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# It Takes a Village: Addressing Racial Inequities in Education Through Community Based Organizations

Ashley Richards  
ashleymr@uw.edu

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# It Takes a Village: Addressing Racial Inequities in Education Through Community Based Organizations

Ashley Richards  
Sustainable Urban Development  
May, 2018

Faculty Adviser: Dr. Jeffrey Cohen

Essay completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Global Honors,  
University of Washington, Tacoma

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Approved:

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Faculty Adviser

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Date

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Director, Global Honors

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Date

Angela is a fighter – her optimistic demeanor would never reveal that she has faced life-altering hardships. Growing up in a township on the outskirts of Cape Town, she’s faced challenges meant to tear her down. Despite this, she expresses enthusiasm towards life and embraces the challenges she faces as a single mother. Her child’s father left her after he found out about the pregnancy and she was devastated. Angela left school to focus on providing for her child and has not been able to go back yet, but hopes to someday. Shortly after her pregnancy, Angela got involved with a local Community Based Organization (CBO) in her township, Philippi. The organization changed her life. She discovered a place that accepts her for all that she was and supports her in pursuing her dreams of returning back to school. Angela volunteers most of her time in the Youth Acceptance and Education Zone (YAEZ), where she supports workshops for other young women. She shares her story and educates those younger than her about the measures that they must take to ensure their academic success – both in and out of the classroom. She believes that had she known about the services available to her by this organization, her life today would be much different.

Angela’s story is not unlike many other youth and young adults who come from neighborhoods of color. In the United States and South Africa, many neighborhoods that are predominately Black receive unequal access to various resources that aid in upward mobility, or the ability to move up in socioeconomic status (Massey & Denton, 1993). Health services, the Internet, and access to extracurricular activities are examples of resources that youth rely on outside of school to encourage their in-school success (Smith, 2011). Inequitable access to these resources creates a division of the haves and the have-nots, which is often determined by race and the socio-economic status of neighborhoods (Massey & Denton, 1993). As generations of

youth continually endure inequities in out-of-school support resources, the systemic cycle of racism continues.

Due to past policies of forced racial segregation in the United States and South Africa, an issue that is explored in more detail later in this paper, many schools remain unequal with regards to funding and resources available to students – leading to blatant racial disparities in educational attainment and student success. In some under-resourced communities, CBOs offer services for students facing racial disparities in their education, which the government has otherwise not provided. Local, state, and federal government systems in the United States allocate educational funding to school districts based on student performance as well as socio-economic status (Center for Public Education, 2008). One factor that often plays into allocation of funding is a family's property taxes, often resulting in the unequal distribution of funding (Berne & Steifel, 1999). Health services, a safe place to study, and access to the Internet for completing homework are among the multitude of resources made available to students through the work of CBOs. As particular student groups continue to attend under-resourced schools, the question of how community-based organizations promote student success and fill the gaps in education-based resources outside of schools becomes one of global importance. The comparative analysis of similar organizations that function in differing global regions shows the current disparities in resource accessibility, and displays the need for societal change.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **How Did We Get Here?**

Historically, the United States has institutionalized racism and residential segregation amongst Black and White people, restricting access to various resources depending on an individual's race and neighborhood (Massey & Denton, 1993). After the Civil War, spatial

segregation was not as common as it was during the early twentieth century. In the South, servants and laborers lived near the plantations on which they worked and in the North, Black populations could be found scattered throughout many of the cities. However, during the early twentieth century, the implementation of housing policies aimed at segregation and the practice of redlining resulted in the establishment of the racialized ghetto – a predominately black residential area (Massey & Denton, 1993). Redlining is the practice of denying or limiting access to home mortgages and even insurance to Black individuals in specific geographic locations (Massey & Denton, 1993). This practice prevented the integration of Black communities into White neighborhoods, forcing Black residents into specific locations with limited access to community resources and economic development. Housing in neighborhoods defined by redlining was crowded and population density was much higher than that in White neighborhoods (Rothwell, 2011). The intentional segregation of Black communities became a permanent aspect of housing policy in the US, and furthered the economic gap between Black and White neighborhoods (Massey & Denton, 1993). Jonathan Rothwell explains:

In low-density areas, property taxes necessarily increase as population increases because there are decreasing returns to scale in the provision of public goods like education, roads, and sewers, but in high-density areas, such as cities, population growth can actually lower tax rates because the marginal costs of new residents are less than the gains in tax revenue from the new residents. (2011, p. 300)

This lack of property tax base and infrastructure drastically reduces the chances for upward economic and social mobility for the individuals living in those neighborhoods (Massey & Denton, 1993), continuing the cycle of poverty.

