems and needs of the Northeast Black Community. Though concerns like issues with policing, infrastructure, environment, safety, and educational and economic opportunity, were overtly stated, the problem of racism in Wichita often was understood as a precursor to these issues.

The issue of racism as a cause for systemic problems was very prevalent in my data and a constant, if not always manifest, consideration of informants. Structural racism is embedded the history of the Wichita through housing policies, restructuring of school zones, redlining in the real estate sector, availability of programs geared towards African Americans at WSU, and other aversive acts of racism by the City. The overall history of tight segregation that manifests itself today in the Central Northeast part of Wichita must be brought to the surface and discussed in order to make lasting progress towards a healthy community. One informant, Loretta, describes the current disparity in race relations in the city many people in the black community acknowledged:

I mean Wichita is way behind, in race relationships. We want people to believe that Kansas is better because we have a black president. But you know, racism is alive and well and it’s been bad a while, and it’s still bad. You know, we strive every day to stifle the undercurrent of the city towards racism but sometimes you feel like you swimming upstream, but you keep going. And I think that’s the problem with the community. You know, they just feel like they don’t have a voice. The City has been doing that for years, it’s hard to convince the community that there’s a change because anytime it looks like there’s a change they pull one of those numbers. — Loretta
These perceptions of embedded racist ideology and the historical racism of the city is what originally led me to research the history of institutionalized racism in Wichita that prefaces this document. Nearly every interviewee cited current or historical problems with racism in Wichita as a concern tied to community health. The perception of informants was often important resources and attention are directed away from the predominantly black Central Northeast, and distributed to places institutions saw as better, safer, and more deserving of resources. Additionally, several informants felt media outlets in Wichita often intentionally colored the Central Northeast area of Wichita as dangerous, which re-enforced the reasoning for unequal attention to the area. One informant, Terrance, told me he felt his community is “kept down” on purpose, because it is easier to keep a group of people down if they are kept in one place, referring to the tight segregation in the area.

Past memories of racism and current felt results of institutionalized racism led to a reiterated lack of trust in the Northeast Black Community expressed by informants and other community members during participant observation experiences. Nine interviews said trust issues were a community health concern. Both the black community and those from the WSU initiative recognized there were problems with trust in the community, though outside officials often did not understand the reason it was such a big issue for the community. When I told one woman, whom I was volunteering at a church in the community with, that I was trying to understand needs in the community, she started singing, “Trust! Trust! Truuust!” while her friends chimed in for a second and giggled. Though these women attempted to make light of the issue, it is likely because they see it as so prevalent and clear in the black community. One informant who works at a clinic in the Central Northeast talks about these issues with trust in reference to addressing health issues at the clinic:
Trust issues. I’d say if ten people came in here there’s trust issues with six of them. They’re so use to being rejected and their ceiling stops they just stop growing. When you don’t have a drive to go further and you don’t see anything at the end of the tunnel. And you don’t see any light at the end of the tunnel, you stop growing as an individual. You just kind of give up. There’s no hope. We could go outside right now and walk around and just look. I’m letting you know right now it would sadden you.—Sean

Some informants communicated an overall feeling of resignation and disempowerment due to the constant dismissal of their voice by institutions in Wichita. Black informants described exclusion from the political realm and having their voices ignored by white officials, which in turn discouraged community members from participating in assessments, meetings, and opportunities to vote, even if officials say these opportunities will help them. The historical knowledge this community possessed pointed to the fact that those in positions of power in Wichita did not have any real interest in their feelings and opinions. They spoke of this exclusion from decision-making concerning their own well-being, and though they may have been invited to participate in meetings, they felt they were ignored or not taken seriously by white officials. A stakeholder, Joseph, declared his frustration with this common disconnect between officials holding meetings and the actual community of the Northeast, referencing a grant meeting he attended:

Who is speaking for whom?...When people are small or unimportant, we isolate their view. Their view is not important—they have no power. Why should we consult them? Why should their opinion matter? And sooner or later… in the initiative, you have all of these opinions—that’s just a way the reports are done. History is written by the conqueror, not by the conquered. —Joseph

I saw an example of this dismissal at one of the meetings led by the KHF grant in the Fairmount Park. An older, black man stood up after the white official from California, who was leading the meeting, went over the findings of the first focus group. He stated, in a very poignant
way, that he did not trust the intentions of the university and felt they were coming in to Fairmount with an agenda. He said he felt WSU was using the man they hired from the neighborhood as a “community liaison” as a way to “put a black face on a white program,” and they were off base in their conclusions and use of the grant money. The man leading the grant presentation responded to him, saying, “There’s money out there, you just have to know where to look for it,” referring to grant money. The white leader of the Shocker Neighborhood Coalition chimed in, quickly dismissing the resident’s statement and merely answered it by saying none of what was going on was “about race.” This gentleman described this interaction in an interview later that week:

