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Community violence disproportionately impacts the lives of Black boys and young men, however, this group continues to display resilience in navigating life after community violence exposure. Several studies explore the way that resilience manifests in youth and young adults exposed to community violence, however little is known about the perspectives of community stakeholders on resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Community stakeholders have influence and are often in positions of power that can be leveraged to support resilience in Black boys and young men, therefore understanding the perspectives of community stakeholders on resilience and contributing factors is essential. In-depth qualitative interviews with community stakeholders (n=29) representing eleven occupational categories were conducted to explore resilience and contributing factors of resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by violence in Greensboro, NC. Findings from this study suggest that from stakeholder perspectives, resilience manifests in multiple ways for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in Greensboro. Diverse Greensboro community stakeholders identified factors that foster or promote resilience in Black boys and young men exposed to community violence which included internal and external factors such as hope, future orientation, family support, spirituality, and mentorship. Aspects of community stakeholder positionality such as occupation, race, gender, lived experiences and residential proximity were also examined to see whether positionality influenced differing perspectives. Community stakeholder perspectives on risk and resilience in Black boys and young men were shaped by positionality through their awareness, understanding, and reliability to the experiences of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in the city. In

addition to the study aims, community stakeholders in this study emphasized the context of systemic risk and community dynamics that shape efforts to address community violence and promote resilience in Greensboro. These findings serve as entry points to inform intervention and prevention efforts to reduce violence and encourage resilience in the lives of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in the city of Greensboro, NC.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND RESILIENCE: COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER

PERSPECTIVES ON FOSTERING RESILIENCE IN BLACK BOYS

AND MEN IN GREENSBORO, NC

by

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Black boys and men growing up in neighborhoods that are marked by community violence are at greater risk of developing many mental health issues and experiencing long-lasting impacts of witnessing violence, victimization, and grief (Chen et al., 2017; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Smith & Patton, 2016; Paxton et al., 2004). Black males are ten times as likely to be the victim of homicide and eighteen times as likely to experience injury related to gun violence (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2021). The leading cause of death for young Black males, age 15-34, is homicide (Heron, 2021). In 2020 the city of Greensboro, North Carolina experienced another record-breaking year with the annual homicide rate totaling 63, and as of November 2021, it is on the track to exceed last year's numbers (Kurzyna, 2021). This stark reality puts in perspective the relationship between community violence and the Black male body. It is clear that exposure to community violence is detrimental and deadly for Black boys and men.

Despite the negative effects and intense risk of violence exposure, Black males continue to overcome and thrive. Resilience scholars attempt to discover why some individuals are able to positively adjust and avoid expected negative outcomes (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). The study of how people thrive amidst adversity is a broad field of research but less is known about what encourages resilience in Black boys and young men who develop in the context of chronic violence (Cunningham, 1999; Gayles, 2006; Jacobsen & Hardaway, 2016; Paxton et al., 2004; Wallace et al., 2018). Since Black males are disproportionately represented as victims of community violence, studies that acknowledge and include culturally relevant factors that cultivate resilience are needed (Jones, 2007; Wallace et al., 2018; Woods-Jaeger et al., 2020).

What we do know about resilience and exposure to community violence among Black males is centered on school-aged children and adolescents (Caldwell et al., 2002; Cooley-Strickland et al., 2009; Diclemente et al., 2018; Zimmerman et al., 2011). Parents and families are emphasized as key sources of support for intervention for youth exposed to violence. An extensive review conducted by Murry and colleagues (2018) of studies on stress in Black families identified racial socialization, racial identity, cultural values, optimism and hope, spirituality, family support, collective efficacy as well as other factors as important culturally specific protective factors. However, these studies did not consider the contributions of broader community members (eg. teachers, coaches, mentors, nonprofits) in violence prevention and positive youth development. A network of support extending beyond the family has played a pivotal role in supporting Black families in the U.S. (Jacobsen & Hardaway, 2016); however, the perceptions and contributions of community stakeholders in fostering resilience among Black boys and young men impacted by violence is less understood. Development and the process of resilience do not occur in a vacuum as it is not the result of personal characteristics solely (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). A call to implement an ecological approach to resilience is growing in demand and appearing in more scholarship on resilience despite violence exposure in African Americans (APA Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents, 2008; Hammack et al., 2004; Li, Nussbaum, & Richards, 2007). Context and environment play major roles; therefore, family, neighborhood, and the larger community can assist in fostering resilience. African American males living in contexts of poverty and violence are affected by these multilevel systems, however, the importance of the community stakeholders is reflected in few studies (Li, Nussbaum, & Richards, 2007); most of the focus remains on the individual or family level.

As children and adolescents age, their social networks and interactions are increasingly composed of peers and non-familial adults. Therefore, community stakeholders are important to include in resilience and community violence research because their partnerships and capacity for enhancing the human capital of Black males can function to help with the implementation of resilience fostering policies, practices, and programs (Murry, Block, & Liu, 2016). Several studies have demonstrated that partnerships between community stakeholders can be instrumental in providing resilience fostering environments for Black boys and men navigating poverty and community violence exposure (Parson & Kritsonis, 2006; Watson et al., 2015; Woods-Jaeger et al., 2019). Briana Woods-Jaeger and colleagues (2019) conducted a qualitative research project that gathered focus group data from African American youth from economically-disadvantaged urban neighborhoods, and youth overwhelmingly discussed the need for greater response from adults and community sectors to support resilience in youth exposed to community violence. In particular, the youth desired improved response and action from adults representing law enforcement, education, mental health services, and churches.

The role of community stakeholders in fostering resilience holds significance within literature (Chung et al., 2014); however, very few studies consider community stakeholder perspectives. When they do, they typically focus on prevention (Allison et al., 2011; Payne & Button, 2009). Concerned with evidence-based practices that influence positive youth development through community mobilization, Allison and colleagues (2011) interviewed 38 community stakeholders representing diverse agencies in Richmond, VA, Charlotte, NC, and Jacksonville, FL to capture their perspectives on the barriers and supports to youth violence prevention. Findings suggest that barriers to youth prevention include the absence of a community-wide initiative and leadership guiding prevention and reduction efforts and shifts in

community leadership and community stakeholder priority fluctuations that influence the salience of community violence as an issue and violence addressing efforts (Allison et al., 2011). Such research points to the rich insights community stakeholders may have in shaping empirical understanding of resilience among Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. However, studies that capture community stakeholders' perspectives on what fosters resilience among Black boys and young men impacted by violence are scant.

As cities and communities attempt to prevent and reduce violence, there is an essential opportunity to explore the important role of community stakeholders, and examine how their perceptions and positionality influence such efforts. To mitigate the impact of community violence on Black boys and young men, a strengths-based inquiry that emphasizes resilience, contributing factors, and the role of community stakeholder perspectives is needed. This study aims to uncover community stakeholders' perspectives about resilience in Black males impacted by violence in Greensboro, NC, contributing to an untapped area of resilience scholarship that explores resilience beyond the individual and family perspectives. Additionally, the study aims to explore whether community stakeholder perceptions and observations of resilience and protective factors are influenced by their positionality in the city of Greensboro. Although mostly exploratory in nature, this research adds breadth and depth to existing resilience literature by expanding scholarship that uses an ecological lens to examine resilience in Black males exposed to community violence and emphasizing the importance of community-level influencers and networks in shaping resilience for this group. Considering the impact of community violence in contexts of poverty, this investigation first begins with an examination of context and its associated risks for Black boys and young men. This context provides a backdrop for exploring

resilience and the ways that community stakeholders discuss contributing factors concerning

young Black males impacted by community violence in Greensboro, NC.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Violence and Poverty

Adversity is required for the presence of resilience (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996). Poverty and community violence are high-risk conditions of adversity characterized by significant challenges, risk, stress, and increased negative odds that are associated with vulnerability (Luthar, Crossman, & Small, 2015). Although poverty is not a new concept, highlighting the experience brings attention to the unique position that economically disadvantaged African American male youth and young adults find themselves in, in relation to the prevalence of community violence in their lives and neighborhoods. The history of our nation regarding race relations is directly related to the poverty conditions and experiences we witness today. African American male youth and young adults living under the poverty line have limited financial assets and scarce access to basic needs and other instrumental resources (Thomas, 2020). Food deserts, subpar education, limited employment opportunities, substandard housing conditions, and a lack of external investment in the growth and enrichment of human beings living in poverty are just a few of the challenges that these individuals face (Swanson & Spencer, 1991; Travis & Leech, 2013). To put food on the table and make ends meet, some individuals in poverty have been forced to be resourceful, often taking advantage of nontraditional and seemingly maladaptive means of providing for their families (Anderson, 2008; Shird, 2017). Reliance upon the informal and underground economy becomes necessary as low-paying jobs fall short in providing a living wage and government assistance programs experience frequent fluctuations due to policy and administration changes (Anderson, 2008). The multitude of stressors associated with living in poverty has been shown to negatively impact mental health, emotional and physical well-being for individuals across age and gender (Li et al., 2007; McCrea et al., 2019); however, the

intersectionality of race, class, and gender makes the black male experience distinct (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2017; Velez & Spencer, 2018).

Black individuals and families are more likely to live in poverty which has socio-historical roots (Caldwell et al., 2002; Swanson & Spencer, 1991). Unfair housing practices such as redlining and white flight behaviors have resulted in racial segregation in residence and neighborhood composition. According to sociologist Elijah Anderson (2008), after the mid-twentieth century, neighborhoods transformed; going from all-white, to mixed, and eventually all-black due to the strengthening and reinforcing of pervasive negative stereotypes presenting Black people as "bad" encouraging white people to distance themselves. Coupled with a rise in economic insecurity as deindustrialization occurred, this led many Black families to live in low-resourced communities characterized by disadvantage and divestment which set the tone for the poverty we witness today (Anderson, 2008). Institutionalized racism continues to create racialized barriers for Black individuals to navigate assistance and programming to help them survive and break out of poverty. People in low-resourced neighborhoods are under intense pressure and stress due to the amalgamation of multidimensional stressors associated with poverty (Taylor & Distelberg, 2016). Compared to resource-rich areas, poverty-stricken neighborhoods and communities experience more crime and violence on a regular basis (Jones, 2007; Parker & Pruitt, 2000).

Health disparities, risks, and outcomes related to contexts of poverty and community violence can be understood based on access to social determinants of health. According to Healthy People 2030 (2021), social determinants of health are the conditions of one's environment based on economic stability, social and community context, neighborhood environment, health care access, and education quality that can have major implications on the

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quality of life, functioning, and well-being. Without social determinants of health such as safe housing and neighborhoods, quality education, job opportunities, adequate income, and access to nutritious food, violence within these communities is inevitably more likely to occur than in other communities (Healthy People, 2021). Additionally, violence in under-resourced communities produces frequent heartbreaking stories of loss to gun violence in the lives of people residing within these social contexts.

Feedback loops embedded within a system of factors increase the risk of violence. Racially oppressive policies and practices, the contextually-specific masculine norms such as Anderson's (1999) "code of the streets", and a lack of economic mobility and opportunity converge to create these feedback structures that fuel community violence (Burrell et al., 2021). Poverty and other social determinants of health create a strong cycle of reinforcement that maintains the health disparities of homicide and violent injury for Black boys, youth, and young men. Responding to racial stigma, a lack of employment opportunities, insufficient wages, limited access to needed public services, and hopelessness, violence and the "code of the streets" provide pathways to safety, self-worth, manhood, and provision for Black boys and men (Anderson, 1999). Anderson (2008) describes that Black male youth growing up in poverty are alienated in society because of powerful negative stereotypes rooted in racism that present them as threatening and violent, which diminishes their human and social capital. As these powerful stereotypes grow and opportunities to employ legitimate means of accessing basic needs and resources weaken, desperation sets in due to economic disadvantage and Black male youth and young men embrace stereotypical appearances and acquire tough personas in order to survive; gaining access to street credibility and the underground economy which relies upon violence and criminality (Anderson, 1999, 2008). Similar to motivations for participating in the informal or

underground economy when legitimate income-producing means seem out of reach, violence for

Black male youth and young men is an assertion of masculinity and an alternative way to

demand respect, autonomy, and reputation when it seems impossible to achieve idealized

versions of masculinity by socially acceptable means (Adams, 2007).

Black Masculinity

From boyhood to young adulthood, Black male youth are faced with challenges around

what it means to be a Black male. From an early age, African American males are labeled and

seen as adults instead of children or adolescents (Lindsey, Brown, & Cunningham, 2017). They

receive messages and treatment that reflect an expectation to assume roles, responsibilities, and

behavior of adults which prevents them from having the opportunity to explore and experience

boyhood. Alongside this early ascribing of adulthood, African American boys and young men

are socialized to suppress emotions and only express or communicate those that are acceptable

for men, such as anger (Lindsey, Brown, & Cunningham, 2017). Jama Adams's (2007) findings

from qualitative interviews of 21 poor African American men with and without criminal histories

revealed that for those forced into independence at an early age, participation in illegal activities

came easy, and their constructions of masculinity centered on reputation. When support is scarce

and communities are in undersupply of emotional and material resources, Black male youth and

young men can default to reputation-based masculinity in order to pursue self-development

influenced by street culture in order to validate and affirm their masculinity (Adams, 2007;

Anderson, 2009; Richardson, 2007).

For Black males exposed to community violence in poor neighborhoods, these aspects of

masculinity and manhood are present during a particularly challenging developmental period of

adolescence and young adulthood and are complicated by the stressors that are present within

their environments. It can be difficult for Black males exposed to violence in economically disadvantaged communities to pursue more socially acceptable or idealized forms of masculinity while lacking the support and guidance to manage emotions, combat hopelessness, and gain skills needed for navigating traditional institutions of education and work (Adams, 2007). Notions of independence and suppression in Black masculinity impact coping and help-seeking behaviors of black men in these contexts in ways that encourage them to personally deal with their mental health issues and stress (Lindsey & Marcell, 2012).

Initiatives and interventions targeted at the positive growth and development and ultimately resilience of Black male youth and young adults can be better equipped to foster resilience by considering aspects of black masculinity and intersectionality. An understanding of Black masculinity and the intersection of race, class, and gender can inform the work that community stakeholders engage in, support, fund, and advocate for on behalf of Black boys, youth, and young men. Community stakeholder perspectives can reveal their level of understanding of the challenges that Black boys and men face regarding race, class, and gender, their thoughts on resilience in Black males, and the way that they see resilience manifesting for those exposed to community violence. This is especially important since community stakeholders such as elected officials can utilize their voice to raise awareness of the importance, visibility, and attention paid to issues around community violence and its impact on Black males (Allison et al., 2011).

The Impact of Community Violence on Black Males

The intersection of race, class, and gender helps elucidate the impact of community violence on Black boys and young men. Dena Phillips Swanson et al. (2002) discussed how identity processes and positive youth development in minority youth varied by gender and Black

males were said to be perhaps the most stigmatized and stereotyped group. The link between race, class, gender, and violence finds its origins in societal disposition around Black males, identity development, and neighborhood influences. Black males are overwhelmingly and disproportionately represented as victims of homicide and community violence (Smith Lee, 2017). Whether directly victimized, witnesses, or the grieving friends, relatives, and community members of victims, young Black males are significantly impacted by community violence.

Jocelyn R. Smith Lee (2016) writes in-depth about the trauma associated with community violence and how these traumatic experiences are gendered, revealing the historical and present-day dehumanization of Black males in ways that cause them to experience tremendous and disproportionate amounts of trauma. When considering the abundance of stress-inducing factors associated with poverty and the intersections of race and gender, Black boys and men are vulnerable to harmful outcomes associated with community violence. Black males continue to be a primary target of misrepresentation and slander in the media and are portrayed in ways that reinforce historical stereotypical notions that view Black boys and young men as threats, aggressive, dangerous, and criminals which dehumanize and devalue their personhood across the lifespan (Smith Lee, 2016). The negative effects of community violence can be viewed in the emotions, behaviors, health, and identity of Black males navigating economically disadvantaged urban settings.