Forced segregation has had a lasting effect in the United States. A report from the Manhattan institute claims that of approximately 70,000 neighborhoods in the US, only 0.5% of them are all White (Anonymous, 2012). This statistic suggests that the segregation of Black and White in the US has drastically decreased. However, other professionals believe that the reasoning behind this is not integration, but rather other phenomena such as gentrification and depopulation of racialized ghettos (Anonymous, 2012). This is refuted, however, in a study conducted by Glenn Firebaugh and Francesco Acciai (2016) analyzing the transition in the neighborhood poverty gap by race over a 30-year period. Their findings show that while economic disadvantage and poverty has decreased in predominately Black neighborhoods since 1980, these neighborhoods have continued to remain highly segregated. This is further displayed when compared to other racial groups, including Asian and Hispanic, which saw a decline in economic disparities but also experienced higher rates of integration into White neighborhoods as compared to Blacks. This discussion of race and integration shows that as predominately Black communities increase in desirability, White populations push out Black populations due to the increased cost of living associated with the transformation of neighborhoods that were previously considered racialized ghettos (Massey & Denton, 1993).

Societal systems of segregation are not unique to the United States. Similar practices can be seen in South Africa, where Black communities were relocated to townships during Apartheid. Apartheid was a political system of forced segregation in South Africa, and was formally accepted in 1948 (Meriwether, 2007). However, racial segregation had been central to South African society since Dutch colonization (Wilson, 2011). With the arrival of Europeans in South Africa came constant struggle and battle between the various European groups, as well as

between Black and White. European settlers restricted the movement of native Black people, and forced them onto land reserves away from “white society” (Zukas, 2007, p. 1001).

Black people were forced out of urban centers and lived in the rural lands located near farms and diamond mines, where they were required to work. Urban centers continued to develop over the years with infrastructure and economic growth. On the other hand, the rural townships, where Black laborers lived, declined with regard to development (Wilson, 2011). Black people could not move within the country freely, due to racial policies that dictated where they could live and work. They were required to carry passes identifying where they lived and who their employer was. Without a pass, they could not freely travel to and from work. Passes were administered by the government, enforcing White dominance over Blacks. In order to obtain a pass, Black laborers often were forced to work for low wages under White people. (Zukas, 2007). This segregation was further reinforced with the passage of the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and later, the Group Areas Act of 1950 under the Apartheid government, both of which protected and permitted racial segregation in housing (Maylam, 1995).

In addition to segregated housing, the Apartheid government enacted the Bantu Education Act, which dictated the type of education that Black learners received and intentionally prepared them for a future of manual labor (Knaus & Brown, 2016). Education for Black learners had initially been the responsibility of churches and missionaries. With the enactment of the Bantu Education Act, the government controlled the type of education that Black learners received. Black learners were prepared to go into the field of manual labor without much room for growth and development, further oppressing them and eliminating their prospects for upward mobility (Wilson, 2011).



The African National Congress (ANC) took political power in South Africa in 1994, after being banned from government due to opposition towards Apartheid policy (Macdonald, 1996). The ANC implemented The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), promising all South Africans basic human rights including equality in housing, healthcare and education. Although the Apartheid government no longer exists, the regulations that they set in place still have a lasting effect on Black communities across the country, despite the ANC's establishment of the Bill of Rights and promises for equality in housing, education, and other basic human rights (Macdonald, 1996).

### **Educational (In)Equity**

Educational equity is important in aiding a student's future potential and upward mobility. Educational equity is explained as an accepted set of rules and processes that are viewed as fair with regards to a student's access to education and educational attainment (Raffo, 2014). The quality of education received by youth is typically different across population groups, and is often influenced by their parent's level of education, as well as race and socio-economic status (Raffo, 2014). With these differences arises the issue of equity in education.

The intentional segregation of Black and White communities goes beyond quality of housing, playing a role in the funding of schools and resource allocation. As described earlier, families from low-income communities have a lower property tax base to support educational institutions; meaning that students living in these neighborhoods have less access to educational support services and remain in an under-resourced educational system. These educational disparities are passed on throughout the generations, preventing further upward mobility and allowing the racism of unequal educational resource allocation to persist (Massey & Denton, 1993).