The people being served should have a voice in the decisions being made concerning the manner in which they are being served. You put a black face on a white program and you can destroy it. I used that term in the meeting at Fairmount Park. To let you know where the white temperament still is, I was immediately challenged by the white gentleman there that I was pulling the race card…he didn’t even hear me. He didn’t hear me. –Leon

This apparent disconnect in communication between social networks in the area may contribute to poor health outcomes in the neighborhood (Cattell 2001). When I interviewed the man who stood up in this meeting, he described the extent to which this disconnect impacts meetings that take place to resolve issues in the Black Northeast Community:

If you want a viable, good program in Wichita you almost need to hold your meetings separate— Because you ain’t going to get no black folk to come into a meeting with white folk and voice their opinion. It ain’t going to happen…It’s not going to happen because the fear that’s within black folk that they have carried for so many years, and it stays with them and it’s not going to come out… The meetings you hold here—you have to be very careful. For example, our county commission, there’s not a black person on it. How many thousand black people are in this city. —Leon

While Leon indicates it is common knowledge in the Northeast Black Community that attending meetings led by white officials is futile, another informant and white resident from
Fairmount does not seem to understand this. She indicated her concern with the lack of communication and participation in the neighborhood and the association meetings, thinking about former days when the association was more active:

Amanda, to this day the people who are concerned they don’t do anything about it they won’t come to meetings — they’re not participating so I’m so pleased that meeting worked. The participation, participation, wherever we were participation. —Margaret

My fieldsite, along with the rest of the community surrounding the university, is a product of white flight and exclusion from economic and educational opportunities that are afforded to the majority of the surrounding white neighborhoods. The symptoms that WSU views as a threat to their campus, including the murder of the woman in Fairmount Park, are systemic and at least partially caused by decades of residential segregation and structural racism. Lasting changes will not occur in the Central Northeast without addressing these issues in conjunction with the entire Northeast Black Community. The community must address deterioration of this area must be appreciated in the context of the deeper history of institutionalized racism in the city comprehend the current outcomes of disparity. One informant refers to the importance of past segregation in Wichita on current outcomes in reference to the new KHF grant meetings focused solely on Fairmount:

There is another view that I was saying about the Fairmount community. If the position of Wichita as a community, and the way it has treated the historical lines of Wichita as a community in the country—Wichita was one of the most segregated communities [in the country], and that really genuinely affected all sorts of relationships with the university. All of those things have not been “solved”. They are like “oh yeah, we have this vote and this movement and that one, and all things are done.” The best you can do is be open about that history, and to ask questions in light of it and see what you get. It shouldn’t paralyze us. It shouldn’t paralyze community activists from just being critical.—Joseph
As Williams & Mohammad (2013) recognize, institutionalized and cultural racism is one of the three fundamental influences on health from where all other outcomes flow. Infrastructure, environmental conditions, social issues, and personal health outcomes and behaviors, embed in a structure based on racist ideology (See Figure 6). Informants were often aware this structural reality of racism is a precursor to current unpleasant outcomes in their community. Interventionists must acknowledge the community members are the best experts on their own health and well-being

CONCLUSION

The problems and needs of the Northeast Black Community and the broader Central Northeast area require an understanding of the deeply embedded structure of this space. It is impossible to comprehend the Central Northeast area strictly within the administrative boundaries of neighborhoods or zip codes. Without recognizing this space as the multiple communities that live within it, and the social memory of segregation and other forms of structural violence in Wichita, one risks looking over what could be the most basic problem in this area. The strategic erasure of history is one of the most harmful tools used by those in power to exercise structural violence. What could be even more harmful is the selective remembrance of history of a nostalgic, historically white community while ignoring the history of struggle in the black community.

Though the picture I have painted in seems to err on the side of solely blaming larger structures for negative impacts of health on this community, this was not intended to be the outcome of this report. Rather, the outcomes point to the fact that larger structural and systemic problems in the community were overlooked on previous assessments of the Central Northeast
area, until now. Though those in the Black Northeast Community recognize poor health outcomes are in part due to agency of individuals, there is the social knowledge these agentive behaviors reside within the historical structure of violence that has oppressed African Americans for centuries.

