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Family Life in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens

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Family Life in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens

by

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ABSTRACT

This study will investigate family life and explore the realities and the resilience of traditional, Black middle class families in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens through changing times. This research will contribute to the literature on local history in Tampa, with a particular focus on Black family. The goal of this study is to demonstrate how Black families support and sustain themselves through the collective efforts of the community and extend kinships.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Carver City- Lincoln Gardens Demographic Description

Carver City- Lincoln Gardens is a historically Black community, located in an area of Tampa known as “West Tampa”. It is a small community in western Hillsborough County located west of North Dale Mabry Highway, east of North Westshore Boulevard, north of West Cypress Street and south of Boy Scout Boulevard. This neighborhood began developing in the 1940s during the Jim Crow Era. Created to perpetuate racial segregation, Jim Crow laws determined where children went to school, who could marry whom, and where people could and could not live. Of course laws like these ultimately affected family life for all. The boundaries of Black neighborhoods were predetermined by racist laws; Blacks could not reside in the same neighborhoods as Whites. According to Wise, “VA and FHA loan programs for housing, both of which utilized racially-restrictive underwriting criteria, thereby assuring that hardly any of the \$120 billion in housing equity loaned from the late forties to the early sixties through the programs would go to families of color. These loans helped finance over half of all suburban housing construction in the country during this period, less than two percent of which ended up being lived in by non-Whites (Wise, 2000).” However, the 1947 court case of *Shelley v. Kramer* was America’s first attempt to establish equal housing rights and eliminate racial discrimination in the housing market (Civil Rights Chronology, 2001). Although these laws were in place they were not speedily enforced. Nearly 20 years after the Supreme Court ruling it was still necessary

to create additional housing laws due to racism. During the Civil Rights era, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 was created. This law prohibited discrimination in home ownership. This study intervenes in the literature on the Black family to demonstrate functional, effective kinship structures that provide resilience for traditional, middle-class Black families.

Historically, Carver City and Lincoln Gardens were two distinctive communities in which African-Americans could own homes. In 1983 the civic associations of each community merged into one. Lincoln Gardens was a community designated for Black military veterans to purchase or build homes. Lincoln Gardens is located the northeastern corner of the area. The two communities are separated by Spruce Street and Lois Avenue. The Black families in the Carver City- Lincoln Gardens area transformed (at times with their bare hands) what long-time residents endearingly refer to as the “woods,” “sticks,” and/or “swamp” into a thriving community. They literally and physically brought life to this then rural but now sub-urban area. Carver City- Lincoln Gardens became one of the places for young Black families in Tampa to begin their adult lives. These families poured in to this neighborhood securing property and building homes. They raised children, formed businesses, friendships, churches, and more. All of these things were necessary to sustain one of the few neighborhoods (due to racially restrictive laws) that they were allowed to call home.

The term middle class in this study is specifically relative to the Black middle class experience. The Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Community is categorized as middle class in this study because of homeownership, family stability, and community involvement. The developmental process of the communities through some of the most racially restrictive times is as amazing as turning water into wine.

Carver City-Lincoln Gardens has survived for generations. Today, the small community is constantly threatened by urban renewal and other development plans. Several families in the Carver City- Lincoln Gardens neighborhood were practically forced to sell their homes due to interstate expansion as well as the construction of upscale apartment complexes. The neighborhood is adjacent to the largest business districts in the state of Florida (Westshore Alliance, 2015). It is enclosed and nearly suffocated by constant development. Norman Wright a resident of Carver City told news reporters how he felt about the interstate expansion project: "We gonna be living in the middle of an interstate. Right now, we're in the middle of a construction zone war zone... it's crazy"(ABC Action News, 2013). He is not alone in his frustration and other residents expressed themselves during the same news report. "This has just really gutted our community," added Tedd Scott (ABC Action News, 2013). Surrounding the community there is the Tampa International Airport, large shopping malls, gentlemen's clubs, corporate and residential building complexes, hotels, restaurants and major highways. Within the neighborhood there are hundreds of homes, 7 Black churches, 2 playgrounds, 3 schools. Yet, there has been very little exploration of this community's history. There has not been any examination of the role of family life in maintaining the individual and collective identity and vitality of this historically Black community.

This study will investigate family life and explore the realities and the resilience of Black middle class families in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens through changing times. The ethnographic evidence collected in this project will be used to argue that kinship networks are exhaustive in the extent that they support Black families and reinforce the functionality of families. These networks are important because they ultimately create an organic system of resistance, support, and activism. The strategies of survival formulated by the community must be stronger and

smarter than the beast (racial oppression) that threatens the community's very existence. This study documents Black middle class, a population that is innovative and underrepresented by scholars. The speed of urban renewal surrounding this community is a threat to the community's existence and increases the urgency for this project.

Importance of Study

There are several reasons that this study is important. First, this study is important because there is little to no documentation of scholarly research in this particular community. The local school district is in desperate need of this type of literature. Local history is at risk of being lost as many of the original community members are now elderly or deceased. Even as the residents struggle to keep the community alive, urban renewal and other development plans affects the community's opportunities for growth and threatens the continued existence of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens as it is historically known. This community could potentially become only fond memories for some. Researchers attempted to salvage memories from Central Avenue Business District, the once Black business district in Tampa, because the area as it was in the past was no more. This project will include some historical data on Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Community that will emerge from structured interviews with residents. While most discussions with members of households will primarily focus on definitions of "family life", it will be important to ask interviewees to discuss their lives in the context of the community.

Second, this study is important because it focuses on family life in a historically Black community. Similar to sociologist, Mary Pattillo-McCoy's research on families in predominantly Black communities in suburban Chicago, I want to examine individual residents in the context of family life while also examining family life within the context of the

community. I want to know how and why these families have remained in these communities over time. I want to know how living in these communities affects residents' sense of family. I want to know how these families are involved in the neighborhoods.

Early studies of Black families often reinforced negative stereotypes. This was often by Black and White researchers who repeatedly used Black vs. White comparative analyses which portrayed White families as the norm while “othering” Black families. This particular study will illuminate the Black family experience by detailing how they managed life with minimal focus of the racial inhibitors that are often overbearing in literature of Black families. I want to shift the focus (without minimizing the experience from being Black and the target of extreme racial bigotry) to highlighting the Black community's victories. I provide some historical background mainly to increase the understanding of things that could be perceived as simple if disclosure of the struggle is not present. One infamous study, *The Moynihan Report* portrays U.S. Black families as dysfunctional matriarchies. This report has been a pivotal source of ongoing debate since its publication in 1965. *The Moynihan Report* is often cited in much of the popular and social science literature on Black families. In an attempt to understand and explain the reasons for Black poverty, the Moynihan Report fueled negative myths and stereotypes regarding Black family life by comparing Black and White families. Stereotypes about Black family life were provoked by comments from the Moynihan report, such as:

“Negroes are among the weakest.” “At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time.” “...36 percent of Negro children are living in broken homes *at any specific moment...*” (Moynihan, 1965)

Staples asserts that there is repetitiveness in focus to unveil the Black problem. In his analysis of theories produced in literature on Black families he found a flawed pattern. The major problem was that social scientists were further stigmatizing the Black family to the point

that one could make the general assumption based on literature of that time, that the Black family was “incapable of rearing individuals who could adjust to the demands of civilized societies” (Staples, 1970). The articles were based on groundless myths and produced negative stereotypes about the Black family in the public mind (Staples, 1971). This has perpetuated myths concluding that Black families in America are dysfunctional, impoverished and undereducated.

Edward Carr, a British trained 20th century scholar and writer, examines the study of history and the writing of history (historiography) in his book titled *What Is History?* He argues that history is an ambiguous study as it is influenced by a number of factors. These underlying factors ultimately create bias in the interpretations of historical facts. Carr guides the readers in an expansive thought provoking process to answer the question “what is history?” Carr uses comparative analyses of ancient and modern historical interpretations that were influenced by their present society’s perception to highlight how interpretations of historical facts can be inaccurate or later understood differently. It is necessary to apply these skills in this study. Carr states that “history consists essentially in seeing the past through the eyes of the present” and that “the facts of history never come to us pure” (Carr, 1961). He argues that there is an ongoing, never-ending continuance of historical facts and the way those facts relate to the historian and the present. Every historian plays a role in the interpretation of history that is both subjective and biased. These biases are unavoidable as each individual is a product of their environment. This is not to insinuate that historians do not attempt to be objective in their reporting, selection and interpretation of historical facts. It is a reminder of the inevitability of bias that affects historical interpretations. Carr recommends that “before you study history, study the historian...before you study the historian, study his historical and social background” (Carr, 1961). This concept is applicable trans-disciplinary as tool for scholars and researchers.

Understanding the historian, the society from which they belong, and his/her background is the first step toward understanding the various interpretations of history.

Fifty years after the original publishing of the Moynihan Report, it continues to pique the interest of scholars. Contemporary scholar, Ta Nehisi Coates, highlights a different perspective of Moynihan, the report and its intent in his recent article “The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration.” His interpretation is more in-depth. This level of depth can be attributed to time. Time has provided a broader hindsight perception that was hindered in period of time that the Moynihan report was published. Coates provides background about Moynihan that includes the fact that he came from a single-parent home. He suggests that Moynihan had hopes of his report improving the conditions of Black families through increasing political awareness that would lead to policy changes. Coates argues that “Moynihan’s aim in writing ‘The Negro Family’ had been to muster support for an all-out government assault on the structural social problems that held Black families down. (‘Family as an issue raised the possibility of enlisting the support of conservative groups for quite radical social programs,’ he would later write.) Instead his report was portrayed as an argument for leaving the Black family to fend for itself” (Coates, 2015). The article is often reviewed as an attempt to alleviate or shift some of blame for the many years of oppression away from the White society making the culprit the impoverished Black woman. “In its bombastic language, its omission of policy recommendations, its implication that Black women were obstacles to Black men’s assuming their proper station, and its unnecessarily covert handling, the Moynihan Report militated against its author’s aim” (Coates, 2015).

Billingsley points out two common trends in research on American families. He argues that Black family life is either ignored or considered a social problem (Billingsley, 1968). Carol Stack argues that “many descriptions of Black American domestic life by both Blacks and

Whites (Frazier 1939; Drake and Cayton 1945; Abrams 1963; Moynihan 1965; Rainwater 1966) have over looked the interdependence and cooperation of kinsmen in Black communities” (Stack, 1970). She suggests these limited analysis imply that homes absent of fathers were broken and/or dysfunctional. Many researchers seek to test how much the Black family has conformed or assimilated to what is considered the basic social family unit (nuclear family or “American” family). Staples and Billingsley statements unfortunately are valid as they relate to the research on Black family life Carver City-Lincoln Gardens. The history of Black families in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens has not been documented and the networks of kinship that characterize these families have not been studied. This study is also important because it focuses on the Black middle class. It is important to study traditional, Black middle class communities because these communities are constantly misrepresented in the media and in literature. I argue that this ethnography will demonstrate the effectiveness of domestic life among Carver City-Lincoln Gardens residents through interdependence and cooperation with extended kinships and community institutions.

Since the work of DuBois, researchers have made much progress with the production of literature on Black families. The Black family is of interest to researchers of various disciplines and racial/ethnic backgrounds. There have been many studies conducted on Black families and communities. However, with the exception of studies on Tampa’s original Black community led by University of South Florida Professors, Cheryl Rodriguez and Susan Greenbaum, Tampa’s Black communities have managed to remain out of the scope of interest for many researchers. My goals in this study parallel in various ways with some of the purposes and conclusions of their local research on the Black community. This research will contribute to the literature on local history in Tampa, with a particular focus on Black family in one historically Black

community, Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. The goal of this study is to demonstrate how Black families support and sustain themselves through the collective efforts of the community and extended kinships.

Research Questions

This study makes a departure from the social science focus on Black poverty. I propose to examine middle-class Black family life; the roles of historically Black communities in 21st century Black family life; and the roles of community institutions and organizations in supporting Black family life in the 21st century. My project will address the following questions:

1. How is Black family life defined for residents of Carver City Lincoln Gardens? Is family defined in terms of the nuclear family structure or the extended family structure?
2. How do family histories reflect the history of the community? When family members tell stories about their lives, what roles does the community play in those stories?
3. What institutions and/or organizations contribute to family stability in this community? Is the church a major source of support or are there other support services that play a more prominent role?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides a solid foundation for understanding factors that influence Black family life, particularly in predominant Black communities. More specifically, this examination of literature facilitates a better comprehension of the value of kinships, networks, and trends in scholarship as it relates to Black families. There are many fine details that require investigation in order to fully comprehend the Black family. Over the decades a few theories have changed and others have remained consistently same. The Black family is an institution that many scholars have attacked or approached by organizing conceptual and theoretical models. Major concepts that are examined in these types of studies include historical, social, political, and religious perspectives. Since the Black family and the Black community form a mutually dependent relationship, this literature review is organized in three parts. The first section reviews the perspectives of Black families according to classic studies. The second section examines literature on Black communities. The final section reviews the significance of kinships and community networks.

Classic Studies of Black Families in the U.S.

Classic Studies of Black family life include the work of Andrew Billingsley, Harriette Pipes McAdoo, Leonor Boulton Johnson and Robert Staples. These are just a few of the authors that have produced major sociological studies that explore the *complexities* of Black family life in America. During the period of Civil Rights Movements and shortly after the publishing of the

Moynihan Report, Andrew Billingsley's important work, *Black Families in White America*, was published in 1968. The author responded to the distorted and uninformed treatment of Black families by social scientists. Billingsley could be described as a Black nationalist but that would not be surprising given the era of this work. He was a pioneer in the literature on Black families at a time when scholarly work was scarce and Eurocentric. Twenty years later McAdoo published *Black Families 2nd Edition*. Her work creates an encyclopedic type collection of unseen works about Black families. She builds on the theoretical frameworks that had been set in place by researchers like Billingsley. Her work was crucial in a time where good scholarly work on Black family life was available but not easily accessible partly because they were rarely published. McAdoo reinforces the importance of studying Black families. Nearly 50 years after Billingsley work, in what is believed to be post racial America, the anthology *Black Families at the Crossroads* was published reevaluating theories and classic concepts. The Black family and society are ever-changing and the literature must continue coincide with the changing times. These scholars have formulated many alternative theories about Black family life that synchronize and contrast with earlier theories. Still today, understanding the Black family is not any less complex.

