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# An Examination of Perspectives on Community Poverty: A Case Study of a Junior Civic Association

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An Examination of Perspectives on Community Poverty:  
A Case Study of a Junior Civic Association

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **Abstract**

Nonprofit organizations have become a necessary staple in the lives of people and communities experiencing poverty. Many of these organizations provide services that they think their communities need. The solutions and services these organizations provide are incumbent on what the organizations think causes poverty. Although the motivations behind these organizations have good intentions, their approach to poverty could further jeopardize people and communities by not providing proper or necessary services that have the ability to help people get out of poverty. To explore how organizational values and perspectives on poverty are operationalized, I examined one nonprofit grassroots organization in Tampa Heights, Tampa, Florida. I applied the following four theories of poverty: individual, cultural, political-economic, and geographic to explain how participants discussed poverty in Tampa Heights. Interviews revealed that while many participants subscribed to multiple theories of poverty, each participant held one dominant view. This finding, among others, exposed the complexities of how individuals understand poverty as well as how nonprofit organizations approach these multifaceted issues. Thus, indicating the need for a clearer explanation of how and why people use these theories or combinations of theories to explain both causes and solutions to poverty.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Nonprofit organizations that focus on youth have become an important part of the lives of poor urban families (Dominguez & Watkins, 2003). These organizations not only give children a place to socialize after school, but they also provide additional education (Dominguez & Watkins, 2003). Furthermore, these types of organizations primarily serve youth from minority communities (Dominguez & Watkins, 2003; Bradshaw, 2007; Nichols, 2013). Young people who experience systemic inequalities are provided skills and opportunities that can improve their quality of life and bridge some gaps of inequality. Therefore, it is important to understand how these organizations can help bridge gaps of inequality for structurally disadvantaged youth and families.

This research studies one small nonprofit grassroots organization to understand the values and perspectives on poverty of voluntary nonprofit organizations and explore how those perspectives are operationalized. The primary research question is what theoretical perspective does the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association espouse? Within this question, I ask two sub-questions: what are the perceived causes of poverty? And what are the perceived solutions to poverty? I addressed these questions for two reasons. One, there is a significant gap in research exploring community development programs in small, nonprofit organizations. While there is some literature on how nonprofit organizations operate, their perspectives on poverty, and the values they espouse, most of this body of literature has studied large, well-known, nonprofit organizations. Small nonprofit grassroots organizations, on the other hand, are highly

understudied because they are difficult to access due to little public knowledge of their existence. Two, I wanted to be part of the conversation of finding more effective strategies to create positive change for structurally disadvantaged youth and families.

This research focuses on The Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association (THJrCA), a nonprofit organization that serves poor, urban, primarily minority youth, ages 6-18, in Tampa Heights, Tampa, Florida. The THJrCA is a grassroots organization, created by the people of Tampa Heights. Tampa Heights' residents played a role in selecting some services that the THJrCA offers. Larger, established organizations that plant themselves in disadvantaged communities often do not ask for community input or do not offer appropriate services. Therefore, it is important to examine grassroots organizations because they can have a significant impact on disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The mission of the THJrCA is to “provide youth the opportunities to build leadership skills and civic involvement through mentoring, caring, and support” (THJrCA, 2015). This research is the first to study the THJrCA's values and perspectives on poverty and how they influence the programs they offer. This study may position the THJrCA to be used as a model for how to create programs for families in poverty that work, and to tailor particular programs that may not be working for all families. Civic associations as well as small nonprofit organizations that focus on youth are understudied (Smith, 1997; Chen et. al, 2013). This study will expand research by focusing on a small nonprofit civic association that focuses on youth. This is important because values shape programs and impact effectiveness; values, which are drawn from culture, are the defining principle of how organizations conceptualize their goals and strategies and how to enact programs which influence outcomes (Chen et. al, 2013).

To understand the importance of nonprofit organizations, how nonprofit organizations operate, and the role that theories of poverty have in creating and implementing community development programs, I provide a review of the literature. This section will be followed by a chapter on methodology, in which I delineate the logistics of my research. The chapter on methodology will detail my research setting, as well as describe how I collected my data. In the next chapter, I will discuss my research findings, which are categorized by themes that emerged in the data. The discussion section of this thesis will connect my findings to cultural values, Bradshaw's theories of poverty and how these values and perspectives on poverty influence the services the THJrCA provide. I conclude this thesis with overall implications of my research, ideas for future research, limitations I encountered, and my positionality.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter will discuss four pertinent areas of literature: *The Importance of Organizations for Families in Poverty*, *The Culture of Nonprofit Organizations*, *Civic Associations*, and *Theories of Poverty* with key works from Domínguez and Watkins (2003), Chen, Lune, and Queen (2013), Andrews, Ganz, Baggetta, Han, and Lin (2010), and Bradshaw (2007). These works bring together social movement, organization, and community and family literature. This literature gives a background on why families need community-based organizations, how cultural values shape these organizations, the structure of civic associations, and how values, strategies, and programs work together to break the cycle of poverty through community development programs.

### **The Importance of Organizations for Families in Poverty**

Organizations are pivotal to families living in poverty (Domínguez & Watkins, 2003). These families have a lack of economic power and insufficient assets for sustainability, causing them to rely more heavily on extended family, or kinship, and organizations (Stack, 1974; Payne, 1998; Domínguez & Watkins, 2003). However, when families are unable to balance reciprocity, navigate physical distance, and deal with family tension, these networks become strained. Thus, families then turn to organizations for acquiring and maintaining daily needs. Seeking assistance from organizations is less time consuming for families, as there is less of an emphasis on reciprocity. Families receive reliable services without giving services back. These organizations

also offer resources for families that serve as “social mobility bridges, connecting low-income mothers with appropriate strategies and tools” (Domínguez & Watkins, 2003). These particular organizations can improve the quality of life for families by offering practical programs tailored to their needs.

Community-based organizations can also be a source for building and extending networks. McMahon and Felix (2011) found organizations serve as a way for youth to create their own kinship networks through the interactions with peers. Peers played a crucial role in developing youth’s perception of self worth in the sample of 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Furthermore, particular educational programs in schools, targeted at the low-income students, have also been shown to increase the confidence of students and their guardians (Strozier et. al, 2005). In a study about relatives who raise the children of other relatives, Strozier, McGrew, Krisman, and Smith (2005) found that programs that offer services to both caregivers and youth yield more holistic results, creating positive change for the entire family. Group support, counseling, advocacy, and case management services for caregivers, increased their knowledge, confidence, and comfort with school personnel leading them to feel less stressed and more connected to other caregivers. Mentoring and tutoring services provided youth with: problem-solving skills, character building, social skills training, goal setting and accountability, and homework assistance. These services increased the children’s self-esteem and academic performance (Strozier et. al, 2005).

Other activities of community-based organizations include developing entrepreneurial and leadership skills, as well as emphasizing education, in hopes of creating social and human capital. Social capital is the development of networks within a professional environment (Leitch, McMullan, & Harrison, 2013). The procurement of social capital is critical to developing human

capital, the possession of desirable skills by a population (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Leitch, McMullan, & Harrison, 2013). Furthermore, both social and human capital is an integral part of developing communities (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). Organizations concerned with social and human capital typically utilize a *Capacity-Focused Development* model which builds their communities from the inside-out, rather than outside-in, which is known as a *Deficit-Based Development Model* (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The *Capacity-Focused Development* approach focuses on recognizing the skills of residents and current assets of a community. Neighborhood organizations build off this assessment unlike organizations outside of a community who focus on identifying problems by which there may be no logical answer (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mancini, Bowen, & Martin, 2005; Bradshaw, 2007). This model is most often used among community-based organizations that focus on low socioeconomic status neighborhoods and will be used as a framework in my analysis of the THJrCA (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

### **The Culture of Nonprofit Organizations**

Culture is the foundation for how we understand our symbolic world. Culture shapes our beliefs, daily practices, language, etc., which influences values, actions, and how we strategize our actions (Swidler, 1986; Chen et. al, 2013). Individuals and organizations use this tool kit to delineate values, goals, appropriate actions to successfully reach goals, as well as a systematic outline of *how* successful organizations should be organized and function (Chen et. al, 2013). The tool kit culture provides is important because it supports stability by having a specific set of strategies of action, yet it enables change by allowing people to create new combinations of practices (Swidler, 1986; Minkoff, 2002; Chen et. al, 2013). Combinations of practices and

strategies are contingent on which values are utilized and the intended outcome of individuals and organizations (Chen et. al, 2013). Furthermore, outcomes are contingent on whether values and strategies are appropriate for the target population (Chen et. al, 2013).

One way culture shapes preferences, interests, and how individuals and organizations choose to reach their goals is through institutional logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Chen et. al, 2013). Institutional logics identify a set of activities or practices best suited for specific ends or goals (Friedland & Alford, 191; Hoffman & Ventreaseal, 2002; Thornton, 2004; Chen et. al, 2013). Although culture offers an array of values and combinations to create and reach specific goals, these logics create a hierarchy of values and delineate appropriate actions to carry out values (Zucker, 1983; Chen et. al, 2013). Therefore, institutional logics provide values, goals, information on which values and goals are best, and instructions on how to "properly" use values to create and meet goals.

Furthermore, culture delineates two types of organizations that best manage organizational operations; bureaucratic and democratic. Most organizations in the U.S. illustrate bureaucratic practices and are characterized by the following: "a division of labor, hierarchy, rules, separation of private and collective property, career ladder, and other bureaucratic practices" (Chen et. al, 2013, p. 861). On the other hand, in a democratic model authority stems from members' collective interests. Equality among members in rank, tasks, property, and ownership, flexibility of rules, collective decision-making, and belief in a collective mission set these organizations apart from bureaucracies (Rothschild & Whitt, 1986; Chen et. al, 2013). Recent research has indicated that some organizations combine the two practices (Chen, 2009; Chen et. al, 2013). Both bureaucratic and democratic practices have strengths and weakness. By combining these practices, organizations can avoid under-organization and over-organization.