Regarding wellbeing and health, the effects of community violence on African American boys and young men are felt intensely. Both poverty and community violence exposure are associated with several physical and psychological issues. Hypervigilance, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance use, anxiety, hardiness scripts, and violence perpetration are just a few of the internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors exhibited by Black male youth

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and adults that have experienced community violence (Motley, Sewell & Chen, 2017; Overstreet et al., 1999; Patton et al., 2016; Smith & Patton, 2016; Smith Lee, 2017). Depressive and anxious symptoms have been associated with witnessing community violence against family members and close friends in males in a study sample of majority African American adolescents (Lambert et al., 2012). In an integrative review of eight empirical articles on health outcomes for African American men impacted by community violence, Paris Thomas and colleagues (2020) found that studies reported higher incidences of inflammation-related diseases, sexually transmitted diseases from sexual risk-taking behaviors, and decreased likelihood of mental health screening in Black men indirectly and directly exposed to violence. The accumulation of stressors from violence exposure in under-resourced neighborhoods takes a toll on the mind and body but also the emotions of Black males. Feelings of hopelessness and fear suppression are far too commonly reported and can predict community violence in Black males (Burnside & Gaylord-Harden, 2018; Woods-Jaeger et al., 2020). Schmidt, Zimmerman, and Stoddard (2018) investigated community violence exposure's impact on African American youth from the Flint Adolescent Study and found that exposure to violence may disrupt adolescents' hope for the future or future orientation, due to the emotionally and mentally taxing perceived stress. Community stakeholders can play a vital role in providing mental health services and improving the help-seeking behaviors for Black males; however, that is influenced by their point of view on what contributes to resilience for Black boys, youth and men exposed to community violence (Lindsey, Brown, & Cunningham, 2017; Lindsey & Marcell, 2012).

As African American boys and men in contexts of economic disadvantage and chronic violence try to make sense of their realities, their identity is challenged and the risk of engagement in violent behaviors increases. Negative influences found in neighborhoods of

community violence can become role models for youth (Butler-Barnes et al., 2011). Forced to reconcile discrimination, racial stereotypes associated with aggression, as well as interpret negative adult influences in their neighborhoods that perpetuate violence imposed on mostly Black male victims, violent behaviors can become internalized as a way of life, and death, for Black male youth and young men. African American youth who witness and experience community violence are more likely to engage in interpersonal violence and perpetuate other violent behaviors (Thomas et al., 2020; Woods-Jaeger et al., 2019). When encountering negative experiences and environments, certain identities and coping mechanisms may be a form of temporary survival tactics for African American male youth based on how they perceive the ecological risk of their neighborhood (Cunnigham, 1999). With identity development taking place during the developmental period of adolescence and into young adulthood, Black males are vulnerable to developing diminished or negative views of self that can lead to negative behaviors, outcomes and ultimately life trajectories related to community violence.

Self-efficacy is an important part of human agency across various domains that encompasses the thoughts and beliefs one has about their own abilities and capabilities which inform decisions and behaviors (Bandura 2001; 2012). Self-efficacy is viewed as a factor that promotes resilience; however, community violence and poverty pose risks via negative role models. Exploring the relationship between community violence exposure and academic motivation, Butler-Barnes and colleagues (2011) found evidence that self-efficacy in males is influenced by racial group beliefs founded upon what is witnessed in the community to the extent that negative influences become role models and influences ideas of what it means to be African American when intentional racial socialization is absent in contexts of high risk. When confronted with defeatist societal narratives and less favorable community figures to look up to,

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Black males' identity formation is shaped by context. In contexts of high ecological risk, the complex challenge of defining oneself is coupled with the long-lasting, deep consequences community violence has on mental health (Chen et al., 2017). Mentoring with intentional culturally responsive programming that addresses the positionality of Black males can be beneficial to young Black males especially in combating negative coping mechanisms and positively influencing emotional well-being, mental health, motivation, and racial identity development (Larson, 2006; Sanchez et al., 2017). Community stakeholders such as mentoring organizations can aid Black males living in environments with prevalent community violence by providing positive role models who contrast the negative influences they may encounter in their neighborhoods.

Resilience

Exposure to community violence is a significant chronic stressor for young African American males living in contexts of poverty, but witnesses, victims, and survivors tend to exhibit remarkable resilience. The class-based and race-related conditions imposed by poverty and community violence create an ecosystem of challenge, stress, and risk for young African American males yet there is light, strength, and opportunity that resilience offers for individuals to heal despite severe adversity. Resilience has a positive juxtaposition to risk for these communities of Black male youth and young adults. Resilience can be observed in the ways that young boys and men continue to cope, heal, and advocate for change despite the deleterious impact that community violence has on their lives. The protective nature of family and social support play an important buffering role for African American males experiencing high ecological risk (Jacobsen & Hardaway, 2016). Building the "psychological armor" (Cunningham, 1999) for this population may help them find ways to cope and positively adapt in

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contexts of high risk. Resilience, or the "ordinary magic" that these individuals display needs

further exploration (Masten, 2014), and the perspectives of nonprofit leaders, grassroots activists,

elected officials, and other community stakeholders can serve as the genesis of such inquiry into

the resilience Black boys and young men display in regards to how they cope and heal from

community violence exposure.

Defining the Concept of Resilience

Resilience has varying definitions and operationalizations, but at its core, it is about

overcoming adversity and bouncing back in the face of risk and hardship (Hawley & DeHaan,

1996). Resilience is comprehensively defined in ways that examine the relationship between risk

and promotive factors and is heavily dependent upon context, population, and domain, therefore

one can academically display resilience but may not exhibit resilience in emotions (APA Task

Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents, 2008). Scholars in

psychopathology originally defined resilience as a trait that was fostered solely through

individual-based factors whereas contemporary conceptualizations discuss it as a process that is

shaped by internal and external forces (Luthar, Crossman, & Smith, 2015). Despite much debate

about how to define resilience, one thing is clear, it cannot exist without the presence of

adversity. To help alleviate confusion, a statement of the definition, approach, and related

terminology being used in the conceptualization and operationalization of resilience for the

current study is recommended by scholars who review resilience research (Luthar, Cicchetti, &

Becker, 2000).

For this research study, I define resilience as a process of adaptation in which individuals

discover and employ internal assets and external resources, to recover from, resist, and or

reframe risk and negative outcomes associated with specific adversity or set of adversities in a

particular context and time. I lean upon the writings informed by community violence that discuss resilience as being a process rather than an innate or acquired trait to embrace a strengths-based approach rather than a deficit or exclusionary perspective (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). This conceptualization of resilience is most favored for this work as it involves looking at both the person's individual qualities and considering the ways that strengths and resources from the family, community, and other external sources can contribute to resilience. For this current study, I highlight the community as a source to facilitate resilience and community stakeholders' perceptions are especially valued since they negotiate relationships between communities and needed resources through social networks and partnerships afforded to them based on intersections of race, gender, occupation, social networks, and other aspects of positionality.

Culturally-Relevant Protective Factors

In contrast to psychological distress and issues linked to community violence exposure, an emphasis on resilience in coping and healing and the related factors provide a much-needed strengths-based perspective that celebrates the tenacity and perseverance of Black boys and young men. Personal assets and external resources are contributing factors in fostering resilience and promoting wellbeing in the lives of Black males. African American males are faced with a multitude of risk factors that are linked to socio-historical gendered stigmatization; however, culture-specific protective factors can encourage resilience (Wallace et al., 2018). Several studies have shown that protective factors play key roles in buffering against negative outcomes associated with community violence and in weakening the relationship between violence exposure and internalizing symptoms such as depression and anxiety (Hammack et al., 2004; Hurd, Zimmerman, & Xue, 2009).

To encourage emotional well-being, Jones (2007) investigated whether factors from an Africentric perspective would help mitigate the impact of chronic violence on outcomes for African American children. Spirituality and formal kinship support had buffering effects for the children studied. Spirituality and kinship support are fundamental components of Black life and family units that have assisted African American families in navigating stressors and injustice for decades. In a complementary fashion, the APA Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents (2008) highlighted critical mindedness, active engagement, flexibility, and communalism as themes in the "portrait of resilience" for African American youth. Several of these factors are consistent with literature that focuses on the benefits of social support, spirituality, racial socialization, and self-efficacy for Black male adolescents and young men (Butler-Barnes, 2011; Hammack et al., 2004; Jones, 2007; Murry et al., 2014; Rosenthal & Wilson, 2008). These culturally and racially relevant resources and assets are important protective factors to examine in the current study and will contribute to knowledge about community stakeholder perspectives on these factors and how they relate to resilience in coping and healing.

The Role of Community Stakeholders in Fostering Resilience

Resilience for Black males is cultivated from a combination of sources across multiple systems represented in the immediate (microsystem) and distal (exosystem) contexts that interact with person characteristics to influence development (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Family, neighbors, and community stakeholders provide support, social capital, and resources that enable hope, future orientation, positive identity, and effective coping methods that can alleviate the psychological distress experienced by youth and adult males exposed to community violence (Murry et al., 2014; Patton et al, 2016). To understand what positive development and

adjustment look like for this population, Murry and colleagues (2016) provide commentary on how parent, community, and family systems contribute to resilience for African American males. Promoting a strengths-based perspective, commentaries endorse supportive parenting practices, the role of adult community stakeholders, and close-knit neighborhoods in assisting African American males exemplify "ordinary magic" in positive development and adjustment (Murry et al., 2016). In addition to neighborhood cohesion and other community-based factors, religiosity and the role of the Black church serve as protective in fostering important internal assets for young men. Community and social networks are posited as salient protective factors for Black boys and men (Jacobsen & Hardaway, 2016).

Community stakeholders that represent programs, organizations, businesses, government, and other sectors and industries throughout a city have a significant role in facilitating resilience-fostering support and protective factors for Black males. An emphasis is placed on the diversity of services and types of support community stakeholders can offer through their representation in various occupations and sectors. Various services, programs and organizations have proven to be helpful for Black male youth and men. Watson and colleagues (2015) conducted focus groups with young Black male mentees of the Memphis-based community violence reduction focused Umoja Mentoring Program where participants noted that the mentoring relationship and organization provided a non-threatening and engaging environment for youth to openly communicate with mentors, peers, and staff.

Echoing the importance of spirituality and mental health, African American men identified church and mental health services as sources of help in dealing with stress when asked about sources of resilience (Chung et al., 2014). Additionally, social work practitioners and mental health professionals are said to be essential in assisting youth exposed to high levels of

community violence (Voisin & Berringer, 2015). Literature consistently emphasizes the importance of community-wide efforts consisting of collaboration and partnership between organizations and institutions dedicated to preventing community violence and supporting the healthy development of African American males (Parson & Kritsonis, 2006; Payne & Button, 2009). Relationships between community stakeholders are opportunities to leverage the expertise of practitioners and strengthen the effectiveness of implementing protective factors in services for Black males in contexts of poverty and community violence (Woods-Jaeger et al., 2019). Such cross-sector collaboration and targeted efforts can combat barriers to resilience and dealing with stress reported by Black males that include a lack of support, negative actions, and inadequate responses from media, law enforcement, education, mental health services, potential employers, and religious institutions (Chung et al., 2014; Woods-Jaeger et al., 2019).

The role of the community should not be overlooked and is deserving of investigation as stakeholders provide relational resources that connect male youth and young adults to a world outside of their immediate ecological context (APA Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents, 2008). Despite the physical and psychological outcomes that pose risks for African American youth in high-crime and under-resourced communities, resilience seems obtainable through comprehensive intervention and services at the community level (McCrea et al., 2019). It is paramount to discover the ways that resilience and its multilayered factors in contexts of community violence are perceived by community members with influence. Given that community stakeholders can leverage their resources and networks to support the healing of Black males through the implementation and integration of resilience research, rich insights can be learned from their perspectives.

Theoretical Framework & Research Questions

The nature of adversity and intersection of race, class, and gender that characterize the experiences of Black males exposed to community violence in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods necessitates a theoretical lens that acknowledges context, is culturally responsive and emphasizes the importance of an ecological perspective. Few theoretical perspectives are equipped to acknowledge the history and societal positionality of minority youth. Margaret Beale Spencer's (1995) Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) offers theoretical tools for examining resilience in Black boys and men exposed to community violence. The Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory is a widely supported theory especially for use in resilience research and for studying minority populations (APA Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents, 2008; Butler-Barnes, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2011; Cunningham, 1999; Murry, Block, & Liu, 2016; Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). Minority youth, especially African Americans, experience unique stressors and sociohistorical factors that impact their development. The PVEST framework incorporates the systems perspective of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1989) that considers the salience of the interactive contexts in which development occurs such as the family, neighborhood, and community. The most significant change to the original theory is the emphasis on the vital component of phenomenology, meaning-making.

PVEST and its components make connections between risk, development, and identity processes for African American youth. PVEST is a cyclical model with bidirectional relationships between vulnerability, stress, coping strategies, emergent identities, and life outcomes (Spencer, 1995). Protective factors and risk contributors perceived from the ecological context interact to form a level of vulnerability that impacts levels of stress influenced by

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challenges and available resources (Swanson et al., 2002). Spencer (1995) highlights neighborhood resources (protective factors) and neighborhood constraints (risk contributors) as having a direct impact on the level of net vulnerability. In contexts where community violence and poverty categorize the risk contributors, community stakeholders across sectors can serve as and create access to neighborhood resources that can offset vulnerability and encourage aspects of adaptive coping methods and positive life outcomes reflected in the PVEST model. Perceived and actualized risks, protective factors, and identity development are core aspects of the theory and are presented in a model that highlights the relationships that exist between risk, reactive behavior, coping, and resilience. Self-appraisal and meaning-making are important mechanisms for understanding positive youth development within the theory. The inclusion of cultural, historic, societal, and other contextual influences on identity and development allows this framework to operate as a comprehensive lens into the experiences and outcomes of African American youth and young adult males (APA Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents, 2008).

Gendered and racialized identities are also discussed as important aspects of PVEST (Swanson et al., 2002). As African American males navigate society and neighborhoods characterized by violence, their and others' perceptions about their experiences, assets and resources are valuable sources of data. PVEST allows for exploration of the meaning assigned by Black males themselves; however, I extend the model in this regard by considering the meaning-making of community stakeholders whose roles and interactions with Black boys and young men impacted by community violence shape their lives and outcomes. As a framework, PVEST appears to be the most readily available and culturally relevant theoretical lens to study resilience in African American male youth and young adults through exploration of the following research

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questions. 1) How is resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence described and observed by community stakeholders in Greensboro? 2) What assets and resources do these community stakeholders identify as fostering resilience in Black boys and men impacted by community violence? And 3) How do the community stakeholder perceptions differ based upon the positionality (occupation, location, proximity, etc.) of community stakeholders?

CHAPTER III: METHODS

The Current Study

The current study is part of a larger ongoing community-based participatory research project called Healing Greensboro approved by the Institutional Review Board of UNC Greensboro (Smith Lee & Payton Foh, 2018). The Healing Greensboro project utilized the Action-Oriented Community Diagnosis (AOCD) approach to assess the aftermath of homicide and violent injury in the lives of Black boys and men in Greensboro, North Carolina. AOCD is a technique used in Community-Based Participatory Research that employs several data collection methods and sources to conduct a comprehensive assessment of a community of interest (Israel et al., 2013). Researchers are considered Outsiders that build and leverage trusting partnerships and relationships with key informants in the community of interest in order to allow Insiders to serve as the experts that provide insights about community dynamics. The Healing Greensboro Project regards community members as experts and sought to prioritize their experiences, perspectives, and stories as a means to gather information about the context of violence, impact, and dynamics at play to cultivate action items and momentum related to community violence prevention and reduction efforts in the city of Greensboro.