Though people may be uncomfortable speaking about race, its effects are still very prevalent in the daily lives of black Americans. As Philip Bourgois (1995) purports, race must be discussed if one wants to make a lasting impact on the inequalities of marginalized populations in the United States. If one’s agency must work within the societal structure that they are born, then institutionalized racism is a form of structural violence for marginalized peoples. As Paul Farmer puts forth, structural violence “constricts the agency of its victims. It tightens the physical noose around their necks, and this garroting determines the way in which resources—food, medicine, even affection are allocated and experienced” (Farmer 2004, 315).

Without addressing macro-level structural and systemic problems in minority populations, one will not be able to understand the micro-level outcomes of health disparity they face. In this particular space, the historical as well as current segregation of Northeast Black Community must be brought to the fore if one wants to understand the strengths and needs of this community. Further, one must recognize the damaging effects that continued exclusion and strategic erasure of history has on this marginalized community who has been fighting for decades to be heard.

**Recommendations**

Following this assessment of needs of the black community living in Central Northeast Wichita, there are several recommendations that come to mind based on my fieldwork
experience. There is a need to take bottom-up approaches to issues rather than perform more top-down assessments and interventions in this community. My main recommendation is to address the broader, structural problems in the Central Northeast that impact the smaller outcomes. First, the creation of better communication and bridging capital between the Northeast Black Community and the hegemonic institutions of Wichita, including the City, WSU, and media outlets. This communication must also take place between the community and outside organizations that provide assistance like medical centers, programs for youth, and the like. Following this bridging of communication between social groups is a need for the creation of new policies through greater political action aiming to fight health inequalities in minority populations. Lastly, there are several specific recommendations I have concerning assistance for this community.

The most frequently perceived underlying contributor of the health issues of the Northeast Black Community was the influence of historical and current racism in Wichita, followed by a lack of a trust and communication between the black community and the hegemonic institutions in the city. Based on new epidemiological research, racism is one of the basic determinants of health (Williams & Mohammad 2013), and though one cannot remove racism and its impacts, steps can be taken towards building understanding and trust between social groups. One approach to this is to find ways to bridge white stakeholders and leaders in the city with stakeholders and leaders in the black community, to begin a relationship of understanding. Using theory on social capital to bridge social groups that hold more power in Wichita with black community leaders is one way to begin to build understanding between these two groups (Cattell 2001; Wutich et. al. 2015).
Next, the continuation of discussions about race and racism in the city should be promoted by organizations hoping to improve health and relationships between the black communities of Wichita. Several informants said though these topics are no longer discussed, aversive racism is prevalent in the city. Some informants even said it was almost worse than before due to the continuing deterioration in their community after white flight, and an unwillingness of hegemonic institutions to bring race issues to the fore. Recognition that the Northeast Black Community’s current status is at least in part shaped by a history of segregation and racist ideology is vital to the understanding of current health outcomes, and to the ability to begin building trust with the black community. Health research continuously has shown inequalities in health in the African American community, and research that is more recent strongly links these inequalities to racism and its outcomes, such as segregation. To ignore this fact is not helpful for moving forward in health interventions in this community.

The residents and leaders of the Central Northeast area are experts on their own community, and must be viewed as such for sustainable changes to be made. A good start to creating more bottom-up approaches is to reach out to already well-established meeting places in this community, rather than trying to make community leaders come to new spaces. The Atwater City Hall and community center and several active churches like St. Marks, Dellrose, Tabernacle, and Calvary, are just a few of note.

Atwater City Hall is a place of importance to the community and provides many resources. Multiple meetings are held there, including the District 1 meeting lead by the district’s council member. These meetings were always full and seemed representative of the true demographic of the Central Northeast area with about 75 percent of attendees African American, and most of the people leading the meetings were African American as well. This center
provided a space where community members felt more comfortable standing up and voicing opinions about their community. Comparing meetings in Fairmount and on campus with the meetings at Atwater allowed me to gain a better understanding of the actual needs in the Central Northeast. I saw why several informants articulated not wanting to go to meetings led by white officials and people who were not from their community because of the support and understanding those at Atwater provided. The Atwater City Hall is another, already firmly established and extremely active, access point that must be utilized to understand the real needs of the Central Northeast area.

The churches serving the Central Northeast area are wonderful access points as well, and should be utilized by interventionists. Pastors at many of these churches are looked to as leaders of the community. Further, I witnessed multiple events at churches that proved these institutions were essential to this community. Churches provided crucial resources, education, and support in a community where many resources are currently becoming even scarcer due to funding cuts by the Kansas government. One community leader and member of the “Council of Elders” stated “the churches are all we’ve got.” Doing fieldwork in this community proved this statement true. Two other organizations of note that informants mentioned as established access points to the communities in the Central Northeast are the Sunflower Community Action Center and the Power CDC. Though I recognized the importance of these organizations, I did not have the chance to during my fieldwork to spend time in these centers. Regardless, several informants mentioned these were important spaces for access as well.