Finding a middle-ground allows organizations to be structured enough that they are efficient but not restrictive (Chen, 2009; Chen et. al, 2013).

For example, voluntary nonprofit organizations that view advocacy as an objective typically fall into the category of mixed practices. These types of organizations are value-driven and aim to spread their desired values with the goal of reshaping society (Chen et. al, 2013). In order to enact shared values, which do not receive proper support from local organizations and government agencies, outside support is essential (Putnam, 2000; Hooghe, 2003a; Chen et. al, 2013). Since democratic or collectivist practices are considered less legitimate than bureaucratic organizations, a mixture of the two can allow for more collective decision-making and the perception of a "professional" and "legitimate" organization when seeking funding and meeting the expectations of their donors (Chen et. al, 2013). In these instances bureaucratic practices become a coping mechanism (Martin, 1990; Riger, 1994; Polletta, 2002; Schmid, 2006; Chen et. al, 2013). While this research informs us of how most large for-profit and nonprofit organizations operate, there has been little research on the structure and operations of small private organizations (Chen et. al, 2013). Previous research gives vital background knowledge to assess how values and ends are promoted. Continuing to expand this knowledge to the small private organization sector will further our knowledge of how these organizations operate and what its members contribute to its practices and ends.

### **Civic Associations**

The civic association is one type of community-based organization that grew out of a need for change in urban communities. A broader discussion of civic engagement, which prompted the creation of civic associations, began in 1901 with the book *The Improvement of Towns and Cities Or the Practical Basis of Civic Aesthetics* (Robinson, 1901). Concerned with

current community conditions, Robinson (1901) urged citizens to beautify their communities, a course of action that was not supported and enforced by local organizations or government entities. Suggestions for beautification ranged from clean streets and street lamps to gardens, parks, playgrounds, and art galleries. As popularity of civic engagement rose, scholars began to contribute to the discourse by translating these ideas into ways in which “good citizens” behave. Civic associations then emerged out of these ideals. There was a need to create an organization that can promote civic engagement and create spaces and plans for such “good citizenship” (Chambliss, 2010). These ideas led modern scholars to characterize civic mindedness as “the qualities of mind and character that...are an essential part of the infrastructure of a thriving free society” (Davenport and Skandera, 2003). These grassroots organizations operate on the contributions of members’ money, time, effort, and skill (Andrews et. al, 2010) to create and maintain their efforts (Andrews et. al, 2010). They utilize democratic practices like group decision-making, but also have bureaucratic practices like a self-selected hierarchy of leaders (Gecan, 2004; Andrews et. al, 2010).

Many scholars have studied civic associations and social change (Andrews et. al, 2010; Davenport and Skandera, 2003). However, among these topics, there has been a lack of research on junior civic associations, which primarily focus on the youth in a particular community. Junior civic associations are important to study, because their focus is on disadvantaged youth in impoverished urban areas. These youth lack opportunities and the social capital needed to pull them out of poverty. These types of organizations serve as an avenue to break the cycle of poverty. From my experience with the THJrCA, I understand their organization as not only a civic association that focuses on civic engagement, civic mindedness, and community beautification, but also as a community center that operates on a *Capacity-Focused Development*

model. Research on these types of organizations will not only benefit the literature of civic associations and community centers, but also bolster the literature on families and youth and small nonprofit organizations.

### Theories of Poverty

Community development programs predominantly aid individuals lacking sufficient resources to meet their needs, and communities in poverty who need assistance (Bradshaw, 2007). This American tradition aims to solve poor urban community issues such as social and economic inequality and disinvestment (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Bradshaw, 2007). With the primary goal of fixing poverty, community development organizations can take several different approaches: individual, cultural, political-economic structure, geographic, and cumulative and cyclical (Bradshaw, 2007). The approach organizations take is incumbent on their perception of poverty, which is shaped by political biases and values (Bradshaw, 2007). These political biases and values are reflected in how people view and discuss poverty as well as strategies of action taken against poverty (Bradshaw, 2007). Table 1 displays each theory of poverty; causes, how it works, community development responses, and tactics community developers use to reduce poverty.

Table 1. Five Theories of Poverty and Community Anti-Poverty Programs

Theory	What causes poverty?	How does it work?	Potential community development responses	Community examples to reduce poverty
Individual	Individual laziness, bad choice, incompetence, inherent disabilities	Competition rewards winners and punishes those who do not	Avoid and counter efforts to individualize	Drug rehabilitation, second chance programs, making

Table 1. (Continued)

Theory	What causes poverty?	How does it work?	Potential community development responses	Community examples to reduce poverty
Individual (Continued)		work hard and make bad choices	poverty, provide assistance and safety net	safety net easier to access, use training and counseling to help poor individuals overcome problems
Cultural	Subculture adopts values that are non-productive and are contrary to norms of success	Use community to the advantage of the poor; value diverse cultures, accumulation, and community building; alternative socialization	Head Start, after school leadership development within subcultures, asset-based community development	Head Start, after school leadership development within subcultures, asset-based community development
Political-Economic Structure	Systematic barriers prevent poor from access and accomplishment in key social organizations including job, education, housing, healthcare, safety, political representation, etc.	Selection criteria directly or indirectly exclude some groups of persons based on inappropriate criteria	Community organizing and advocacy to gain political and economic power to achieve change; create alternative organizations	Policies to force inclusion and enforcement
Geographic	Social advantages and disadvantages concentrate in separate areas	Agglomeration, distance, economies of scale, and resource distributions reinforce differences	National redistributions, concentration of development on local assets	Redevelopment areas, downtowns, rural networking, urban revitalization
Cumulative and Cyclical	Spirals of poverty, problems for individuals (earnings, housing, health, education, confidence) are interdependent and strongly linked to community deficiencies (loss of businesses, inadequate schools, inability to provide social services, etc.)	Factors interact in complex ways. Community level crises lead to individual crises and vice versa, and each cumulate to cause spirals of poverty	Breaking the spiral of poverty with a spiral of success through a comprehensive program that addresses both individual and community issues	Comprehensive CDC programs that build self-sufficiency in a community reinforced environment, programs that link individuals and community organizations, asset-based approaches

(Bradshaw, 2007)

As seen in Table 1, different perceptions of poverty yield different strategies. According to Bradshaw, these strategies produce a variety of results; some more effective than others.

Nonprofit organizations that focus on community development typically take the cumulative and cyclical approach to poverty. Individual, cultural, political-economic structure, and geographic theories demonstrate the complexity of poverty, but they address poverty from only one angle (Bradshaw, 2007). Community development programs typically utilize all of these approaches to create comprehensive programs that address poverty as a multi-faceted complex issue (Bradshaw, 2007). The individual approach holds that any person has the ability to succeed if they work hard enough, remain persistent, and are consistently motivated (Asen, 2002, p. 29-34; Bradshaw, 2007). This strategy is threaded throughout most public policy programs and typically results in little positive change and is the least likely approach for community-development organizations to take (Campbell & Wright, 2005; Bradshaw, 2007). Although community developers favor more positive theories and approaches, the individual approach is community development's natural foundation (Bradshaw, 2007). All community development programs and strategies have been created from the idea that there is something wrong with the current state of an individual or community (Bradshaw, 2007). Therefore, although many community developers do not take an individual approach, the existence of the organization and programs is due to an individual theory of poverty.

The "culture of poverty" theory expands upon the individual theory by claiming that poverty is a subculture in which those in poverty develop a shared set of beliefs, values, and norms different from what is acceptable in middle and upper class culture (Bradshaw, 2007). This approach typically focuses on building off of existing culture and yields mixed results (Goetz, 2003; Goering, Feins, & Richardson, 2003; Bradshaw, 2007). After-school programs fall

into this category because organizations remove children from their everyday cultural environment and place them in a different cultural environment that they have created (Bradshaw, 2007). They typically feel that the environment they create is more appropriate and positive than the environment outside of the organization (Bradshaw, 2007). After-school programs generally yield positive results (Bradshaw, 2007). These programs provide alternative socialization within a safe setting with the hopes of reducing generational poverty (Zigler & Styfco, 1996; Levitan et. al, 2003; Bradshaw, 2007). Community developers often create teen after-school programs so teens can be monitored, away from gangs and other negative influences. Simultaneously, program coordinators can instill positive social values (Levitan et. al, 2003; Bradshaw, 2007).

The political-economic structure perspective of poverty contends that social and economic systems are responsible for individual poverty situations (Tobin, 1994; Jencks, 1996; Blank, 1997; Quigley, 2003; Bradshaw, 2007). With a specific emphasis on education, this perspective holds that inequality is reified through schools, because schools in poor areas receive less funding leading to low achievement and the unlikelihood of pursuing higher education which result in a lack of wealth and power (Chubb & Moe, 1996; Bradshaw, 2007). Community development programs aim to change these types of systems through either social movements, the creation of alternative organizations, and changing public policy (Page & Simmons, 2000; Quigley, 2003; Rank, 2004; Bradshaw, 2007). Among these three strategies, the creation of alternative organizations is the most popular among community developers. Within this development model, there is an emphasis on community owned businesses, housing, and schools that promote the social and human capital of individuals in poverty (Bradshaw, 2007, p. 17).

Finally, the geographic perspective contends that particular areas are impoverished due to their geographic location, which lacks sufficient resources that generate well-being and income (Bradshaw, 2007). These particular populations also lack the power to leave these locations (Bradshaw, 2007). Since certain areas, both urban and rural, lack certain resources community development programs focus on creating a self-sustaining population with hopes of increasing opportunities for residents (Morris & Wohlenberg, 1971; Bradshaw, 2007). To create a self-sustaining community, developers focus on redevelopment or revitalization, civic improvements, the promotion of economic development, and investments in roads, parks, and schools as well as other community organizations (Bradshaw, 2007). These efforts are carried out within severely distressed and disinvested areas experiencing extreme poverty (Bradshaw, 2007).