Equal and equitable access to education is essential to ensuring a student's success. While various policies in the United States require children to attend school (e.g., RCW 28A.225.010), educational resources outside of school are not always equally distributed across communities of different races and socio-economic statuses (United States General Accounting Office, 1997). Resources such as Internet, health services, and extracurricular activities are external factors that contribute to the success of a child in school. Communities of color often have less access to these resources due to the continued impact of past policies requiring racial segregation (Massey & Denton, 1993). This pattern of inequitable resource distribution is present in Tacoma, Washington, where students living in low-income communities, often of color, have less access to the resources that promote their educational success. Property taxes account for approximately 20 percent of Tacoma Public Schools general fund (Tacoma Public Schools, 2018). The district explains that property taxes are based on location and appraised value of the home, displaying the inequities in education that occur when funding distribution is based on pre-existing inequities in resource accessibility.

Similar disparities emerge in South Africa, where schools located in the heart of Cape Town receive higher budgets. Learners attending these schools typically come from wealthier families with easy access to outside-of-school resources, aiding in their success. On the other hand, township schools, such as those in Philippi, receive smaller budgets (McKeever, 2017) and many learners rely on the assistance of CBOs to provide the resources denied to them (Knaus & Brown, 2016). The unequal distribution of resources for learners has been largely linked to the history of Apartheid in South Africa (Smith, 2011). South Africa has been noted as one of the most educationally unequal countries, despite it being the most advanced on the African continent with regard to educational standards (McKeever, 2017). As the legacy of Apartheid

lingers, the racial inequities in education will persist and Township communities will continue to be underserved.

### **Community Based Organizations**

CBOs act as an academic support service to many youth outside of school. CBOs are agencies that operate not-for-profit and provide various social services for the local community (Terrana, 2017). Resources made available to youth by CBOs in the Cape Town region include HIV education, afterschool activities, meals, and tutoring. These services are vital to breaking the systems of racism found in segregated settings, and go to show the important role that non-state agencies play in addressing racial inequalities (Knaus & Brown, 2011). Evidence shows that many of these organizations are sparse in poor, urban communities, despite these communities being the ones that most require their services (Terrana, 2017).

While many organizations commit themselves to providing for their youth, there are numerous challenges faced by organizations working in disadvantaged communities. Many founders, volunteers, and employees of CBOs live in and have grown up in the community they are serving (Terrana, 2017). Interviews with minority-founders of CBOs in the United States reveal that maintaining legitimacy in the community is heavily reliant on trust and knowledge of community dynamics. In diverse communities where many different languages are spoken and funding is sparse, being an active member of that community allows for local connections to churches, schools, and other organizations (Terrana, 2017). Additionally, there is often concern about whether CBOs are reaching the most vulnerable populations in the community. Youth who face challenges such as HIV, pregnancy, and even language barriers are often difficult to reach due to the responsibilities associated with handling these challenges, such as child rearing and caring for family (Yakubovich, Cluver, Skeen, Hensels, Macedo, & Tomlinson, 2015). Research

shows that while many organizations are making progress in promoting the psychological wellbeing of at-risk youth, some see low rates of students currently facing challenges taking advantage of the resources made available by CBOs (Yakubovich et. al., 2015).

Two challenges that many Black youth face in the education system are connection with teachers and engagement in classes. Baldrige, Hill and Davis (2011) report that Black male youth in under-resourced urban schools often face a “social crisis” (p. 121) while interacting with the public education system. Black males are often targeted in academic settings as dangerous and unengaged with educational material due to lasting societal stigmas associating Black communities with ghettos, gangs, and crime. These associations result in a greater proportion of Black youth being suspended in school (Baldrige, Hill & Davis, 2011). CBOs work with vulnerable youth, such as Black males, to find alternative routes in education that will further enrich students and encourage their academic success (Baldrige et. al, 2011). Activities offered to students include after-school athletic programs, leadership training, and academic tutoring (Knaus & Brown, 2016). Organizations that focus on enrichment activities encourage youth to get involved outside of the classroom through community engagement.

Health and wellness is an important aspect that plays a role in the educational success of youth. In South Africa, HIV poses a challenge for learners due to its life-threatening nature and the negative stigma associated with the virus (Knaus & Brown, 2016). Many learners are made to feel ashamed for contracting the virus. However, many cases are unavoidable and transmission of the virus is often carried from the parents, or transmitted after sexual assault (Amahle Ndlovu, Personal Communication, September 5, 2017). Additionally, treatment is scarce in under-resourced townships, leaving many youth without proper care and forcing them to dropout of school in order to take care of their health or the health of an affected family

member (Yakubovich et. al., 2015). Another health-related challenge faced by many female youths is unplanned pregnancy, which often requires them to drop out of school temporarily, leaving them to fall behind their peers (Amahle Ndlovu, Personal Communication, September 5, 2017). As numerous health concerns factor in to the educational outlook of youth, many CBOs step up to prevent transmission of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and pregnancies through sex education, parenting classes, and STD testing services (Yakubovich et. al., 2015).