Historical and theoretical concepts at times collide as the authors examine the impact of slavery and the influence of African traditions on Black family life in America. Inquiring minds sought to understand the cause of the Black family's struggle with poverty. The problem was that scholars attempted to interpret and understand Black families by making comparisons to White middle class family life. White vs. Black comparisons that are for the purpose of determining functionality is like comparing apples to oranges. Social barriers diminish the possibility for using White families as a tool of measure against Black families. Some argue that

the major problem with Black family is the family's structure and that there were far too many female-headed households (Moynihan, 1965). I am with the opposing side of that argument that highlights resilience and progression made possible because of the family structure which often included kinships and community networks. Many struggle with accepting the Black family as a normal or independent institution. Some researchers have found correlations between the current ways of life for Black families to African traditions. While other researchers view the state of the Black family as a response to slavery and other oppressive systems. The unique Black experience in America has had a significant impact on the Black family. I align with the arguments that view this uniqueness as a factor that must be considered in documenting the traditional, Black middle class experience. As researchers attempt to gain a complete understanding of Black family behaviors, values and traditions, it is often necessary to review the past. "The history of a people plays an important part in shaping the nature of their institutions, and the conclusions that effort to understand the nature and dynamics of Negro family life" (Billingsley, 1968). The best thing about this collection of literatures is the utilization of varied methodological approaches and the abundance of sources.

The research design of *Black Families in White America* creates a solid framework for the continuum of dialogue, debates and discourse surrounding some of the most perplexing issues that affect the Black family. Billingsley joins arguments on the impact of powerful social structures of slavery and racial discrimination on Black family. Billingsley efficiently highlights three essential facts regarding the history of Black families in America. The facts are that Black people came from Africa; were excluded from major institutions of American society and; their families were often dismantled through slavery (Billingsley, 1968). These facts fuel the historical concepts and dialogue on Black families in America. His research as well as the

research of many others including McAdoo, Johnson and Staples, reveals that in Africa, there were various family patterns. There were families that were patrilineal, matrilineal and of double descent. Marriages often included the exchange of property. Families were both nuclear and extended. Extended kinship networks were important in Africa, America and in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens. Monogamous marriages were one of the most common forms of marriage. These historical perspectives indicate the presence of resilience of traditions that are present in modern Black families in America. This provides a sound alternative form of analyzing the Black families exclusively. Eurocentric views at times assess Black family's ability to assimilate to the White family structure (Billingsley, 1968). The historical conceptualization section in McAdoo's compilation of studies demonstrates the diversity of some of the thriving theoretical possibilities. One of the important contributions of her work is the varied scholarly perspectives that are provided. It is important for scholars and politicians to understand that a family's descriptive status can vary and swooping generalizations overlook far too many pertinent details.

The Moynihan Report of 1965 continues to raise eyebrows in contemporary studies of Black families. I will discuss the report and some of discussion surrounding it later in this document. *Black Families at the Crossroads* by Johnson and Staples challenges claims made in this report regarding the ways in which the single-mothers and matriarchal household was problematic. "It was, he (Moynihan) said, the dominance and influence of the Black mother over their sons that was responsible for their lack of achievement, especially in relationship to Black daughters" (Johnson, Staples, 2005). Giddings suggests in her book, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* that this report is more sexist than it is racist and does not accurately correlate racial oppression to the proper guilty party (Giddings, 1984). Kinship patterns are extremely varied but what we learn about these networks or shifts in

family structures are seemingly timeless. One of the contributors in McAdoo's 4th Edition of *Black Families* nailed it. Niara Sudarkasa posits "Marital stability and family stability are not one and the same" (McAdoo, 2007). She builds on the concept that suggests that African American family life is but a continuation of African traditions. With this concept she argues that kinships are normal and valuable evolutions of the African culture.

Today, the internet has made it possible to access scholarly literature within moments. There is a significant amount of literature related to Black families. In the Appendix of *Black Families in White America* the author provides a useful model to facilitate the understanding of how Black families are represented in scholarly literature. He provides four categories; "studies on of the family, studies of ethnic assimilation in American life, studies of the Negro experience and studies of the social welfare problem" (Billingsley, 1968).

Community Studies

W.E.B DuBois, a Black male sociologist, took on an ethnographic project to study a Black community in Philadelphia which inadvertently became a scientific model or template for such studies, that many researchers would later follow. DuBois's study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, was an ethnographic exploration of the Seventh Ward of the city of Philadelphia. While DuBois did conduct interviews with people in individual households, this was a study of "community" and is considered one of the first studies of African American urban life. He did not generalize his interpretation of the Black experience, his hands on approach allowed the community to determine their own understanding. There needs to be more studies like this to help form effective social policy and attempt to debunk myths. He employed a significant amount of qualitative and quantitative data. This included home visits, very detailed and specific

interview questions, census data, surveys and etc. The sample size in this study was large enough that although there is room for errors it was very representative and informative of the population of the 7th Ward. Although he does not deal with semantics, the terms community, family and kinship can almost be used interchangeably in these types of studies. Ultimately, he revealed racial barriers and concludes that there are several dynamics to improve or resolve problems that plague Black communities. Ethnographies provide readers with a more authentic voice of the communities that are studied.

Daniel Moynihan, a sociologist and politician wrote the report *The Negro Family*. Initially, it appeared that his aim was to pinpoint the factors of poverty in Black communities, “define the problem” (Moynihan, 1965). His work was important to policymakers and the Black community. It failed to accurately represent the Black community and reinforces negative stereotypes because important details of the report were not included. He ultimately blames the Black mothers for the impoverished conditions of the Black Community. This report reasserts that the problem is in fact the Black people. Although he uses quantitative and some qualitative data to support his findings there was a major disconnect in article. He recognizes that Black families have demonstrated their durability but fails to thoroughly investigate how this sustainability was made possible. Billingsley argues that Moynihan has a selective interest in the Black families that was biased and/or distorted. “There are a number of methodological and substantive problems with the Moynihan report. A major distortion was singling out instability in the Negro family as the casual factor for the difficulties Negroes face in the White society. It is quite the other way around” (Billingsley, 1968). *All Our Kin* could be called an excellent corrective response to the *Moynihan Report*. Using qualitative data Stack discovers that through kinships (blood related and non-relative), critical lasting networks are formed. “The Black urban

family, embedded in cooperative domestic exchange, proves to be an organized tenacious, active, lifelong network” (Stack, 1975). No doubt, Moynihan’s work was significant as it is continuously debated. It stimulates scholars in the discourse on Black families and gained the attention of political planners (Billingsley, 1968).

Anthropologist, Carol Stack conducted an ethnographic study in a Chicago community she calls “The Flats.” She crosses social barriers often formed by race and ethnicity. She discovers a common ground as a single mother and was able to gain access through one of her participants. Her investigation was an intimate and refreshing review of the Black family structure. She came to understand how family standards were redefined in “the Flats”. Although, they were different from the White families that researchers often used as a prototype they were functional. She collects data through interviews and observations while in the community for 3 years exploring the strategies of survival in a poor Black community. The theoretical perspective of her research was geared towards “three central concerns: how people are recruited to kin networks; the relationship between household composition and residence patterns; and the relationship between reciprocity and poverty” (Stack, 1975). Her analysis of these kinships led to a conclusion that was quite different from those of the controversial *Moynihan Report*. She states “many descriptions of Black Americans domestic life by both Blacks and Whites have overlooked the interdependence and cooperation of kinsmen in Black communities” (Stack, 1975). In Appendix B, part “c” there is a list of questions relating to kinship. This section provides a useful pattern of the scientific methods she employed in her interviewing process. This method allows the researcher to understand how the participants define kin without influencing their response (Stack, 1975). Other types of studies regarding

Black families are also useful in understanding kinship and resilience in Black family life. Networks are formed that significantly impact the way these groups are socialized.

Cheryl Rodriguez, Associate Professor of Africana Studies and Anthropology at the University of South Florida, published an article “Recapturing Lost Images: Narratives of Black Business Enclave.” “Recapturing Lost Images” is an ideal title for her work. It is powerful and descriptive of the ongoing dilemma of losing Black history. This particular article is part of a (Tampa) African American heritage collection that she completed with Anthropologist, Susan Greenbaum. The collection was called “Central Avenue Legacies: African American Heritage in Tampa, Florida.” Rodriguez details pieces of history that began in the late 1800s, expands into a cultural safe haven and active force for Blacks during Jim Crow and Civil Rights Era. She focuses on a Black business district located on Central Avenue in the heart of Tampa. She effectively uses oral narratives, interviews, articles, photos and more to capture the significance of Black businesses in that area through changing times. The author’s work remains relevant today. Black communities benefit greatly from these types of studies because they learn more about themselves through these types of projects. Her work highlights the urgency that should reside with historians, anthropologist and other researchers to collect, uncover or rediscover as much Black history as possible while it is available. Central Avenue experienced decades of change, struggle, and progression as an intricate part of Tampa’s Black Community. Today, one of the most visible aspects of this legacy is a mural and building. Black people have been historically displaced and their histories diminish with little to no evidence of its existence. Her research had a phenomenal affect on the community, “many of these citizens were unaware of the role that this neighborhood had played in developing and sustaining Black pride and Black traditions in Tampa” (Rodriguez, 1998). The most important part of Rodriguez’s research in

relation to this study is that it reveals the roles Black businesses not simply from an economical stand point but as an intricate part of a network; a network between Black businesses owners and the Black community as a whole.

Kinships and Community Networks

This study investigates one of Tampa's Black middle class communities and describes how Black families have sustained themselves through changing times. Even though the population of Black middle class citizens has increased in the United States, historically, the majority of the scholars only studied the Black poor (Billingsley, 1968) (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999) and there are still limited numbers of studies on the Black middle class. The book, *Black Picket Fences*, was an attempt to address a deficit in scholarly literature as it relates to the socialization of the Black middle class. The sociologist, Mary Pattillo-McCoy, spent a little over three years residing in an area suburb outside of Chicago she conducted 31 interviews and made other observations. The end result was a very raw and seemingly uncut ethnography. The only thing that could have made this study better is more interviews. This is a fairly small sample size for such a large community. However, the scientific methods employed in her research are useful as a template and meticulously detailed.

Communities form formal and informal networks and kinships. These community networks include but are not limited to churches, neighborhood associations, businesses, schools, recreation centers, gangs and more. Whether the literature focuses on Black families or Black communities when researchers seek to explain the strength, resilience, or mobility of Black people, readers are bound to find a connection to kinships and community networks. In Pattillo-McCoy's chapters titled "Generation through a Changing Economy" and "Neighborhood

Networks and Crime” the author highlights sustainability and kinships that are described as neighborhood networks. Her study reaches through various generations and institutions revealing the functionality of what others-- using the White middle class as the standard structure-- may write-off as dysfunction. “Sociological conceptions of class include occupation and education along with the measure of income” (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Historically, there has been an unsevered connection between Black poor and middle class (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Elevation of social class did not automatically equate to an alleviation of racial oppression (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Racially restrictive laws limited residential options which resulted in Black middle class families being typically geographically close to poorer Blacks. The author provides an example of this dynamic. She explains the gang members are commonly thought of as the ills or menaces of a community but Pattillo-McCoy found that residents often felt safe because of the presence of gang members. They shared a common racial ground which was ultimately more significant than their class difference (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community has a presence of various social economical classes. Not every longtime resident in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens possess college degrees. The entire community is not totally economically self-sufficient, some may have even committed crimes. Nevertheless, “when neighbors live with one another for long periods of time, they form friendship (and kinships) and take responsibility for each other’s well-being” (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). “Racial segregation binds together African Americans of various social positions into a large and diverse residential Black community” (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). The author compares and contrasts Black middle and poor class to White middle class. Her research exposes elements of struggle put in place by racist social structures, networks the Black middle class communities form out of necessity to overcome these struggles and the resilience to persevere.

It is continuously documented throughout the literature that when people are faced with adversities, kinships are often formed out of necessity. “In a stream of historical development reaching back to centuries in Africa- broken partly by the slave system- Negro families has placed heavy emphasis and reliance on interactions with both relatives and nonrelatives outside the immediate nuclear family” (Billingsley, 1968). These kinships or networks can be formed with different members of the community. Networks and patterns of kinship have become a major role in the socialization process of the Black family. Billingsley uses qualitative data to draw attention to the roles of kinships in some of America’s most prominent Black families. “Many Negro men and women can point to a member in the community who made the difference in his success or failure in life” (Billingsley, 1968). There is mutual exchange and expectation that these relationships create. The expectations are often characteristically the same as expectations that people tend to have for an actual family member.

Researchers frequently use ethnographic methods to understand the many aspects of Black communities. This not only increases the common knowledge about the Black communities, it also uses the voices of the people of those communities. Black communities have been marginalized, misrepresented by researchers who were not familiar with the cultural patterns of the Black family but formed misguided theories or conclusions based on uninformed observations. The increase in literature increases the potential to improve racial intolerance and inequities. The ability to fully comprehend the complex dynamics of Black family life increases with each thorough investigation. Ethnographies like these should not be undervalued but when it comes to Black family life in Tampa there is a void in the research. The few collections mentioned here, as significant as they may be, do not cover enough territory. Although, the

methods can consistently be reapplied researchers are bound to have some varying conclusions as well as commonalities. The fact is that more of these studies are need, especially in Tampa.

Comparative studies of families have ultimately made a particular description of the White American family the norm. “Simple White-Negro comparisons on almost any set of standardized variables will necessarily produce distortions, for they ignore the important dimension of social class” (Billingsley, 1968). Billingsley is arguing that these comparative studies often compare the White upper class to Black lower class not considering that the classes themselves are not equally yoked historically, culturally or even socio-economically. The specific distinctions are abundant.

Articles and books on kinship in African American communities have revealed that there is wealth in these support networks of extended and fictive kin. The value of kinship was often overlooked by many of the earlier scholars. Stack realized a glass ceiling in the literature regarding Black families. She went outside of the “American” family model and sought to recognize the importance of kinship in the Black community. Her research zoned in to find out things like “how people are recruited to kin networks; the relationship between household composition and residence patterns” (Stack, 1975). Stack concluded that these kinships were “proven strategies for survival” (Stack, 1975).

Previous research of the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community revealed that some of original homeowners of the community purchased multiple lots that were later occupied by their relatives. The fact is “extended-family wealth positively affects the probability of becoming a homeowner” (Hall, Crowder, 2011).