As previously stated, community development programs typically build off the previous theories through a cumulative and cyclical perspective. This theory views individuals and communities as caught in a spiral characterized by a lack of opportunity and a specific set of problems in which there is no adequate response (Bradshaw, 2000; Bradshaw, 2007). This is why community development programs take a complex, multi-faceted approach. Organizations utilize asset mapping from a capacity-based approach, by identifying strengths of the community and using those strengths to create solutions (Kretzmann, 1993; Bradshaw, 2007). Furthermore, to break the cycle of poverty, community development programs focus on the following three strategies: comprehensive program, collaboration, and community organizing (Bradshaw, 2007). Comprehensive programs provide an array of services that attempt to link individual and community needs (Bradshaw, 2007). Collaboration refers to creating a network of supporters to properly manage programs and provide complementary services. Lastly, community organizing

encourages local people to break the cycle of poverty. It takes an entire community effort to empower individuals and break the cycle of poverty (Bradshaw, 2007).

As shown in the research presented by Bradshaw, the cumulative and cyclical approach to community development yields the most positive long-term results compared to any other approach. Although this approach yields the best results, no federal programs utilize these comprehensive programs (Bradshaw, 2007). The implementation of these programs is left up to foundations and small nonprofit organizations (Bradshaw, 2007). Small nonprofit organizations are understudied due to difficulty recognizing and accessing them (Chen et. al, 2013). Furthermore, there is very little literature on Junior Civic Associations, which focus on community development. This proposed research study will examine the structure, function, values, and programs of a small nonprofit community-based Junior Civic Association focused on community development. This study will expand on the literature of organizations, civic associations, and community development.

### **Chapter 3: Methods and Data**

In this section, I will discuss the setting of Tampa Heights from a historical perspective and how Tampa Heights' history has led to the Tampa Heights' community rebuilding plan. This section will also outline how the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association came to fruition, how the organization operates, the organization's mission, and what programs they offer. Finally, I will provide the logistics of my research. These logistics include: my theoretical approach, how I gained access to the THJrCA, the interview process, information on participants, and ethical concerns.

#### **The Setting: Tampa Heights**

Tampa Heights, the first suburb of Tampa, Florida, was founded in 1889 as a residential community for Tampa professionals and tourists escaping harsh northern winters (Leonard, 1978). Characterized as a "healthy" place to raise a family, the Tampa Heights community expanded their neighborhood to include "beautiful" churches and some of the nation's first schools (Leonard, 1978). Caucasians, Latinos, and African Americans populated separate sections of Tampa Heights, contributing to the diverse rich culture of the area (Leonard, 1978; Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee, 2003). Although the middle-class population of Tampa Heights had been increasing for nearly 30 years, the community began experiencing a slow decline during the expansion of downtown Tampa and modern housing along the waterfront of Bayshore Blvd., on Davis Island, and the Interbay area (Tampa Heights Citizen

Advisory Committee, 2003). By the 1930s, many families relocated to those areas and Tampa Heights lost its prestige. Over the next thirty years poverty and deteriorated housing began to characterize what was once Tampa's most desired neighborhood of 1889 (Leonard, 1978). Tampa Heights lies one mile north of Downtown Tampa, consisting of a population density of 3,996 persons per square mile, compared to the average of 1,862 in the city of Tampa, according to the 2010 census.

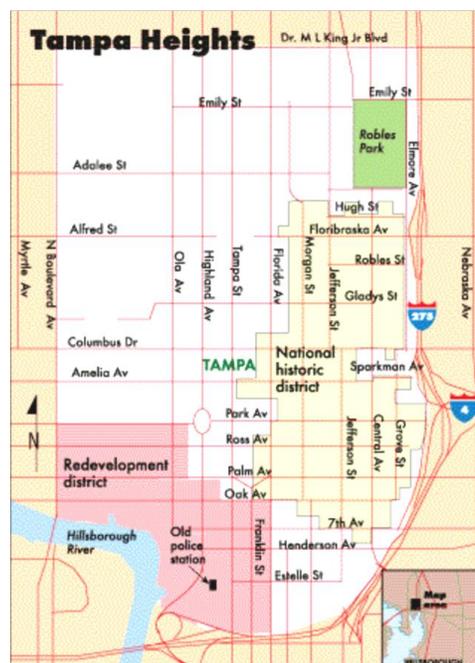


Figure 1. Map of Tampa Heights Tampa, FL (Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee, 2003)

Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard creates Tampa Heights' northern border. The western boundaries lie at North Boulevard and the Hillsborough River. Nebraska Avenue is Tampa Heights' Eastern border. Finally, the southern borders are Scott and Cass Streets. In 2010, the population distribution of Tampa Heights residents consisted of 45% young to middle-aged

adults (18-49 years), 32% children (under the age of 18), with the remaining 23% consisting of residents ages 50 to 85 years or older. Just over half of the population identify as female (52%). 59% of Tampa Heights residents are black, 32% are white, and the remaining 9% are other races. Tampa Heights' residents make nearly 33% less (\$16,599) per capita than the average Tampa resident (\$28,891). Over half of residents ages 18-64 live below the poverty level. In 2013 1,777 (households received food stamps and 195 (households received cash benefits, with food assistance having a slight decrease since 2012 yet a substantial increase since 2011 (Landry & Johnson, 2014).

### **Tampa Heights Plan: Rebuilding Community**

During the decline of the Tampa Heights community, residents came together to devise a community plan in 1999. Their goal was to create a document that would serve as a guide to rebuilding Tampa Heights. This document was a collaborative effort between leaders of the community and numerous residents and businesses, prompted and headed by the Tampa Heights Civic Association. The development of the *Tampa Heights Plan* began in 1999, finally ending in a 41 page document, outlining current and future prospects, in 2003. Plans include: better public transportation systems, diverse and affordable housing, greenways, financial stability, an increase in shopping and local business, a safe community, increased social fabric, a neighborhood identity, and much more (Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee, 2003).

To rebuild their community Tampa Heights residents asked, "What resources do we have to solve this problem ourselves" (Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee, 2003)? Consistent with the capacity-focused development model, residents recognized the following assets: skills, talents, and experiences of residents (including individuals labeled as welfare

recipients, homeless, and elderly), local and home businesses, organizations (cultural, communications, religious), and residents' income (Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee, 2003, p. 3). "Schools, housing, public institutions and services, welfare and capital improvement expenditures, and public information (Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee, 2003, p. 4)" are also considered assets to the community. The residents of Tampa Heights have also acknowledged forces working against their neighborhood: perpetual economic dearth, a lack of social integration, isolation, and the individual and social behaviors from these forces (Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee, 2003).

### **Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association**

The revitalization plan identifies children as a priority, which prompted the creation of the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association (THJrCA). THJrCA is a non-profit neighborhood center in Tampa Heights tasked with creating long-term community change, starting with youth.

Their mission statement is as follows:

"Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association is a community-based, resident driven organization that connects youth and families in the community; provides youth the opportunities to build leadership skills and civic involvement through mentoring, caring, and support; and secures resources to respond to identified needs" (THJrCA, 2015).

The THJrCA has been in existence since 1998. Their programs for youth include: after-school programs, summer camps, academic goal planning, leadership development, college preparatory tutoring, and college or technical school visitation. The THJrCA's first site is located at the Mobley Park Apartments in Tampa Heights and is utilized for children in middle school or

younger. This site was established shortly after the THJrCA left the Tampa Heights YMCA facility after two years of operating from that site. The Mobley Park Apartments agreed to lease a small education center to the THJrCA, free of charge, if they provide free after school care to the apartment residents. An increase in youth utilizing their services pushed the THJrCA to find an additional space just for teens. They secured an old church a few blocks away and have nearly finished renovations. The THJrCA was cleared through the City of Tampa to open and is currently operating their teen program out of this facility. Currently, this facility offers teens tutorial services, such as tutoring and mentoring, in their own space, but will offer more entrepreneurial programs tailored to them in the future. Future programs include: leadership and sports development, business and entrepreneurship, financial literacy, workforce and college preparation, computer training, and academic support and remediation (THJrCA, 2015).

Through these programs teens will be able to learn culinary and business skills, the financial ins-and-outs of running a business and budgeting, strategies for obtaining a job after high-school or moving on to college, establish support groups, and much more (THJrCA, 2015). The THJrCA also offers a summer program they call *Summer Enrichment* (THJrCA, 2015). The THJrCA Summer Enrichment program “offers leadership training and opportunities, sports and health awareness, entrepreneurship and community service activities in a fun-filled environment.” During this program they take the youth on fieldtrips to further their life skills. Similar to their programs during the school year, the summer program requires a minimal fee from parents if they can afford it. If not, the fee is waived (THJrCA, 2015).

The role of the THJrCA is not to administer services *they* think families need; their role is to tailor programs to meet the goals of the community plan, a collaborative *community* effort, and give families the services they request. Families using the services of the THJrCA were

given a survey in 2004 asking what services they needed for their child. Furthermore, when parents enroll their children in the program there is a space for them to describe their children's needs. Board members and staff are receptive to all necessary changes and accommodations. Parents can always approach the staff with concerns and changes they need for their child and those changes will be implemented. For example, if a child is mostly receiving help with math and science and a parent comes to the staff concerned about their child's grade in English, the THJrCA will spend more time on English. Lastly, the THJrCA holds an annual meeting for parents to voice their concerns and make suggestions for programs. The THJrCA gives families multiple avenues and opportunities for voicing concerns and making suggestions so programs are truly tailored to meet their needs.

A community garden has also been added on the grounds of the second THJrCA site. The community garden serves as a space for community gatherings (barbeques, yoga, etc.), harvesting for the future culinary program, and educational programs for youth. Older students in the culinary program will primarily use the vegetables from the garden for cooking, while younger students have plots they plant, maintain, and harvest. Once vegetables are harvested, youth sell them at their own farmer's market. The proceeds are divided among the youth in the program and deposited into their bank accounts set up by the THJrCA. Members of the Tampa Heights community also purchase plots, making them responsible for planting and maintaining their particular space. There are also communal areas of the garden which all members are required to maintain together (Tampa Heights Board of Directors). The community garden not only provides healthy foods for youth and plot owners and enables members of the community to communicate and connect, but also provides a positive space for youth and other members of the community to interact.