Along the lines of communication, I also saw a problem with communication between residents in the Central Northeast and already established programs that are available to help the community. A recommendation on this front would be, as I suggested above, going to already
existing political venues like churches and community centers and speaking to leaders there about disseminating the information about these programs. Some people in this community do not have ready access to the internet, especially the elderly, and many people do not look at all of the flyers they receive in their mailbox.

My final recommendation on the subject of health disparities in the Central Northeast is political action. Pastors at churches and leaders at the Atwater City Hall had already mentioned they were pushing for greater political action in their community. There was a common sentiment that people in the community do not get politically involved or vote in every election because they are so use to not seeing any positive outcomes from this in their community. There was also the feeling of being “burnt out” from years of fighting for better conditions and not seeing lasting results. Because the issue of racism is so systemic and so deeply embedded in the structures of our society, the need for political action and policy change is core to the changes in health outcomes in minority populations. Not just black communities need to be pushed to be more politically active, but health officials, academics, and people who possess the knowledge of these disparities and have the social capital to fight for systemic changes and be heard by hegemonic institutions.

There are several other things of note for further research in Central Northeast Wichita I did not discuss in my outcomes because they were not as prevalent in my discussion on community health, but should still be addressed in further research. Several informants said a big concern in their community is mental health problems, especially problems with depression and anxiety. Hypertension, diabetes mellitus (Type II), and disability, followed among physical health issues. Behavioral problems were mentioned in both surveys and interviews, the most prevalent being drug and alcohol addiction. Additionally, there was the acknowledgement by
informants and during district meetings and several interviews, that there is a large percentage of elderly residents, and a significant Hispanic population living in the Central Northeast area, that have an entire set of needs of their own beyond the scope of this study but should be considered for later research.

In addition to these further health concerns, researchers must look closer at high rates of low birth weights and infant mortality among black women in Sedgwick County in the context of segregation in Wichita. Sedgwick County has one of the highest rates of infant mortality among black mothers, especially in the zip code 67214, just west of WSU where there is still a high percentage of segregation. Several health researchers have linked segregation to infant mortality and birth weight (Hearst et al. 2008, Kramer & Hogue 2009, Williams & Collins 2001). This connection should be looked at in the context of historical and current segregation in Wichita, and the impact it may have on maternal and infant health in the city.

**Broader Impacts**

As urbanization increases and communities become more heterogeneous, researchers need to understand the obstacles urban, predominantly low-socioeconomic status, African American communities face. To this point, there has not been much research on the impacts of urban universities on the communities around them. This study has contributed to this scholarship of the different social, economic, and environmental factors that add to, or take away from, a greater sense of health and well-being in urban neighborhoods. Involving the community in the research process and valuing their knowledge about their community’s strengths and weaknesses, allows for balancing power structures inherent in studying marginalized populations and helps to build trust.
The best way to understand the needs of a particular community is to go into the community and use ethnographic methods to document the emic perspectives of strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood’s health and help to give a voice to disempowered communities. This strategy helps to build trust that has been lost through decades of institutionalized and systemic racism, and may result in outcomes that are more comprehensive. Gaining an emic understanding of a community by speaking to people about their histories, concerns, ideas, struggles, and assets, results in a richer knowledge of the community, which one can use more to completely understand quantitative data about population health. Using narratives to understand the embodied experiences of populations facing health inequalities may unearth some of the most important issues contributing to health.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1

Interview Protocol

1.) How would you define a healthy neighborhood? Community?

2.) What are some things in your neighborhood that you see as needs or problems? Things that are standing in the way of your neighborhood being healthier?