There is a level of repetitiveness that can be found in the literature on kinship. There are varying theoretical and historical concepts related to Black families. One factor that stands out

when discussing kinship, be it Moynihan, Stack, or Harriet Pipes McAdoo, is that women are in leading roles. America being a patriarchal and racially oppressive society has influenced the continuation of this pattern within the Black family causing them to be “othered,” deemed problematic and pathological. What influences the way kinships are formed does not change the value it represents.

Gerstel’s article, “Rethinking Families and Community”, encourages scholars to rethink Black family structure. Scholars had for many years excluded Black families from their research relating to family. Once this changed there was often a mistranslation of the facts and experiences related to Black family life. Today, there has been a significant amount of research and theories that circulate regarding Black families and kinship. “Rethinking Families and Community” presents a challenge to fully evaluate the family network. This contemporary study discusses the notion that often extended families are not considered the norm. “This focus on marriage and the nuclear family contains strong racial and ethnic—as well as class—biases. Eurocentric conceptualizations of family taint a common feature of the culture of the Black extended family networks being a fully comprehensible experience” (Gerstel, 2011). “SNAF—the Standard North American Family... ideological code” often excludes the Black family simply because it excludes a major and at times “standard” component of many African-American families (its extended members) (Gerstel, 2011). The value of extended kinships is immeasurable. McAdoo (2007) argues, “The extended family and multigenerational fictive kin are the foundations that almost all African American families depend upon.” Researchers must continue to set the record straight. Expose generalizations or misinterpretations about the Black family.

The Black Church

One component of Black culture and/or Black communities that can facilitate a better understanding of the concept of the extended family is the Black church. The Black church has been a relevant social factor in Black communities since slavery. Relationships among the church members often extend beyond church services. “Fictive kin terminology is also incorporated in the relationships among members of many Black churches” (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Johnson and Barer, 1990; Chatters, Taylor, Jayakody, 1994). Hence, members often refer to each other as brother and sister. The older women in the church are referred to as the mothers of the church. Black people have been contributors to the church throughout history and the church has impacted the lives of Black families significantly.

In DuBois’s research of the Philadelphia community he recognizes the church’s role as having both tribal and family functions. This is important as this study seeks to find the sources of strength in community institutions as an extension of the kinship network. “The social life of the Negro centers in his church baptism, wedding and burial, gossip and courtship, friendship and intrigue all lie in these walls”(DuBois, Anderson, Eaton, 1995). The churches often reach far beyond Sunday services in to the lives of the community and its congregation. “The Negro churches were the birthplaces of Negro schools and of all agencies which seek to promote the intelligence of the masses; and even today no agency serves to disseminate news or information so quickly and effectively among Negroes as the church” (DuBois, Anderson, Eaton, 1995).

“When the civil rights movement was drenched with the foul spray of White supremacy and Jim Crow, it took cover in sanctuaries [Black churches] across the land” (McCray, Grant, Beachum, 2010). The authors here imply that the Black church should maintain such obligations

to its community. Black churches are beneficial to Black families as an agent in parenting networks. According to McCray, Grant, and Floyd's (2010) contemporary analysis there is a potential positive impact that the Black church can have on the success of African American students. The authors support this analysis of the Black church with historical theories that asserts the Black church as an essential social force in African American communities. The conceptual frame of this study places emphasis on the urgency for resistance to the school-to-prison pipeline that significantly impact African American families (specifically males). This study connects the Black Church to education, social justice and the community. This is mainly a qualitative study that reveals a minimal amount of quantitative data that would have strengthened their argument. There is a major limitation in this data in that it lacks reflecting on the relationship between single parent households and disciplinary issues as well as the need that this presents for Black male role models. A major point that is highlighted in this study is that "majority of Black Churches are in segregated Black communities" (McCray, Grant, Beachum, 2010). The article describes the majority of these Black churches as segregated institutions with Black congregations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Ethnography

Ethnography is a scientific method of investigation that utilizes the researcher to collect data (LeCompte, Schensul, 2010). This method is one that utilizes the perspective of the research participants to produce, reconstruct or interpret a story. This method of research is commonly used in anthropology, Africana Studies and other social sciences and, has consistently proven to be effective in community research. Ethnographies can include both qualitative and quantitative data (LeCompte, Schensul, 2010). Ethnographic methods are different from other qualitative methodologies because with the other methods the researcher interprets that data from their own perception which can also be limited scope. The ethnographic methodology produces a more intimate compilation of data as it requires that the researcher refrain from overpowering the words and ideals of the participants. The data is complimented or supported with theoretical information of scholars and researchers. Studies that utilize quantitative methods are often less personal and more numbers driven. Quantitative methods rely mainly on numbers and are useful in providing statistical data. Quantitative works great with the support of qualitative data to explain variations or outliers in the numerical results (LeCompte, Schensul, 2010).

Ethnographic Methods

This study uses mixed methods to explore Black family life in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. This research was approved by and conducted within the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Although there is in no significant risk involved in this particular study the names of the actual interviewed participants have been changed. The approach to this particular analysis of families in these communities is a micro-level perspective of the symbolic interactions and functions of Black families, their community and their kinships. For this project, I conduct fieldwork in various community settings to gather data on the factors that contribute to Black family life in these communities. The primary ethnographic method was interviewing, which was conducted with 10 community members who had lived in the community for at least 20 years. Although the sample size is small, these residents had extensive experience in the community and were also much grounded in family life. The majority of the interviews were with residents or former residents of Carver City. The interviews consisted of 18 open-ended questions about their lives as members of families in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. Although there is no risk to participants in this study, I do not use the actual names of the people being interviewed in an attempt to protect their identities. Some of the quotes are verbatim but in others I have removed unnecessary phrase like “um,” “uh,” “mmhmm,” or word repetition for better clarity. Interviews were recorded using digital audio technology.

I also collect data through participant observation. I attend several community meetings, functions, and several church services. Participant observation is significant in this study. I believe that this method is excellent for this particular study because of my own family ties to the community and my positionality as both a researcher and as a person who is familiar with aspects of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens. I easily obtain access to the community and

participants and reside near the area. This familiarity with the neighborhood at times present somewhat of a hardship when attempting to be identified as a researcher. I attempt to minimize the barrier by often wearing clothes that were branded with USF logos. I wanted to separate personal identity as family while, I wanted my participants to maintain comfort with me as a family friend. There were a few minor challenges as conversations transformed from casual to more in-depth discussions or even as the recorders turned on and off. The interviewing process often began with an explanation of this particular study and its importance to scholarship. Then we would review the questions before the recording began. This allows participants some mental space for processing concepts and response for questions. Aside from data gathered through participant observation and interviews, this project was also informed by literature on Black families, Black communities, kinships and community networks.

Every visit to the community and every interview is an opportunity to observe. I used my field journal, camera, phone, recorder and computer whenever possible to capture thoughts, expressions, body language, and images. Carsel Armstrong, a longtime resident, was my tour guide while surveying Carver City-Lincoln Gardens neighborhood. He would drive and tell stories frequently stopping for me to capture photos. My daughter was our backseat passenger. It is hard to imagine that there were ever any homes on the block where the enormous sized residential complex now consumes the entire block. It was equally as difficult to imagine the area as rural, wooded and remote. I saw homes that had been relocated to a different block, homes of old friends, homes where tragic events took place, new homes, homes that were renovated and homes that were in need of renovation. We paid special attention to the commercial power lines that hover over the small residential community. The commercial power lines produced the subliminal message that the area may have plans that threaten to over

power the humble residential community. Throughout the research process I remained available and visible to members of the community.

Challenges

Bias is unavoidable with this type of research. The major obstacle in conducting these interviews is that it is highly reliant on memory. Some of the participants were asked to recall life in their neighborhood dating back more than 50 years ago. Time can distort images and remembering the good old days can come with a bit of nostalgia; recalling the times when “nothing was wrong.” This makes it somewhat difficult to identify historical experiences with race relations. Many times during my fieldwork it seemed feasible to imagine that racism was not much of a problem because it seemed to vaguely exist in their interpretations.

Psychologically there is a great possibility for false memories. Some memories may be lost, distorted, romanticized or exaggerated. The information that will be presented in this study is information that was mostly confirmed by multiple participants in an effort to compensate for bias. It was also challenging to get more participants from the Lincolns Gardens community. The majority of the participants are Carver City residents. Therefore, comparatively there will be a very be a significantly imbalance in the amount of information about the community as separate entities.

Foundation of this Research

These families made something (a community) out of nothing. To start the study it is important to review how homeownership became possible for families of this community during a racially restrictive era in the South. What does urban renewal, religious institutions, schools

and other social or cultural institutions look like in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens? This part of the investigation was conducted in the Fall of 2013. Prior to the start of the thesis project, I previously audio recorded 3 interviews that are useful in this study. However, this initial and brief experience as a researcher in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens facilitated my rapport with community residents and stimulated my curiosity about the community.

The Black church has been researched extensively and for its role in Black family life. There are 7 churches in this small community; I visited 3 of the churches in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens to make a general observation of family- church relationships. Special attention was given to analyzing what the churches offer to its members and the community. The interaction between the members of the church with one another and me allowed the opportunity to evaluate whether or not the relationships extend beyond church friendships. I take notes, collect programs, and welcome packages/pamphlets. I chose the 1st Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens because it is the oldest church in the community. Pilgrim Rest was chosen because of personal familial ties. This church has hosted the homegoing services (funerals) for many community members including my own relatives of the community. Friendship Missionary Baptist Church was selected because of its current location on the border of the community facing corporate complexes. The data collected from these observations, the interviews and participant observation help to determine the significance of the church to these families.

CHAPTER 4

CARVER CITY LINCOLN GARDENS THROUGH THE CHANGING TIMES

“It was nothing but palmettos and no streets or nothing out here when I moved out here in 1949” (Mrs. Townsend).

“Diamonds are formed deep within the Earth about 100 miles or so below the surface in the upper mantle. Obviously in that part of the Earth it's very hot. There's a lot of pressure, the weight of the overlying rock bearing down, so that combination of high temperature and high pressure is what's necessary to grow diamond crystals in the Earth” (Lineberry, 2006).

Ultimately, diamonds are considered to be a precious stone, highly sought after, and is a highly valued treasured. This analogy can be applied to what shaped a community that would later be called Carver City-Lincoln Gardens. Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community is a diamond in the rough that is highly sought after by developers.

The diamond analogy can also be used to understand the structure of the kinships in this community. The carbon atoms in this comparative analogy represent the Black families. The process of what happens with the carbon atoms is symbolic of the kinship networks. The high temperature and pressure is symbolic of the oppressive racial social pressures. “Diamonds are made of carbon so they form as carbon atoms under a high temperature and pressure; they bond together to start growing crystals. Because of the temperature and pressure, under these conditions, carbon atoms will bond to each other in this very strong type of bonding where each carbon atom is bonded to four other carbon atoms. That's why a diamond is such a hard material because you have each carbon atom participating in four of these very strong covalent bonds that

form between carbon atoms...As other carbon atoms move into the vicinity they will attach on. That's the way any crystal grows. It's the process of atoms locking into place that produces this repeating network, this structure of carbon atoms, that eventually grows large enough that it produces crystals that we can see" (Lineberry, 2006). The beautiful community of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens, the diamond, is a testament of their bond and their resilience under pressure.

The success of this Black middle class community is not measured simply by their assets. It is inequitable to force Black middle class achievements to adhere to the standards of measure used to determine White middle class because it is not an equal comparison. Black families are in a class system of their own. Their achievements can be better understood by understanding their road to success. Black families built this community in the midst of a time plagued by racist laws that created numerous handicaps. The kinship networks described in this study may give the impression that their positions in life came easy. It was anything but easy. When the government would (figuratively) cut off an arm of the Black family (i.e. Jim Crow Laws: the husband earns way less money than his White counterpart performing the same jobs) kinship networks would lend a helping hand (i.e. provide assistance in the form of childcare, give property as marriage gifts). This community would not exist without the hard work and dedication of the families who built it. The community began to develop during the Jim Crow Era.

Dubois wrote the book *The Souls of Black Folks* during the Jim Crow Era. The book goes to great extents to illustrate the Jim Crow experience. That experience is best demonstrated in his Chapter "Of the Coming of John." He made a comparison that demonstrated the internal and external turmoil that Black Americans often faced during the time of separate but equal laws. Dubois wrote about two young men named John, who grew up during the enforcement of Jim

Crow Laws. Both Johns were from the same southern town in America. The Johns were roughly the same age. They attempt to travel similar roads to adulthood and success. The major difference was race. One John is Black and the other is White. The boys' experiences were totally different. Once Black John began to come of age there was an awakening of consciousness, it was a revelation that was unnecessary for White John. He began to realize the obstacle that being Black in America presented.

Dubois coined the term "double consciousness" to illustrate the split in reality for Black Americans (Dubois, 1903). There was the promise of an American experienced that was not available if you were Black. The Black experience was not included in the American Dream. Black John prepared to enter into manhood and his departure off to college was bitter-sweet. It was one where some were excited and happy about his departure, while others worried that he would return with Northern views and would think he is better than them. These concerns were not present or necessary for White John as he journeyed off for college.

Black John left for college. Once he took his studies serious his mind was opened to things that were unknown to him before. The awareness did not increase his sense of belonging; by the time John returned home he was sad. He was very disturbed by the treatment of Black people by White people. He easily identified the oppression, the inequality, and the double standards. This awareness made him different and less acceptable when he returned home. He was not the same John they remembered (Dubois, 1903). Needless to say, the White community was not thrilled with these new views of John on trying to educate his people and their laborers. The White community made it clear to John that if he tried to teach them (his Black family and friends) that they are equal to White people it would result in his death (Dubois, 1903). This is an excellent description of the Jim Crow experience for many Black people in the South. Black

Americans in the South were restricted in mobility by these Jim Crow laws. Unfortunately, for many Blacks the thoughts of equality were accompanied by thought of death. The potential anxiety of such pressures to stay in compliance was enormous. This is should be considered when a Black person who grew up during Jim Crow and Civil Rights reflects and says things like “we just stayed in our place” or “we did not bother them and they did not bother us.” After returning from college his awareness of his blackness as well as his rights as an American caused him to be viewed as a problem, a “Dangerous Nigger” (Dubois, 1903).