Semi-structured interviews conducted with community members of varying positionality across systems levels in Greensboro were the focus of the current study in order to explore community stakeholder perceptions about the assets and resources necessary for cultivating resilience in young Black males impacted by community violence. As acknowledged by PVEST, the ecological environment is composed of interactions between Black males, family, neighborhood, and the broader community of organizations and community stakeholders. These community stakeholders represent key decision-makers and influencers within the broader

Greensboro community. Since stakeholders in the community are influencers that hold special roles and relationships in communities, their interview data was regarded as valuable sources that could provide insight into how resilience is both conceptualized and cultivated at the community level. There is much to discover from community stakeholder perspectives and the data was examined based on alignment with resilience literature related to community violence.

Recruitment

Stakeholders were initially recruited through connections made by cultivating and leveraging a community partner relationship. During the initial stages of the Healing Greensboro Project, a community partner was secured by establishing a relationship with a local director of a nonprofit mentoring organization. The community partner was a mentoring organization led by a Greensboro native that serves families primarily in Northeast Greensboro, a section of the city that reflects the legacies of residential segregation and that is disproportionately impacted by violence. The community partner was instrumental in identifying community stakeholders for recruitment for interviews. Recommendations were requested for community stakeholders in the eleven occupational categories. The goal was to capture diversity in perspectives around the issue of community violence and its impact on Black boys, men, and families by interviewing community stakeholders across sectors who could speak from different lenses about needs, strengths, and factors that promote healing in the lives of this group. After receiving recommendations and gathering contact information for stakeholders in the Greensboro community, potential participants were contacted through phone calls and email messages to inform them of the project and gauge interest in participating in an interview. Once interest was confirmed, prospective participants were provided with information on the project and informed consent. Interviews were then scheduled with a research team member for a time that was most

convenient for the community stakeholder. Additional stakeholders were identified for recruitment by research team members and via snowball sampling at the end of each interview. Given the health and safety concerns brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the last seven interviews were conducted virtually instead of in-person during the Spring of 2020.

Context

The interest in Greensboro, NC was prompted by record upticks in homicide rates starting in 2017 which caught the attention of the principal investigators to explore the impact of community violence on Black males and families in the city. The Healing Greensboro Project is situated in a city with a concerning prevalence of community violence and rich history that shapes the context in which community stakeholder perspectives are situated. Greensboro is the third-largest city in North Carolina boasting a population size of just over 290,000. The area is often described as a small-big town by study participants that has the charm and family-friendly characteristics of a smaller town but the amenities and activities featured in large cities. Although having a lot to offer in terms of education and entertainment as a college town with multiple universities, athletic tournaments, and innumerable special events and celebrity concerts hosted at the Greensboro Coliseum, Greensboro, NC has a long history of race relations that have shaped the city and the lives of its residents. Well-known throughout the nation, Greensboro is the place of origin of the sit-in movement in which four Black male college students, The Greensboro Four, from North Carolina A&T University staged a sit-in at Woolworth's counter on February 1, 1980 (Huaman, 2010). This incident sparked a sit-in movement that reached across the nation that advocated for the civil rights of Black Americans and challenged the injustice and racism of legalized segregation. Much like the histories of many cities, segregation and racism shaped the neighborhoods that are seen in Greensboro today as

White individuals utilized strategic practices such as redlining and white flight to create concentrated disadvantage in neighborhoods where Black families resided. In addition to these practices, federally funded initiatives of "slum clearance" from urban renewal and neighborhood revitalization in the early 1950s through the mid-1970s displaced a lot of Greensboro residents, disproportionately affecting Black families and businesses, especially in Southeast Greensboro (Redevelopment Commission of Greensboro, n.d.). Though this history reflects former times, the lasting impact on the city of Greensboro and its residents is still relevant today and for this particular study.

One region of Greensboro, East Greensboro, is described as an area with heightened vulnerability to the impact of poverty. According to the East Greensboro Study Committee Summary Report released by the Greensboro Planning Department (2015), East Greensboro is defined as the 60.44 square miles of area east of North Elm Street, US 220 South, and Randleman Road. According to this 2015 report created by city officials, East Greensboro exceeds citywide demographic and economic statistics in terms of its proportion of Black residents, unemployment rate, average household size, rate of employment in blue-collar and service jobs, and proportion of households that include children. Although making up more than a third of Greensboro's population in 2015, East Greensboro fell well below city averages on things like median home value, median income, and education attainment. East Greensboro also contains Smith Homes and Hampton Homes, the city's two-largest public housing projects comprising over 700 affordable housing units combined (Greensboro Housing Authority, n.d.). This information is important to consider when exploring community stakeholder perspectives of resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by the violence that resides in the region.

Participants

To explore the aftermath of homicide and violent injury in the lives of Black boys, men, and families, the Healing Greensboro Project utilized semi-structured interviews to collect data from diverse stakeholders in Greensboro, NC beginning in the summer of 2019. Participants included a sample of 29 community stakeholders. The sample of stakeholders (n=29) was 51.2% male and 48.3% female and identified as either Black (79.3%), White (17.2%), or Biracial (3.5%). Stakeholders were recruited from the following occupation categories: elected officials/ civic leaders, educators, medical professionals, media, law enforcement, clergy, grassroots activists, nonprofit leaders, clinicians, business leaders, coaches, and community healers. The Community Healer in the sample is a community stakeholder engaged in a number of activities to restore and heal communities of color through rehabilitation, counseling, therapy, and enrichment activities that characterized their for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Participants represent organizations and sectors that directly and or indirectly engage Black males impacted by community violence with varying levels of proximity to and interaction with under-resourced neighborhoods and communities in the city of Greensboro. Interviewed community stakeholders have a range of familiarity and history with the city; some participants are lifelong residents of the community whereas others more recently migrated to the area in pursuit of education or employment opportunities. Further details about these and other community stakeholder characteristics such as area of residency, years as a Greensboro resident, and personal impact of community violence can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Community Stakeholder Characteristics

Stakeholder Characteristic	Number of Respondents	Percent of Sample (n = 29)
Race		
Black	23	79.3%
White	5	17.2%
Biracial	1	3.5%
Gender		
Male	15	51.7%
Female	14	48.3%
Category		
Grassroots Activists	2	6.9%
Nonprofit	4	13.8%
Elected Officials/ Civic Leaders	4	13.8%
Physicians/ Health Professionals	2	6.9%
Media	2	6.9%
Law Enforcement	3	10.3%
Coach	1	3.4%
Business	1	3.4%
Clergy	4	13.8%
Educators	5	17.2%
Community Healers	1	3.4%
Hometown		
Greensboro Native	6	20.7%
Non-Greensboro Native	18	62.1%
Longtime Resident (40+ Yrs)	4	13.8%
Years in Greensboro		
0-5	3	10.3%
6-10	2	6.9%
11-15	3	10.3%
16-20	8	27.6%
21-53	6	20.7%
Entire Life	6	20.7%
Area of Residence		
Northeast Greensboro *(Includes East GSO)*	5	17.2%
Northwest Greensboro	3	10.3%
Southeast Greensboro *(Includes East GSO)*	3	10.3%
Southwest Greensboro	3	10.3%
Central/ Downtown Greensboro	2	6.9%

Neighboring Cities	4	13.8%
Engagement with Black Boys & Young Men		
Direct	20	69.0%
Indirect	5	17.2%
Personally Impacted By Community Violence (Exposure, Lost Loved Ones, Victimization)		
Confirmed	16	55.2%

Data Collection

Stakeholders were provided with detailed information about the research project and their rights as voluntary participants and expressed informed consent before the start of the interview either by verbal acknowledgment or signed informed consent based on in-person or virtual format. The in-depth semi-structured interviews lasted two hours on average and were audio and or video recorded. The majority of the interviews were conducted in person; however, researchers pivoted to virtual interviews via video conferencing platform Zoom in Spring 2020 due to data collection disruptions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants received either a $30.00 cash incentive or a thank you letter for their voluntary participation based on their ability to accept monetary gifts in their professional roles. Interviews were conducted by either the principal investigators or graduate students on the research team. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the research team and de-identified for anonymity. Interview questions and prompts gathered rich information about community stakeholder perceptions about the causes and consequences of community violence and asked questions about coping, healing, and resilience. A few questions tapping into stakeholder insights about the resilience of Black boys and young men from the community stakeholder interview protocol are:

- What needs and strengths of Black boys, men, and families have you observed in this role?

- How have you observed Black boys and men cope with violence in Greensboro?

- What might healing look like for Black boys and men impacted by violent injury or violent death in Greensboro?

  - How might your organization contribute?

  - What might this look like in your role with this organization?

The semi-structured nature of the interview protocol allowed for the addition of questions in response to insights gleaned in the process of data collection. To explicitly tap into stakeholder insights about resilience, the following questions were added and asked of the final subset of participants $(n = 7)$.

- What does resilience look like in Black boys and men impacted by violence?

- What enables Black boys and men impacted by violence to be resilient? /(What contributes to the resilience of Black boys and men impacted by violence?)

Analysis

A modified grounded theory approach informed by Daly (2007) guided analyses. The context of risk and resilience-building factors discussed in the literature review (eg. spirituality, social support) informed the framing of the investigation; however, the analysis was largely exploratory in nature allowing codes to emerge largely from the data itself. Evolved forms of grounded theory vary from traditional grounded theory in terms of their approach to coding, analysis, and use of literature, often utilizing different terminology to distinguish the coding phases such as open, axial, and selective coding (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019). Differing from the traditional form of grounded theory, the specific methods and processes of coding in the evolved form have less reliance upon a priori codes from literature and an emphasis on suspending preconceived ideas to allow new meanings and interpretations to emerge from the

data (Daly, 2007). Open coding, the initial stage of assigning codes to meaningful sections of text from line-by-line reviewing of transcripts is the first step in this triadic coding process (Daly, 2007). This exercise of naming casts a wide net on the data by coding text that is then organized into umbrella concepts and categories (Charmaz, 2005). This process is followed by axial coding which begins to look for patterns and links between categories that exist across codes. Lastly, selective coding is employed to create the storyline or central theoretical narrative that represents the patterns and relationships between categories (Daly, 2007). Participant quotes that best highlight stakeholder perceptions on resilience for Black boys and men impacted by violence were selected and ground the articulation of study findings.

Interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using qualitative data analysis software Dedoose. Dedoose is a secure encrypted desktop software used to analyze text, photos, video, and other forms of qualitative and mixed-method data with integrated tools for coding and naming data. Each interview transcript was read line-by-line and coded in Dedoose during the open-coding phase. A priori codes related to resilience, risk, positionality, and contributing factors were added to Dedoose along with their definitions. As new ideas for codes emerged from the interview data, new codes were discussed amongst team members and then added to Dedoose as a code along with definitions. For consistency, each code and definition were also referenced in a shared codebook among coders. When assigning codes in Dedoose alternating colors are assigned to each line of text that has been coded. To indicate that the same text has been coded more than once or by multiple coders, the colors become darker or red to demonstrate overlap. After assigning the codes to all transcripts, code excerpts were created for each code. Code excerpts extract and compile every piece of text assigned to a selected code. As part of axial coding, code excerpts for each code were examined for themes across participant

interviews and patterns were identified, discussed, and confirmed amongst the research team. In addition to codes focused on resilience, risk, and contributing factors, attention was also placed on identifying similarities or patterns between codes related to information on community stakeholders' positionality.

Reflexive and analytic memoing captured general notes and reflections about the codes and quotes within the data. To reduce individual bias and increase credibility, memos were also used to capture the reasoning behind analytic decisions and codes and categories were reviewed by additional research team members throughout the analytic process. An undergraduate coder trained in Dedoose and the coding scheme developed for this project assisted in coding the data to achieve triangulation of researchers, enhancing the trustworthiness of the analysis (Daly, 2007). Weekly team meetings took place in which the primary and secondary coders compared and contrasted insights concerning the codes, themes, and quote selection. When consensus among the first and second coder was difficult to reach, a third member of the research team, the Principal Investigator for the larger Healing Greensboro project, helped in decision-making about the codes, patterns, and themes. Once identified patterns were supported by the entire research team, quotes across interviews were selected that best represented the pattern of findings. This selective coding was the final step in the analytic process.

Positionality Statement

As I consider what resilience means to me as a Black woman and why it sparks my interest, I am readily reminded of my former students and my little brother. Growing up in poverty, gunshots at random hours of the night were normal. As I have gotten older and the community that I grew up in has started to change in less favorable ways, I find myself more concerned with the well-being of the Black males I am attached to who still occupy and reside in

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spaces where community violence and poverty persist. The students that I served in the nonprofit world in Greensboro, their stories about close friends and family they have lost, and the fear for their personal safety immediately come to mind. I can remember going into lockdown right in the middle of dismissal because gunshots were heard near the school. All of these experiences have come to shape the importance and intentionality with which I engage in this type of research.

I feel it is essential to engage the community in order to take a deeper look into Black boys and men in these contexts and to figure out what fosters their resilience. Despite the heartbreaking stories and all the odds stacked against them, my brother and the youth I was able to serve continue to exhibit resilience. That is amazing considering how detrimental community violence and poverty can be for Black males. As I continue to grow as a professional and as my platform changes regarding my career, I feel it is always important to stay grounded and to utilize my research as a means to explore issues relevant to the communities and individuals who have played a part in my identity and success. I hope that findings from this research can one day be translated into application on a community level, especially for the community of youth that I have directly engaged with as a youth services provider in the city of Greensboro.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

To understand community stakeholders' perspectives on resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence, interview data from participants across community sectors and system levels were analyzed. Themes emerged regarding community stakeholder perspectives about risk, resilience, resilience-fostering factors, and community dynamics that shape both exposures to and resilience in the wake of community violence. Beyond stakeholder occupation (e.g. business leader, clergy, nonprofit leader, physician, educator, elected official / civic leader, coach, community healer, grassroots activist, law enforcement, media), participants' shared and varied perceptions around these themes were informed by dimensions of stakeholder positionality (e.g. occupation, residential proximity to violence, race, and lived experiences related to violence and disadvantage). There was broad consensus across stakeholders about the risks that Black boys and young men face that shape their vulnerability to violence. Community stakeholder perspectives were most divergent with respect to contributing factors that promote resilience. Their similar perspectives of risk are an important entry point for setting the context to fully understand the results of their observations of resilience and contributing factors of resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence.

Risks for Violence Exposure in the Lives of Black Boys and Men

As widely conceived in the field, resilience is born of adversity. To best understand Greensboro community stakeholders' perspectives on resilience, it is important to situate them in their perspectives of risk. In describing the risks that Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in Greensboro face, community stakeholders named a range of ecological factors that shape adversity for these males stemming mostly from the family and community level. Lack of opportunity and access to resources stemming from structural divestment and the

impact of community violence were the most prominent themes across stakeholder discussions

of risk, with key inputs regarding family structure, mental health, and masculinity being

subthemes of community violence.