Another aspect of health and wellness for youth is access to nutritional, well-balanced meals. For many youth living in under-resourced communities, family finances are tight, and access to healthy food is not always readily available. Many organizations recognize this gap in health and work to provide at least one meal a day for youth who “are going to school without a meal” (Knaus & Brown, p. 139, 2016) in order to ensure that their students are well-nourished and able to perform well in school (Linda Brown, Personal Communication, February 7, 2018). Addressing the 1961 Food for Peace program, President Kennedy stated, “Food is strength, and food is peace, and food is freedom, and food is a helping to people around the world whose good will and friendship we want” (Potorti, 2014, p.2). Meal programs in the late 1960’s started by the Black Panther Party offered free breakfast to youth, and eventually expanded to include grocery services. By providing for youth, they encouraged students to remain in school (Potorti, 2014).

The practice of providing meals for youth is continued today, as many CBOs in the United States are able to apply for food grants through governmental organizations, such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to launch programs that provide for youth who are not receiving lunch (“Brand new non-profit,” 2013). In San Bernardino, a CBO uses grant money from the USDA to support their summer lunches program. This program offers a free meal each day to youth from low-income communities who would normally receive a school

meal. Community members have embraced the meal programs for youth, stating that, “This program will not only help with hunger but will provide positive activities between the youth and their peers on a daily basis” (“Brand new non-profit,” 2013).

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

As youth of color continue to attend under resourced schools, CBOs become essential to promoting their educational success. Past policies enforcing racial segregation in housing and education have established barriers in a contemporary context for youth of color that are not easily overcome (Smith, 2011). Additionally, funding allocation and distribution in education leads to disparities in resource accessibility amongst different schools depending on the student’s socio-economic background (Berne & Steifel, 1999). A lack of community resources in combination with inequitable education standards has led to a continuous cycle of racism and poverty in many segregated urban settings across the globe (Massey & Denton, 1993). These cycles restrict youths of color’s chances at upward mobility and further enforce segregation and inequities in housing and education as a societal norm. Keeping in mind policies of segregation and the experiences of youth, such as Angela, the question arises, how do community-based organizations promote the educational success of youth of color outside of school?

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Settings**

During summer of 2017 I studied abroad in Cape Town, South Africa, where I volunteered with a CBO local to the Philippi Township in the outskirts of Cape Town. In addition to volunteering, site visits to a local High School, other CBOs and townships, and township libraries were areas of interest for research and observation while in Cape Town. Upon returning to the United States, I reached out to an organization local to Tacoma, Washington to

set up an interview and a time to conduct a site visit during their afternoon program for community youth. To maintain the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms have been assigned to organizations, programs, and individuals involved in this research study.

I grew up in a small, predominately white town. Racism was always present, however, it wasn't until my first year as an undergraduate student at the University of Washington Tacoma that I recognized the racism in my home town in comparison to the increased diversity of being in a city. I believe that racism and discrimination are unacceptable, however, as a white female I struggle to fully grasp racial discrimination and its implications for the future prospects and growth of non-white individuals. Having never been a victim of racism, my outlook on oppression is from an outsider's perspective and I can only speak to experiences of racism based on published statistics, my observations, and speaking to others in racially oppressive settings. As a visitor to the locations in which I have collected data, I was aware of my social identity as a white female in my interactions with others. Being an outsider affected the behaviors and attitudes of those around me and their interactions with the environment, as we had not established a longstanding rapport and trust. I regularly reevaluated my own role and positionality in these new environments to maintain validity and reliability in my data collection. I went into this study with minimal experience of and exposure to racial oppression with the objective to gain a better understanding of how CBOs function in racially oppressive settings, as well as reflect upon my own position in relation to race and oppression.