The THJrCA operates on board and staff members' time, effort, and skill, as well as grants and outside funding. They utilize a combination of democratic and bureaucratic practices. The THJrCA engages in collective decision making and has a collective mission, but all board and staff members have individual titles and there is a hierarchy of leaders. Although a hierarchy exists, tasks are split evenly or according to a member's skill set or the amount of free time board members have. Board members meet on the last Monday evening of every month from six to eight o'clock. The president or vice president runs meetings unless told otherwise by the president. During meetings, board members discuss any new business and report on assigned tasks from the previous month.

### **Theoretical Approach**

I take a grounded theory approach, an inductive method that builds theory from emerging data, rather than trying to fit data within a particular set of contingent theoretical guidelines (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2002). Methods of grounded theory include: analyzing data as it is collected, creating conceptual categories that explain observed social processes, and using these categories to create a theoretical framework that illustrate observed social patterns (Charmaz, 2002). Grounded theory is particularly useful when the researcher has few preconceived notions and wants flexibility in analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Richards & Morse, 2007).

### **Field Access**

In order to build relationships with board and staff member, as well as learn the ins-and-outs of the organization, I worked with the THJrCA nearly every Saturday for approximately one

year (January 2015 to January 2016). I volunteered at their second site, helping finish most of the renovation process. I painted, cut wire for lights, cleaned, and completed various other tasks that required unskilled labor. This site is a space for youth as well as offices for specific board and staff members. Currently the entire building has been renovated, except the sound studio and commercial kitchen. While working at the new center, I had established a good relationship with some of the board members. Those board members encouraged me to attend monthly board meetings so I could meet other members. These meetings allowed me to introduce myself and my research as well as recruit participants. Furthermore, I have attended public events with board and staff members and their families, such as a diabetes awareness walk, and worked with board and staff members in the Tampa Heights Community Garden on many occasions.

## **Interviews**

I conducted ten semi-structured formal interviews in the fall of 2015 at public locations that were most convenient for participants. Out of a total of fourteen board members and four staff members, I interviewed seven board members and three staff members. Interviews lasted between 37 and 90 minutes. All participants indicated they were comfortable with being recorded on the formal written consent forms. Finally, interview questions were open-ended, not limiting responses participants provided. The interview guide is available in Appendix B.

Interviews were essential for studying the perspective of board members and possibly teasing out unwritten values and goals of the THJrCA. This method allows researchers to ask direct questions to give them a glimpse of the participant's point of view (Mack et. al, 2005). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask direct questions about the organization, programs, and clients they service from an interview guide, yet allowed me flexibility to stray from the

guide when necessary. As the face or voice of the organization and given that most are working professionals, some board and staff members of the THJrCA have experienced formal interviews through seeking funding and in dealing with the news media. Therefore, participants felt more comfortable discussing their programs in a more formal setting within the context of formal language.

Finally, qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA was used to analyze the data. A qualitative data analysis program was necessary to keep data organized since there were ten interviews. MAXQDA allowed me to organize my data into themes, allowing for a more thorough analysis. The organizational feature of this software brought clarity to my analysis by separating and color-coding themes. This aided me in drawing connections between larger themes, from which I drew conclusions.

## **Participants**

Board and staff members of the THJrCA are an educated and diverse group of people. Participant demographics were collected through a free online survey website. The survey consisted of five questions asking participants to identify their sex, age, race or ethnicity, annual household income, and educational attainment. Participants were provided a list of options for each question and selected the answer that best described them. Survey results delineate that three participants identify as female and seven participants identify as male. One participant is between the ages of 20 to 24, one is between the ages of 30 to 34, two are between the ages of 35 to 39, two between the ages of 40 to 44, one is between the ages of 60 to 64, one is between the ages of 65-69, and one participant is between the ages of 70 to 74. Five participants identified themselves as black or African American, three participants identified themselves as white or

Caucasian, one participant identified themselves as Asian Indian, and one participant identified themselves as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. Two of the ten participants earn an annual household income of \$25,000 or less, one participant earns between \$25,000 and \$50,000, two participants earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000, two participants earn between \$75,000 and \$100,000, and three participants earn an annual household income of more than \$100,000. Two participants have earned an associate's degree, three have earned a bachelor's degree, and five have earned a master's degree.

### **Ethical Concerns**

Before I began my research I obtained the THJrCA's formal written consent, as well as IRB approval. Since poor communities have a history of being exploited for research, I wanted to make sure the THJrCA was supportive of my research. Once I received a letter of support, I began interviewing participants whom consented to the research study. Also, pseudonyms have been assigned to each participant in order to protect their identity. Furthermore, board and staff member's titles have not been used so as to create anonymity since it is such a small organization with one distinct position for each individual. Instead, there are descriptions of board members duties and how they operate as a collective group. Although real names and titles are not public, I have this information recorded in a private file only for my access. I did not reveal any interview information to other participants. Personal information about participants was completely confidential.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

This section is separated into broad themes: perceived causes of poverty and perceived solutions to poverty. Each broad theme is then organized into sub themes which outline board and staff members' specific perceived causes and solutions to poverty. Participants attribute poverty to (a) a lack of family structure, (b) a lack of parental involvement, (c) problems with youth, and (d) inadequate access to resources. Participants feel their organization could solve these community issues through (e) creating alternative environments to alter problems with youth, (f) creating life-long learners, and (g) influencing family achievement.

In this section, it is clear that some participants' associate poverty with individual character flaws and cultural ignorance, while others subscribe to the view that poverty is created by a political and economic structure or agenda out of residents' control, and isolation due to geographic location. It is important to understand how participants view poverty in order to delineate what values the THJrCA espouse. These values and theories are used to create community development programs, which have the potential to break the cycle of poverty. However, depending on which values and theories are utilized, these programs, which intend to pull people out of poverty, may keep people trapped in their current situation and perpetuate negative ideologies of people in poverty.

## Perceived Causes of Poverty

### Views on Family Structure

Board and staff members seem to be concerned with the structure of today's poor families. Andy, a board member of the THJrCA, discussed a cultural shift that he thinks has contributed to poverty.

I mean, there was a time when communities, or they talk about the village. You know, it takes a village to raise a child where everybody didn't do everything, but everybody was taken care of. When kids needed to do something, maybe it was three or four of the parents, they took all the kids! Not just their kids, everybody. So, people didn't feel alone. If the village ate, you ate. We don't have that today.

In this quote, Andy reminisced of times where an entire village raised children. He spoke of families working together to raise children, claiming families were less stressed and strained because raising children was not as individualistic. Andy recognized that raising children used to be a collective community effort, but many cultures have changed. He asserted that today, people do not take care of each other. People worry about their own families and do everything themselves and that can make life very lonely and contribute to poverty. Thus, the *structure* of today's families is responsible for community poverty and denotes a cultural view of poverty. Andy feels that there is an inherent deficit in the way people raise their children today.

While Andy discussed a historical-cultural shift in family structure, others conveyed a concern for current household structure in relation to absent fathers. Kevin, another board member of the organization, was particularly concerned about the lack of structure he sees in poor communities like Tampa Heights. When I asked why he feels there is a lack of structure at these youths' homes, Kevin responded with the following example:

Most of these families they don't have a father figure in their household. They're divorced or they're in jail or they're just out running around doing their own thing... I can't speak professionally on this, but I hear many *many* stories about how not having a healthy family can create lots of issues outside of home.

Kevin believes that the absence of fathers is an indication that households may be unhealthy and lack the structure he thinks is necessary to mold a successful child. Discussing the *structure* of households, and their deficiencies as a unit, shows that Kevin explains poverty through a cultural perspective. During interviews, all participants echoed similar concerns about single-mother households. However, most participants were not concerned with *how* fathers left their families, but the challenges single-mothers face after fathers have left.

### **Lack of Parental Involvement**

All board and staff members agreed that being a single-parent home can add to community issues outside of households, but six participants added that a lack of involvement from the parents are what's really hurting the youth of Tampa Heights. Toby, a board member, believes that many parents just use the THJrCA as a babysitting service and that if parents became more involved with the center and their children, then Tampa Heights could become a better and stronger community. In the following quote, Toby explains how parental involvement would benefit the THJrCA and Tampa Heights:

I think that would be a tremendous boost as far as the program is concerned. The more family and the more adult involvement then the larger and stronger it [the organization] can be. That would be building a better community. That would be building a better, more responsible, better educated community where people in the neighborhood in the community can understand there is a ladder out there that it is possible for them to apply and achieve more for themselves.

In this quote, Toby explains a lack of individual and community achievement through cultural norms. According to Toby, becoming engaged in community organizations that provide important resources will lead to success. Unfortunately, he feels the Tampa Heights' community exhibits norms that are contrary to what he thinks will make them successful. He discloses that if parents become involved with the youth center, the community center can become more prominent in Tampa Heights and adults will finally be able to recognize that there are opportunities for them to achieve a better life, if they work hard and apply themselves. He presumes that families of the youth utilizing the THJrCA have not recognized the community center's full potential to create change due to a lack of involvement. This cultural view of poverty indicates that parents have the opportunity to achieve more for themselves if they become engaged and understand that if they work hard or apply themselves then they can be successful.

Andy, on the other hand, stated that parents initially viewed the THJrCA as just a free service, but after using the services, parents recognized the value of the THJrCA.

The parents in some cases brought them to the program because they need after [chuckles] hours care, some of them, but when they realized it's more of a program, it's not babysitting, the parents realized that's what we needed. That care, that activity, not only got them to when I can come home and my child's homework's done, they've been engaged, and they've been safe. I think that's what the parents needed. We know what the students needed, some very smart students, needed someone to care about their school and attention and give them attention related to that.

Andy agrees that many parents originally signed their kids up for the THJrCA program because they needed a babysitter, but later families realized the THJrCA was exactly what their children needed. Their kids needed the attention they cannot dedicate to them and parents recognize the THJrCA's efforts as a valuable service.