In “The Coming of John” what was good and celebrated for the White John was dangerous for Black John and caused a lot of anxiety. This related directly to the implications of Jim Crow laws. This is the way everything was under Jim Crow laws, cold water was good enough for Whites to drink while warm water was considered sufficient for Blacks. The best of service, seating, land, housing, employment, school and everything that the South had to offer was offered to the Whites and expected by them. The worst of these things or whatever was left over became the foundation that many Blacks in America were expected to build from. This level of racism and discrimination was common and accepted in the South. Interestingly enough both Johns initially understood this to be the cultural norm. These fears that are perpetuated by way of racist policy are forms of sabotage. The Black community was surely in a state of terror after enduring years of harsh racial brutality. Recent studies on racial lynchings that happened between 1877 and 1950 prove how horrific the times were for Black people in Florida. “Florida ranked fifth with terror lynchings within its borders. Per capita, however, Florida ranks first, with 0.594 lynchings for every 100,000 residents” (Downs, 2015). Through the changing time periods of oppression in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens the community integrated their children with the children of their White counterparts. “The solution is not to “integrate” them into the

structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become beings for themselves” (Freire, 1993).

This oppression could also be found in the Armed Forces. “With the help of the G.I. Bill, millions bought homes, attended college, started business ventures, and found jobs commensurate with their skills” (Katznelson, 2005). Black soldiers were in the military since the Revolutionary War but their service did not exempt them from bigotry. Katznelson (2005) tells how the benefits provided by the G.I. Bill were for Whites only. Race was a barrier in receiving the benefits from this bill. Blacks were not being approved for home loans and ultimately deprived of due benefits. This study is not extensive enough to determine how or to what extent the lack of implementation of these policies affected Carver City-Lincoln Gardens.

A New York Times book review on *When Affirmative Action was Whites* states that “Katznelson demonstrates that African-American veterans received significantly less help from the G.I. Bill than their White counterparts. ‘Written under Southern auspices,’ he reports, “the law was deliberately designed to accommodate Jim Crow” (Katz, 2005). He cites one 1940's study that concludes “it was as though the G.I. Bill had been earmarked “For White Veterans Only”. Southern Congressional leaders made certain that the programs were directed not by Washington but by local White officials, businessmen, bankers and college administrators who would honor past practices. As a result, thousands of Black veterans in the South -- and the North as well -- were denied housing and business loans, as well as admission to Whites-only colleges and universities. They were also excluded from job-training programs for careers in promising new fields like radio and electrical work, commercial photography and mechanics. Instead, most African-Americans were channeled toward traditional, low-paying ‘Black jobs’ and small Black colleges, which were pitifully underfinanced and ill equipped to meet the needs

of a surging enrollment of returning soldiers”(Kotz, 2005). This was and is the active silent story behind the stories of triumph. Although, racism is more covert in today’s society it is evident that it is ever present. Coates (2015) discusses the racial imbalance of Black men who are incarcerated and the ways mass-incarceration affects the Black family. Michelle Alexander (2012) refers to mass incarceration as the *New Jim Crow* (which is the title of her book) and it is still progressively affecting Black families of the United States. It is modern slavery (Alexander, 2012). Mass incarceration restricts voting, gaining employment, finding housing and certain charges terminates the ability to receive federal assistance (which includes educational monies) (Alexander, 2012).

Ethnographic Description

Today, it might be difficult to imagine that the areas of Carver City- Lincoln Gardens were once rural with dirt roads, wild animals, and cow pastures. This area is described by most of the older residents as an unwanted, undeveloped, swampy, wooded, and snake infested land mass. The lots were originally affordably priced as low as \$25 per lot and sold quickly in the 1940s and 50s. Some of the people interviewed recalled the Hale Grocery Store which was located on Cypress and Lois. Some also remembered Tillman’s Corner. “Wasn’t nothing but a grocery store and the beer place right there on the corner. Walk out the beer diner and walk down a lil walk and right in to the grocery store. That was the only store in Carver City, Hale’s Grocery” (Mrs. Townsend). Neither of those businesses is there today. There were no community schools. School aged children attended to Dunbar Elementary, West Tampa Jr. High, and Blake High School. These racially segregated schools were located in the West Tampa area, roughly 3 to 5 miles east of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens.

Throughout the changing times and generations later, some of the original homeowners and their descendants still proudly call this community home. According to the Hillsborough Community Atlas website (2012) this land mass is made up of 26.62% residential, 51.51% commercial and services, 12.07% Institutional developments. The Urban and Built up percentage is 94.11%. The 2010 reports states that there were 2,205 residents of this community and 384 households received public assistance (Hillsborough, 2012). The population is steadily increasing due to urban development which is creating a more racially diverse community. Urban development in this community has resulted in the demolition of some of the original family homes which have been replaced with enormous upscale residential complexes and highway expansion projects. This has significantly changed the racial dynamics of these communities. There is a visible threat of erasure. The neighborhood is still predominantly Black however; the recent integration of other races has been astronomical. The White population skyrocketed between the years 2000-2010 (Hillsborough, 2012). There were 702 Whites in the area in 2010 which is more than a 700 percent increase from the 85 Whites that were there in 2000 (Hillsborough, 2012). It is expected that these changes in the racial structure will continue as developers continue to build more residential spaces in the areas. Within the community today there are 3 schools, 2 recreational parks, 100s of homes, Carver City- Lincoln Gardens Civic Association and a solid waste company. Surrounding the community is businesses and major business development.

Historical Overview of the Community from the Perspectives of the Residents

During the Jim Crow Era in Tampa, life for Black people was lived separately from their White counterparts but typically not with equal standards of living. In this investigation of Black families in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens evidence of the community's resilience is heavily

shown through its community and kinship networks. The focus here is not on the racially oppressive structures that Black people were forced to adhere to instead, the intent is to provide insight on the functionality of Black families that is often misunderstood, especially when scholars mainly focus on the disadvantaged group of the Black population (Black poor). Needless to say, the resilience of Black people has been consistently unwavering as they continue to reach beyond the realms of oppression in hopes for racial equality. Black families were directed to the areas that were deemed less desirable to Whites, like the neighborhood that is currently known as Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. It did not appear that the residents focused much on their disadvantages or their White counterparts when it came to this particular neighborhood. The families of this community were focused on their opportunity to progress. They were determined to create and maintain comfortable and safe homes for their own families. Historically, Black people in America have often been an extremely marginalized group, and although there have been many changes Black people often remain in the margins. Black families' stories have been at a deficit in historical literature and misrepresented by scholars and the media. Historically, Black people in America have been uprooted from their homes, displaced and forgotten. Despite those facts, throughout American history Black families have been uniquely resourceful and resilient.

When participants were asked to reflect on their earliest memories of the communities the responses include as few as 3 neighbors, Black/White boundaries, dirt roads, woods, cows, wildlife, Claxton Manor, ponds, swamps, remote area and more.

Some residents remember the area as a solid waste dumping ground (this was not an official or authorized dumping area but because the area was undeveloped people often dump trash in the area), swampy and wooded before it was transformed into one of Tampa's first,

traditional, Black middle class neighborhood. One resident shared photos of large boulders and a log that were underneath his old home that had to be demolished due to major cracks in the structure of his home. He did not build his home himself, he paid a construction company. Without all of the intricate details this is could be indicative of some of the unfair practices that Black families of these communities endured. Despite the solid waste and despite the fact that between the two communities there was once a local stockade that was known for its frequent escapes, Carver City- Lincoln Gardens was and still is home to many Black families.

The migration to Carver City- Lincoln Gardens was indicative of Black progression; a progression that many of the families of this community were delighted to be a part of. While observing the body language of many of the participants during interviews and other engagements there were always lots of smile while reflecting on their lives in the neighborhoods. A few of the participants were the original homeowners while others were second or third generation residents. In an effort to truly understand the experience through changing times, I interviewed participants from varying ages. Although, their experiences and memories are somewhat different the sense of pride remains intact generation after generation.

It is evident after speaking with many of the residents that homeownership was not a gift without hard work and lots of effort. Many of the original homeowners were married when they acquired their home and it required the income of both to maintain the home. Some of the families valued education and had dreams and goals for their children to excel in academia. Many of the later generations did just that. They attended various colleges and universities and many earned advanced degrees.

Creativity can apparently be born through struggle and oppression. This creativity is evident in the community networks that are formed out of necessity, many of which have

remained for years, or generations. Researchers refer to this as “social organization” (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Carver City residents spoke of many family businesses like Hale’s Grocery, Davenport Limousine Service, Reese’s Store, and Tillman’s Corner. Then there were the less formal businesses of childcare services, laundry services, barbers, domestic workers, and landscaping business that made it possible for families to sustain themselves. Most importantly, there were the families of this community. The families contributed to one another in various ways. One resident told of her church family member/neighbor who co-signed for her first car loan. Another resident expressed a deep sense of gratitude to her neighbor who assisted her in maintaining her religious values by taking her children to church while she worked on Sundays. A former resident recalls acquiring property in Carver City from her in-laws who were also residents as a wedding gift.

Most of the original homeowners in Lincoln Gardens were military families. In 1944 Congress passed the G.I. Bill which provided Veterans easier opportunities for obtaining higher education and homeownership (Wise, 2000). Franklin D. Roosevelt earned much praise for signing this Bill (Wise, 2000). Residents of the community state that Lincoln Gardens in its early developmental phase was area specifically designated for Black WWII military veterans. The residents had more than race in common they seemed to share a camaraderie that is common among members of the Armed Force. There has been coverage of this area through local media outlets. Residents described Lincoln Gardens as orderly. Residents of the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community created jobs, worked multiple jobs, relied upon family, friends and networks to maintain their dreams.

CHAPTER 5

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HISTORY

“Charity begins at home and spreads abroad” (unknown).

Although this is not a comparative analysis this statistical data will bring into perspective the fight that Black families are faced with, while demonstrating why I argue that Black Families in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens are indeed resilient through their networks. There is no right to health care for all. Kaplan reports that between 1991- 2000, and estimated 900,000 Blacks deaths were due to health disparities (Kaplan, 2011). “Studies confirm significant differences between Blacks and Whites ranging from five years less for life expectancy (73.2 for Blacks versus 78.3 for Whites) to more than twice the infant mortality (9.1 for Blacks versus 3.7 infant deaths per 1000 live births for Whites) and more than three times the rate of maternal mortality (31.7 for Blacks versus 9.6 per 100,000 live births for Whites)” (Kaplan, 2011). He also finds that African-Americans have yet to reach fair and comparable status as it relates to income and wealth. The wealth inequalities are not only changing they have become worse. Between the years of 1984 to 2007, a quarter of African Americans had no assets (Kaplan, 2011). Whites represent the majority of the wealthiest population.

Stack argues that “many descriptions of Black American domestic life by both Blacks and Whites (Frazier 1939; Drake and Cayton 1945; Abrams 1963; Moynihan 1965; Rainwater 1966) have over looked the interdependence and cooperation of kinsmen in Black communities” (Stack, 1970). She suggests these limited analyses imply that homes absent of fathers were broken and/or dysfunctional. Many researchers seek to test how much the Black family has

conformed or assimilated to what is considered the basic social family unit (nuclear family or “American” family). Stack realizes a glass ceiling in the literature regarding Black families. She goes outside of the “American” family model and seeks to recognize the importance of kinship in the Black community. Her research zones in to find out things like “how people are recruited to kin networks; the relationship between household composition and residence patterns” (Stack, 1975). Stack concludes that these kinships are “proven strategies for survival” (Stack, 1975). I intend to demonstrate with ethnographic evidence that the Black families of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens are functional as families and supported through kinships.

In this section, I will summarize oral histories and family stories. These stories focus heavily on the importance of familial support from both the nuclear and extended family. I attempt to unveil the variation in how kinship and community are expressed by the residents. The families communicate how establishing and maintaining homeownership became possible with the assistance of their family and community networks. These families’ stories reveal some of the realities of day-to-day life for Black families and Carver City-Lincoln Gardens residents from the emergence of the first Black families in the Carver City- Lincoln Gardens Community in 1949 through the 2000s (Rodriguez, 1998).

In *Black Pickett Fences* it was necessary for the author to define Black middle class because through changing times the qualifying components to identify Black middle class often changed with the times (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Post World War II studies found that African Americans had a few defining elements that were essential to Black middle class identity (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Black middle class was more than the homes it was a commitment to improving their community and the situation of Black poverty (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Some of those elements include homeownership, civic and church involvement, and family-centered

activities (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). These are also the fundamentals used to define traditional, Black middle class in this particular study and may not be how all participants self-identify. I use this definition of Black middle class because Carver City-Lincoln Gardens began its development as a Black community post WWII. Survival and success during these racially oppressive times required strategy and commitment from the entire Black community.

Rodriguez elaborates on the ways in which Black entrepreneurship and business development provided a foundation for African American Community life by way of social autonomy, activism and professionalism (Rodriguez, 1998). This is resilience, determination and the power of community network. “The Central Avenue community organized to create, libraries, daycare centers and scholarships” (Rodriguez, 1998). Carver City- Lincoln Gardens community did all of these things too. It is those elements of the community that are considered when I define this Carver City- Lincoln Gardens community as a traditional, Black middle class. “Many of these citizens (of Central Avenue) were unaware of the role that this neighborhood had played in developing and sustaining Black pride and Black traditions in Tampa” (Rodriguez, 1998). This is also true for many of the residents of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens. This project is indeed empowering for the residents of Carver City- Lincoln Gardens and reaffirms Black pride and Black traditions for this community. Urban development destroyed the Central Avenue Black business district but articles like those included in the “Central Avenue Legacies” recaptures, restores and immortalizes a very important piece of Tampa’s Black heritage (Greenbaum, 1998; Rodriguez, 1998).

Although Carver City- Lincoln Gardens remains a thriving community today, some homes have become casualties of new development. This makes it impossible to ignore the potential threat of erasure of the Black community as it was historically. Greenbaum asserts that

the Central Avenue project was necessary to “develop an archive on African American heritage in Tampa” because there was a deficit of documented local Black history that was available to the schools and general public (Greenbaum, 1998). This project contributes to the growing archive on African American History in Tampa. The oral histories that are collected are important elements to capturing Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Legacies. The oral histories of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens are as raw as possible to illustrate the empowerment of kinship and community in layman’s terms in an effort to insure that it is comprehensible to most readers. The names of the actual participants are coded in this section for privacy. A large portion of the sections are organized into family groups.