### **Philippi, South Africa.**

Indawo Ithemba is a CBO that is part of the Philippi Collaboration Lab – a coalition of local organizations working to provide for youth. The organization works with youth outside of school to promote inside-of-school educational success by providing many of the resources that

students need but do not have at home. Indawo Ithemba runs the Center for Bright Futures (CBF) in partnership with other local organizations to provide vital services to youth. Students attend afternoon workshops in the Youth Acceptance and Education Zone (YAEZ), which focus on teaching students about their sexual and reproductive rights, as well as encouraging healthy sexual practices by providing HIV and STD testing (Amahle Ndlovu, Personal Communication, September 6, 2017). There are also spaces at the CBF for students to study for classes, participate in activities such as music, drama, and soccer, and receive an afterschool snack (Amahle Ndlovu, Personal Communication, September 6, 2017). While with Indawo Ithemba, other member CBOs of the Philippi Collaboration Lab were present on the campus and in meetings. Additionally, while in Philippi a site visit to Nelson Mandela Senior Secondary school was conducted where I was able to visit several active classes and unused workspaces.

The organization has three permanent buildings on their campus that house their office space and a women and children's shelter. The structures where students receive their services are constructed primarily from recycled materials, and lack reliable heating and power sources. Emotional counseling, as well as medical services such as HIV and STD testing are done in reinforced sheds nearby the main office building. The afternoon workshop is held in a recycled shipping container within the organization's campus – this is where learners spend the majority of their time after school. The shipping container is equipped with electricity and a recording studio, donated by an EU funder, where learners can take part in story telling. However, the studio equipment requires more infrastructural support than they have available, and it is often left untouched. At 3:00pm, when school lets out, learners filter in to the YAEZ excited to participate in the day's activities and share their stories. They smile and speak native Isi Xhosa to



one another, they sing and dance before beginning workshop discussion, and they respect one another's actions and fears as they open up.

**Tacoma, Washington, USA.**

Local to Tacoma, the Center for Tomorrows Leaders (CTL) provides services to students from racially disadvantaged neighborhoods and schools. CTL provides a snack and dinner for youth and offers academic services such as tutoring and college prep programs for students four days a week. CTL operates several individual programs, including a 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade program, 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade Middle School Scholars Program, and 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade High School Scholars Program (Linda Brown, Personal Communication, February 7, 2018). The High School Scholars Program provides high school students from an array of schools in Tacoma a place to receive tutoring and prepare for college in an after-school program several days a week (Linda Brown, Personal Communication, February 7, 2018).

CTL works closely with a local church in the community, and rents a portion of the church during the week for afternoon activities and management offices. They pride themselves in the success of their students – photos of high school graduations, college & career days, and images of young, friendly faces plaster their walls and welcome anybody checking in at the main office. The first face you will see in these images is Juquan, a program graduate who returned to give back to those who supported him and encourage students to stay motivated academically. Organizational leadership takes the time to talk about the successes of all of the students pictured, but are especially proud of Juquan and all he has accomplished since graduating.

Past the main office, students congregate in an unused gymnasium that the church has allowed the organization to use. Half is set up with desks for students to do their homework and eat dinner, while the other half remains open for evening basketball games during enrichment

time. The gymnasium walls are covered with a combination of student work and achievements, and posters advertising the various student-led clubs that meet weekly during the afternoon program's independent enrichment time. Leaders share offices and collaborate on programming for the different age-groups; however, spend the majority of their time in the afternoons outside of their offices, working with their students to establish trusting relationships.

### **Data Collection Methods**

This qualitative research study consists of comparative analysis of similar CBOs. Organizations were analyzed and compared based on the programs they operate for youth, as well as how they function in their community with regard to involvement, outreach, and presence in schools. Educational workshops and tutoring, health services, and extracurricular activities are examples of the programs offered by the CBOs included in this study. Additionally, connection to youth post-high school is another aspect of involvement in the community that will be discussed and compared. This includes outreach and check-ins to youth who have completed the program, as well as volunteer opportunities to promote leadership skill development.

Methods pertaining to Indawo Ithemba include participatory observations and ethnographic interviews with on-site staff while studying abroad in Cape Town, South Africa and volunteering with the organization. Interviews were informal, allowing for conversations to occur naturally. While at Indawo Ithemba I worked on a mapping project for the organization, the purpose of which was to show locations of adolescent-youth friendly clinics youth could visit. Throughout the process I worked closely with Nihiku, the organizations director, to locate clinics as well as discuss the goals of the organization. During the afternoon I would observe students in the YAEZ and on occasion participate in their activities and discussions. Through

working with youth from Philippi, I was allowed the opportunity to continue informal interviews and discussions with them to hear about their experiences in school and growing up in Philippi.