Lack of Opportunity and Access to Resources: "The Line of Poverty is Violence"

Across community stakeholders, lack of opportunity and access to resources was

identified as a central contributing factor and a root cause of community violence among Black

boys and young men in Greensboro. Lack of opportunity and access to resources was understood

by community stakeholders as insufficient availability of essential basic needs such as food,

housing, finances as well as the limited opportunities and access to employment, mental health

services, and engaging programs that could provide positive activities and outlets for youth

living in economically disadvantaged areas. Community stakeholders connected the lack of

resources and opportunity to systemic forces, acknowledging these risk factors are aspects of

poverty that force people to operate from a mindset of survival. Speaking from the perspective of

law enforcement, one stakeholder described it this way:

> I think lack of opportunity…certainly poverty because I think that people oftentimes will
>
> do things just to survive... If you're living in substandard housing and you're not sure if
>
> you're going to eat every day, you know you may go out and do something, that you
>
> wouldn't normally do just to put a meal on the table, or to pay next month's rent. And
>
> then, of course, when you adopt that as a way to survive, you know it becomes a
>
> lifestyle... it can spiral into a whole lot of other things. (Law Enforcement 3 - Black,
>
> male)

Displayed in the viewpoint of the law enforcement stakeholder, lack and limited access to

resources was believed to be heavily linked to poverty and survival, however, community

stakeholders' perspectives varied based on their perceptions of the type of opportunity and resources that they felt were most lacking and influential for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. A biracial educator expressed thoughts about survival and poverty and felt these risk factors were related to limited opportunities centered on education and employment. He stated:

> If you don't have that opportunity to change and get a better education even later in life, or some sort of training, you're still gonna be in a mess. You're still gonna be in poverty. You're gonna be working your tail off and you're gonna be working long hours and, and hours nobody else wants and you're still not gonna have enough money to put food, just put food on the table. And that's not even, that's not even living a real life. That's just existing." - (Educator 1 - Biracial, male)

Discussing a lack of economic resources and basic needs, one stakeholder addressed the systemic issues related to poverty. Informed by her position and her organization's efforts to address issues of generational poverty she stated:

> And then sitting right in the middle of a fire working with families with generational poverty…when you don't have money and you don't have your basic needs met. Uh, the toxic stress, the toxicity that exists is real. And it shows up in unusual ways…So we're seeing some tragic and devastating outcomes or results that are really the root causes of people living in poverty and they don't know how to get out. Umm and it's not they're dumb. It's just that the ecosystem is not built for you to self-serve your way out of poverty. - (Nonprofit Leader 4 - Black, female)

According to this stakeholder, a lack of resources and opportunities related to poverty as a root cause influencing negative outcomes. Additionally, she speaks of unaddressed systemic forces in

the ecosystem that can be barriers to resilience, which make it difficult for Black boys and young

men to get out of poverty and resist those "devastating outcomes".

Several community stakeholders had additional thoughts about how the absence of

resources can influence a particular negative outcome, violence. Thoughts of how the lack of

opportunities and resources stemming from concentrated disadvantage can lead to trajectories of

violence engagement were highlighted. Community stakeholders mentioned a lack of resources

when responding to questions about the causes and drivers of community violence,

acknowledging that the two are heavily related and often occur in shared spaces. According to

community stakeholders, inadequate access to transportation, employment, food, housing, and a

lack of other basic needs as well as limited access to essential resources such as enrichment

programs and mental health services create an environment where violence is inevitable. A Black

clergyman's comments were explicit in discussing this link between poverty and violence. He

stated:

> I never will forget the line of poverty is violence... It's violence. When you
>
> disenfranchise people, you create that culture of violence. Where people begin to take
>
> advantage of each other and take each other's lives and think nothing of it. (Clergy 1 -
>
> Black, male)

To this community stakeholder, disenfranchisement and poverty were responsible for creating a

culture of violence. Struggling to make ends meet and manage the weighty burdens that come

with poverty, community stakeholders felt that Black families, and in particular Black males,

were positioned in risky contexts that encouraged certain outcomes and behaviors such as

stealing, retaliation, self-medication, and engaging in violence. A pediatrician stated:

> Um so, like I said before, it could be because initially they don't have the resources to get

what they need for their families, so it becomes a vicious cycle of, let me steal to get what

I need. Let me hurt someone else to take what they have so I can have what I need for my

family. Um and sometimes it goes on for so long, you don't know why you're doing it,

it's just like, "oh my, my dad did this, my big brother did this, so now I'm going to join

whatever gang or whatever association they have to protect myself". A lot of it has to do

with lack of protection, I believe…And to a certain extent, you don't even know why

you're doing this. It's just like, this is what we've always done, this is how we survive. -

(Physician 2 - Black, female)

Couched in this idea of survival, violence was seen as a component of the "vicious cycle"

created when Black males are unable to access opportunities and resources. Other community

stakeholders held similar perspectives about how lack leads to violence as exemplified in these

perspectives across multiple categories. Their varied perspectives are displayed in quotes in

Table 2.

Table 2. Additional Community Perspectives on Link Between Lack, Access, and Violence

Stakeholder Characteristics	Quote
Media 2 (Black, female)	"I guess I would just say the same thing, um, finances, economic, socio-economic situations, um, people who feel like they are, have nothing, or pushed to the wire, or don't know how they gonna feed their family or make ends meet. Sometimes they'll push to do things that aren't uh the best decision."
Law Enforcement 2 (Black, female)	"People are hungry, people are uneducated, people don't have a place to live. You know what I mean? And so, all of those systemic issues of quality of life affect how people rationalize what they do. And a lot of people turn to violence."
Elected Official / Civic Leader 1 (Black, female)	"And so for me {pause} when I see the removal of opportunity, violence is gonna rise…"
Coach (Black, male)	"Half the students live in a really good area and some just don't live in...it's not necessarily bad areas, it's just an area that doesn't have a lot, so you can get in a lot of trouble."

Quotes featured in Table 2 exhibit the shared understanding among some Black community stakeholders of structurally imposed lack of opportunity and resources as a direct or indirect cause of community violence even among individuals with various occupations. Community stakeholders characterized lack resulting from systemic divestment as a risk factor that pushes or forces people, especially Black males in poverty, to resort to violence to survive and acquire those absent or distant resources.

Although a lot of the conversation around risk stemming from a lack of opportunity and resources seemed to be focused more generally on populations of economically disadvantaged Black males and families in the city of Greensboro as a whole, it is important to note that some community stakeholders felt that a certain section of the city was the most vulnerable to experiencing systemically-driven lack of resources, especially in terms of resources that provide enrichment activities that engage youth and expose them to important extracurricular experiences needed for their development and growth. One region of Greensboro, East Greensboro, was consistently described as an area with heightened vulnerability to violence, attributed to the limited resources and opportunities available to youth residing in this section of the city. Commenting on the reasons behind the disproportionately high frequency of violence in East Greensboro compared to other regions of the city, a White female Elected Official/ Civic Leader 2 stated:

> …and in East Greensboro is where they're struggling with the highest unemployment and they have the lowest wages and they deal with eviction and you know, when you have an area of town that they have the highest problems, the poverty rate is the highest, and {pause}, you know, I think when, in some instances, they're dealing with hopelessness

and when you have people who are, folks faced with hopelessness sometimes they make

bad decisions.

In her direct naming of the East Greensboro area's poverty-driven factors as contributing

mechanisms to rates of violence from her perspective, this Elected Official / Civic Leader echoed

many of the key statistics from the East Greensboro Study Committee Summary Report on the

area (Greensboro Planning Department, 2015). In addition to the many stressors that poverty

imposes financially and mentally, community stakeholders expressed that poverty can limit

exposure to positive opportunities and experiences outside of their neighborhood context. East

Greensboro was described by a community stakeholder representing the media field as an area

that lacks opportunities for Black male youth and young adults. A woman in media said:

... it's like, Black boys have nowhere to go. Especially if they're living in East

Greensboro... We don't have the rec centers to send them to. We don't have libraries to

go to. Umm you know these are low-income families so they have to take a bus to get to

the library downtown or get to their nearest library. They just don't have the resources

that are readily available to them. Umm and I think that's how they're ending up getting

into violent lifestyles is just fighting for basic needs that we all have. Umm and then

fighting each other because of that family that they've developed through these gangs.

(Media 1- White, female)

According to this community stakeholder, the lack of accessible resources that provide

enrichment was a function of the poverty in East Greensboro and had a direct link to violence

and gang involvement. This perspective is consistent with a Black male pastor's thoughts on the

availability of resources for youth in East Greensboro that he shared when responding to a

question about where his ministry was generally located in the city:

I think this is considered to be East end, Florida Street, Smith Homes area. I think this is

considered to be the East end. It's kind of rough around here a little bit…I find one other

thing, as far as need, and that is um the children don't have anything to do around

here…and we have Caldcleugh Rec Center up the street, but they still need something to

do, you know? We had some kids, it's just, had nothing else to do but bust our windows

out on the bus, they just had nothing, they just. They just had nothing else to do. I think

they need a little bit more. We got Warnersville Recreation Center and we got

Caldcleugh, they just need a little bit more to do around here. (Clergy 2 - Black, male)

Some community stakeholders noted that limited access to enrichment and opportunity

becomes more influential when resources and programs that provide these experiences and safe

spaces are lacking during the summer months, a time in the year when they notice older Black

male adolescents and young adult Black males typically have reduced opportunities for

interacting with enrichment programs, employment, and other activities in comparison to

elementary and middle school-aged Black boys. An elected official / civic leader commented:

But ultimately the thought that, especially in lower socioeconomic communities, in order

to sustain a sense of promise, you've gotta have activities and opportunities that exceed

that age bracket. But we don't have enough resources per capita to provide it. There

aren't even enough jobs, summer jobs available for youth. (Elected Official / Civic

Leader 1 - Black, female)

According to community stakeholders, Black boys and young men living in East Greensboro

may have greater structurally-driven limitations around basic needs and enrichment

opportunities. Lack of opportunities and access to resources characterizes the risk context for

some Black boys and young men and therefore shapes community stakeholders' understandings of how resilience manifests in this group.

Community Violence: "It's Babies Getting Their Hands on Guns Now"

Community stakeholders across sectors perceived community violence as the norm or a way of life for Black boys and men residing in specific regions of Greensboro characterized by poverty, particularly East Greensboro, a region known to experience some of the highest vulnerability to disadvantage and violence. Community stakeholders discussed an interconnected range of factors as being some of the drivers of violence in the city that typically impact young Black boys and young men, such as the ease of access to guns, gang involvement, and the convergence of residents from different geographical origins driving rises in conflict. Across these perspectives of the risk factors related to violence themes around community violence's impact on younger Black males, mental health, and masculinity emerged. Community stakeholders' perspectives on resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence are made more clear based upon their understanding of how community violence creates a context of risk that disproportionately impacts Black boys and young men.

Engaging in Violence at a Young Age

Regarding the pervasiveness of violence, community stakeholders concentrated on the uptick in violence and how Black boys, teens, and young men were disproportionately the victims and perpetrators of violent crimes. These perspectives give insight into what Black boys and young men are navigating and overcoming in regards to early engagement with violence. Law enforcement stakeholders' thoughts on the pervasiveness of violence in young Black males are shared in Table 3.

Table 3. Law Enforcement Perspectives on Community Violence in Young Black Males

Stakeholder Characteristics	Quote
Law Enforcement 2 (Black, female)	And um, you know I get, I get tired. Of every call…"we had another shooting...Black male. We had another stabbing—Black male. We had another drive-by—Black male." You know? And seeing these kids, dead in the middle of the street...I'm like what justification can I give? What explanation can I give? What rationale can I give? To explain..the level of violence with our young Black men."
Law Enforcement 1 (White, male)	"So you're asking me now what's the age of the more violent crime gang members? We're dealing with now, 12, 13,14 {laughs} I would say 13 to 18. I mean the whole thing shifted down. Umm these kids are getting shot umm like these kids that I spoke about that are back and forth across town shooting each other's houses, the mean, the median ages are probably 15. Which is crazy, {small pause} like that's madness. You know but that's, that's reality right now."
Law Enforcement 3 (Black, male)	"Uhh one thing that's really concerning and disappointing at the same time, is that, umm, in Greensboro specifically a lot of the gun crime that has been committed, and also the victims of gun crimes have been in the African American community, especially young Black males. And, umm, I identify I think with that personally, because of course I'm a male and I used to be that age, and umm, and you try to figure out like "what's, what's happening now, uhh where young people are grabbing guns and will in actually shoot other people"? And it just seems to be more prolific now."

Although law enforcement may be more acquainted with the frequency of violence by way of their occupation, community stakeholders in other professions were also noticing this increase in violence among young Black males. A business leader shared:

Kids are getting involved in violence at a younger age. And if you hand a kid anything at a young age, more than likely tv they're gonna mismanage it…they don't have the mature mindset to actually manage it…it's more than likely going to be out of control. And I think that the guns and violence, um, I think that's where we're at…Um, but to go deeper than surface. Um, these kids are struggling…and it's a lot of hopelessness… they're not equipped to handle you and your issues emotionally and socially. So, you just find

something else that you can do that's not embarrassing you. (Business Leader - Black,

male)

According to this business leader, violence in young Black males is driven by feelings of

hopelessness which leads them to seek out other outlets. Another community stakeholder felt

violence was increasing in young males but alluded to the glorification of violence and gun

access as key risk factors for community violence among Black male youth in Greensboro.

Because the violence is increasing. It's getting worse. And it's overkill. It's not like we

shoot you one time and we gone. No, they shootin' you up. And it's babies getting their

hands on guns now. With seventeen and sixteen-year-olds getting their hands on guns. Or

feeling like they gotta show big… ARs on social media. I'm like, you guys are glorifying

violence. Umm, and I think that's an issue to me. (Grassroots Activist 1 - Black, female)

This activist's comments illustrated the salience of violence among young Black males and how

their glorification and access to guns are a concern for her.

Other stakeholders (educators and elected officials/ civic leaders) felt that pop culture

plays a major part in influencing younger Black males to engage in violence. They specifically

mentioned the influence and reinforcement of violence as a culture found in young Black males'

exposure to violence in television, toys, video games, and music. A Black female Educator

mentioned, "Um, even toy guns, I have issues with that because again, it's the exposure. Um,

video games, it's the exposure and a lot of things go uncensored…Like kids nowadays are

exposed to so much and it's, it's right there." Observations of resilience in young Black men

exposed to community violence are in the face of violence engagement at earlier ages, increased

access to guns, and the reinforcement of violence in pop culture.

Mental Health Issues and Masculinity

In addition to the prevalence of community violence, community stakeholders felt that the impact of violence on Black male youth and young adults takes a big toll on their psychological health and well-being. Mental health issues add an additional layer to the context of adversity in which community stakeholders believe that Black boys and young men are finding ways to navigate and even thrive. Community stakeholders felt that mental health issues severely challenged Black boys and young men's ability to cope by introducing hopelessness and other psychological issues derived from losing loved ones, witnessing violence, being victimized, and even engaging in violence. Utilizing a short narrative example to drive this point home, one community stakeholder commented:

> So, now this is happening too, let's just take one block. Let's say in one block, there are 12 kids and 7 of them are Black boys and they grow up on that block with gunshots, some of the people on that block are dead now before they even got outta high school or whatever…you potentially have 7 Black males in one space managing mental trauma now you multiply that by the number of blocks in a neighborhood. So grief alone and trauma has produced a whole community of distracted, hypervigilant, anxious, depressed individuals who have to coexist and don't get to leave that radius very often. (Elected Official / Civic Leader 1 - Black, female)

Internalizing issues and externalizing behaviors such as depression and hypervigilance are a few psychological examples of the toll that community stakeholders felt community violence takes on Black males. Suicide and homicidal ideation were observations made by a Black woman Physician amongst her young Black male patients. She shared:

Suicidal ideation is when you want to cause self-harm. I see more self-harm as a

pediatrician. Which to me is still like, you know big, then I do homicidal ideation. Um,

and so I do see that effect on a lot of my patients. They know of somebody who's gotten

shot, or they know, um, have been in the same area where the person was killed or

harmed, and that has a very significant impact on their mental capacity and their desire to

live and want to keep going. (Physician 2 - Black, female)

Expanding upon previous perspectives on hopelessness, this physician reveals that at its extreme,

hopelessness resulting from community violence exposure can lead to young Black men's

contemplation of taking their own lives.