When family members of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens are questioned about their community it is easy to become bombarded with responses. I was often provided a space to speak about my research in the CCLG Civic Association monthly meetings. Most of the members in attendance were over 50 years of age. Many of them were retired but committed to the communities. I express my desires to write their undocumented stories about family, kinship and community; without fail, undeniable expressions of pride cover their faces. Someone typically interjects with the length of time they or their families have or had been in the community. It made obtaining referrals simple. Residents did not hesitate to recommend community members who they believe to be better informed than themselves. The people of this community often reminisce on the stories that they were told by their parents or their own personal experiences.

According to the families in this study, in the early years of this community many families sent their children to racially segregated schools mainly located in the heart of West Tampa. One of the original residents states that there were no busses provided for the children to

get to these schools for quite a while. The lack of available public school transportation required families to seek out other alternatives for commuting their children to and from school. Some of the options included and required the assistance from relatives, neighbors and friends. Kinship networks were common and necessary in many instances for families to function most efficiently. A member of the community explains how he would spend several nights at his grandmother's home which was much closer to his school to accommodate for the commute. These schools were considered Black schools. The schools for this community included Dunbar Elementary, Just Junior High, and Blake High School. These schools were racially segregated by laws that prohibited Black and White children from attending the same school. Attending all Black schools was not a problematic for many of the families based on the racial dynamics. The school spirit was high at Blake High School among many of the former students. As a matter of fact, some could not imagine any other school that they would rather attend, and was devastated when they were bussed to new schools. Needless to say, Black schools were not provided equal school resources as their White counterparts. Integration seemed to offer a reasonable solution to the inequities. Black families in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community had no choice but to embrace the potential opportunity for better educational opportunities that integration was expected to offer. In later years, the families were able to send their children to Roland Park Elementary which is in the community. After integration was enforced children were bussed to various schools throughout the county. Currently, many of the families' children conveniently attend the neighborhood schools, Roland Park and Jefferson High School.

The Townsends

One particular resident, Mrs. Townsend, was recommended by a number of residents. Mrs. Townsend is well known for the length of time she has resided in the community as well as, the contributions that her family made there. During my interview with her she recalls that there were only 3 houses in the Carver City area when she arrived. The only other families there were another Black family and a White family. She moved there at the age of 17 in the year of 1949, after graduating from high school. Her husband was the son of the community store owner. She moved from the West Tampa area off of Grace Street. The young couple received assistance from her in-laws who were both property and business owners in the community. This particular time period is historically known as the Jim Crow era. Jim Crow Laws were racially unfair, restrictive, and oppressive. Resilience and strategy was necessary and in place for Black families in Tampa to thrive despite the oppressive circumstances. According to the elderly Carver City-Lincoln Gardens resident the few Black people who were residing in the newly developing community were cognizant of their permissible racial space. “Well, they had like a White neighborhood, a trailer park... and we didn’t have any problem with them because they stayed in their trailer park and we stayed over to the (their own)house, we didn’t have any problems.” The Townsends started their family and she continued her education in the medical field. Over the years, she watched as the community grew neighbor after neighbor. It was easy for her to provide the names prominent members of the communities such as nurses, teachers, clergy and athletes. One of her fondest memories of Carver City- Lincoln Gardens includes a gentleman she calls Mr. Richard Doby. She indicates that this particular gentleman, Mr. Doby, once resided off of Lois Avenue. Mr. Doby was a Black philanthropist and many articles have been written about his impact and contributions to the Tampa Area (Barry, 2010). The school Dobyville was

named after him. He managed the community waste on property that he owned in Carver City. That area today is where condos are now constructed, on the corner of Lois Avenue and Spruce Street. Mrs. Townsend remembered when church services were held in the home of a neighbor. “Well, we had one church right on the corner of Grace and Lois. Ms. King in her home she had a sanctified church. She would have service there and that’s where we went to church right there.” Her relationship with Ms. King extended beyond church services. Mrs. Townsend was not financially established enough to purchase her first car alone. Ms. King was a co-signer on the loan of Mrs. Townsend’s first car. She expressed how appreciative she was that Ms. King would risk her credibility to assist her, she was certain that she made good on the loan. Mrs. Townsend later married her second husband who was a major contractor in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. He built and sold homes in the community for \$300 down and \$70 per month. Mrs. Townsend continues to reside in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens, 75 years later. Her eyes teared up as she remembered all of the hard work that was necessary to sustain living in this community. There were several external factors that Mrs. Townsend’s immediate family that supported her resilience in the community which included her in-laws, neighborhood friend and the church.

The Williamsons

In an interview with a former resident, Mrs. Williamson, she states that her family began their life as husband and wife in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. She moved to Carver City from the Belmont Height Area of Tampa. They later resided on West Chestnut Street. She remembered her first visit with her then boyfriend to his family’s home out in the rural peaceful area currently known as Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. After a few visits the young couple

married. The extension of family and kinship proved to be beneficial time and time again. Initially, the Williamsons moved in with her husband's parents. Sharing homes amongst family and relatives was not especially uncommon in this community from the earliest to the most latter part of this community's existence. Shortly after being married, her in-laws presented the newlyweds a nearby lot of land as a wedding gift. This is one amazing and specific example of how Black families in this particular community were able to extend their wealth, deepen their roots, and build kinship ties. This familial support is a significant factor of the resilience that is evident in this community.

The land was initially unwanted and of no significant value to White developers, who were interested in building elsewhere in the City of Tampa. Therefore, the lots of land in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens were offered at affordable prices. Black families were ambitious, they wanted to overcome oppression. They recognized both the opportunity for homeownership and the cost effectiveness of the lots that were up for sale. Family, after family, gravitated to the area and seized as much property as they could reasonably afford. Many Black families of the community initially purchased multiple lots and dedicated much time to cleaning and preparing their property. Some of those purchasers also made homeownership possible for their neighbors by selling their lots. Eventually, the Williamsons built their first home on the property and resided there for 40 years. The year was 1959; their home was a 2 bedroom, concrete- block home. At that time, there were only about 3 homes on the block. The couple held a \$4800 mortgage with Finance Homes. Mrs. Williamson's in-laws resided in a home on the adjacent block. These were happy times. The kinship network web was in place. She recalled frequent family cookouts and gatherings. They were related to both of their next-door neighbors. Everything was convenient because on the same block her sisters and brother in-law occupied

homes with their respective families. This young couple relied on two incomes to manage. Their only son and granddaughter graduated from Jefferson High School. “It was just a beautiful place. It was quiet, wooded and then the progress started. Everybody got along.” When they realized that they would have to leave their home due to urban development she was angry. The young wives of the community worked along with their husbands to sustain their families. This was common and necessary in most households.

The Wells

Mrs. Williamson’s sister Mrs. Wells was married to her husband for 61 years and they shared 5 children. Mrs. Wells married at the young age of 17 years old but that did not seem to be very uncommon at the time. The young Black families were resilient, effective, and efficient. This family lived on the Carver City side of the neighborhood for over 40 years. The Wells like many other couples of this community relied on two incomes to secure their home. Mrs. Wells recalled the joy of making the final payment on the home. They raised their three children in the home. Their children attended racially segregated schools. Her eldest son was very disappointed with being integrated for his senior year of high school; it deprived him of the opportunity to graduate from Blake High School with his former classmates. His mother supported the change because she believed integration would create better and equal educational opportunities for Black children. Blake has gone through many generational changes over the years, today it is relocated a few blocks from its original location and it is a magnet high school. “Blake and Middleton were downgraded to junior high status” (Bullard, 1989). Tampa’s Black community did not support the change (Bullard, 1989). “Less than one-half of all tenth graders eventually graduate” (Bullard, 1989). The transition of integration was much easier for their

younger son, who attended Roland Park Elementary. There were so many memories at their home they did not want to part. Their home was the last home standing on the block.

Unfortunately, the aging couple was affected by chronic illness. The wife became the full-time caregiver of her husband. The wife stood strong under the pressures of the developers who desperately desired for them to relinquish their rights to the property. They received offer, after offer until they finally settled on a selling price. They finally gave in to the pressures of the developers and sold their home which was completely paid off. The family was able to purchase a new home outright in a nearby community. She says she often reminisces about the good times her family shared in their Carver City home. Today there is no trace of their home or any of the other original homes that were on that block. The street block currently provides homes to more families than it previously did. In place of the homes is a large newly constructed, multi-level apartment complex. Nevertheless, memories of kinship, family, blood, sweat and tears remain.

The Adams

In an interview with a Hillsborough County teacher that resides in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens and has done so for more than 50 years, it demonstrates how legacies are exchanged from one generation to the next. Ms. Adams is the current homeowner of the resident that was originally purchased as newly constructed home by her father. She inherited the home after the death of her parents. She has another blood-relative who also lives in the Lincoln Gardens side of the community and is also the homeowner by way of inheritance. Many of the homes of Lincoln Gardens are no longer occupied the original owners but by the next generation of family. The kinship ties become inextricably interwoven and bonded over time. “This was a mixed neighborhood ...as far as background. We had, um, people that came from the projects; we have

people that came from rental properties. The one common thing we (Lincoln Gardens Community) have was the military. They got out here, they kept the neighborhood in order. It was always clean. The kids were orderly. Everybody in the neighborhood knew they had the right to correct you,” recalls Ms. Adams. Her comments echoed the sentiments of other Lincoln Gardens Residents that I met and conversed with throughout my research. There has been research on the socialization of military families specifically, because there is uniqueness about their socialization process that somehow links with the structure and discipline of the armed forces. Lincoln Gardens is the area that was designated for Black Military personnel. The area is small and intimate in size which is what make it effortless to get the perception of the community as one little, big family. It seems as if everyone knows each other, they are not only aware of each other’s struggles and progress but they are also a part of each other’s security and success. She describes her relationship with the community as “very positive.” “We look after each other. A lot of the original families especially on Cherry Street are still here. Um, it’s not the parents, it is the children now living in the houses that I grew up with and so we look after each other and it’s wonderful. In fact, I can name house by house everybody who was originally owner of the house and their children and all that. We were that type of neighborhood we knew everyone.”

While interviewing the Parkinson family that has resided on the Carver City side since the 1960s, Mr. Parkinson shared with me a written document from a long time resident of Lincoln Gardens who is also a part of his church family. The document was not dated or signed but it is interesting nonetheless. According to Mr. Parkinson, the author of this document is one of the original homeowners. The document is titled “Reflections of Lincoln Gardens Community.” According to her, “It started as a neighborhood for currently serving Black

military soldiers. We always have been a close-knit family unit. The residents are respectful, quiet, kind-hearted and caring people.” She went on to name the first 6 families that she recalled moving in to the neighborhood. There are memories of dark nights before there were any street lights; pebbles for streets before there were paved roads. There are memories of a playground and church being built. She refers to her neighborhood as “a safe place to live.” The letter offered the perspective of the next generation as seen through the eyes of her children about the community “Lincoln Gardens was the village that aided in their upbringing.”

The Role of Entrepreneurship in the Development of the Community and the Family

The Bolts

Former resident Mr. Bolt recalled his family moving into a wood-framed home in Carver City from Ybor City in the early 1950s. His father was self-employed in landscaping and his mother was employed as a domestic worker. Before his parents built their own home in Carver City they were renters in the area. There were only 5 houses in the country side area when his family arrived. Only one family in the neighborhood was White. He enjoyed hunting wild animals in the area as a youngster. He states that his mother won a small lottery of some sort. She decided to take the winnings and apply it towards homeownership in 1952. His mother and father secured a mortgage and purchased several lots of land on Laurel Street in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens. Years following the original purchase of property, multiple homes were constructed, his parents occupied the first home and he and his sisters occupied subsequent homes. According to public records, they purchased 4 lots in block 2 of Cypress Estates (before it was Carver City) in 1952. Eventually the lots owned by him and his sisters were sold outside of the family. Like many families of these communities this family worked hard to sustain their

place in this community. They too built a family network that inevitably supported their resilience in the community.

Black families were self-sufficient, creative, forceful, and determined. They did not have much support from what was considered the greater White society. This makes their success seem a bit more organic and raw as they formulated networks of kinship. This family continued to venture out as entrepreneurs. Mr. Bolt's mother and sisters started a laundering service and would iron clothes daily. People would drop their clothes off to them in the morning on Cypress Street. They would take the clothes home and iron them for a fee. The clothes would be available for pick up in the evening. He purchased his first home next door to his parents. During our interview he reflects on struggles that he faced as a young man. Mr. Bolt lost his home when he attempted to save his parents' home. He worked in landscaping with his father for many years.

Unfortunately, during the process of this study Mr. Bolt met his demise. I attended his funeral services. There seems to be no greater time of reflection in Black families than during times of grief. Family and friends console each other through reflections and embrace. Obituaries create a small trail of lineage and history. Mr. Bolt's niece Bobbi, also a former longtime Carver City resident, expressed just how difficult the loss of her uncle was for her. Losing a loved one is difficult especially when they are a strong line in the network of kinship. The details of the conversation exhibited how extended kinships create the momentum for Black families to transcend negative stereotypes and form astronomical value and purpose. Bobbi explained that when her parents separated her father abandoned his parental responsibilities. She said that it was her late uncle, Mr. Bolt, who stepped in as a substitute in the role of her absent father over and over again. Mr. Bolt and Bobbi shopped for her first car at an auction together.

He was emotionally and financially available to her and successfully filled a void. Later, Mr. Bolt came to her rescue as an adult when she was in an abusive relationship. He was available physically and provided security and safety. Mr. Bolt was not flawless but he was impactful in the process of securing kinship ties. This extended kinship was represented in his loyalty, courage, support and simply his presence.

After Mr. Bolt's funeral service, family and friends enjoyed food that had been prepared by neighbors, family and friends. The food was served by friends of the family. Cars overflowed in the yards of neighbors but there was not one complaint. I stayed until about 8p.m. Cars continued to roll in and roll out. These types of services are often bittersweet as everyone reunites. These are often the places where oral histories are told. Mr. Bolt's life was a testament of the village.

The Parkinsons

It was about 6 o'clock in the evening when I arrived at the home of the Parkinsons on Green Street to conduct an interview. There was another person who seemed to be going to the same home. She asked if I going in and I told her yes. "How is Mrs. Parkinson?" she inquired. I had not yet met the wife and could not offer the response she was seeking. Still, there she was eagerly gazing, waiting to hear my response. The friendly neighbor gave me her name and asked that I deliver a message to Mrs. Parkinson that she loves her and will be by to check on her soon. The cause for concern was based on the fact that she heard that Mrs. Parkinson had not been well. Her concern seemed genuine; I thought she was a relative in that brief exchange. I delivered the message to Mrs. Parkinson once inside the home. After the interview it was clear why one might have identified a neighbor as kin.