Similar methods of data collection were used at other locations in Philippi that were areas of interest. While working with other member organizations of the Philippi Collaboration Lab, I was able to observe youth and their interactions, as well as their participation in programs offered by those organizations. Additionally, I was able to speak with and attend a meeting with staff from another organization, allowing me the opportunity to better understand how the organization functions in the community and the efforts of the Philippi Collaboration Lab, as well as discuss the challenges faced by the organization and the impact of those challenges on youth. During site visits to local libraries and Nelson Mandela Senior Secondary School, I took extensive field notes on my observations.

The objective of the local component of this study was to mirror the methods used at Indawo Ithemba at the CTL in order to best compare the organizations and determine common global themes amongst community-based organizations. That said, several methods of data collection used at Indawo Ithemba were not suitable for replication at the CTL due to the complexity of the program and workshop scheduling. Additionally, much of the work done by the CTL is done during school hours at local schools, limiting access to program administration and approved volunteers. Due to this, data collection was limited to ethnographic interviews conducted in a semi-structured fashion, as well as some email conversations.

An interview was conducted with the Center for Tomorrow's Leaders' High School and Post-Secondary program coordinator, Linda, where questions asked related to the mission of the organization, challenges that they and that youth in their community faced, as well as the various forms of academic and enrichment activities they provide for local youth. While the focus of

conversation was on the High School and Post-Secondary programs, we discussed some information on the Elementary and Middle School programs as well.

### **Data Analysis**

Field notes and interviews were transcribed for data analysis purposes. Images of student work and workshop notes were also transcribed and included in data analysis. The transcribed data was analyzed using Saldañas coding model for qualitative research (Saldaña, 2009). This model is a three phase model which allows for initial coding, categorization of initial codes, and a thematic analysis of data. The first phase of coding was a combination of descriptive, attribute and holistic coding. Each data article was coded based on key terms and concepts that were important to the topic. Information regarding who was involved and what the conversation or setting was regarding was included as part of the attribute coding, and a brief summary sentence of the entirety of the data article was included as the holistic coding. All codes were organized by data article and transcribed for further analysis. The second phase of coding included categorization of similar themes through pattern coding. Codes from the first phase were rearranged and grouped together based on similarities in content and topic, patterns in language, or key terms and phrases used repeatedly. The third phase of data analysis included a thematic analysis of the categories and the individual codes within each category. Categories were grouped together based on their similarities to determine recurring themes.

## **RESULTS**

There were a total of 503 codes from the first phase of coding. These codes came from 23 data articles including interview transcripts, field notes, and student work from the YAEZ afternoon workshop. These codes were grouped into 17 categories. These categories include: race, educational challenges of students, emotional challenges of students, gender challenges,

health challenges, in school challenges, outside of school challenges, community challenges, who CBOs try to help, community involvement, goals of CBOs, CBO programming, reasons students participate in CBOs/take advantage of services, student outcomes/learning/growth at CBOs, society, government, and challenges CBOs face. These 17 categories were analyzed further, with four themes ultimately emerging from the data.

**Theme 1: Students of Color face a variety of challenges which influence their academic and personal success.**

In residentially segregated regions, accessibility to resources and services is limited for youth of color. While past policies that legalized segregation are no longer enforced or legal, these policies continue to have an impact and create challenges in accessibility for youth of color on a global, as well as local scale. This difference in infrastructure greatly impacts a student's ability to perform in school. While volunteering at Indawo Ithemba, students expressed that the fear of sexual assault and the medical consequences that followed greatly impacted their ability to stay in school. Unplanned pregnancies and HIV are common barriers to education that female learners face after sexual assault. During an afternoon workshop at the YAEZ, a young girl shared her experience of rape by her uncle. After the assault, she was unable to receive immediate medical attention and became sick. Unable to care for themselves or a child and attend school, learners are forced to drop out of school and often do not return.

In addition to physical barriers to education, youth of color face emotional challenges that affect their ability to perform in school. At the CTL, Linda emphasized that the organization prioritizes their student's well-being and their mentors focus on counseling their students prior to doing homework when that support is needed. This heightened importance on emotional health shows the severity that the emotional state of youth plays on their ability to succeed. Both

organizations explained that the majority of the students they serve come from economically disadvantaged families. The tensions associated with finances often cause stress in youth, and alter their emotional state – they question the future, and how they are going to afford continuing their education and growth. These barriers emerge from a long history of racism. Youth of color face these challenges at a disproportionately higher rate than white youth (Baldrige et. al, 2011). Furthermore, these barriers to education prevent youth from moving up in socio-economic status, and allow the cycle of poverty and racism to persist.