Other participants spoke about the level of involvement with parents between their kids and the program. Stanley, for example, made it very clear that not all parents are disengaged. He divulged that the parents he sees that are engaged with their children are those who have gone through “trials and tribulations.” He believes these parents know the “do’s and don’ts” and try to motivate their children to stay in school. Even though some parents encourage their child to study and make the decisions they wish they would have made, the THJrCA feels their program is a necessary component to achieve the goals and education the parents were unable to accomplish.

While all participants were concerned about the challenges of single-parent households, Andy had a unique perspective on parental involvement of people experiencing poverty. He stated,

They make a decision that I’m not going to spend time with you. I’m going to go to work so I can feed you, clothe you, and house you. They give up. That’s the thing that we really find that’s most important. You have kids that turn out great when they didn’t have a lot of food, they had to wear old raggedy clothes, and go home to a house without heat, but their parents were home all the time with them. [Laughs] Those kids actually turn out fine. Kids that have a play station, a nice decent apartment, and ride in the car, and eat every night, but they never see their parents. Those are the ones we lose, but it’s hard to tell someone it would almost be better if you were on the street and you were with them the whole time than you’re in an apartment working 14 hours a day and come home too tired to talk to them, agitated and irritated, angry, and that’s what’s killing them.

Andy explains the challenges of parents being involved in their child’s life through the individual theory of poverty. In order to fulfill their child’s basic needs, parents *choose* to work long shifts, leaving their child alone after school. Andy believes parents who “choose” to go work rather than spend time with their children are making a bad choice, because children who are left alone after school and not receiving the attention they need are the ones they “lose.” So, according to

Andy, families make a decision to either spend time with their child, or work long hours to meet their child's basic needs. He believes spending time with your child is the most important thing a parent can do.

### **Problems with Youth**

Four board members and two staff members drew my attention to some problems they have faced with Tampa Heights' youth. All of these participants explained these problems through an individual perspective of poverty. For example, Kevin discussed a lack of motivation, Dwight discussed a lack of personal responsibility, and Stanley conveyed concern for a lack of adherence to values in the face of peer pressure. In the following quote, Kevin explains why he believes youth in Tampa Heights are unsuccessful:

If you take the time and you actually put the effort into learning something and getting involved that opportunities that are out there are also available to you... We just have to show them there's the whole cause and effect scenario. The more you get involved at an earlier age the more you educate yourself. The more you get involved in your community the more opportunities become available to you. You'll network with people that will help you along the way and you can become greater than what you're accustomed to. You can become greater than what you see around you.

Throughout much of our conversation, Kevin explained poverty through individual deficiencies. Kevin believes youth lack motivation to become educated, engaged in their community, and achieve more than those around them. To achieve academic and life goals, Kevin believes Tampa Heights' youth must be focused and study hard. He asserts that if youth put more effort into studying, a plethora of opportunities would be available to them. These opportunities, achieved through studying, will allow children to be more successful than other people in their neighborhood.

Kevin also expressed that he finds it difficult to get youth today to even make an effort to do activities that may benefit them. He feels that if Tampa Heights' youth just tried activities the youth center offered, they would probably enjoy them and want to be in the THJrCA program.

It's very hard these days to just get someone to make the effort to do something you're just telling them about. Until they maybe get a taste and see how it might be beneficial to them. That's what I think is going to keep them coming back.

Kevin's solution to motivating youth is to get them to try new things and show them the benefits of their efforts. This will not only motivate them to be successful, but will also make them want to continue to attend the THJrCA program. Later in the interview, with a heavy heart, Kevin revealed that he thinks a lot of youth are "lost." He is not sure why, but he believes that if youth at least made an effort to try the THJrCA programs, they would enjoy them and it could turn their life around.

Two board members addressed a similar sentiment. Some board members feel like there are "lost" youth not only in Tampa Heights, but also in the THJrCA program. Dwight described his thoughts on "troubled" youth utilizing the services of the THJrCA:

You're expected to behave in a certain way and that's a big key to what I think the program tries to do with kids is to teach them responsibility. This is your responsibility to be here, your responsibility to act a certain way, to keep your grades, to do all these things. This is stuff that's on you... It is a membership program effectively. I mean, you sign up and join the organization and you're expected to be there.

Although the above quote describes a few rare cases, Dwight concludes that it is the youth's responsibility to be at the community center and comply with what behavior practices the THJrCA deems acceptable. If youth do not want to show up and comply with the rules of the THJrCA, then that is their problem. Youth are responsible for their success and if they do not want to make the effort, then they do not have to come to the program.

Stanley, as well as two other participants, told personal stories of “troubled” youth.

Stanley, a staff member, told me a story about one youth he tried to “save,” but couldn’t. Stanley described his experiences with a youth that got “hooked on the streets:”

[He] was one of my pioneer kids that had been in the program for years... I’ve been with that kid since he was seven years old, seven. Yep. Situation was, once he got into high school it all fell from there. He didn’t want to follow directions, didn’t come to the program like he used to... Every time he called me to tell me he was playing in a football game I’d come support him, but still did the right thing until he started hanging with his cousin and that’s when he just fell apart. In jail, getting arrested, drug charge, those are things that happened then... He’s doing much better now, but at that time I couldn’t save him. I said, ‘You know what? You want to go do your own thing, go ahead. When you understand what the streets are like, you’ll change.’ And that’s what he did.

This particular child had been in the program for several years and was extremely receptive to the program, but Stanley believes the child veered off the right path when he entered high school and began experiencing more peer pressure. This child was unable to maintain the values that THJrCA had instilled in him and succumbed to peer pressure. Although Stanley continued to support the child, he eventually felt he needed to let go and let the child make his own mistakes.

Participants also discussed the importance of building self-esteem. While talking about the importance of the THJrCA program, Andy expressed that some youth in the program and neighborhood need their program to build their self esteem. “You can provide something to kids [that] gives them a boost. It adds to their self esteem and that’s really critical...they can’t let things that they might feel...that’s kind of beating them down. We want to get rid of that.” Andy believes this particular program is necessary, because it builds youths’ self-esteem and helps youth understand that they can conquer the world if they want. Stanley also claimed that youth need to be positive and not let life circumstances break their self esteem. According to Kevin, Dwight, Stanley, and Andy, individual deficiencies, such as lacking motivation, personal

responsibility, strong values, and self esteem, contribute to a lack of success. Exposing youth to new things, showing youth what they can achieve through studying, teaching personal responsibility, showing “tough love,” and engaging youth in activities that build self-esteem help alter these individual deficiencies.

### **Lack of Access to Resources**

Many of the board members of the THJrCA recognize geographic location as contributing to residential poverty. Although community redevelopment efforts have been made to revitalize blight and isolation, Tampa Heights’ population is still primarily lower-income black residents with little access to common place amenities. Board and staff members often feel like Tampa Heights is overlooked due to its geographic location.

Lower enclaves like this- remember I told you about East Tampa and Sulphur Springs? Everybody is focused on them, so they got a hundred people coming in and helping them. No one even knows- half the people couldn’t even tell you how to get here, [chuckles] right?! So, what happens is these people [Tampa Heights] become isolated. So, the community has a final way to reach out to these people in their little areas and say, ‘No, no, we know you need help. We see your kid walking from school to home by themselves and we’re here to help you.’

Andy explains poverty through the geographic theory of poverty through discussing the geographic isolation of Tampa Heights. Andy posits that the community is isolated and he has found that very few people actually know where Tampa Heights is located within Tampa. He sees other neighborhoods in poverty within Tampa as receiving tons of help. Andy feels frustrated that certain low-income communities receive tons of help, but the residents of Tampa Heights have to create their own organization to help their community because they are geographically overlooked. Interestingly, two other board members mentioned they discovered

Tampa Heights through their jobs. If it had not been for work, they would have never known the community existed.

Even though Tampa Heights created the THJrCA to help residents, outlined a strategic plan, and many residents are active in trying to create positive community change, board members and staff of the THJrCA find that community changes are slow in Tampa Heights. Many of the statistics that plagued Tampa Heights ten years ago are still relevant today. The fact that Tampa Heights is still a “food desert” is particularly concerning to many board and staff members. Kelly, a staff member of the THJrCA, discussed this issue in great detail,

Just the simple fact that this area is a food desert is kind of alarming to me. So, there’s all of these residential homes and apartments about to come and restaurants, but there is no place for people to shop anywhere nearby...So, that statistic kind of makes me a little upset to see that happen and I don’t know where the breakdown is, whether its city planning efforts or the community not advocating loudly enough for themselves, but there’s so much development in and around that some things should be common place amenities that you need in a neighborhood. Then keeping in mind residents and their demographics that you have in the neighborhood, so, it’s interesting that’s still the case.

Kelly, expressed disbelief that a community in the middle of a large urban city is *still* a food desert. Other neighborhoods have common-place amenities, like grocery stores, but Tampa Heights remains isolated. In all, a total of five participants mentioned a lack of access to nutritious food and discussed the stresses of not having access to a grocery store and other common-place amenities. Board member Ryan shared much of his concerns. He believes that parents, especially single mothers, cannot properly take care of their children when they do not have access to a decent job, and especially when they do not even have access to a grocery store.

Eight board and staff members also recognize community barriers to political knowledge and economic stability. Tampa Heights’ access to these fundamental resources causes much

anxiety for participants. Ryan described some of the economic differences between his family growing up and the families living in Tampa Heights. Ryan's families' economic situation allowed one parent to stay home to take care of him after school and help him with homework. He feels that he was fortunate to have parents who were able to provide a home life that he believes Tampa Heights' parents wish they could provide. Unfortunately, many board and staff members believe parent's desired economic stability is out of reach. They attribute this to economic inequality. While discussing why the THJrCA program is necessary for the youth of Tampa Heights, board member Jim stated,

That goes to the income inequality... I read a lot of economic literature and the way capital has been moving forward, it's really led to some inequities in society. Access...for the lower and middle class, to things that the middle-upper class think is rudimentary, is not there and a lot of times you can go live your whole life and not realize that these people don't have access to a computer or internet. Something that is so fundamental. They don't have access to a basketball court or a park and that's a deep problem and it's been growing. It's regulatory in nature. There's definitely government role in that.