Community stakeholders articulated the link between community violence and mental

health for Black boys and young men in Greensboro, but perspectives differed on where mental

health issues were situated in relation to community violence, some seeing it as a cause while

others saw it as mostly an outcome of community violence. One stakeholder captured both

perspectives in her statements on mental health and community violence:

But we know some of our kids who had umm, just a lot of trauma and then trauma then

spilled over into mental health and behavioral issues cause it all stems from something.

And so we had students who we had to refer to day treatment. We had students who we

had to refer to…grief counseling after the loss of a loved one…There's things that have

gone on for years that people are exposed to. Um, there's undiagnosed conditions. You

know, I think I, {participant sighs} I had, we had a student who we knew was bipolar at a

very young age and we knew that his dad was too, undiagnosed. So his violence would

come out when he was having one of those episodes And so the same thing for his dad,

that was in and outta jail, in and out because of an undiagnosed mental health condition

and a lot of that happens in our communities. Um, schizophrenia, people dealing with all

sorts of thoughts and things and I think sometimes that kinda, it trickles over. (Educator 4

- Black, female)

The negative impact of mental health as both a cause and consequence of community

violence was also discussed concerning barriers that exist in addressing the mental health and

emotion processing needs, especially for Black males. Community stakeholders admitted that

these mental health problems were in part influenced by the ability to access mental health

services; however, norms of masculinity manifested as a larger theme in stakeholder perspectives

around help-seeking behaviors, grieving, and coping with the impact of community violence. A

clinician working in the nonprofit sector shared the following comments about how Black boys

and young men grieve:

> I mean my initial response was kinda, do they [grieve], like kinda who says they do? Um,
>
> I think they just go inside themselves. Like a question I ask a lot is, like have you cried
>
> about this? And then they'll say no, and I'll say, well, when's the last time um that you
>
> cried on the inside? Oh, like five minutes ago.Yeah. And so I think that's how they grieve
>
> to themselves internally. Sometimes they'll acknowledge it, sometimes they won't, just
>
> even to themselves. (Nonprofit Leader 2 - White, female)

This pattern of grief manifesting in handling things internally or avoiding them all together was

also present in other perspectives on how Black boys and young men impacted by violence

process their emotions and experiences. A different community stakeholder expanded on her

perspective on how schools can provide structure in the healing process for Black boys, men, and

families trying to heal from community violence by saying:

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A lot of times families don't know how to, again, there's that stigma, especially with males of, you know, "we'll just handle it, we don't talk about it or this happened and you just needa suck it up and move on, or man up" or whatever it may be, you know, this is that hyper-masculine or what they think is masculinity that you have to address situations with or we don't talk about it, and that's just a cultural thing. (Educator 4 - Black, female)

Masculinity and in particular, the masculine norms reinforced in Black males are seen as a cultural issue for this stakeholder. This idea of masculinity affecting the healing process was noted by other community stakeholders such as Elected Officials/ Civic Leaders, Law Enforcement, Coaches, Grassroots Activists, and Physicians. Directly reflecting on masculinity as a barrier for Black boys and young men to heal from the effects of community violence, a Nonprofit Leader explained:

I believe we have punished men for being emotional. Umm, we've made it taboo or gay to be emotional when in actuality it's just an expression that all of us have. All of us, male or female. Women are allowed to embrace umm, their emotions. They are able to display it in a number of ways, being hurt, embarrassed, ashamed, umm, but it seems like the only emotional response that little boys are able to have without being abused is to be angry. Umm, and that's perpetuated not just by their fathers, but also by mothers who think that they're doing them a favor because they don't want them to be soft. Aunts you know, female teachers tell boys "don't cry". (Nonprofit Leader 1 - Black, male)

His perspective tapped into the way males are socialized regarding emotions, receiving messages from multiple sources that limit their ability to express their feelings in comparison to females. An educator's thoughts on emotional socialization were complementary to this perspective.

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Sharing his observations of how and when Black boys and men are allowed to express emotion, an educator stated:

> You know, and I mean the only time we allowed them to cry is it like their mom or grandma died. Like that's the only time it's like oh it's okay to do that but other than that you know you can't have no emotions. You can't say I love you like, Black males can't say I love you to each other without being considered gay or no homo…I don't know, it's just, it's it's we, we're just taught to be built different. (Educator 3 - Black, male)

Community stakeholders felt that Black boys and young men impacted by community violence were subject to intense emotions following exposure; however, due to socialization about masculinity and emotions, they were often left ill-equipped to deal with and process the severe emotional and mental impact of violence exposure.

Family Structure: The Influence of Limited Male Presence.

The absence of father figures in the home and the lack of positive male role models in the community consistently surfaced as a concern for community stakeholders especially when responding to questions about the needs of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in Greensboro. Community stakeholders mentioned that many Black males are typically raised in single female-headed households and how the absence of a positive or "godly" male figure in their life can leave them without a sense of direction or guidance from a male perspective. Speaking further on the absence of fathers and "godly" male figures, a member of clergy stated:

> Well I mean um, the obvious, you know. Most of the homes, uh, most of the ladies here, the women here are single-parented. They don't have a male, they don't…a lot of the children's fathers are not living with them. Um, I think our Black boys, I think that is sad,

I think that it's part of the problem, that our Black boys do not have no godly male

influence. They may have some male influence, but it's not godly male influence. So I

think our young Black males don't have any godly male influence. (Clergy 2 - Black,

male)

Continuing this thread of the impact of the family structure, a physician also commented on his

observations of the prevalence of Black males victims of community violence being raised in

single-parent headed households based upon interactions with his patients and their families.

It's the family structure that seems to have gotten hurt. Now that is an assumption I am

making based on what I am seeing when I see the families come into the hospital. I don't

know if that's really what's going on or not, but I do know a lot of these kids that are

involved in these activities whether they're in gang activities or not, um, have single-

family homes. I mean, single-parent homes. (Physician 1 - Black, male)

An elder activist in the community also weighed in on this issue of an absence of a father figure

or male presence in the home, noting that a male presence helps to bring balance as an aspect of

the foundation of the family structure which is akin to how he was raised. He commented:

And that's the way it should be, you know your goal is to have a family, have a husband,

and doing well. And unfortunately, in today's-there's so many families don't make it…If

you go to the school and say "how many kids in this classroom have both parents?" one

or two [say] yeah, and, so you know that impacts the foundation…There's nothing wrong

with single parents, okay? But you need to have that buffer. You know? You need to

have that good buy bad guy stuff like that, that I was raised with. (Grassroots Activist 2 -

Black, male)

Despite acknowledging the strengths of Black single women in caring for and providing for their families and children, it was evident that community stakeholders viewed the lack of positive male role models and father figures as particularly disadvantageous for Black males in contexts of community violence. Some community stakeholders even felt this missing male presence affected the family structure to the point of driving young Black males to seek fulfillment and belonging through gang involvement. A quote from an interview with a media professional revealed her thoughts on the matter:

> I feel like, you know, I'm a white woman so it's really hard for me to put myself in their place but I feel like from what I hear from people in the community that are working with these boys, umm, like they have nowhere to go. They don't have that family structure and I think that they just think it's the norm to join gangs or to get that fellowship. (Media 1 - White, female)

Gangs providing a sense of community or family were not only limited to her perspective but were also captured in interviews with other community stakeholders. An additional community stakeholder noted that in the same way that organizations try to address the limited male presence in the lives of Black boys and men impacted by violence, gangs can function in the same way. She shared:

> The family neighborhood…it's just tough because if you don't have I know a lot of you know, young guys don't have fathers, right, or their fathers aren't there. So there are you know organizations that you know, try to step in to try to you know, be the model or to be that example for them. And unfortunately, you know gangs also kind of offer that family. To kind of fill that family void. (Educator 5 - Black, male)

Although it was recognized that family structure and gang involvement are highly connected, some took a different viewpoint, viewing the absence of the male presence within the family and community as leaving Black boys and young men vulnerable as targets for gang recruitment. Summarizing his thoughts on the rationale for requiring that recruited mentors agree to mentor Black boys and adolescents for three-year time commitments in his mentorship program, a Nonprofit Leader expressed the following discussing relationships, the missing "strong man" and gang affiliation:

> …for this particular group of boys they suffer from broken relationships. Whether it's fathers, whether it's family members. They move a lot so they lose, it's hard for them to even establish strong relationships with caring adults in their neighborhoods…we didn't want to add another adult in these kids' lives who would just disappear…Because I know so many young men who are in gangs. Who are number one, great young men. And a lot of them really just capitulated to, umm, to the group…there's a quote in the Bible that says 'if you're gonna spoil the house, you must first bind the strongman.' And so, we are living in a society, and in particular with African American men, umm, where the strongman is not in the house. And so it's easy to spoil the house when that strongman is not there…And so, if they don't have a father, a strong man, some advocate right there in their community with them, then it's a great possibility, if they if they're pressured every day eventually, they gonna, they're gonna reform. (Nonprofit Leader 1 - Black, male)

Much like the way that community stakeholders differed on their perspectives about mental health, some had thoughts and feelings about whether the family structure and the missing males is a matter of cause or consequence. Those who focused on consequences discussed how community violence has "destroyed families" due to incarceration and homicide,

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leaving those individuals remaining to manage life without loved ones. Talking about the things he witnessed and heard from his students, an educator explained:

> It's taken away their fathers… And it's taken away a lot of sons so I think the, the people that are remaining it's affected the Black families construct I mean it's...Like do you know it, it's like it was nothing again like one of my kids would say my older brother got killed you know or, my older brother got shot, or I've been shot, umm my dad got killed or you know so. It takes out a lot of, a lot of the family value, it takes out a lot of the family cohesiveness it takes out, it takes out the family. Like then it becomes second nature like an expectation sort of…You're going to lose someone to violence. (Educator 3 - Black, male)

A Business Leader also voiced his perspectives on this issue. He mentioned:

> Um, I think violence are in violent acts instantly affects two families instantly. Um, you have one who is the victim and umm, there's pain and suffering there. Then, uh, the one who has committed violence, more than likely you're filling up the prison system. So now your family no longer has, you have kids, brothers, sisters, younger brothers and sisters, they look up to you…Like it's so many different effects that happens instantly. (Business Leader - Black, male)

This instant shift in the family structure affects both victims and perpetrators leaving two families without their loved ones.

Positionality Influencing Perspectives: Awareness of Risk and Resilience

Perspectives are informed by positionality and whether through occupation, residential proximity, race, gender, or lived experience, this intentionally diverse sample of community stakeholders in this study had differing perspectives on their observations of risk, resilience, and

the assets and resources that foster resilience in the lives of Black boys and young men exposed to community violence giving insight on the third research question. Due to the salience of positionality, the aspects of positionality that are most relevant are highlighted here as a bridge between risk and resilience and others are embedded throughout the entire results section. Positionality shaped the way that community stakeholders approached the interview questions, bringing to light the different experiences and aspects of identity that inherently informed their individual perspectives on the way that Black boys and men exposed to community violence overcome risk. Race and gender, occupation, residential proximity, and lived experiences were the aspects of positionality that most heavily shaped community stakeholders' perspectives in this sample.

Race and Gender

Race is an essential aspect of identity for Black Americans and it remains an important part of community stakeholder positionality. The majority of the sample of community stakeholders were Black however the influence of race did surface for White individuals in the sample as well. Although race showed up as an important aspect of positionality, it showed up in different ways for Black and White community stakeholders. For White stakeholders, the intersection of race and gender seemed to influence their perspectives. Within the sample, 3 out of 5 White community stakeholders, all being female, discussed their positions of race and gender as impacting their ability to share their observations of risk and resilience in Black boys and young men. White female community stakeholders openly acknowledged how their race and gender prevented them from being able to comment on the experiences of Black boys and men impacted by community violence. When asked about how community violence has impacted Black boys and young men, she stated:

I can tell you how I think it's impacted them [Black boys and young men]. Um, I think

that they are going to be the best reporters on that. So I can tell you from my, old white

lady perspective about how I think that it might impact families for what I see with the

families that we worked with. (Nonprofit Leader 3 - White, female)

Preferring for Black boys and young men to be the informants on how community violence

impacts them, this White community stakeholder expressed that her perspective was informed by

her race and that she would only be able to comment based on her thoughts. An additional White

female community stakeholder chose to refrain from commenting further when asked if she had

any additional thoughts about community violence and its relation to Black boys and men in the

city of Greensboro. She expressed:

You know, I don't think so, umm, because I'm also, I don't wanna be presumptuous and

being a White woman and I hate to say it, I'm getting to be an old White woman. You

know, I don't, I umm, yeah I don't want to be presumptuous about things either. -

(Elected Official / Civic Leader 2 - White, female)

For half of the White community stakeholders, their race and gender played a factor in whether

they felt comfortable with speaking about the experiences of Black boys and young men

impacted by community violence, wanting to avoid making inferences or assumptions.

For Black community stakeholders, their perspectives were very different. Almost

juxtaposed to the perspectives of positionality regarding race for White people, Black

community stakeholders felt that their race and gender is what drew them to working with Black

boys and men because they could see themselves in them and others felt there was a "spiritual

connection" that existed between Black people that helped them empathize with Black boys and

young men impacted by community violence. This connection can be seen from a Black male

Educator's perspective. He shared, "I interact with students across the district, a lot of those are Black males. I tend to gravitate towards Black males, of course, because I see myself in them and I want them to be successful" (Educator 3 - Black, male). His interactions with Black males were driven by his desire to see Black boys be successful because he resonated with them because of shared race and gender. Speaking to the ways that Black individuals are connected by adversity, a Black woman Physician describes:

> There's an unsaid language between us, because of our trials, um we whether, whether we know each other or not, we've been through, we have something in common. Um, and so to have that commonality and to be able to um be resilient in it, I think that's the strength. Black people are resilient. (Physician 1 - Black, male)

To her, the "unsaid language" between Black people is connected to having common adversity that provides a source of connection and strength displayed in the resilience of Black people. A Black woman in Law Enforcement called it a "spiritual or unspoken connection" between Black people that allowed her to connect more easily with families that are grieving the loss of a loved one to homicide.

> But a lot of people don't have that spiritual connection with people. I think Black and Brown people are spiritually connected in a way that you can't describe. It's like a..unspoken connection...walking into a house of a family that's grieving is a lot more comfortable to me..umm, than it would be to any other officer. (Law Enforcement 2 - Black, female)

The aspect of race and gender are presented here to display the contrast between White and Black community stakeholders which offers some context regarding why Black community

stakeholder perspectives were more prominent in the remaining sections on resilience and factors that contribute to resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence.