3.) What are some positive things about your neighborhood that you would say improves the health of your community?
APPENDIX 2

Survey

Neighborhood Health Needs Survey
1. Check the MOST IMPORTANT items (NO MORE THAN 10) from the list below that need to happen in YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD NOW to create a better and healthier place to live.
   - Increased lighting in the neighborhood
   - Better community policing
   - Better recreational areas for sports (ex: basketball courts, baseball fields, etc.)
   - Better access to public healthcare
   - Clean up trash in the neighborhood
   - Improvement of streets in the neighborhood
   - More educational opportunities for all ages
   - Improvement of trust and relationship with WSU
   - More job opportunities
   - Programs allowing young adults to build skills/job training
   - Better access to healthy food
   - Improvement of race/ethnic relations
   - Improvements to Fairmount Park
   - Improvement of sidewalks and walking areas in the neighborhood
   - Better affordable options for childcare
   - Tutoring for math and reading for youth
   - Improvement of rental properties and abandoned properties
   - More involvement of community members in neighborhood issues
   - An indoor community recreation center for exercise
   - Community pool
   - Other________________________________________________________

3. Check the personal health issues from the list below that are MOST PROBLEMATIC or that people MOST need help with in your neighborhood:
   - Aging problems (e.g., arthritis, hearing/vision loss, etc.)
   - Cancers
   - Child abuse / neglect
   - Chronic Diseases
   - Dental problems

Assaf 121
Diabetes
Disability
Domestic Violence
Firearm-related injuries
Heart disease and stroke
High blood pressure
HIV / AIDS
Homicide
Infant Death
Infectious Diseases (e.g., hepatitis, TB, etc.)
Mental health problems
Maternal health
Motor vehicle crash injuries
Rape / sexual assault
Respiratory / lung disease
Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)
Suicide
Teenage pregnancy
Other ____________________

4. Check the MOST CONCERNING behaviors from the list below that worry you in your neighborhood?

Alcohol abuse
Dropping out of school
Drug abuse
Lack of exercise
Lack of maternity care
Not getting “shots” to prevent disease
Poor eating habits
Racism
Smoking and Tobacco use
Not using birth control
Unsafe sex
Unsecured guns
Other___________________________

Please circle one option for each question below:

5. How do you rate the overall health of your neighborhood?

Assaf 122
6. How do you rate your own health?

Very Unhealthy  Unhealthy  Somewhat Healthy  Healthy  Very Healthy

7. How easy is it to use safe and maintained areas for recreation in your neighborhood? (Consider: walking areas, places to play sports, community gyms and pools, etc.)

Not easy  Somewhat Easy  Easy  Very easy

8. How easy is it to get healthy food in your neighborhood?

Not Easy  Somewhat Easy  Easy  Very Easy

9. How happy are you with the quality of life in your neighborhood?

Very Unhappy  Unhappy  Happy  Somewhat Happy  Very Happy

10. How happy are you with the health care options in your neighborhood?

Very Unhappy  Unhappy  Happy  Somewhat Happy  Very Happy

11. Is your neighborhood a good place to raise children? (Consider: school quality, day care, after school programs, recreation, etc.)

Bad  Below Average  Average  Good  Very Good

12. Is your neighborhood a good place for older people to live? (Consider: housing, transportation to medical services, social support for the elderly living alone, etc.)

Bad  Below Average  Average  Good  Very Good

13. Is your neighborhood a good place to get a job? (Consider: jobs with a chance to move up positions, businesses run by those in your community, chances for job training and higher education, etc.)

Bad  Below Average  Average  Good  Very Good

14. Is your neighborhood a safe place to live?

Assaf 123
15. **How good is your neighborhood support for people and families during times of stress and need** (Consider: neighbors, support groups, faith community outreach, agencies, organizations)?

   - Very Unsafe
   - Unsafe
   - Somewhat Safe
   - Safe
   - Very Safe

16. **Do you think people in your neighborhood have the opportunity to have a say in the community’s quality of life?**

   - Never
   - Not Often
   - Sometimes
   - Usually
   - Always

*Please write any other suggestions, comments, or concerns you have about your neighborhood:

Please check your answers below:

17. **What is your age?**

   - 25 or less
   - 26 – 39
   - 40 – 54
   - 55 – 64
   - 65 or over

18. **What is your gender?**

   - Male
   - Female

19. **What racial or ethnic groups do you most identify with?**

   - African American / Black
   - Asian / Pacific Islander
   - Hispanic / Latino
   - Native American
   - White / Caucasian
Other __________________

20. What is your marital status?
   
   Married or co-habitating
   Not married or Single

21. What is your highest level of education?
   
   Less than high school
   High school diploma or GED
   College degree or higher
   Other __________________

22. What is your average household income?
   
   Less than $20,000
   $20,000 to $29,999
   $30,000 to $49,999
   Over $50,000

23. What is your current living situation?
   
   Home Owner
   Renter
   Staying with friends/family

24. Which of the following do you use for healthcare?
   
   Pay cash (no insurance)
   Health insurance (e.g., private insurance, Blue Shield, HMO)
   Medicaid
   Medicare
   Veterans’ Administration
   Indian Health Services
   Other __________________
APPENDIX 3

Survey Data

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