The Parkinson's story in Carver City began during the Civil Rights era. During that particular time in history African Americans were fighting relentlessly for equality, demanding immediate changes. There were still Black and White water fountains, all White little leagues, and etc. Black families were very accustomed to carving their own path through America's racial bigotry. Before purchasing their home, the Parkinsons rented a duplex in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens. They became more than friends with their neighbors, they were family.

Mr. Parkinson described an encounter and relationship that developed between his family and a neighbor. "She was living in a duplex next to me, and we became friends right away. They helped babysit for us sometime when we were busy or whatnot. Their mother and father invited us to their church and their home, and whatever events they might be having at their house, family reunions or whatever. And that's how we, my children grew up together knowing them, I guess, they probably took them as aunts, uncles what have you, and, uh, we called them Papa Love and Mama Love." After renting the couple decided that Carver City- Lincoln Gardens was a great place to live and purchased a home in the area. "Well, when I moved in on Green Street in '62 (1962), there was only three houses on the south side of Green Street in the 4200 Block, there was a cattle pasture on the right hand...north side," Mr. Parkinson recalled. The community had not yet been named Carver City. The particular area where he lived was named Forest Heights by the developer. They were a military family. Mr. Parkinson was a service man who proudly served in the U.S. Airforce. Mrs. Parkinson was a nurse. They relocated to the area from another state and had no biological family in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens when they initially arrived. The couple had 3 children. Like the typical service man, he was often away on deployment. This leaves much of the hands-on portion of parenting to the wife. Although one parent was absent and they were in a neighborhood far from any blood relatives, she was not

alone when it came to parenting responsibilities. Mrs. Parkinson said, “I did work. And I couldn’t make it, I don’t think if they hadn’t helped me. I couldn’t do it by myself.” There are many times when “family” includes those who are not biologically related. Families of the Armed Forces are familiar with forming camaraderie or kinships as a part of survival but this also applies in the civilian world and in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. Mr. Parkinson explained in detail the support his family received. “Some of the time when I was gone, like, the majority of the times when I was gone from – to Italy or France, Germany or Spain, or wherever, the men in the neighborhood would cut my grass. When my wife had a problem in the household, like, plumbing or something that they could handle, they would come and take care of it. She didn’t drive at that time. Most of the times that she needed a ride to some place or another (the neighbors had) no problem with somebody taking her. (There was) no problem with somebody watching the kids when they come home after school. They knew what they’re supposed to do, come in the house, and stay in the house. The neighbors saw that they did that, they didn’t cross the ditch, I call it. I appreciate all of that and I think all of that was a great help in raising my children.”

“This focus on marriage and the nuclear family contains strong racial and ethnic—as well as class—biases. Euro-centric conceptualization of family taints a common feature of the culture of the Black extended family networks being a fully comprehensible experience” (Gerstel, 2011). “SNAF- the Standard North American Family... ideological code” often excludes the Black family simply because it excludes a major and at times “standard” component of many African-American families (its extended members) (Gerstel, 2011). Some well-developed kinships offer immeasurable benefits and wealth. If it were necessary to name the aforementioned services in terms of service for hire, the professional services needs of this family may have included

landscaping, childcare, chauffer, and plumber services. These types of contributions to Black families by way of kinship networks significantly reduced the chances of failure.

The success of Black families in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community can be measured in the fact they have remained for generations. The longevity is an indicator of the resilience of the community. Because kinship networks are exhaustive in the extent that they support Black families, when these networks are critically analyzed without a doubt it debunks any myth of the dysfunctional Black family. In essence it supports the functionality of family and loosens the stifling boundaries of the standard family model creating a space large enough to include a broader area of inclusiveness for the various possibilities of what an American family might look like.

Some of the conveniences that the neighbors or extended kin offered to each other were services that were not readily available in the area at the time. There was no public transportation, no playground, and all of the neighborhood schools were not yet constructed. Mr. Parkinson explained how rural the area was, “we didn’t have door-to-door mail service.” I asked Mr. Parkinson, “What is some of the differences between non-biological kin and biological kin?” His response was swift. “Well, nothing.”

Mr. Parkinson described some of the advantages of this kinship, friendship, relationship in an interesting manner. These advantages are simplistic at time, undefined at time but real and very important in kinships. He said “Well, the advantage I found with it was that we had someone to help us with our child raising, helped gave us pointers as older adults, we could learn and listen from them.” Mrs. Parkinson described her relationship with the community as close and just like family. Family and community become nearly synonymous at times in certain neighborhoods especially when every part of the growth seems somehow interwoven. Mr.

Parkinson said “I think the neighborhood and everything had a lot to do with my children coming up the way they are and turning out the way they did. Carver City and Lincoln Gardens area was the village from my children, as far I’m concerned. I do believe that it takes more than the parents to raise a child and to be able to enjoy life because you need friendships and that’s part of the neighborhood. You need mentors. That’s part of the neighborhood. You need guidance from some people who might know things about some things that you don’t know anything about, that you can get from the neighborhood. So, I’m a firm believer in the neighborhood and the community being an asset to each other.” These were not just words for this family it is evident by their deeds in the community.

Despite their own busy and demanding lives they extended themselves to community. Reciprocity is a key factor in maintaining many of the kinship networks that existed in these communities. They were fully committed to the kinship network. Mr. Parkinson said, “I was a Boy Scout director. But my biggest thing was at first, little league. I organized that... as president of that, -- we had four teams of little league boys; two teams of senior league boys and four teams of girls, softball.” The Forrest Heights Little League included children from Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community. “The recreation center was named Forest Heights Recreation Center. Later on, I don’t know exactly how many years, but they changed the name from Forest Heights to Loretta Ingraham. But that was after we had the original Forest Heights Recreation Center rebuilt; including a pool, a rec. room, a conference room, a library, inside basketball court, and all of this was a request. It was made by Reginald Williams and Mr. Cliff Jones, who was one of the recreational center’s personnel.” There is an old saying that “charity begins at home and spreads abroad” and sometimes in an effort to care for our own we care for others. He continued, “I had been trying to get a swimming pool in the community for my children (they

loved to swim) so they could go swim. We had to go to MacFarlane Park pool, which meant they had to cross Dale Mabry Highway, which was a very, very busy highway and as far as I was concerned, was very unsafe. So, I started requesting a pool and I guess it must have taken me about 10 years; anyway, I finally got it. I got Mayor Greco to agree to give us a swimming pool and whatever else we might have wanted in a swimming pool. Well, me as a layman, as far as a recreation goes, I didn't know what was needed in a swimming pool – I mean, in a recreation center. So, I got with Mr. Jones and told him to make me a list of everything he thought that a recreation center would need and require. So, he made up a list and I told him that the only thing I was concerned about was the swimming pool and the library. We had gotten the library to come out here and park the truck on the weekends, but that didn't turn out too well because the kids, when they was out of school, they wasn't too interested in the library. So, Mr. Jones put the list in then we agreed to it. So we got everything we requested except, a track field around the football field, which had to go up into Lincoln Gardens. They also put an outside basketball court, tennis court, and volleyball court in the Lincoln Gardens area, which was used and ran by the Loretta Ingraham Recreation Center.” The social dynamics of the community with the help of community was transformed to meet the needs of the Black families of the community.

Cedric “CJ” Mills was a 16 year old, 10th grader and football player at Jefferson High School. He was gunned down in the front yard of his grandmother's home in the 4200 block of West Laurel Street in Carver City. Another young man who lived in the Caver City community was 16 years old, and also a 10th grade football player of Jefferson at the time of the shooting recalled feeling the devastation from the loss of a “friend, brother, and team leader.” Aiden says the day was just like any other school day ending with football practice with his friends. His father came into his room to inform him that someone had been shot in their neighborhood.

Shortly afterwards, he crossed path with the team coach who informed him of the loss of CJ. The entire football team met immediately at the high school gym with grief counselors. The next morning at breakfast the school seemed to be at full capacity however, there was an unusual calm as it affected the entire student body. This unsolved murder shocked the community. Carver City- Lincoln Gardens has a football field named in honor of his memory and Jefferson High School retired his Jersey #8. This short story demonstrated that kinships are formed during childhood with residents. There was a bond of brotherhood and a shared grieving experience throughout the community and institutions of the community.

Formal and Informal Networks

Formal and informal networks are a part of most communities and they are absolutely evident in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community. Pattillo-McCoy discusses neighborhood networks in *Black Picket Fences*. These organizations are formed at various levels from criminal to political. The organizations that are discussed in this study are a few of those that have contributed to the interlocking of families to their neighbors and the community in an effort to sustain and support one another. I argue that the presence of these social organizations is what formed the resilience in these communities. These networks in this particular study are in fact the motivating forces that were necessary for Black families to withstand the pressures of systemic and overt racial oppression. There are many theories on social organizations; the following theories are a somewhat simplistic way of comprehending the dichotomy of networks that serve a purpose from those that do not. “Social organization is goal-oriented. Social disorganization is defined as the inability of a community structure to realize the common values

of its residents and maintain effective social controls; hence, social organization refers to the effective efforts of neighborhood actors toward common ends” (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999).

The Carlins

What began as one father cutting and grooming his sons’ hair transformed into something larger. The haircuts were apparently phenomenal. Many of the neighbors took notice and admired their dapperness. According to Mrs. Carlin a few neighbors inquired about who cuts her boys hair. This was the beginning one resident becoming the community barber. Mr. Carlin is described as a husband, father, and hardworking man who took pleasure in grooming his sons. Providing haircuts for the neighborhood became a hobby and informal weekend/evening job. He worked 2 other jobs yet, he still managed to provide haircuts for many of the neighborhood boys. A space in his home slowly transformed into a barbershop. Mrs. Carlin recalled early knocks at the door by the neighborhood clients. Her husband found great pleasure in offering his services to the community. There were many times when Mr. Carlin first began cutting hair for a few of the neighbors, some of the parents struggled to pay the \$1 or \$2 fee that barber would charge. Back-to-school or Easter haircuts were especially important to many of the families. If the families were unable to pay at the time, the barber would still offer his service and skills. There were times that he would groom the young boys at no cost or on credit. He taught his sons how to cut hair. In the early years of development of this community, his labor of love was a service that was much needed but not available in the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Community.

The Corner Store

A family which lived in Lincoln Gardens opened a convenient store in Carver City. The building was not owned by the family. Many members of the community remembered purchasing low cost snacks from the store as children. The establishment that was once known

as Reese Corner Store (but is now known as A & J's Carver City Market) established rapport with the community. The store was engaged in insuring the welfare of the community. Occasionally, when families ran into financial hardships they were able to shop at the corner store. This store offered many conveniences to neighborhood families including store credits. The store offered a credit that was not bound by written agreement, Visa or MasterCard but by trust, respect, communication and commitment. This was truly a convenient store but not in a 7-11 sense because the owners' empathy and compassion for the patrons was unparalleled. The store is no longer operated by that family but it is currently an open establishments. It is a place where you can observe community members shopping, socializing and gathering.

This community had in its possession great wealth. Carver City- Lincoln Gardens were collectively wealthy even though some of the residents remembered struggle. Their combined resources are responsible for securing Black families in this community. The extend kinship network helps to make this middle class community highly functional. Extended kinships made surviving possible because of the many resources that where available to the families of the community at times simply for asking or the willingness to accept an offer. They found strength in their families by uniting with their neighbors. The Black families in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens worked together like the strings of a guitar; they play well together even though they stand alone and they are a part of one instrument. There was one question that participants consistently answered the same. All of the participants in this study agreed that their family is strong and functional. The kinships that were formed seemed appreciated by the participants of this study and it is evident that these kinships are priceless and the source of the communities' resilience through the changing times.

CHAPTER 6

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

In this section, I will discuss major social institutions in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community. Although there are other major social institutions in the community, I chose to focus primarily on the churches and the civic association. The church was chosen for three major reasons. The first reason is its documented historical role in the Black community, especially during the most oppressive times for Blacks in America. The church was and is an institution that supports community awareness and activism. Church members often meet several times a week. The church was important enough to the community that some residents transformed their homes into a place of worship. Next, there are several churches within this small community which is a significant indicator of the community's need to develop deeper bonds and networks through religious practices. Third, although many of the participants of this study currently attend churches outside of the community, many of the same participants previously had membership or fellowshiped with one or more of the community churches. All of the participants were familiar with the community churches in one way or another. The relationships between the church and community is significant to this study because the tendency for fellow church members to form familial type kinships and support networks.

The civic association in the community is not as physically prominent as the church but was selected in this study for very specific reasons. First, it is a testament of the commitment of the families of the community. The association was formed from camaraderie of neighbors in

the early years of the community. During a pleasure based social gathering neighbors played card games and discussed resolving various concerns for the community. These discussions eventually lead to results and a well-organized association. The organization is an example of a community grassroots organization. They were focused on change. This leads to the next reason this institution was selected. CCLG Association's functions are critical to the preservation of the community. The organization was granted a historical marker for the community after the CCLG Association petitioned the City of Tampa. The organization is led by residents and many residents frequently attended the monthly meetings. Finally and possibly most importantly, the organization has a significant level community engagement. Everything that this organization fights for is exclusively for the community.

In this project, I explore the relationship of these institutions to the families who have lived in the community for many years. I consider the ways in which these organizations contribute to family stability and the ways in which they support family life.

The Churches

What social forces affect Black residents sense of place, home, and community? There are many social forces that influence the residents of the Carver City- Lincoln Gardens community. The most readily observable influential social forces in the community are the Black churches, families and the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Civic Association. Pattillo-McCoy saw the importance of recognizing generational presence in her Groveland, Chicago Study; "...grandparents in their fifties, sixties and seventies still act as caregivers to both their children and grandchildren" (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Sunday meals have been staples in Black families for decades. Dubois notes an observable pattern among Black families of the Seventh

Ward of Philadelphia: “only on Sundays does the general gathering in the front room, the visits and leisurely dinner smack of proper home life (Dubois, Anderson and Eaton, 1995). I often met with participants of this study on weekends, Dubois observation remains relevant. Upon arrival to many homes on Sunday, I was often met with the aromas of Sunday’s dinner with guests or relatives present. In Dubois’s ethnography, chapter 11 is titled “The Negro Family” he understood that in order to understand the Black population you must understand the impact of the Black family. These studies in Black community share both a gloom and glorious likeness with Carver City- Lincoln Gardens.