In this quote, Jim describes structural barriers lower and middle class populations' experience. Rudimentary items upper class people deem as necessities are luxuries to which, people of lower socioeconomic status do not have access. Jim attributes these experiences to America's political-economic structure. He believes access to fundamental conveniences is a huge problem and the government reinforces this inequality. Toby also denoted the THJrCA is important because it provides access to knowledge and opportunities unavailable to Tampa Heights' youth. Toby explains his rationale in the following quote:

Otherwise these kids just wouldn't have the opportunity to confront those other things. It's simply outside of their reach. They're not going to private schools. They're going to inner city public schools therefore their education is confined to the experience there. These are skills that are being offered that are

outside of their normal reach and I am very happy for them in that regard. So, therefore, they can go forth in life having had these experiences and a greater wealth of knowledge and confidence and achievement.

Here, Toby emphasizes structural barriers to education. He contends that Tampa Heights' youth are not going to schools that are going to teach them things that the board members feel are necessary to become successful. These schools have little funding and simply cannot provide the same services as other schools in the area. Thus, the THJrCA must supplement portions of their education and build skills to which youth simply do not have access. Three other board members posited that certain economic baselines are not being met because they have found that most of the youth in their program are from single-parent homes. Without the option for a dual-income household in today's economic climate, single-parent families are unable to provide their children with access to better schools and technology that many other people may take for granted. In all, board and staff members feel that economic inequality strengthens the education and technology gap their youth experience.

These board members posit that education programs in urban communities have largely been a failure. They feel that the inability to meet, and exceed, a primary economic baseline is due to a lack of education about laws and a general understanding of how "systems" operate. They also believe that it is a well known phenomenon that people in poverty do not understand laws and government systems and are taken advantage of in that the laws are used against them. When discussing creating a general understanding of how political and financial systems operate, Andy stated,

There are just- political process. Understand how that works...some people don't even understand about voting and representatives and voting districts. No one teaches you that. It's not in school, so you have to learn it in social settings. Well, in the urban community we're not thinking about that. We're thinking

about where we're going to eat... It kills me! ...no one has a clue about retirement, 401k's, IRAs and it's adults... In the urban community you have all these parents who are uneducated, not school, but generally uneducated about the world. Well, they have kids, right? Now the parents are supposed to teach the kids, but they can't! They don't know! ...it's like we're just recycling these kids. You'll see their parents and then you'll see the kids and you go, 'Yeah, I can see where this is going.' Not that the parents are bad or anything, but the parents was only exposed to this much [demonstrates a small amount with his hands] and can only teach this much, but the world is this big [demonstrates a large amount with his hands]. They only know this neighborhood. They only know that school, because they went there. They only know the work that they do. That's all they kind of know, so we try to add the other pieces. You know there are a lot bigger and broader things out there that your parents don't know.

In this quote, Andy conveys his concern about a lack of political and financial awareness in Tampa Heights. Andy believes parents are ultimately responsible for teaching their children political and financial processes, but they cannot because they were never taught about these systems. Thus, Andy sees a cycle occurring. He believes Tampa Heights' youth are being "recycled." For Andy, a lack of generational awareness creates a cycle of political and economic ignorance. Tampa Heights' are never given a chance to understand important fundamental capitalist systems that could help them become successful, because they are left out of many political-economic processes.

Board and staff members also feel like it was their responsibility to create the THJrCA to promote the social and human capital for youth in poverty. They feel that government agencies, as well as academic researchers, designed to help poor communities, do not give poor communities the attention that they need. Andy explained that there is so much opportunity to learn, but it is difficult to keep researchers or government agencies involved in community development.

It's a lot of hit and miss. You'll get a lot of attention and then it goes away. It needs to be consistent. If you really want consistent attention you need to get a government agency built and they're supposed to give you attention, but then they don't because there's bureaucracy and it becomes a job and it goes away.

Andy believes the only way to receive consistent attention, and help with community development, is to have a government agency that provides services to residents. However, he posits that even those agencies that are designed to help the community become disinterested quickly. He attributes this phenomenon to the political-economic structure of organizations.

Because Tampa Heights' youth are living in a community with the lowest income generating households in Tampa, the THJrCA recognizes that youth do not have access to as much of the technology and general education in schools compared to children in other neighborhoods due to political-economic structures. Therefore, the THJrCA feels it is imperative to have a computer lab and to offer other activities that can bridge the gap of education inequality in schools. Since the education system has failed residents, due to a lack of economic resources, board and staff members feel it is their responsibility to create a program that can bridge the gap.

Overall, board and staff members of the THJrCA concluded that a lack of family structure, a lack of parental involvement, problems with youth, and a lack of access to resources contribute to poverty. Participants discussed a historical shift in family dynamics and child rearing practices, as well as the absence of fathers in the Tampa Heights' community. They feel that these shifts in family dynamics have led to a lack of family structure and a decrease in parental involvement. Participants also believe that what they see as a deficient household structure and minimal parental involvement leads to bad behavior and a lack of achievement in youth. Although board and staff members attribute youth's low academic achievement with

disengaged parenting, they also recognize systemic problems within schools and political-economic systems.

### **Perceived Solutions to Poverty**

The causes of poverty discussed by participants are explained through individual, cultural, political-economic, and geographic ideologies. The problems (causes of poverty) board and staff members discussed are all addressed by their program. Family structure, parental involvement, problems with youth, and access to resources, all influence the community development solutions that participants describe. These solutions are: creating lifelong learners, providing alternative environments, and influencing family achievement. In order to reach these goals, the THJrCA has created an after school program that encourages civic engagement and leadership development, provides tutoring and mentoring services, takes youth on field trips, builds job skills such as entrepreneurship and business training, and teaches youth how to create and maintain a sustainable food source through their community garden.

Returning to Bradshaw's table in Table 1, community development programs that subscribe to the individual theory of poverty provide training to individuals in poverty. Therefore this theory connects with the THJrCA's tutoring and mentoring services. The THJrCA's creation of an after-school program that encourages civic engagement and leadership development fulfills the cultural approach. Their emphasis on education and field trips to universities, colleges, and local political functions, as well as their entrepreneurship program illustrates the political-economic approach. Finally, geographic causes of poverty are addressed through teaching food sustainability in their community garden.

Life does not fit neatly into categories and as my participants discussed solutions to poverty, they drew on multiple theories of poverty. While I have categorized different causes as belonging to an “individual,” “cultural,” “political-economic,” or “geographic” theory of poverty, it is important to note that most of the THJrCA’s programs are multi-faceted and combat multiple causes of poverty. This section will illuminate these complexities.

### **Alternative Environments**

All board members and staff spoke of the importance of creating alternative environments for youth. The THJrCA wants to create safe spaces that are conducive to learning. While discussing the goals of the organization, Dwight stated that the primary thrust of the THJrCA is to alter social “issues.” According to Dwight, altering inherent negative social behavior is critical to their program. Dwight not only pointed out how important it is to teach proper social interaction between young boys and girls, but he also stressed that it is their responsibility to alter youth’s frame of mind. He stated,

It’s a poor community. More importantly, it’s a community who people kind of generally, I think, pretty much have a consistent frame of thought about life, their lives and the lives around them, and how the world treats them. So, bringing a child out of that environment and saying, ‘That’s not the only world that exists.’

In this quote, Dwight illustrates the importance of providing an alternative social environment using cultural causes and solutions. The THJrCA has become the necessary environment where youth’s current frame of mind can be modified. Dwight, as well as seven other participants, believes this environment is important to expand the minds of Tampa Heights’ youth and show them that there are different ways of thinking and living. Some participants also believe it is

necessary to expose Tampa Heights' youth to different environments so they know what opportunities are available to them if they work hard. Kevin stated,

We take kids to governmental function, board meeting, and things like that. We take kids to campus state trips. We just go out in that kind of environment and show kids what is there for them if they apply themselves...there are alternatives that you can choose that you might not have thought about to go on in your life.

While Kevin subscribes to the individual theory of poverty by using language such as “apply” and “choose,” his proposed solution includes aspects of the political-economic structure. Andy emphasized the importance of structure, when creating an alternative learning environment, in order to show youth that they can be successful if they apply themselves and the THJrCA provides them with opportunities. While Andy primarily focuses on parental involvement and family structure, which is very rooted in the cultural theory of causes of poverty, he links these differences in family structure and parenting style to differences in economic resources, acknowledging the political-economic contributions to poverty. In the following quote, Andy described why he thinks providing these opportunities are necessary:

Middle class people, upper class people, and all the way up to the elite I'm sure that as they're raising families they're planting these seeds from a very young age. They're sort of molding their children to be the best that they can be so they can enter the best schools and become model citizens, whereas I don't see that in the inner city. They're just kind of roaming around doing whatever they can. There's no real structure.

Within this quote, Andy explains that economic classes influence cultural values. He believes that lower-income values do not provide youth with the same opportunities as those in middle and upper class families. The values low-income families utilize are contrary to norms of success. Therefore, youth are not raised to be successful. According to Andy, this subculture does not allow low-income parents to mold their children to be the best they can be. Therefore, it

is necessary for the THJrCA to create an alternative environment where youth can be provided with structure and opportunities to become successful and prevent youth from aimlessly roaming the streets.

### **Creating Lifelong Learners**

Other participants echo that education is important and needs to be stressed even more in the THJrCA program. While this may sound like a political-economic approach to solving poverty, many board and staff members focused on individual's attitudes towards learning. For example, Kevin thinks adults and youth would be more successful if they had a more favorable view of learning. Kevin describes his opinion on continued learning in the following quote:

Not many people, once they're done with their formal education, continue learning... if we can plant the seeds in these young kids now, to never stop learning, to never stop pursuing something greater, to never stop trying to be something greater than they were yesterday, they're more likely to continue down that path when they become teenagers and young adults... show the kids that learning is very exciting and you should never want to stop learning about something... These are things that I wish there were more of or at least more encouraged to the youth, especially the at risk youth. I feel like there's a lot that they're ignorant to, because they don't have anyone telling them or at least someone they can relate to.