Occupation

The field of work that community stakeholders were involved in influenced their perspectives, their occupations affected the level of interaction they had with Black boys and young men impacted by community violence, therefore influencing their insights on the risk, resilience, and contributing factors of resilience. For this study, occupation refers to the occupational category in which community stakeholders were recruited. Both Black and White males and females who held the positions of Nonprofit Leader, Grassroots Activist, Clergy, Business Leader, Educator, Community Healer, and Physician tended to interface with Black males more often. A Nonprofit Leader discussed the capacity in which she and her staff interact with Black boys and young men. Responding to a question asking about her organization's interactions with the population of focus, Black boys, men, and families impacted by community violence, she mentioned:

> On a regular basis, particularly related to our work with the police department…so about 25% of our families in therapy would be families of color but the number of referrals we get for um advocacy and case management is typically closer to 60-70% families of color…all of those for that program include somebody between under the age of 18, and their family. (Nonprofit Leader 3 - White, female)

For this nonprofit leader, a good portion of her clientele were youth and families of color. Other community stakeholders commented on their level of engagement with Black boys and men as well. The Community Healer in the study stated,

I…always go into the east side of Greensboro right, because I do home visits to some of

my clients… I do a lot of work with Black families and people of color…We work

primarily with people of color, our target population is African Americans, and so this

year and mostly African American youth. (Community Healer - Black, female)

Noting not only her level of interactions with African American or Black youth as a target

population, but she also mentioned that she also has clients in the East Greensboro area, which is

particularly impacted by community violence.

A few community stakeholders felt that their occupations placed them in a "unique

place" or caused them to have a "unique perspective" as a result of the work that they do and the

way that their occupation interacted with other aspects of their positionality such as race and

gender. This "unique" positioning and perspective was attributed as impacting their

understanding of the types of risk and situations affecting communities of Black boys and men

impacted by community violence. A Black female in the nonprofit sector explained it this way:

I would say that it's not fully understood and it's not knowable by all. I sit in a unique

place with relationships with law enforcement. Relationships with the judicial system.

And…working with families with generational poverty. So I would say that...there's a

degree of ignorance around…why this condition exists. (Nonprofit Leader 4 - Black,

female)

Her occupation as a Nonprofit Leader provided her with relationships that informed her

understanding of what is going on within certain communities. This idea of being in a unique

position as a result of occupation was shared by a member of Law Enforcement. She shared:

I think I have a unique perspective as it relates to standing...in this position as law

enforcement. African American female, and being a strong Black woman… Because I

can see both sides. (Law Enforcement 2 - Black, female)

Acknowledging how her occupation, race, and gender intersect to form a "unique perspective"

she discusses how she can see things regarding community violence and its impact on Black

boys and young men from both the perspective of the Black community and from the perspective

of her role in law enforcement. This comment revealed the complexity of positionality that

informs and is inherent in the perspectives of each community stakeholder in this study.

Residential Proximity

Similar to occupation, proximity in residence to communities impacted by community

violence affected their awareness and ability to speak to the issues as well as strengths of Black

boys and young men impacted by violence. Functioning almost as a proxy of class and

socioeconomic status, community stakeholders' residential proximity is defined as their

geographical area of residence and the proximity they have to communities, such as East

Greensboro, that experience community violence more frequently. The majority of community

stakeholders tended to live in areas that were more distal to areas with more reported community

violence as shown in Table 1. Some lived in neighboring cities. For instance, a Black male

Educator residing in the Browns Summit area shared his thoughts about community violence in

Greensboro. She explained:

Umm...to tell you the truth. Um.. I know it happens right…I don't know the extent. What

I mean by that is. Because we're in this new age where you know TV is pretty much

almost obsolete but, like there's not too much cable anymore by streaming stuff in social

media and so whenever you do that..you're missing out on the news. (Educator 5 - Black, male)

Relying mostly on the news as a source of information on what is happening in terms of community violence, this community stakeholder displays the way that residential proximity can keep individuals from having insight into what is happening in communities where Black boys and young men are impacted by community violence. A clergyman discussed his residential proximity as well as his congregations and how it sorely limits their understanding of community violence's impact on Black boys and young men. He shared:

> Most of my people drive in...very few, we have some who live near, but for the most part, most people are driving in so they're not watching it or seeing it. I mean my heavens, I drive in…So of course, you know, we're not as connected as I wanna be. Cause I think I have to be in the city to really deal with it, to feel the impact of it. But I mean you know, most of us are driving in, so we don't really have an understanding of what our brothers and sisters are going through. I think, for the most part, most of my congregation they have homes in Irving Park and other places, and McLeansville and then, of course, you know, Benbow Park area over here. I have a lot of congregation that lives over here. But, they're everywhere so they don't really feel the sting of it [community violence]. (Clergy 1 - Black, male)

Another community stakeholder drove this point home, recognizing that his residential proximity sorely limited his understanding of what Black boys and men face in certain communities.

> Um, I like where we live, it's a nice neighborhood but it's separated from the primary Black communities here. Which makes it kind of {short pause} I feel sometimes

hypocritical, um, concerned about what's going on in the Black neighborhood not living

there and that's where part of my conflict comes in, and dealing with this is that I don't

know what they're going through and I need to know what they're going through but I

don't…You know, I'm getting in the game kind of late and because I'm not in that

community, not a, um, a living member in that community, it's hard for me to really

understand. (Physician 1 - Black, male)

Interestingly enough, despite his direct interaction with victims of community violence on an

occupational basis, he still felt that his residential proximity played a significant role in limiting

his perspective. His statements about living in a "nice neighborhood" and the separation from

other Black communities demonstrate a notion of class that another stakeholder expanded upon.

While discussing the disconnect that occurs between Black people with certain levels of

educational attainment and class based on their living in particular communities away from

communities experiencing community violence, a Black community stakeholder stated:

So remember part of segregation was to make sure you can't see segregation. So what it

turned into post-segregation is make sure you can't see the poor people… I lived here for

9 years before I fully understood how bad things were…So I never saw it until I started

volunteering and I was like, what?... I didn't know. Did I know that some people weren't

doing well? Yeah, that exists in every city, but I didn't understand the degrees, I didn't.

And so that's why…my number one business goal is to create a hundred percent

awareness around the abject poverty in Greensboro, North Carolina…what we gon' do

about it? (Nonprofit Leader 4 - Black, female)

Despite there being aspects of positionality that may lead to a disconnect between populations of

Black people either as a result of aspects of SES, there still remains a level of investment and

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intentionality in finding ways to stay connected or keep an "ear to the ground" around issues of community violence affecting Black males. This intentionality is a characteristic most relevant to the race aspect of positionality for Black community stakeholders.

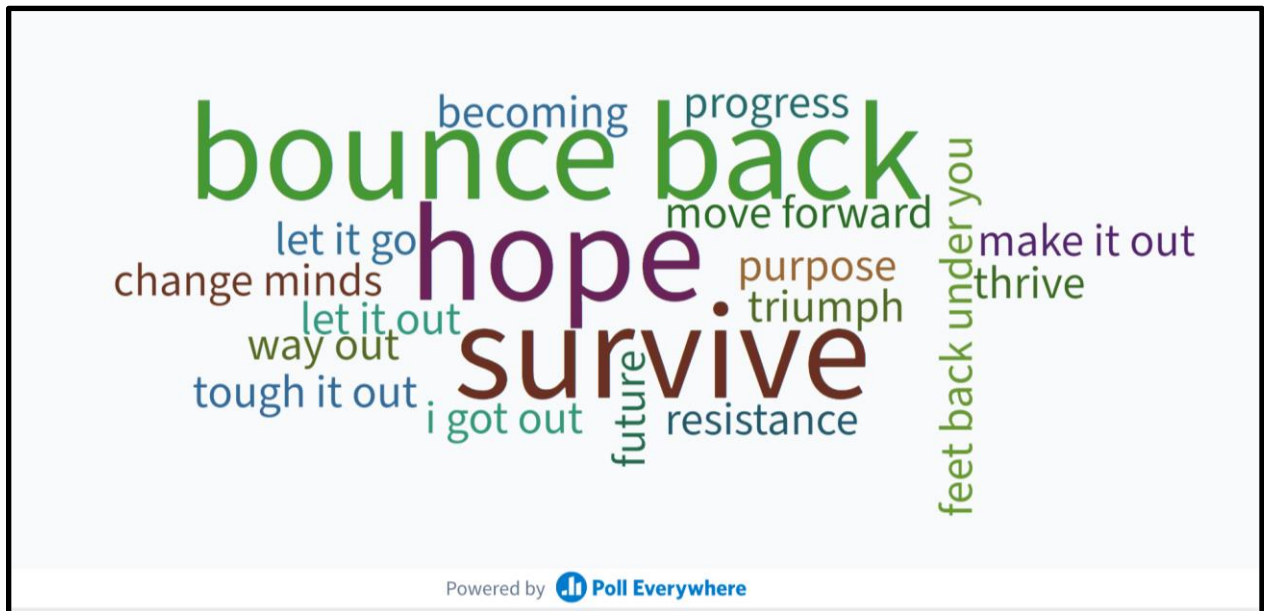## Resilience in Black Boys and Young Men Impacted by Violence

While community stakeholders offered rich interconnected insights on the risks that Black boys and young men in Greensboro face, they also offered perspectives on their observations of what resilience looks like for this group. Addressing the first research question, community stakeholders shared their observations and descriptions of resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in Greensboro. Resilience was described in many ways that reflected the various yet complementary lenses through which community stakeholders viewed resilience in Black boys and men. Healing and resilience were oftentimes discussed simultaneously. I see healing as an important aspect of resilience for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence, it is one of the many ways that community stakeholders observed resilience in this group. An overview of the descriptions and definitions of resilience is provided followed by specific examples of resilience-fostering factors that community stakeholders identified. A benefit of the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for resilience-focused questions to be asked in the seven most recent interviews that were conducted. Their direct responses to those resilience questions are also included.

A coach described these observations well in his definition of resilience in Black boys and young men, "prospering through the process" (Coach - Black, male). Community stakeholders expressed that Black boys and young men exhibit resilience in the way they respond to the pain of loss, in the way that they keep moving forward after being victimized, and in the way that they maintain a focus on the future despite their current circumstances. Community

stakeholders (coach, educator, nonprofit leader) observed Black boys and young men survive and thrive by engaging in several activities, whether it be honoring the life of a lost loved one through a creative or physical outlet, finding trusted individuals to disclose and share feelings, or utilizing violence exposure or victimization as a "wake up call" or "second chance".

To capture the breadth of community stakeholder perspectives, Figure 1 displays a word cloud that captures the many phrases that community stakeholders employed when describing resilience in Black boys and young men that have been impacted by community violence.

Figure 1. Word Cloud of Community Stakeholder Descriptions of Resilience

Community stakeholders tended to speak about resilience during the interview when protocol questions elicited their answers around strengths, healing, coping, and hope for Black boys and young men impacted by violence. Figure 1 displays terms from across the spectrum of community stakeholders in the study, yet some individuals specifically named "resilience" in their responses. An educator who witnessed resilience in his students who are exposed to violence regularly shared:

Umm resilience, being able to bounce back. I had a lot of students that, it was amazing to me because I didn't grow up in that world like that. Like, I didn't grow up in the world of my best friend could die tomorrow because of gang violence or something like that. So they would just be like, I mean if somebody was to get shot or they be like you know I mean it's a way of life. Like y'all just able to bounce back like that… Like I think they're resiliency, I mean I think they've it they've seen it so much before them that they're like, it's like they're numb to it. Umm, I don't know if that's a strength or not but it's just like they're able to bounce back a lot quicker sometimes. (Educator 3 - Black male)

Uncertain if numbness was a strength, this community stakeholder still recognized that his students' resilience, or ability to bounce back quickly following community violence exposure, was related to their responses to experiencing violence so often. Another community stakeholder utilized the words "resilient" and "bounce back" to also describe the way she witnessed Black boys and young men respond to community violence when interfacing with the judicial system.

Umm, you know I feel like they're resilient here. Cause I do see them bounce back pretty quickly like, just even in court. I would be, I would assume I would be torn up and falling apart having somebody killed and I see them, I mean they're torn up, they're falling apart but they're also laughing and like full of joy. (Media 1 - White, female)

As a white woman, she expresses that she would be "torn up and falling apart" in response to losing a loved one to violence however she witnessed resilience in how Black boys and young men are both falling apart but also finding ways to have joy despite tragic loss. These two perspectives of resilience in Black boys and young men demonstrate that community stakeholders believe resilience is encompassed in a range of responses to community violence such as numbness, falling apart, laughter, and joy according to community stakeholders. The

range of behaviors, traits, actions, and reactions that community stakeholders identify in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence illustrates that despite their community violence exposure and its impact on their lives and emotions, they still find ways to use their experiences to "prosper through the process" and find creative ways of navigating which demonstrates that there was depth and diversity present in community stakeholders' observations of resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence.

In contrast to other interviews, 7 out of 29 community stakeholders were asked a direct question about what resilience looks like in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. A Black male member of the clergy who has been personally impacted by community violence at a young age had this to say about resilience:

Resilience looks like, I think it looks like.. grit you know it's being able to cope and, for lack of a better word, adapt to events that have taken place. And utilize those events as motivation, to achieve and to be successful, not just for yourself but for your family your community...So that takes you know, I think again that whole mind, body, and soul, so you're going to have to have people along the way, that help you with that resiliency. So if it's you gotta talk to somebody, get some kind of counseling, or being able to find an outlet for that a lot of times. You turn to you know sports or something, could be reading, could be some kind of gift or talent that you have a way to figure out how to channel that, so I think that that ends up helping with resiliency in that way. (Clergy 4 - Black, male)

For this community stakeholder, resilience was embedded in coping and adaptation and turning the negative events of community violence into a positive possibly by channeling different outlets fostered by internal assets and external resources. For a clergy member responding to this question, he explained that resilience looks like "just getting back to life, you know? moving on

with life, as best you can, you know? And finding more positive meaningful ways to move through life and with life. That's how I kind of see resiliency" (Clergy 3 - Black, male). Having lost a child to community violence, this community stakeholder identified finding ways to move forward and recover after community violence exposure as an example of resilience looks like for him.

Lived Experiences Shaping Community Stakeholder Perspectives on Resilience

Community stakeholder definitions and descriptions of what resilience looks like were informed by their lived experiences as individuals that have experienced adversity and as survivors of community violence exposure, victimization, and homicide, a salient aspect of community stakeholder positionality. Helping them to understand and resonate with the experiences of and resilience of Black boys and young men impacted by violence, lived experiences was another connection point that gave some community stakeholders an insight into what risk and resilience look like and what factors are most needed for promoting resilience in this group. In quotes such as "resilience looks like me", you can see how this Black male Elected Official / Civic Leader felt that he is one of the Black young men that has been impacted by violence in Greensboro that has exhibited resilience. In his interview, this Greensboro native explicitly indicated his connection to community violence, "There have been people that I've known that have died because of violence. There have [been] people that I've been connected to…I didn't necessarily know them personally, but then there's some that I've known personally." This community stakeholder's connection to violence was also informed by having participated in conducting multiple funerals for victims of community violence. Community stakeholders with lived experiences often spoke of victimization, violence exposure, having lost family and friends to community violence, or living in similar communities of Black boys and

young men that have been impacted by community violence. Table 4 highlights the personal and professional connections with community violence and additional lived experiences of other community stakeholders across multiple categories.