There are other institutions that are available to the community, even if the community does not always take full advantage of their community partners in the network. However, the church is the most prominent institution in the communities. There are 7 churches currently in the community, with the First Baptist of Lincoln Gardens being the first formal religious structure in the community. There have been many other churches in this community with various leaders through the years. These churches have been and still are significant in the community. Many of the participants in this study currently have memberships with churches outside of the community but have had memberships and affiliations and/or active memberships with community churches at some period of time.

There are a number of reasons to explain why I have chosen to incorporate the church into this particular study. Much of my motivation has to do with my own positionality. The church was a significant part of my life from birth to adulthood. The role of the church in my life influenced my friends, voting selections, dress code, and my foundation for formulating gender roles. Although some of my views have changed as result of growth and personal development I cannot deny the impact of the Black church experience and its influence. The

reason the church had such power is because I like some others trusted them with my soul, the church was my moral compass and more importantly the church was family.

My role as a researcher at these particular church visits is a bit of a different experience than personal visits to churches in the past. Prior to this study I never visited a church with the particular intent to observe them specifically as part of a community and family network. My religious perspectives, concepts, or convictions are not brought into this research. Effectiveness in this particular study of the church requires objectiveness in the interpretations of the observations. Although I have an extensive history with the Black church, I did not find it difficult to be an objective observer because these visits were more or less about observing strategy, interaction and impact.

I grew up attending a small conservative Black Pentecostal Church in Southern Hillsborough County. I spent time with my church family about four times a week: Tuesday- choir rehearsal, Wednesday- Bible Study, Friday- Tarry Service, Sunday- Church services, and occasionally, other special church related events would require even more of my time. Many of the Churches that I visited in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens have meetings for fellowship scheduled on multiple days of the week. There is a level of commitment that is expected and somewhat required of church members.

People may choose to commit to a church for the love of God, music, socializing, and/or moral lessons. The church becomes a significant part of its members' lives both in and away from church. People's affiliation with the church is often known in their community which partners with certain expectations based on this particular affiliation. The church is an institution that is often inclusive in the lives of the members from birth to death. The church officiates baby christenings, marriage ceremonies, funerals and more. Some Black churches design ministries to

assist, council and accommodate the young, old, women, men, couples, singles, destitute and more. The church offers functions that are supportive and in place ultimately to form kinship networks with its members and the community.

Defining family, relationships, kinships; understanding tokens and expressions of love and community are critical elements to comprehending the intimate driving forces of the people of this community. The church is a significant component of this study because the community churches provide representations of extended family in the community. I make this assumption based on the number of churches that are located within the small parameters of the community. Random House Webster's College Dictionary provides an extended definition for family. The following is a limited definition highlighting the most applicable attributes as it relates to this particular study.

Family: 1. Parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not. 5. All those persons considered as descendants of a common progenitor. 6. A group of persons who form a household, esp. under one head. 8. A group of related things. 9. A group of who are generally not blood relations but who share common attitudes, interests, or goals.

This definition demonstrates that there is a need to expand the scope or definition of family in order to fully encompass what is present in this community. Defining acts of family is in fact inclusive of numerous things. There are varying expectations that individuals have for one to be considered family. Often when it is related to family, it seemed that residents of the Carver City- Lincoln Gardens do not bother seeking out a definition for what simply is. The fine line between friend and family is blurred and will not be thoroughly defined in this particular study.

This portion of the research will reflect the observations that were made while visiting churches in the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Community. The first church visited was Pilgrim

Rest Missionary Baptist Church. This church sits on the corner of Lois Avenue and Nassau Street. This was not my first time entering this church. I have attended several family funerals at this church over the years. I have also witnessed many funerals of non-relatives and community members at this church. My Grandmother's, Lucille Tillman Armstrong, funeral was at the church, as well as her daughter and her son (all longtime residents of Carver City). This was my first time at Pilgrim Rest for a regular church service. The choir was singing and I sat silently about midway the sanctuary near the aisle. The music in the church was energetic gospel. The Pastor of the church was out ill and the congregation prayed for her wellness. The church is under the leadership of Dr. Linda Reese, Senior Pastor and Elder Elliott McBride, Assistant Pastor. During a brief testimony period three members of the congregation shared moments of gratitude. They were thankful for having God as a protector. One gentleman was thankful that his family filled an entire pew. Another member said that he is thankful that he is rich because of God. These moments of gratitude are important because they help explore the ways in which people connect things spiritual to the material realm. Near the end of the sermon several announcements were made. There were plans in the making for a health care event. The Health Care Ministry organized this annual event for the members and the community. Medical professionals volunteer their services to support the event. The church newsletter lists all the names of the members with July birthdays. This church lists services that can potentially assist the community greatly. Summer Vacation Bible School is a program that is offered for the youth while school is not in session. There is the Loretta Ingraham Super Seniors Ministry that organizes outings and events for the Senior Citizens like water aerobics and etc. The name Loretta Ingraham is familiar to many members of the community as there is also a local community recreational center named in her honor. The church is planning to extend its reach beyond the

community and host a radio station 96.3 FM WURK. The station will be operated by the church. They welcomed me and all other visitors. The congregation was majority women and predominantly Black. The church designed supportive programs that benefit various demographic of the community. Community institutions, such as this one, that form relationships that meet needs of the community is likely to form a bond that can be forever or temporary and life-altering.

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church located at 4301 West Cypress Street was the second church visited. The building marker on the church states the church was built in 1982. I arrived at 10:50am church services began at 11am. Prior to entering the sanctuary I was greeted by a member who was former First Lady. She told me that the original church was located on Lois Avenue. I was greeted by over 10 different members before the start of service. Once seated a member of the church's Hospitality Ministry provided me with a welcome letter. The letter also served as an invitation to the Friendship Church Family if in need of a church home. I was given a bookmark that listed the day and time of regular church services, as well as the ministries that the church offers. The message on the bookmark also reads as follow: "You are welcome here, you are loved here, you are a part of God's family, (and) you are welcome to share because you know we care..." One member comes up and asked my name, when I told her she said we are family. She thought I looked like my aunt who was a longtime resident of the community. I began to think about all the people who recognized my family resemblance. They would tell me stories of how they went to school with my cousins, how they sang with, worked with, played with my family members and how we are cousins; but it was not necessarily because we were at all blood related. The people of the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens have always seemed to go the extra mile to welcome with love and open arms. I immediately felt at

home around them. The church was celebrating the Pastor and his wife's 15th Anniversary. This was the very end of a week-long celebration. These events are demonstrations of appreciation, encouragement and love. Imagine a seven day long birthday party and the amount of time, commitment, and dedication required to organize such an event. Imagine the commitment to attend these services after a long day of work. There was a second service that particular Sunday that started at 4p.m. which was followed by dinner fellowship at the church. Those in attendance could partake if they so choose.

First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens is the oldest church in the community. The church was originally founded by a resident of Lincoln Gardens. In a letter by a Lincoln Gardens resident she remembered that this location was originally a playground. "The playground was changed to the community church. Residents gave money or cement blocks to aid in the construction." Some residents indicated that in the early years of the church the membership was very much members of the community and stated that there was a strong sense of family there. There is a brick walkway in front of the church. I asked a member could she tell me about the walk she said it was the product of a fundraiser that allowed members to purchase and dedicate engraved blocks to the memories of loved ones. There were blocks with Bible verses and family names. It reminded me of the importance of family in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. There is evidence of connectedness of generations that is present in the memorials.

This particular Sunday, the church was recognizing a youth member. This meant that most of the church services and functions were led by youth members on this particular Sunday. One of the youth members in attendance had recently graduated from high school. She received special recognition for her accomplishments. She planned to leave for college in the fall. The church watched her grow up through the years and they were very proud to call her their own.

Her mother was by her side as she was awarded \$600 towards college expenses. A baby was also christened on this Sunday. The baby was baptized and admitted to the church. The Pastor called the names of aunts, uncles, God-parents and other church member who were committing to assisting in the upbringing of this child. There were also discussions about back-to-school events and health fairs. This is a great example of the way networks of extended kinships are formed. A helping hand in the time of need is always appreciated. I am not certain of what percentage of these members are residents of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens but it is clear that the church is there to be present for its members and the community. During an interview with Ms. Adams, I asked, “What role does the church play in the community?” She replied, “I think it played a big role then because most of the people in the neighborhood attended the church. The minister who led the church was from the community. So if there was anything going on, the church always knew about it and was a part of it. Uh, not so much now... it’s just a different feel now.”

These experiences at the church are similar to what Dubois reported in *The Philadelphia Negro*. “Organized Life of Negroes” is the chapter that Dubois elaborates on the functions of the church. Although his study is over 100 years old his findings about the church remain relevant. “Its tribal functions are shown in its religious activity, its social authority and general guiding and coordinating work; its family functions are shown by the fact that the church is a center of social life and intercourse; acts as newspaper and intelligence bureau, is the center of amusements—indeed, is the world in which the Negro moves and acts. So far-reaching are these functions of the church that its organization is almost political” (Dubois, Anderson and Eaton, 1995). He details six main functions of the church that are as follows:

1. The raising of annual budget.

2. The maintenance of membership.
3. Social intercourse and amusements.
4. The setting of moral standards.
5. Promotion of general intelligence.
6. Efforts for betterment.

These functions could be found in each of these churches. Some may argue that this network is not necessarily considered family or kinship, but I would quickly disagree. There was one interesting common factor among all the churches that I visited. Each church immediately recognized that I was an unfamiliar face. They knew their church family members well enough that it was impossible for me to blend in as just another common face in the crowd of many. Even still I was welcomed with love and open arms in each place of worship.

CCLG Civic Association

The Carver City- Lincoln Gardens Civic Association is an organization that was formed for the people and by the people. After discussing this project at the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Civics Association, I was approached by Ms. Adams she expressed an interest in participating in this study. We later coordinated a date to conduct an interview. In an interview with Ms. Adams she explained, “We did not have a lot of things in place at that time. We didn’t have a playground. People in the community got together, petitioned the city to put a playground in our neighborhood and (then) we had a playground.” She discussed how the community organized Girl and Boy Scouts for the children of the community and developed a civic association for the community. She stated that initially residents would meet in each other’s homes for the civic meetings. Another resident echoed that what started out as card games and a

social space with neighbors and friends transformed into something more meaningful. Ms. Adams stated the meetings “changed to a civic association with the welfare of the community as its major priority.” She went on to state that many of the original homeowners have passed away and many of their homes have been left to relatives. “We all had a common goal and that was what was best for the children in this community and because of that, most of the kids out here were educated and we have been able to develop even a better life than our parents were able to.”

I did not personally witness any card games at the association needless to say the members of the community continue mix business with pleasure. During this study, they organized a Jazz in park for the pleasure of the community. They have held fish fries, computer classes, and health and wellness events. Often after the meetings people hang around to engage each other in conversation.

I attended the Carver City- Lincoln Gardens Civic Association meeting on several occasions. Although, the organization is concerned with the appearance of their community this organization is not a homeowners association. It is supported by members of Carver City- Lincoln Gardens community and is open to all residents. The association meets once a month, on the First Thursday of each month at 6pm. The meetings are not typically very long. CCLG Civic Association epitomizes organized social activism. They are a group of intellectuals, socially and politically savvy community members. This organization has a reputation of standing strong against any entity that compromises the concerns of the community be it present or futures concerns. They are visible and present in the community offering scholarships for higher education, community workshops, political forums and an outlet for individual grievances. The organization is absolutely reflective of its motto “Accountable, Responsible, Change for Now and the Future.”

I accepted the invitation from Dr. Maurice Harvey, president of the association, to attend this meeting. After the first meeting, I felt at home. I knew that I could count on their support. Upon each arrival I signed in and received copies of the meeting agenda and the meeting minutes. There were times when there were about 15 people in attendance including myself then there were other times were there easily 40 or more people in attendance. They were familiar with the interest that USF has taken in the community. Upon realizing I was there as a representative of the USF Community Research Project excitement filled the room. They wondered who had been interviewed. Names, questions and comments were randomly shouted out. Did you speak with Juanita Hale? Someone asked. Another person mentioned the low price for purchasing lots in the area back when the area was nothing but woods. Another attendee says you should talk to my father he is one of the oldest residents from Carver City and he lives in Progress Village now. He is old someone should interview him soon. "I bet he could tell you a lot about the Armstrongs." The members have long histories with the community and are aggressively tracking the concerns of the citizens of Carver City – Lincoln Gardens. They are a civic force. The organization is a tax exempt 501 (c) (4) entity.

Most of the residents that I spoke to were familiar with the CCLG Civic Association. The voice and presence of the younger members of the community is desired and needed. The current member are constantly requesting and welcoming all members of the community to participate. There is much to be gained from this organization including a wealth of information about the community, mentorship opportunities, opportunities to be heard, to be a part of the change and more. The agenda and the usage of parliamentary procedures help to keep the meetings orderly. In attendance there have been members of the Tampa Police Department, Department of Transportation, business owners, scholars and more. They work to preserve and

enhance the community. The CCLG Civic Association requested and received a historical marker for the community. The scholarships that are offered are fairly easy to obtain. One of the easiest requirements is to be a resident of one of Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. The president of the association said that they would gladly give more scholarships if they received more applications. The association is definitely an extremely valuable part of the community network and contributes to the resilience of Black families of this community.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This project attempts to address three important questions about family life in the historical Black community of Carver City- Lincoln Gardens. The first question: how is Black family life defined by residents of Carver City- Lincoln Gardens? This question is to determine if participants define family in terms of the nuclear family structure or the extended family structure. The next question is how do families reflect the history of the community? This question is to illustrate the ways in which families and community intertwine. Finally, what institutions and/or organizations contribute to family stability in this community? There is a intense focus on the roles of the church and the community association and how they function as extension of the family and a part of a larger network. I will provide the answer to these research questions, explain my motivation for this project, and close with my final impressions.

Ultimately, this examination of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens is not fully comprehensive. It does not represent or include all Black families in this community. This study is not a Black vs. White comparative analysis but a study of family life as it was and is for Black families of this community from the days of “Jim Crow” to modern times of the so called “post- racial America” from the residents’ perspectives. There is a sense of delight that is present from the participants in this study that should not disqualify or minimize the significance of the racial struggle that they indeed endure and maneuvered around.