Kevin believes that not enough people continue their education. To motivate Tampa Heights' youth to engage in continued learning, Kevin suggests showing youth that learning is fun. If the THJrCA can get children to enjoy learning, they will *want* to continue their education after primary school and throughout their adulthood. Kevin's relies on an individual-based strategy to mold the youth of Tampa Heights into lifelong learners.

Kevin also advocates providing youth with a role model from the community. It is necessary to make learning fun to engage youth, but providing a role model children can connect

with is the most effective way to internally motivate children to achieve higher education. In the following quote Kevin explains why a mentor adolescents can connect with is essential:

More people [It] can have a deeper impact on these kids' lives, because they can say 'This person came from where I came from. This person looks like me. This person talks like me.' They can relate to that person. To me, that carries a lot of weight when you have someone willing to give you advice and help you in a way when you know they had a similar background as you and they made it. They gained something out of it and now they're putting it to good use. I think that really is very powerful.

In this quote, Kevin describes the feelings children can have when they see someone from their same background achieve higher education and success. He thinks this experience can make youth aware of their own potential to be successful if they apply what they're learning through the THJrCA. To Kevin, a role model is the most powerful tool the THJrCA can use to get adolescents motivated and excited about the program, gain valuable knowledge from the program, and apply that knowledge.

### **Influencing Family Achievement**

Many participants agree that creating an alternative environment to mold youth into life-long learners, outside of school and their households, is important. On the other hand, some participants, who subscribe to a cultural theory of poverty, expressed concern about sending children back to their homes. For example, Andy feels that some of what the THJrCA teaches the kids is lost when the kids go home. He believes that educating parents and other adults in the neighborhood will help break this cycle. Andy stated,

We send them right back to their parents. We spend so much time with the kids. We need to educate the parents too. They need to learn the same things! ... One of the reasons I got my degree is when I'm out here I try to use some of the tools that you learn to

educate, not just have conversations or whatever. To educate the adults around me, and the parents of these programs about some of these things, so now they're also educated and maybe they'll educate their friends. So, that's a gap too. We miss a lot of kids and those kids become uneducated adults. Those adults have kids. We educate those kids, but they lose half of it when they go home, because the parents are like, 'I don't know what you're talking about' or 'I read on Facebook that da, da, da, da, da.' So, it's like a never ending cycle, so until we can educate a generation of children along with the generation of parents who are going to be grandparents... See grandparents know, but by that time it's too late [chuckles]. The kid's already grown and had another kid. The grandparent's trying to tell the grandson, 'Look, I should have known this 20 years ago.' It's too late. It's too late. So, that's why we're here.

Andy stresses the importance of reaching as many children and adults as possible. He believes that some of the efforts of the THJrCA to educate children are lost due to uneducated adults. By the time adults become educated it's too late. He posits that these issues further generational education gaps. According to Andy, the only solution is to fully educate multiple generations in order to change the culture in their homes.

Other participants are a bit more optimistic about the education efforts of the THJrCA. They have hopes that children will apply what they learned from the youth center at home to create a healthier home with more stability and open communication. Their goal is to change the culture at home but their approach to solve the problems at home involves focusing on the *individual* child. Kevin's goal is to make learning fun so that children are excited and automatically apply what they learn in the youth center at home, without thinking. Kevin stated,

If we can disguise learning and make it fun, they won't even realize it. I want them to leave and get excited and do more research about it when they get home about a particular topic or talk to their parents and their grandparents about it. Then hopefully create a little trickle effect [lowers voice] especially with some of these situations where it's babies having babies. You know, you get a four year old, a four or five year old kid, whose mom is not even 20 and they're at a point too where maybe this child can

produce a shift in their way of thinking where the parent that is still young enough to turn their own life around. There's many people going back to school now in their 30s and 40s, so I would like to see that as well, see kids taking this information back home and helping their parents out or their grandparents out.

Kevin particularly hopes that the child's education in the alternate environment the THJrCA supplies will change the way their parents, particularly young parents, think. He hopes that youth will inspire their parents to seek higher education and a better life. Toby also talked about family achievement. While discussing his personal goals for the youth, he stated, "I'm hoping that would provide them with the opportunity of better jobs and better career choices and as far as the families are concerned, that the bleed-over there would be an uplifting effect for families."

Other participants discuss youth they are unable to reach and change their frame of mind, due to the larger culture surrounding them in everyday life. Dwight, a board member, mentioned that some of the parents of whom he considers "troubled youth," do not seem to be doing a very good job of raising their children. While discussing his concerns, Dwight said, "We've had some kids whose parents...don't appear to be doing such a good job. It's human condition. It's all over the place..." He believes that troubled youth adopt the behavior of their parents rather than the values and behaviors the THJrCA tries to instill, but many board members acknowledge that the problem is more complex than simply "bad parenting." Youth and families are stuck in a culture of poverty. In order to alter this behavior, board and staff members feel obligated to instill "proper" mainstream values in Tampa Heights' youth with hopes that these ideals could help alter family values and improve household living conditions.

Overall, it was evident that board and staff members invest large amounts of time in Tampa Heights' youth with the hope that their services provide these children with the knowledge and skills, as well as opportunities, to improve their households and daily lives,

eventually creating a population of higher-educated individuals and a healthy, sustainable neighborhood. The importance of the THJrCA that many participants discussed is eloquently summed up by Toby in the following quote:

I think that it's something there is a very very big need for...because there are children in our community who otherwise, would stumble and fall along the way had it not been for the opportunity to be involved in the programs that are offered by the association.

Participants believe it is necessary to create alternative environments for the youth to learn new ideas, and positive social values, as well as closing educational gaps. With these new ideas and positive social values, board and staff members hope to mold the youth into life-long learners. Finally, there is an ultimate goal of influencing family achievement. Participants hope their efforts with Tampa Heights' youth will become integrated into their households, increasing upward mobility. Participants effectively believe the service their organization provides is necessary to create bright futures for the youth of Tampa Heights.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Participant Values and Theories of Poverty

Board and staff members of the THJrCA use their cumulative values and perspectives on poverty to determine what programs to offer, what goals they would like the Tampa Heights' youth and families to achieve, and their rationale for wanting or needing a community center. These values and theories of poverty can be detected through the words participants use to describe *how* and *why* something is important, *why* they think a phenomenon is occurring, and *what* strategies they feel will fix poverty. To determine which theories of poverty board and staff members subscribed to, I analyzed each transcription based on Bradshaw's (2007) definitions and explanations of each theory of poverty. Once I constructed the findings, based off Bradshaw's work, I read through each quote used, to showcase board and staff members' perspectives of poverty, and to determine participants' cultural values. In the end, I found that all participants subscribed to multiple theories of poverty, but they each had one dominant perspective. For example, individual and cultural theories of poverty were highly related, as well as political-economic and geographic. A few participants primarily subscribed to the individual theory of poverty, while discussing why the youth of Tampa Heights need the services of the THJrCA, but used the culture of poverty theory to describe how their program could impact the neighborhood of Tampa Heights.

## **A Critique of the Cumulative and Cyclical Theory**

While theories of poverty explain how organizations approach development in impoverished communities, there is still much work to be done on understanding the complexity of these theories. Individual, cultural, political-economic, and geographic theories have been oversimplified. In response to this oversimplification, Bradshaw attempted to create a holistic and complex approach in order to explain both causes of poverty and the approach modern nonprofit organizations are taking. However, his theory is unclear.

Bradshaw defines the cumulative and cyclical approach as a complex strategy that builds on components of individual, cultural, political-economic, and geographic theories “in that it looks at the individual and their community as caught in a spiral of opportunities and problems, and...once problems dominate, they close other opportunities and create a cumulative set of problems that make any effective response nearly impossible (Bradshaw, 2007, pg. 17).”

Bradshaw labels his theory “cumulative and cyclical,” yet he explains this theory through the cycle of poverty. Social scientists have been discussing the cycle of poverty for decades. Therefore, is the cumulative and cyclical theory a new approach to poverty or is it a reinvention of the cycle of poverty? If the category of cumulative and cyclical does differ from the cycle of poverty, these nuances need to be expressed and clearly stated. If ideas of poverty, and possibly poverty itself, have become more complex, then social scientists, as well as community developers, need to understand modern ideas, causes, and solutions to poverty. If theories are unclear, they are helpful to neither researchers, nor nonprofit organizations, nor clients themselves.

Furthermore, Bradshaw discusses the cumulative and cyclical approach through recognizing all causes of poverty and the necessity to utilize multiple solutions to address these causes. According to Bradshaw, even if each person in an organization does not recognize each theory of poverty, they can still come together and design a multifaceted program through their cumulative ideologies. However, if these organizations do not consciously pull these ideologies together to create a cumulative program, then what other communication and social processes between organizational members must be present? Studying social processes and levels of communication through which nonprofit organizations formulate cumulative approaches can aid other organizations in altering their approach to communication between members if the organization is not reaching the outcomes of a cumulative approach.

### **The Complexity of Applying Theories of Poverty**

As previously stated, each participant had one dominant view of poverty. Andy, Ryan, Dwight, and Toby primarily discussed poverty as a subculture. Kevin, Erin, and Stanley generally pointed to individual deficiencies while discussing causes of poverty, but predominantly explained solutions to poverty through cultural ideology. Pam and Jim mostly discussed a lack of political-economic inclusion and structural barriers as the primary contributors to poverty. Finally, Kelly focused her explanations of poverty in Tampa Heights' through its geographic location. There were also five participants that discussed three out of the four theories of poverty through both causes and solutions or a combination of causes and solutions. Finally, two participants explained poverty, its causes and solutions, through all four theories of poverty. Although participants clearly held one dominant view of poverty, other ideologies were woven into their explanations for both causes of and solutions to poverty. Also,

participants often used multiple theories to explain community issues, but discussed the solution to these issues through a different theory of poverty. These findings illustrate the complexity of our cultural ideologies. Although the theories of poverty are clear, the ideas and explanations participants gave showed how intertwined these theories are. Unfortunately, theories of poverty do not showcase the complexity of these findings.