Table 4. Lived Experiences of Community Stakeholders

Stakeholder Characteristics	Quote
Clergy 1 (Black, male)	"I've lost a few people in my life to violence. I've lost some family members...my mother's older sister…she's had to bury about two or three of them…she lost about two or three grandkids... to violence"
Educator 4 (Black, female)	"And all of a sudden over the walkie…he said shots fired…So he was like, it was machine gun fire. So we had to go into lockdown."
Coach (Black, male)	"but myself who's been through it a lot, I can relate to some of these guys, and they can trust it…I grew up in it...daily."
Grassroots Activist 1 (Black, female)	"I got shot…my step son…my baby cousin…each stop sign on my street has been hit with either attempted homicide or it ended up within homicide."
Physician 1 (Black, male)	"I also knew kids that were friends of my kid…who died from this kind of stuff."
Elected Official / Civic Leader 1 (Black, female)	"A good friend of mine…he got shot…and he died…I had two friends who to this day one of them has a hole right here and the other one has a hole in their calf from where they got in a shootout on the street… the other one that literally, {pause} that almost took the breath out of my body wasn't a death. It was a friend who was a perpetrator."
Nonprofit Leader 2 (Black, female)	"I'm within a black church, and so I've seen like homicide kill some of our young people and then you see what that does within the community. Um, and you see, you know, very first hand watching a family kinda walk through that pain"
Media 2 (Black, female)	"I have known people, you know, who have been victims, or maybe not know 'em so well but just know them as someone from the community or someone from the neighborhood or "that's my friend's friend" type deal so."

| Community Healer (Black, female) | "I grew up in violence, so personally to do this work, because I grew up in it." |

As shown in Table 4, those with lived experiences of the direct impact of community violence were Black males and females. These lived experiences that they discussed informed the work they do, and their relation and familiarity with the stories of risk and resilience of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. White or biracial community stakeholders were more likely to report no lived experiences or personal impact of community violence.

Factors that Promote Resilience among Black Boys and Young Men

Addressing the second research question aimed at uncovering stakeholder perspective on contributing factors of resilience, community stakeholders viewed a range of assets, strengths, and resources across multiple ecological systems at the individual, family, and community levels as factors that promote resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Community stakeholders commented on the individual characteristics and qualities that Black males possessed as well as the ways that families displayed strength in processing and navigating community violence exposure. Conversations around contributing factors were discussed both as functions of community stakeholders' personal or professional examples and thoughts about what they felt was most helpful in encouraging resilience in Black boys and young men following community violence. Findings on factors that promote resilience are organized by internal assets, family strengths, and external resources.

Occupation and Other Roles Shaping Perspectives on Factors that Promote Resilience

The field of work that these community stakeholders participated in informed their perspectives on what resilience fostering assets and resources were most important. Although they may not manifest as themes across resilience fostering assets and resources, community stakeholders in education tended to speak about the importance of education or school

involvement, those in the nonprofit sector tended to talk about services and programming for youth, those providing mental and behavioral health services tended to direct focus on socioemotional, counseling, and therapy resources. Table 5 features examples of this trend.

It is important to note that although all stakeholders were approached and interviewed based on their influence and membership in one specific occupational category, there were a few that had multiple overlapping roles that also influenced their perspectives. Other roles such as their leadership positions in their own churches and businesses, professional distinctions as clinicians, active participation as mentors in nonprofits, and activism in the community also informed their perspectives on what factors were most important in fostering resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. For instance, a Physician's role in a community-based nonprofit organization in association with her local church, allowed her to interact with additional Black males extended beyond her clientele of patients in the East Greensboro area. In discussing the reach of the nonprofit's basic needs services, she explained:

> So we obviously have been on the East side of Greensboro…we don't, we don't exclude anybody of color because it doesn't matter what color you are…But because of where we're located, and that's strategic, most of our participants are African Americans. And they're men. (Physician 2 - Black, female)

For this stakeholder, her roles in this community-based organization informed her perspective by giving her greater interaction and insight into the strengths of Black boys and men impacted by community violence outside of the observations afforded by her main profession as a physician. Having multiple roles was a characteristic of eight other community stakeholders in the study that represented the nonprofit, business, clergy, elected official / civil leader sectors who also

served as clinicians, pastors, nonprofit mental health professionals, grassroots activists, and who owned their own businesses.

Internal Assets

Community stakeholders discussed the many internal qualities that Black boys and young men impacted by violence possess that aid them in exhibiting resilience. Black males were described by Educators, Business Leaders, Coaches, Clergy, Elected Officials / Civic Leaders, and Physicians as being intelligent, powerful, good-hearted, and loyal individuals with lots of pride and strength. According to community stakeholders, the main internal assets that helped foster resilience in Black boys and young men were hope, future orientation, and spirituality.

Hope and Future Orientation. When asked interview questions about healing, the strengths of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence, and what enables resilience in these males, community stakeholders tended to mention a sense of hope and future orientation as important individual characteristics. Reflecting on his resilience, a Black male Elected Official/Civic Leader discussed hope as an important part of resilience.

> Resilience looks like, umm, it's like me. It's like me. It looks like, in spite of all that has happened, umm, you continue to press on. You continue to, umm, envision a world that is the one that you know, umm, that you believe you are worthy of…And you continue to just believe. To believe. Umm, to hope, to have hope. Umm, and to trust, to trust that this is the plan. (Elected Official / Civic Leader 3 - Black, male)

Hope and future orientation were not limited to Black males visualizing what their futures could hold individually, community stakeholders identified wanting better futures for their children as a distinct motivator that contributes to resilience for Black male young adults who are fathers. An Elected Official / Civic Leader mentioned:

Umm, and that when you go to East Greensboro and they see a future for themselves and

their children. And I think that's what healing starts to look like and that, you know,

young Black men…don't feel the need to pick up a gun. Umm, and that they see the

value in a good education. Instead of...you know, picking up a gun or joining a gang or

just that there is hope for seeing themselves grow old. Maybe that's what I see. (Elected

Official / Civic Leader 2 - White, female)

According to this stakeholder, an influential source of motivation for the future was fueled by

Black young men wanting to see a future for their children.

Spirituality. An additional individual asset that community stakeholders, especially

clergy, felt Black males employed to overcome adversity from community violence was

spirituality. In addition to clergy, other Black community stakeholders such as physicians,

nonprofit leaders, and elected officials/ civic leaders felt that engagement with a religious

institution or having a personal relationship with God helped to cultivate a sense of purpose and

access a community of support in Black males following community violence exposure.

Responding to a direct question about what enables resilience in Black boys and young men

impacted by community violence, a Black man representing clergy stated:

Again, like I said, mind, body, and soul. I think it does start with some level of um

awareness of a higher power. Then I also think it's...it's this idea of your own kind of you

know, worth and value as an individual and knowing that you are here for a purpose. I

think to me that's probably one of the things that allows someone to be resilient, that there

has to be some kind of purpose, some kind of meaning to your existence and without

that...you can find yourself in a dark place. So the sooner you can discover that, hopefully

early on, the better you can kind of, you know, channel and focus, you know what it is

that you know you're setting your heart to do. (Clergy 4 - Black male)

For this clergy member, he felt that spirituality helps one discover a sense of meaning in life that

becomes essential when navigating "dark places." In addition to being a source of discovering

purpose and meaning, other community stakeholders attributed personal faith or spiritual

foundation as key players in the healing process for Black males, helping them to process and

come to terms with losing loved ones to violence. A Black male physician commented:

I do think, um, churches are helpful in providing some spiritual foundation for them…I

think having that foundation, that support can offer some, um, some, some background

for healing. Um, you know, it may be just a way to deal with it in terms of knowing that

people might be with God and with Jesus when they leave this earth and everything. Um,

but if it helps people get through the healing process, I think it's what they need to

believe. I think there needs to be that option for people to get through it...If somebody

dies in your family, you've got to have a way of healing from that and feeling that all

things are okay. (Physician 1 - Black, male)

For some community stakeholders who have felt the impacts of community violence in their

personal lives, spirituality was seen as a vital "stabilizing force". Two Black male stakeholders

(Elected Official / Civic Leader 3, Clergy 3) discussed this in similar ways. Both responding to

direct inquiries about contributing factors of resilience in Black boys and young men impacted

by community violence, an Elected Official / Civic Leader and a Clergy member essentially said

faith alone is number one.

Yeah, I mean it's just faith in Christ, you know that that's what I see. Uh, because we're

not able to turn anything else, they can make me, you know your job is not doing it

because it can still let you go. Your money is not doing it, you know you can lose it. And you know, and even friendships today they're not as strong as you know, they should be, could be so to me, the only stabilizing force in life is faith in Christ. He's the one that is stable. He's the force that doesn't change but everything else does. And that's, the only thing that you know for me to give people the strength that they need to be resilient to move forward is just walking by faith. (Clergy 3 - Black, male)

Faith was seen as the only truly effective source of resilience for this community stakeholder. This notion that nothing else matters or enables resilience but faith in God was shared in very close likeness in the comments of another Black man who stated:

The most high God. The most high God. God enables us to do that. God's Spirit enables us to do that. Umm, nothing else, there's nothing else that enables us to do that. Umm, we don't have anything else. We don't have anything else. It's, it's, it's not privilege, it's not money. It's not material. It's God's Spirit. (Elected Official / Civic Leader 3 - Black, male)

This idea that "there's nothing else" expresses the sheer importance of spirituality as an asset for Black boys and young men according to community stakeholders. A clergy member with a ministry in East Greensboro also felt that a relationship with God was foundational to everyone. Responding to what healing looks like for Black boys and young men.

The Lord is the foundation for all of us, basically, I don't care what color you are, you know you. If you're not in touch with God you're not in touch with yourself and if you're not in touch with yourself then you're not in touch with other people outside yourself. So you will be insensitive to everybody, including yourself. Because you have no spiritual development, you know. (Clergy 2 - Black, male)

Having a spiritual foundation was seen as critical for all people including Black boys and young men exposed to community violence.

Family Support

The family was also seen as a source of support that could contribute to resilience for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Support from family members during the healing process was seen as a strength of Black families. At the family level, social support from family members was a highlighted strength that helped Black boys and young men navigate the aftermath that follows community violence exposure and access a source of support during the healing process. The family's role in coping was described by a physician. He stated, "And the one lesson, it will always at some point cause them to cry, hurt, something, but they cope with it by being a family coming together and leaning on each other to get through it" (Physician 1 - Black, male). Supporting one another through the process was an example this community stakeholder provided when describing coping in a family that lost a son to violence highlighting how families cope in the community with one another. Understanding the importance of families as a result of losing his own son to homicide, a Black Clergyman shared his thoughts and examples of his own engagement in the healing process with his family.

> I think for each of us individually, there again, you know just having that family support to be there to be involved with. I just think there's so much healing in community…as a family, you know we all actually do personal counseling with the professional counselors to just talk things through, and have come up with some of our own added solutions to address, maybe, where you are to feel better about the trauma that you're dealing with and how to overcome and move past those things. (Clergy 3 - Black, male)

The community and support that exist in families were displayed in how they approach even help-seeking collectively as a unit. Families hold a special role in promoting resilience through healing according to stakeholders. A Community Healer noted the family unit and generations of fathers specifically as being a picture of what resilience looks like but also what enables Black boys and young men impacted by community violence to overcome adversity.

> Resilience, simply put, in a Black family, I see four fathers in a row...great-grandfather, grandfather, father, and the son. And standing in a row, and at some point holding each other and wiping each other's tears, being in support of whatever it is emotionally a son is dealing with, but those men always uplifting that next generation helping support them… not shunning them, you know him for having emotionality. Actually, allowing him to be expressive…I think what enables them is um, you know, if they have full families…single parenting raises more possibility for young Black males to be in violent situations because they are in the street…So, having you know, a two-parent home…can be really important for some. (Community Healer - Black, female)

Connecting back to the aforementioned risk around missing males, this community healer felt that the presence and support of fathers within the Black family fosters resilience in Black boys and young men by giving them space to express their emotions.

Some community stakeholders highlighted how the family's resilience fostering properties for Black male youth and young men is rooted in the family being an essential part of communities.

> You know I think the family is the fabric of our community. ..When we see you know thriving and flourishing families, and I think we see a healthy and thriving community and so. Just being able to see people live, work and play together and in peace and being

able to see, again going back to the children, making sure that they thrive, because they're

coming from this, this structure, this family unit, where they have you have the ability to

develop in and reach their full potential. And so I think the families individually and then

collectively… we see healing by again them..coming together, bridging those

gaps…generationally, which leads ultimately to a flourishing community. (Clergy 4 -

Black, male)

According to this clergyman, flourishing families are set in a unique connection point between

individuals and communities, cultivating environments where Black children can thrive and

encourage resilience within communities. Based on these perspectives, families are an essential

contributing factor that connects youth to a collaborative, foundational community of support

necessary for navigating the healing process and expressing emotions for Black male youth and

young adults in contexts of community violence.

External Resources

External community-level resources were discussed the most by community stakeholders

as resilience contributing factors. Services and programs that address mental health, education,

finances, and basic needs and provide safe spaces for Black boys and young men impacted by

violence to express themselves and gain enrichment were at the core of most community

stakeholder perspectives on external resources they perceived as fostering resilience for Black

boys and young men impacted by community violence. Community stakeholder perspectives

(coaches, educators, law enforcement, nonprofit leaders, elected officials, media, clergy,

business leaders) emphasized that these influential resources are or should be provided from

many sources across community sectors ranging from the church, school system, nonprofit

organizations, sports teams, agencies, and government. Table 5 displays a wide range of

perspectives regarding the external resources that community stakeholders identified as well as the way they saw them benefiting and promoting resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. In addition, Table 5 also features stakeholder thoughts on the sources of these external resources.

Table 5. Diverse Community Stakeholder Perspectives on External Resources

Identified Resource	Community Stakeholders	Benefit	Source (Who & Where)
Police Support (3.4%)	Educator 4 (Black, Female)	- Build relationships with the community for safe reporting and seeking help	Community
Jobs / Training (6.9%)	Media 2 (Black, Female) Elected Official / Civic Leader 4 (Black, Female)	- Jobs for young men, - Source of income - Provides sense of value - Helps raise level of hope	Community
Community Investment / Funding (6.9%)	Media 1 (White, Female) Business Leader (Black, Male)	- Providing basic needs and resources for low-income areas - Funding for mentors, grassroots organizations, counseling, and therapeutic activities - Helps support social and emotional needs	Community, Programs, Lawmakers
Conflict Resolution (6.9%)	Business Leader (Black, Male) Clergy 1 (Pastor) (Black, Male)	- Teach how to deal with conflict	School, Church, After-School Programs, Sports, Home, Society
Programs / Outlets (6.9%)	Nonprofit 1 (Black, Male) Media 2 (Black, Female)	- Reduces the risk of youth joining gangs - Space for creativity and free expression via creative outlets (arts) - Summer activities and enrichment for older Black male youth	Summer Programs, Recreation Centers, Community, Downtown Area
Mental Health & Counseling Services (13.8%)	Business Leader (Black, Male) Nonprofit 3 (White, Female) Educator 3 (Black, Male) Clergy 1 (Pastor) (Black, Male)	- Addressing social and emotional development at a young age - Learning about the importance of having "outlets" or emotional release - Providing space for boys and young men to be vulnerable and be aware of their emotions - Aid in healing	Counseling, Therapy, Family Counseling, School, Church, School Counselors, Social Workers
Holistic Approach / Wrap	Elected Official/ Civic Leader 1	- Bridging geography, economy, and	Community Organizations,