This small sample of Black families reveals a few things about Black family life that seem somewhat standard for many. The residents of the community consider these

neighborhoods their home and their neighbors are indeed their family. There are nuclear families within the community however, the families extend themselves beyond the standard family to find strength and lend support to their neighbors and extended kin. In fact, these extensions of family have been present and necessary from the earliest stages of development in the community and still exist today, generations later. Kinship networks are a primary source of the community's resilience. Residents of Carver City- Lincoln Gardens have protected each other's children, fed their neighbors and organized programs for the children and the adults. They have created a support system for the elderly, built playgrounds, built sanctuaries, built homes and developed an association to secure the interests and stability of the community. This is community activism. These things are significant contributing factors to the stability and resilience of all Black families in this community.

People arrived in this community with their own immediate family in mind. Discussions with the participants of this study make defining family both a challenge and simple. Most of the residents know many of the family clans by last name even if they do not know a specific individual. Often in their efforts to care for their own family and improve their own lives they inadvertently or deliberately compliment their neighbors' lives in the form of networks and kinships. The financial, psychological, intellectual, moral and even at times spiritual value and relief that is exchanged as a result of the networks formed in the community is incomprehensible. These networks were and are priceless. Based upon the many interviews, casual discussions, and observations made in this ethnographic study the definition for family in this community is fluid in that reaches beyond biological realms and, is solid in that once an individual is a part of the kinship network it seems that relationship is permanently solidified. Family life for the residents

of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Community is represented in both nuclear and extended family structures.

Community and family in the Carver City- Lincoln Gardens community interlock in such a way that the words “community” and “family” are synonymous. The Black families of the community persevered through some of the most racially challenging times for Black Americans. When the stories of the community are told it is not difficult to gather that the community organizations and institutions respond to the needs of the community. The civic association and its beginning is a great example of the families bonding as a community. This institution was formed out of necessity during small gatherings in the homes of Carver City-Lincoln Gardens residents. Families wanted to make their community better. They created a social space to identify problems and collectively discover acceptable solutions to the problems. Decades later this organization remains an active voice of the community, even in the political arenas. Everyone I asked about the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens Association was familiar with the organization. The association can benefit greatly from the support and assistance of the youth in the community. The organization continues meet regularly and solicit the participation of all residents of the community. The solidarity that is present in the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens community has created a powerhouse through the social forces that make this area home.

The first formal religious structure in the community is the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens. There were many churches that came after First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens and those are also significant to the community. However, this church is most suitable for this conclusion. It is also a great example of the community officially extending kinship. It was founded by former resident, Reverend John Stephens. First Baptist Church of Lincoln

Gardens (like other churches in the area) initially held services in the home of Reverend Stephens who resided in Lincoln Gardens. It was not until 1964 that the actual church was constructed. This is a church for the community and by the community. Black churches provide its members a significant extension of family. They are often staffed with additional mothers, fathers (pastors and deacons), sisters and brothers (lay members of the congregation) figures.

The best way to emphasize the level of intimacy of the relationships between the community institutions and the families is to understand their beginning. They began in the intimate and personal space of community members, their homes. The longevity of these institutions is more than a testament to the community resilience it is also a testament to their relevance to Black families in the community.

Time partners inevitably with change. Unfortunately, many of the original homeowners have transitioned from this life leaving a deeply rooted legacy of memories of families, kinships, tragedy, triumph and more. Some of the younger generations have out grown their home community and created lives elsewhere but many still remain. They all should remain proud, thankful and aware of the true legacy that they have been left to sustain. Some never knew the history; some do not remember the struggles that came along with segregation. Black families in the South learned to work around the many racially restrictive obstacles that were the laws of the land. Newer generations inherit much more than a piece of land and a home; they hold proof that their family came, their family fought, their family has remained resilient and ultimately their family was victorious in overcoming part of the battle of oppression. The elders of this community survived and thrived through many seasons of change. Some of them reminisced the good old days in Carver City-Lincoln Gardens. Although, they have witnessed amazing growth

in the community, not all of the changes have been favorable. Nevertheless, many of them happily remain there, connected to the kinship network of resilience.

After the many conversations in the community I am certain the residents are extremely proud of what they have created, earned and contributed to the history of Tampa, their community of Carver City- Lincoln Gardens and to their family. Although much has changed over the decades, there are some things that I believe will remain, and that is the presence of family, church, and the civic association.

This study is not for the purpose of viewing these communities with rose-colored perception or is it to ignore social, economic or other perils. This study highlights the resilience of Black families in this community. Their strength and resilience is evident in their amazing labors of love for one another. The study demonstrates that Black families are capable of raising and sustaining families and moreover developing successful communities. Black families supported and sustained themselves through the collective efforts of the community and extend kinships.

Reflections

I reflect on my initial excitement and motivation to participate in the Carver City-Lincoln Gardens research project. Initially, I loved the idea for purely personal and somewhat selfish reasons. Mainly, my motivation was the love of my family and the opportunity to discover family history. My family is deeply rooted in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens dating back to the 1950s. It was more than a pleasure to learn about Black family life in Tampa. This type of information was never available to me in the local schools that I attended here in Hillsborough County. I never felt included in Hillsborough County's history.

This study changed my life. I come from a family that communicates openly about family and things that are believed to be important. Surprisingly, I was 39 years old when I joined this research project and I did not realize the significance of a home that had been in our family since the Jim Crow Era. There were/are no books or scholarly literature that mentioned this community as an accomplishment. My family survived the struggles of the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Era. They were simply ecstatic to be homeowners. They did not fully disclose the politics and social dynamics of the time that made this experience a bit more phenomenal.

Unfortunately, with in the last 10 years my family lost their original home in the community that was purchased by my grandparents. This research experience has permanently escalated the value of that home. That home is part of a priceless legacy.

There are times when we see our parents without fully acknowledging the process of them becoming adults. I did not initially realize that my Dad grew up in that home. Although I ate, played, and slept there. Somehow, I missed that connection. I did not realize that my family members were in Carver City because there were only a few places that Black people were allowed to reside in Tampa. I did not realize that they were part of the making of a community that many speak of with such fondness. I did not realize their contributions to our family, even though I have witnessed uncles, aunts, cousins, siblings, nieces and nephews living there. I did not realize their sacrifice, struggle, strength, intelligence and resilience as members of the Black community. One could argue that I may have been naïve to not realize this great history but; I argue that this deficit in knowledge that I experienced is indication of an absence of literature that documents local Black history.

I would love to buy back the home that was once owned and built by my grandparents. I am not sure if I will ever have that opportunity. This leads to my current motivation for this

research. There are many families residing in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens who share stories similar to mine. It is likely that some of the younger residents are not aware of the legacy their family or ancestors may have left behind. I imagine that they would not want to experience the extreme loss that I feel. I am hoping that this study of family will remind some and make other aware of the beauty of Black family, Black community and Black history. The homes in the Carver City- Lincoln Gardens Community are historic symbols, monuments of sorts, of Black progression and resilience through racial oppression in Tampa.

Final Impressions

Family or being a part of a kinship is not frequently defined by individuals who are not researchers of family life. Family or kinships just “is” to the average person. During one particular interview in Lincoln Gardens my daughter and niece (both 11 years old) were with me. We pulled into the driveway, got out of the car, and the homeowner opened the before we knocked to invite us in. The girls had their activities to keep them busy; I had my recorder and interview questions. Before we began the interview the girls were offered drinks and snacks which they gladly accepted. The interview flowed with ease and no interruptions from the girls. The following day her brother was expected to return home and the family planned a small gathering there to meet and greet with him. It all ended with us returning for Sunday dinner with the other members of her family. We shared food, ideas, laughs, conversations, advice and more. My daughter and niece appointed themselves as honorary grandkids of the family; the family accepted their love and reintroduced themselves as the uncle/aunt or grandparent respectively. They were made aware immediately that there will be academic and behavioral expectations associated with this new relationship/kinship. The children were told how the

adults would be available to them. It was amazing. The swiftness in which family or kinship can just happen is often as instantaneous as childbirth or a family gathering. Documenting and defining when family or kinships happens can often presents a major challenge because there is a blurred line when it comes to this seemingly natural transition.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How long have you lived in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens?
2. When did you initially move to the area?
3. Do you have relatives that live here? Who are they?
4. How do you define family?
5. Do you think of your immediate household as your family or is your family larger than just the people in the household?
6. Do you have friends in this community that you would define as “family”?
7. Why do you think family is important?
8. How long has your family lived in this community?
9. Is this a good community for families?
10. Do you think people in this community value family life?
11. In what ways does the community provide support for families?
12. Are you a member of a church in this community?
13. Have you ever gone to or participated in activities at any of the Neighborhood Churches?
14. Do you have any non relative neighbors that you have built a family like relationships with? If yes, why do you feel like they are family?
15. Have relatives or family- like ever resided with you in while in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens? if yes, name your relationship to the individual(s)

16. Did you receive any assistance from relatives or the community while in Carver City- Lincoln Gardens? If yes please explain.

17. What is the best and worst thing about your family?

18. Do you believe your family is strong? Functional? Normal?

Appendix B: Timeline

	Sep 13	Oct 13	Nov 13	Dec 13	Jan 13	Feb 13	Mar 13	Apr 13	Jul 14	Aug 14	Sep14	Oct 14
Read Books and Articles												
Interviews and Observations												
Field Journal												
Annotated Bibliography												
Literature Review												
Research Proposal/Outline												

December 2014 Finalize Proposal and Define Research Questions;

January 2015 Work on IRB and submit by the end of the month; complete ETD workshops; meet with committee and complete the Thesis Committee Appointment Form.

April 2015 Approval IRB

Sept 2015 Complete and transcribe interviews with at least 10 people from the Carver City/ Lincoln Gardens communities

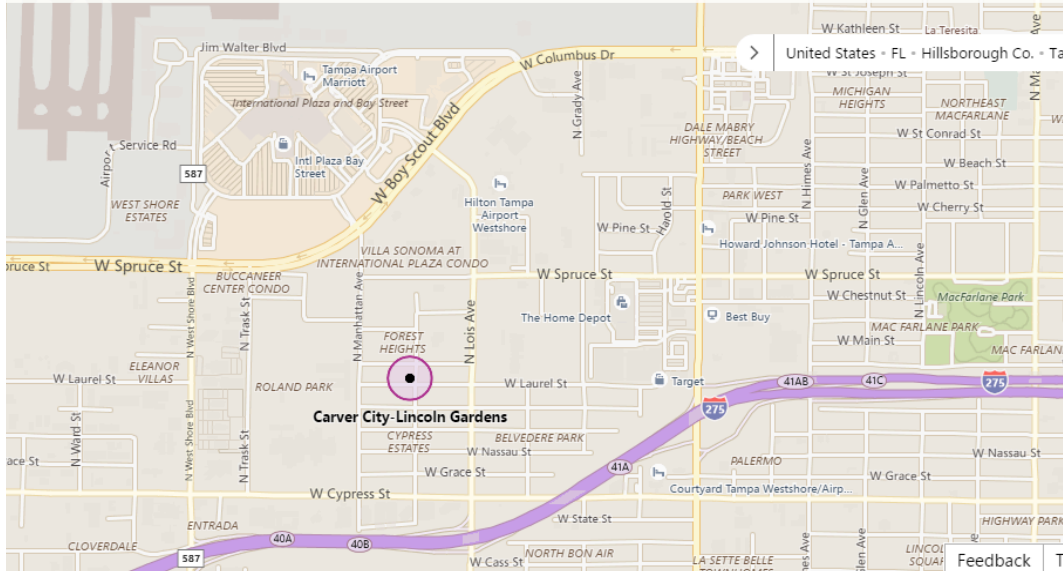
October 2015- June 2016 Data Analysis, Organize Conceptual Themes/Write/make revisions

June 2016 Defend

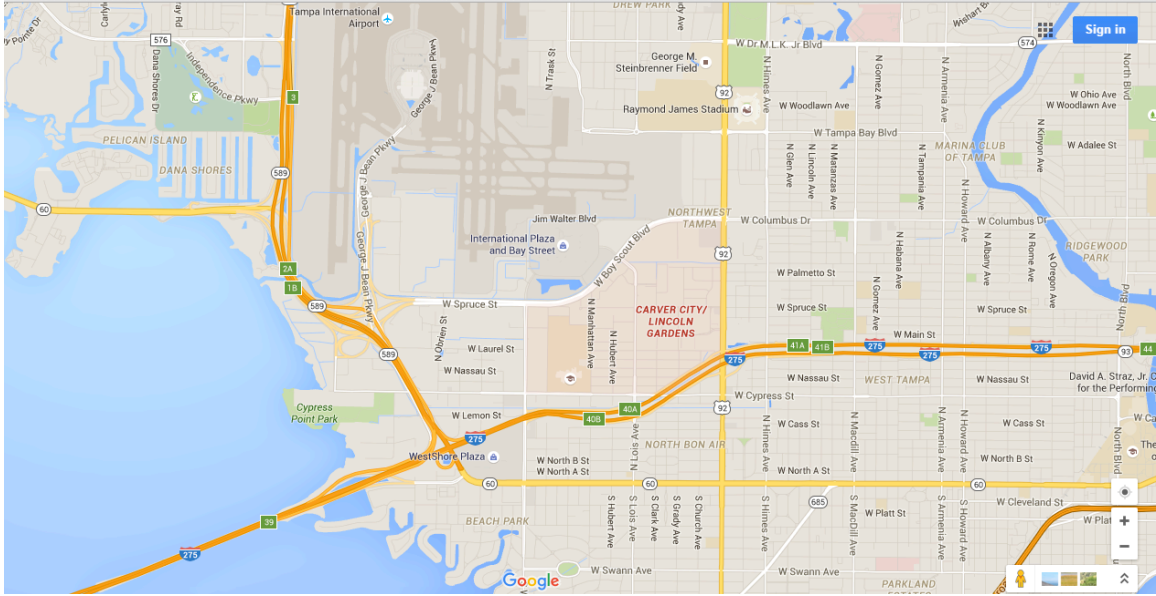
Appendix C: Maps



<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Carver+City%2FLincoln+Gardens,+Tampa,+FL+33607/@27.9595122,-82.5235639,5622m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m2!3m1!1s0x88c2c3abb94f799f:0x026a5e3a696ac2da>



<http://www.bing.com/mapspreview>



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