Overall, I found that ideologies about poverty are intertwined. Participants often discussed causes of poverty through one theory, but solutions to these problems through another. These findings show the complexity of deciding what causes poverty and what the best solutions are to alleviate poverty. A new model that is simplified yet, reflects the complexities of ideologies drawn from our cultural experiences, can make these findings more clear. In all, this study shows that the board and staff members of the THJrCA subscribe to all theories of poverty. Unfortunately, there is no way to tell how an organization actually carries out their ideologies through interviews, but, according to Bradshaw, recognizing all of the theories of poverty within one organization is a positive sign that an organization is utilizing a multi-faceted approach to address poverty.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

There are approximately 7.5 million grassroots organizations in the United States (Smith, 2000). Millions of youth and their families depend on these organizations to help meet their daily needs as well as provide services and opportunities they cannot access. The THJrCA in Tampa Heights, Tampa, Florida is one of these organizations. This organization was created by leaders in the community and serves many impoverished youth and families in Tampa Heights.

Theories of poverty are woven into these organizations. These theories influence what services are provided, as well as which ideologies are replicated. Therefore, depending on which theory of poverty is used, nonprofit organization can either pull individuals and communities out of poverty or jeopardize people and communities experiencing poverty through perpetuating negative stereotypes. When applying these theories to interviews with board and staff member of the THJrCA, I found that all theories of poverty were discussed through causes of poverty and solutions to poverty in Tampa Heights. Although the THJrCA's board and staff members recognize the complexity of poverty as a collective group, it is unclear whether the organization truly takes a cumulative and cyclical approach to poverty. Since organizations like the THJrCA serve millions of people, studying these types of organization is essential. Program evaluations, as well as more contributions to literature on theories of poverty, organizational values, civic associations, small nonprofit organizations, and community development will raise awareness of how we can serve or better serve youth in underserved urban communities.

## **Limitations**

It is important to note this study is not generalizable to all small nonprofit junior civic associations. This study focuses on one junior civic association, therefore, only telling the story of one group of community activists. Other small, nonprofit junior civic associations may operate differently, have different experiences, subscribe to different theories of poverty, and espouse different values.

I also encountered time limitations that may have led to participants not discussing all of their thoughts. Many board members have professional jobs outside of their work with the THJrCA, allowing very little time to schedule an interview. Often board members fit my interview between meetings, before work, or after work. I often felt like participants were worried about making it to work, or their next meeting on time, or they were tired and would rather be relaxing at home after a long day's work. Staff members were also very busy, often allowing me to interview them while they were working. Some staff members became distracted during the interview, often pausing to check on children. These pauses may have led staff members lose their train of thought and forget something that they were going to say or to not be fully focused on our discussion.

## **Future Research**

This research studies one small nonprofit grassroots organization. To understand how small nonprofit grassroots organizations generally operate, many more of these types of organizations would need to be studied. Also, more civic and junior civic associations need to be studied. There is very little literature on civic associations and almost no literature on junior civic associations. We need to study more of these organizations to understand how they operate. As

for the THJrCA, the ways in which the values of board and staff members are translated into the activities they offer, needs to be studied in-depth. Theories of poverty and values integrated into programs could be detrimental to Tampa Heights' youth, demonizing and perpetuating negative ideologies of impoverished communities. Therefore, youth outcomes and the ways in which the values of the THJrCA have impacted the youth of Tampa Heights, also needs attention. My work has begun the discussion of the theories of poverty and values that the THJrCA espouse, but a program evaluation would need to be done to determine how these theories of poverty and values affect the outcomes for Tampa Heights' youth. Finally, if the programs that the THJrCA offers are successful, board and staff members need to document what they are doing and how they are doing it, so that their organization can be used as a model for other communities that would like to create a junior civic association focused on community development. Although my research has contributed to many bodies of understudied literature, there is still much research to be done.

### **Positionality**

These research findings are interpretive, meaning my personal experiences and my positionality as a white, middle class, educated woman have influenced my analysis of the data. My interpretation of the data has also been molded by how I understand each theory of poverty, as well as other relevant literature. Therefore, other researchers may interpret my data differently.

My presence as a white, educated student and researcher could have influenced board members' actions and language during board meetings. My presence also may have influenced how participants discussed a topic or addressed a question in face to face interviews. Many participants would pause to think before answering a question, often saying, "How do I say

this?” I noticed that black or African American participants were more careful with their words and gave full explanations when discussing racial inequality. These participants spoke to me like I did not, and likely could not, understand their experiences, whereas white and other minority participants explained very little, unless prompted. These participants would often say, “You know what I mean,” while discussing individual and cultural contributors to poverty. I was treated as if I automatically understood their logic and thought process. Many participants became confused or said the same thing over again if I asked them to explain what they meant.

Although there are limitations to qualitative research that could have influenced the data and findings, qualitative research allowed me to capture the personal experiences of participants of an essential community organization. I feel privileged to have gotten to know my participants so well. I feel honored that the board and staff members of the THJrCA welcomed me into their organization and were excited for me to do my research on their organization.

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## **Appendix A: Addendum**

During the course of data collection, board and staff members were dealing with the threat of the proposed highway expansion plan, the Tampa Bay Expressway (TBX), eliminating the second site of the THJrCA. TBX is a proposed interstate expansion project that will add express toll lanes on highways throughout Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Polk counties. The widening of both sides of the interstate to accommodate express toll lanes would eliminate the THJrCA community center, as well as Tampa Heights' community garden, causing six years of hard work and almost one million dollars in donations lost. The community center that community activists have spent the last six years rehabilitating is in jeopardy of being seized by FDOT and demolished to expand the interstate. Outraged, community activists have been fighting back against FDOT to save their youth center and continue their community outreach goals.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2015, there were emergency meetings about TBX and board meetings were often dedicated to discussing how they were going to fight for their building. Since TBX was so prominent in the lives of the THJrCA board and staff members, naturally most participants mentioned or discussed TBX in interviews. Most participants offered the same answers when asked about what they dislike about the organization and what they would change about the organization if they had unlimited resources: the location of their building and TBX. The threat of TBX greatly influenced what participants discussed and their

feelings in interviews. Many times I would have to eventually steer the interview back to the interview guide, because participants spent so much time venting about the threat of TBX.

Working to fight against TBX also changed work dynamics, creating strain on some relationships within the organization. Many board and staff members mentioned they felt frustrated that much of the work load that the organization used to do together, such as writing grants, were pushed to only a few people. These participants acknowledged that this issue was due to TBX and was not really the fault of the organization, but nevertheless, it was frustrating. Overall, interviews resulted in copious amounts of data that fully answered my research questions, but it greatly affected participants' responses and emotions, when asked certain questions. The threat of TBX did not compromise the integrity of my data, but TBX did alter some board and staff members' perspective of the organization and potential organizational improvements.

## Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH FLORIDA  
August 20, 2015

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE  
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669  
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799  
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

Monica Heimos  
Sociology  
Tampa, FL 33607

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00022980

Title: Civic Engagement Programs for Youth: A Case Study of a Junior Civic Association

**Study Approval Period: 8/19/2015 to 8/19/2016**

Dear Ms. Heimos:

On 8/19/2015, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

**Approved Item(s):**

**Protocol Document(s):**

[Study Protocol.docx](#)

**Consent/Assent Document(s)\*:**

[Informed Consent.pdf](#)

\*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category: Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristen Salomon', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson  
USF Institutional Review Board

## Appendix C: Informed Consent



### **Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk**

**Pro #** Pro00022980

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You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

#### **Civic Engagement Programs for Youth: A Case Study of a Junior Civic Association**

The person who is in charge of this research study is Monica Heimos. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Emelda Curry.

The research will be conducted at a public place of the participants choosing.

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#### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to find out how the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association operates and how board members and staff create their youth programs. This information will contribute to a current discussion of how nonprofit organizations and junior civic associations operate, as well as, how the values held by program creators' influence how programs are constructed.

#### **Why are you being asked to take part?**

I am asking you to take part in this research study because your perspective as board member or staff member offers unique insight into how junior civic associations operate and create their programs.

### **Study Procedures:**

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to meet the researcher, at a time of your choosing, in person to be interviewed for approximately 90 minutes to discuss your position and experience with the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed word for word; however, your name and information will not be associated with the transcriptions. Recordings will be deleted once the interview is transcribed.

### **Total Number of Participants**

About fourteen individuals will take part in this study. All individuals will be board members or staff of the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association.

### **Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal**

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

### **Benefits**

We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

### **Risks or Discomfort**

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

### **Compensation**

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

### **Costs**

*It will not cost you anything* to take part in the study.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

I will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, the Co-Investigator, and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP) as applicable.

- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

**You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Monica Heimos at (321) 360-6166.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638.

**Consent to Take Part in this Research Study**

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

**Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent**

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

## **Appendix D: Interview Guide**

### **I. Interview with board members and staff:**

1. Can you tell a little bit about what you do in the organization?
  - a. What is your role? Schedule?
2. Can you tell me the story of how you became involved with the THJrCA?
3. What are some of the needs of the families that become involved?
4. Can you tell me about the programs you offer?
5. Can you tell me a story about what inspired a particular program?
  - a. Why is this particular program necessary?
6. How do your programs serve the needs of the families?
7. How are these programs important for the families you serve?
8. Can you tell me about your main goals for the families you serve?
9. If you had unlimited resources for the organization, is there anything you would change?
10. What do you like about the THJrCA?
11. What do you dislike about the THJrCA?
12. Tell me a case where this organization really helped somebody.
13. Tell me about a case where this organization was unable to help somebody.
14. Is there anything you want to talk about that I have not asked about?
15. Do you have any questions for me?