**Theme 2: CBOs rely on community connections and volunteers to offer academic and non-academic services to vulnerable youth in the community.**

The code “community” came up seven times throughout the data analysis process. Both organizations encourage young adults who participated in the programs to come back to the organization to serve the younger generations and give back to the community. As an intern, Juquan works with students at the CTL younger than him to discuss his academic path and support those who are facing similar challenges in their education. Although Angela did not participate in the YAEZ program at Indawo Ithemba, she is well known in the community and is able to connect well with the teenage girls who attend afternoon workshops. She expressed that helping young girls in Philippi motivates her to give back. Both young adults are able to connect with the students because they have lived similar experiences, faced the same challenges, and are relatable to youth. Juquan attended the same high school as many of the current CTL students. He knows the challenges they face and uses his experiences to guide them toward success. These connections are important to youth, and inspire them to continue fighting for their rights to education and accomplishing their goals, without these relationships, many would not receive this encouragement.

The importance of community connections is further emphasized when taking into consideration the experiences of outsiders coming into the safe spaces of youth. While observing an afternoon workshop at the YAEZ at Indawo Ithemba, many of the youth present were hesitant to speak up about their experiences. Their program leader expressed frustrations that they would not speak up, and that normally they would not “keep quiet” (Amahle Ndlovu, Personal Communication, September 6, 2017). With an outsider observing youth in their space, the feeling of safety disappeared and caused hesitation in sharing personal stories and experiences. Linda shared a similar experience when she began her role at the CTL. As a new leader in the program and being an outsider to the neighborhood, she struggled to establish a positive relationship with her students. She said, “they didn’t know me, and they didn’t trust me” (Linda Brown, Personal Communication, February 7, 2018), and she had to ease her way in to earning their trust and establishing a positive rapport. Community involvement and participation in these organizations is essential to the success of students. By being able to discuss the challenges they face with someone who has faced similar experiences, they are able to open up and express their feelings. These shared experiences also create an understanding and foster growth, as mentees are able to learn from their mentors who have overcome similar challenges. The trust and understanding between youth and their mentors is essential to their success, and the presence of an outsider or individual who is not personally familiar with the barriers in place has the potential to break the openness of youth.

**Theme 3: Students who participate in workshops and use services provided by CBOs are taught skills needed to succeed academically and personally.**

The walls of the YAEZ at Indawo Ithemba are plastered with posters of student work. Workshop notes, words of inspiration, and areas that youth feel they need more education in are

written out on oversized sticky notes and kept up as reminders of the progress they have made. Students expressed a need to better understand their sexual and reproductive rights, and understand what to expect if they do become pregnant. Spaces such as the YAEZ are a safe place for youth who have no other place to go. The opportunity to learn and grow as an individual on both an academic and personal level are great motivators for students to participate and actively engage in CBO programming. The CTL begins each afternoon session with an hour of homework, dinner, and then an hour of enrichment time where students can participate in life-skill development activities that prepare them for life outside of school. Many students also attend their workshops to receive assistance in completing college applications and finding scholarships. While Indawo Ithemba does not have all of the necessary resources to assist students in funding their education, many permanent employees assist students in applying to universities.

Students rely on the services of CBOs to aid in their academic success. Without this assistance, they would not have access to many of the resources necessary. In Philippi, there is one library and it serves the entire township. While students can access some resources such as the Internet and books at the library, one librarian explained that when school lets out, the library is packed full of learners – they have even tried to open a late night study space for youth. She said, “They could use double the space for youth areas” (Librarian, Personal Communication, and September 19, 2017) but still wouldn’t have enough to meet the needs of every child. CBOs offer an alternative location for youth to go and spend their afternoons where they will have the opportunity to focus on school. By providing this safe place for students to work on homework and have fun after school, CBOs bring in youth who are most vulnerable to dropping out of school due to the societal barriers in place to prevent their success.



**Theme 4: CBOs are limited in their ability to provide for youth due to minimal government funding and intervention, as well as societal systems of racism.**

As stated, past policies of residential segregation continue to impact youth of color living in predominately black neighborhoods. The systems of funding distribution that are in place further reinforce inequitable access to resources amongst varying racial groups. A household's property taxes are what fund their child's schools (Berne & Steifel, 1999). In racialized ghettos and the townships of South Africa, where tax bases are lower, the funding distributed to schools is much slimmer and youth attending these schools do not receive the same resources and opportunities as students attending predominately white schools. These practices of educational funding allocation reinforces racism in education and establishes further barriers for youth in completing their education and moving up in socio-economic status.

CBOs face similar challenges in receiving funding. CBOs have to be located in the same neighborhoods as the youth they serve (Yakubovich et. al., 2015), meaning that they lack the same infrastructure resources as the youth they serve. There is a constant challenge in finding and keeping volunteers, as organizations want people from the community, but often community members must work to provide for their own families. As non-profits, funding is scarce and keeping both paid employees and unpaid volunteers can be a challenge – grant writing is a challenge, and at the YAEZ, employees lacked the computer skills necessary to apply for continued funding and assistance. During my time at Indawo Ithemba, the YAEZ leader had a family emergency and had to leave work for a week. During her absence, the afternoon workshops were canceled due to a lack of cross training with other employees and volunteers. The students who relied on the services of the afternoon workshop were unable to receive help or have a place to go those days. This lack of cross training further emphasizes the struggle that

CBOs face with regards to funding. The lack of funding access prevents CBOs from having a backup plan when permanent employees are unavailable; ultimately affecting the youth they serve.

## **DISCUSSION**

The themes that emerged through this research display the importance of CBOs in providing services for youth that the government has been unable or unwilling to provide. The lack of government intervention and influence in community development practices and the inequitable distribution of education funding is a sign of continued racism, despite racist policies of segregation being illegal. Studies have shown in countries where the majority of educational funding is raised on the local or state level, inequities are more common despite ideologies that basic education is a human right. In countries such as Malawi, education is primarily funded by the government, but approximately 20% of fees must be contributed by individual households (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2018). In poor countries, this financial burden can lead to an inability for impoverished youth to attend school. That said, other countries, such as France have resorted to alternate government funding options that reduce inequities in education. Rather than placing the responsibility of educational funding on local governments, France uses national funding to support education (Center for Universal Education at Brookings, 2015). By doing so the inequities associated with local funding do not occur. This ensures universal access to quality education for youth despite race and socio-economic status.

Where the government is unable or unwilling to provide for youth, CBOs step in to offer services and provide resources to ensure their success. CBOs take a holistic approach at working with youth and offer an array of services promoting youth success. By expanding services to include the emotional wellbeing of students, CBOs are able to focus on the most vulnerable

youth in a given area (Yakubovich et. al., 2015), while maintaining a safe place for all youth. CBOs provide essential services to students including health screening, mentorship and counseling, tutoring, and a safe place to be after school. These factors greatly influence a student's ability to perform in school, and the role of CBOs in assisting them better their chance of continuing their education.

There is no single, perfect answer of how to end racial inequities in education, however, CBOs have made an impact in providing services in underserved communities. With relation to government spending and funding allocation for education, it is essential that governments adopt an allocation practice that reduces inequities in resource distribution rather than reinforcing them. Governments may look to countries such as France as a model for education spending. Since switching funding from the local to national level, France has observed an average of 40% of young people achieve a higher level of education than their parents, and are therefore able to move up in socio-economic status (Center for Universal Education at Brookings, 2015). This trend of upward economic mobility illustrates the kinds of positive changes in educational equity that national-level funding strategies may provide. If other countries adopted this method, resource accessibility would be more evenly distributed across all schools regardless of property tax base, while simultaneously alleviating some of the responsibilities of CBOs to ensure the success of youth attending under resourced schools.

The intent of this research was to display the current educational inequities associated with race both locally and abroad, and the ways in which CBOs address these inequities. Though segregation in housing and education is no longer an active practice in the United States nor South Africa, past policies have had a lasting impact on communities of color. Future research in this field should include an in-depth analysis of government funding, as well as an expanded

comparison of CBOs in other countries and how they address racial inequities with regard to education.

### **CONCLUSION**

As youth of color continue to attend under resourced schools, it is essential that CBOs are present in their communities to bridge gaps in education-based services. Students such as Angela and Juquan are not unique to Cape Town and Tacoma. Racial disparities in education are present across the globe and greatly affect youths' outlook on upward mobility. While reallocation of educational funding is a necessary action by governments, the public can play a role as well by getting involved in CBO work and volunteering their time, as well as advocating for youth rights to equitable education. Systems of racism have been embedded into society through the implementation of past policies that enforced racialized segregation. These practices of segregation prevented the upward mobility of youth of color by clumping all communities of color into a single neighborhood, and underfunding the schools that served those neighborhoods. Societal change is needed, and CBOs have stepped in to address such inequities in education. The role of CBOs in promoting the educational success of students is essential to breaking down barriers and ending cycles of racism and poverty. As communities fight for the rights of their youth and provide services to aid in their success, youth will be able to overcome the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives and foster the future growth of younger generations. After all, it takes a village.

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