Around Services (13.8%)	(Black, Female) Elected Official/ Civic Leader 2 (White, Female) Nonprofit 3 (White, Female) Nonprofit 4 (Black, Female)	education together to provide a more successful chance for Black families to 'thrive' - Programs that provide housing, healthcare, employment, education, and pre-k resources to benefit the entire family - Infusing services together to decrease space, connection between spiritual coping and mental health support; bridging partner agencies to provide efficient support - Programs that link generations (parent-child), neighborhood, and housing resources together; job readiness, financial literacy, and education to alleviate poverty	Reentry services, Libraries, Parks and Rec Centers, Grassroots Organizations, Family Programs, Police Training and Accountability, City Summits, Agencies, Nonprofit Organizations, Homicide Hotline, Case Management, Community Partners
School / Education (17.2%)	Physician 1 (Black, Male) Nonprofit 2 (Black, Female) Nonprofit 3 (White, Female) Educator 3 (Black, Male) Educator 4 (Black, Female)	- Provide structure for healing process - Discussing and learning more about violence - Teaching about trauma, violence, grief, loss, and healing - Socioemotional learning - Talk about violence and prevention; helps in addressing civil unrest - Educational achievement through student-leader roles	Teacher Therapeutic Trauma Training, Summer Programs, Schools, Educational Settings, School Safety Office, Local Black Male Leaders, School counselor, School Social Worker, Principals, Assistant Principals, After-School Programs, On-site Mental Health Services
Safe Spaces (24.1%)	Elected Official/ Civic Leader 1 (Black, Female) Educator 2 (White, Female) Media 2 (Black, Female) Nonprofit 2 (Black, Female) Nonprofit 3 (White, Female) Educator 3 (Black, Male) Educator 5 (Black, Male)	- Learning agency - Professional development - Restorative practice/justice for Black youth dealing with trauma - Recognizing Black boys and men as humans - Build an "internal tool kit" - Advocate for themselves - Places to heal / learning how to heal - Space for Black boys and young men to address trauma - Male bonding experiences	Church, Community Programs, Grassroots Organizations, Community Spaces/ Rec Centers, Non-profit Organizations, Therapy Groups, Summer Programs, Healing Circles, Schools, Sports, Retreats

| Mentorship / Positive Influences (51.7%) | Nonprofit 1 (Black, Male)
Educator 2 (White, Female)
Media 1 (White, Female)
Media 2 (Black, Female)
Nonprofit 2 (Black, Female)
Business Leader (Black, Male)
Law Enforcement 1 (White, Male)
Nonprofit 3 (White, Female)
Law Enforcement 2 (Black, Male)
Educator 4 (Black, Female)
Coach (Black, Male)
Physician 2 (Black, Female)
Clergy 2 (Black, Male)
Elected Official/ Civic Leader 3 (Black, Male)
Clergy 4 (Black, Male) | - Cultivates emotional resilience
- Developing problem-solving skills and resiliency
- Helps people get jobs
- Positive / Better influences
- Helps kids stay out of trouble
- Affirms Black boys' and men's strengths
- Opportunity to heal
- Long-term relationships
- Positive opportunities
- Space for open conversations about life and responsibilities
- Connections to career resources
- Training on how to interact with police/law enforcers
- Building relationships at a younger age
- Helps with school
- Alternative to gangs
- Exposure and enrichment | Adult Role Models, Caring Adults, Sports, Older Black Men, Church, Barbers, Neighborhood, Coaches, Those with Lived Experiences, Strong Black Men, Police, Younger Black Men, People on the Ground, Non-profit Organizations, Black Male-Specific Programs, Schools, Professional men, Life Experienced Coaches, Holistic Programs, Church Programs, Men's Ministries in Church, Student Outreach Programs, Focus groups |

Community stakeholders shared their opinions about these external resources but also gave credit to multiple people, initiatives, organizations, and agencies that they felt were providing such resources for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence such as churches, schools, community spaces, and strong Black men. Mental health services, conflict resolution, jobs, police support, wrap-around services, and safe spaces were all mentioned as important external resources to promote resilience in the lives of Black boys and young men. The diversity of external resources that community stakeholders identified reveals the need for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence to have access to a number of resources provided by institutions that cover multiple aspects of their lives such as education, government, law enforcement, and community programs. The most prominent theme that emerged across community stakeholders' perspectives regarding external community-level resources that foster resilience was mentorship.

Mentorship. Identified as an influential contributing factor at the community level, mentorship was mentioned frequently by various stakeholders. Community stakeholders sensed that mentorship provided needed direction, guidance, a listening ear, and a positive example for Black boys and young men following community violence exposure. Replying to a question about the observed needs of Black boys and young men who have been impacted by violence in their communities, a Coach identified strong mentorship from coaches as a needed resource. He communicated:

> I would say, like, strong mentorship...and somebody who can relate to them...some of these guys need football and mentorship more than football and mentorship need them. So I think strong mentorship um...life experienced coaches, um...they need somebody they can have fun with too and talk to any and everything about. (Coach - Black, male)

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The Coach's statement about the need for mentorship also displays his thoughts on who those mentors can be and what types of support they offer to Black males. A Black female in Law Enforcement raved about her mentee and the mentoring program she was actively participating in and had the following to say about mentoring's impact.

> Umm, even like the mentoring programs… the at-risk young men that are involved in the [mentorship program name]. Um, yeah, now they've done it so long that they've had kids graduate and going to college, and that absolutely has to have an impact on crime being prevented, or, you know what I mean, or, you know, turning those at-risk kids around.
> (Law Enforcement 2 - Black, female)

For this stakeholder, mentorship's ability to foster resilience among Black boys and young men exposed to risk was connected to educational achievement and ultimately crime reduction as a byproduct from her perspective. Another perspective of mentorship as an external resource that can promote resilience was that it can provide a source of guidance and purpose for young Black males without father figures.

> So, I think that having purpose, having meaning and helping young men at an early age, establish that. And that's why mentoring is so powerful because you can kind of gather that information in that relationship if you don't have a father, or if you don't have a family structure, instead of turning to a gang or you know friends that may not be doing things that are going to lead to success, you can have someone that can kind of guide you in that and help you maybe figure out what that is. So purpose and meaning. (Clergy 4 - Black, male)

In providing guidance, mentorship was understood to be a positive alternative to gang involvement. This perspective relates well to conversations around gang involvement and family

structure and highlights the potential that mentorship holds in combating risk and promoting

resilience for Black boys and young men exposed to community violence. The capacity of

mentors and mentoring to provide an alternative route for Black boys and men was also

discussed by a Black female Educator. While sharing her hopes for Black boys and me she

stated,

> My hope for Black men and Black boys is that they can work together and embrace each
>
> other and we have more mentoring of each other. Um, cause everybody's gotta
>
> story…You have a lot of professional men in the area who could help others. There's
>
> gotta be examples. There's gotta be mentors. There's gotta be people who show our men
>
> that there's other ways. Here's how you can work to get out. Here's how you can start.
>
> Here's what you can do. Um, and then hope, like that would be like a catalyst, cause
>
> some, they need someone to show them how, and show them some alternatives, and then
>
> some people to tell their story too. (Educator 4 - Black, female)

Her hopes for Black boys and men impacted by community violence in the city were couched in

her perspective of their need for mentorship and specifically from other men who have personal

stories of resilience and can share information about how they pursued alternative pathways and

managed to "get out".

Community Dynamics: Constraints to Resilience

Though not originally a part of the study aims, community stakeholders (clergy, law

enforcement, nonprofit leaders, business leaders, elected officials, media, physicians, educators,

community healers) continued to talk about the community dynamics of Greensboro. These

community dynamics were really important for understanding the implications and effectiveness

of the resilience fostering assets and resources that community stakeholders identified. I define

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community dynamics as aspects of the city of Greensboro and its residents that either impede or

facilitate violence reduction and healing. These community dynamics can include politics, social

class, relationships, and many other characteristics that either facilitate or create barriers to

growth and addressing issues at the community level which can, directly and indirectly, impact

resilience and the opportunities for fostering resilience in Black boys and young men impacted

by community violence. The community dynamics discussed most by this sample of community

stakeholders were systemic issues (racism, inequality, inequity), disconnect, "terroristic

territorialism", and collaboration. A range of quotes representing community stakeholder

perspectives on these community dynamics is displayed in tables throughout this section.

Systemic Issues

Racism

Community stakeholders' views on racism were that it was historical, systemic and the

genesis of other systemic issues within the city such as poverty and the lack of resources and

opportunities that exist for communities where Black boys and young men impacted by

community violence tend to reside. A nonprofit leader shared her thoughts on racism in the city

(Table 6). According to this Black woman, racism in Greensboro is nothing new but is more

hidden and goes unacknowledged. Discussing the systemic nature of racism and its linkage to

oppressive systems for Black people in the city, one community stakeholder in Business

expressed strong feelings about racism present in the city and how there are systemic issues and

less opportunity for Black people in the city. Speaking on the through line between Greensboro's

historical and present-day racism and community violence, one Black male Educator's

statements revealed his own ideas of how systemic racism leads to violence in the city.

Table 6. Community Stakeholders Perspectives on Systemic Issues in Greensboro

Systemic Racism	
Nonprofit Leader 2 (Black, female)	"I think there's always been a lot of racism in Greensboro. I've lived in other places where I think it's a lot more overt, but here it's definitely covert. And so sometimes people are like, "we're good, we're blended," we're not good. And so nobody really faces themselves about their own -isms...I think, you know, systemic racism, systemic oppression, all that plays a role in, with everybody really. But definitely with our Black boys and Black men. And I think until we take the time to like see them and hear them, we can't even begin to talk about healing."
Business Leader (Black, male)	"I think the city is very racist…I just, I really really really feel like this is just a really really racist city. Lot of systems in place that are oppressive, not a lot of opportunities for Blacks in the city."
Educator 3 (Black, male)	"Systemic racism has always been in Greensboro and still lives today but umm just do your research and it's there. So I think a lot of times systemic racism leads to anger, and anger leads to getting in somebody's face, and getting into somebody's face leads to pushing, pushing leads to punching, punching leads to stabbing, stabbing leads to shooting. I mean it's just, it just continues on."
Systemic Inequality & Inequity	
Nonprofit Leader 4 (Black, female)	"We do not want to deal with the inequity that's built into every single system here in Greensboro. It is unequal, there is bias in everything here. It's really sad…And when inequity exists, you will never eliminate a problem or a situation because there is a targeted population and inequity for adverse outcomes. And I don't know how the healing starts unless we deal with the systems of inequity…And people in power are not willing to share resources in an equitable way. Cause equal doesn't mean equitable."
Law Enforcement 2 (Black, female)	"And my perception, is this [Violence Prevention Initiative] delving into..the systems of the nation?...You know, as long as that system, that circle, that perpetuates every single second, of the day. As long as that system is in place, everything we do on a smaller scale, okay we may succeed on a smaller level, but these systems are in place so you're gonna reach this glass ceiling to where...it's still designed to disenfranchise people on every level of society...So I mean [Initiative Name] is...a great concept, I guess, but in the grand scheme of things...what will its effectiveness be?"
Educator 5 (Black, male)	"The whole thing with you know work hard, you should make it at life. You pull yourself up by your bootstraps. So what if you can't afford bootstraps? …You're born at a disadvantage. And I think I've seen some video…She was talking about how, imagine playing monopoly and you can't join the game for, like so many rounds. And then, after so many rounds, you can now join a game, but you have like less money, you know properties already bought up, and you're still trying to witness like that's where stuff is at…it's just system…I'm sure the local government can do something about it, but just try to combat the system."

A Black male Clergyman's viewpoint on the link between racism and violence was expressed this way, "You can't, you can't address violence without dealing with racism. It's tied in." Racism in Greensboro seems to be a sociohistorical barrier to progress in regards to encouraging resilience among Black boys and young men exposed to community violence.

Inequality

The inequality issues within the system(s) were also a concerning community dynamic for community stakeholders. The perspectives highlighted across the fields of law enforcement, nonprofit, and education highlighted unequal and inequitable systems as being issues that also go unaddressed which can minimize efforts to promote healing and violence reduction and prevention in the city. It seems that the remaining presence of these systems of oppression undermines the work being done and suggested in the city to foster resilience in Black boys and young men exposed to community violence.

Disconnect

Community stakeholders felt that disconnect was another barrier that existed as a community dynamic (Table 7). This disconnect occurred especially between different classes of residents in Greensboro. Most frequently, community stakeholders that referenced this disconnect spoke of it in regards to there being a lack of awareness and concern for things that are taking place in Black communities where Black boys and young men are located and where community violence is present. Those at the center of this disconnect were characterized as upper-class residents, people no longer living in the inner city, White people, and city leaders. Similarly, multiple community stakeholders (elected officials / civic leaders, clergy, educators, physicians) felt this disconnect applied to certain sections and zip codes of Greensboro such as 27410, Downtown, West Greensboro, Friendly, and Irving Park areas. These conversations

around class-based disconnect are reminiscent of those where community stakeholders discussed

positionality and the impact of residential proximity on the perspectives of risk and resilience in

the lives of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence.

Table 7. Community Stakeholder Perspectives on Disconnect in Greensboro

Disconnect (Class, Concern & Awareness)	
Physician 1 (Black, male)	"I would hate for it to be true, but I think that there's just not as much concern about what happens in certain communities. I just don't think that as long as it doesn't get over to 27410 and 2744-whatever, that it is a problem…there are five zip codes that..you get 90% of the victims from, and then there are others where 0%. Well, I think the response is slow because it's not in those with the 0%, let it affect somebody over on that side… I don't think there's anyone who really cares about what happens in certain zip codes. Um, even some of the blacks don't necessarily care…So I think those are some of the dynamics...Residents. Um, I'd say upper-class residents, you know, who are professionals at sort of turning a blind eye to what's going on. "Yeah, no, that's you. Oh, that's bad...Oh, that's terrible. Okay, Bye. See ya." That's exactly what I think I was and I'm not comfortable with that anymore."
Elected Official / Civic Leader 3 (Black, male)	"As long as crime is confined to East Greensboro, South Greensboro, in the hood, in Black communities, it don't matter. People don't care! City leaders don't care! They do not care. Hear me, they don't care! Umm, it's not until crime is downtown, or crime is in West Greensboro, that it becomes an issue. As long as Blacks are killing Blacks, white people don't care about that. They are uninterested."
Clergy 1 (Black, male)	"I would describe it [community violence] as a serious issue...that's being swept up under the rug and not being aggressively dealt with. I think many of our people who are no longer living in the inner city are as sensitive as we should be. I think we're not sensitive to...the impact of people who are dealing with new norms."
Educator 4 (Black, female)	"I don't think a lot of people know what is happening. And again, my view might be skewed because I was right there. You know, somebody that lives two streets over or down on the other side, they probably don't know what's going on because they're not right there. And you know, when you look at things as far as numbers go, the numbers can look different because maybe in this community these things are happening on a regular basis but in Greensboro overall it's not. But I think there needs to be some awareness brought to it."

"Terroristic Territorialism"

"Terroristic territorialism", a term coined by a Black male clergyman, was a community

dynamic that emerged in response to the separation that keeps organizations, people, agencies,

and groups working in silos. In naming this community dynamic he stated:

[what are some of the dynamics that serve as barriers to getting on one accord?]

"Territorialism. People who are coming to this area with expertise, like yours, that we

don't engage people unless they've had significant time in the city…I call it, Sunday I

dealt with it, I call if terroristic territorialism. And people are territorialistic and, they're

terroristically territorial. And so we start getting on that turf. And I think that's, that's the

tragedy of this city…Greensboro has the greatest potential. But we act in silos. (Clergy 1

- Black, male)

This territorialism was said to be a tragedy of the city that hampered the potential of Greensboro

and prevented people, particularly newcomers with expertise, from being on one accord in

efforts to improve the city. Working in silos was echoed by a White, female educator who stated,

"We do a lot of things in isolation here" (Educator 2). Others saw this "terroristic territorialism"

as a barrier that resulted in poor coordination between organizations causing harm to those

intended to help. Community stakeholders also saw this issue of territory as manifesting in poor

communication between groups and seeing the same faces doing work to combat violence and

promote healing. One community stakeholder shared their thoughts stating:

I've seen all kinds of community initiatives come together to try to combat violence or,

you know, give people a healing space so they can talk about things or feel like they can

have some kind of community event and things like that. Umm, but, unfortunately, like I

go to a lot of these events and they are not well attended and you see the same faces. And

so, that's cool, that we got these, the same people who are dedicated but how can we get

other people involved? (Media 1 - White, female)

In her comments around this issue, she expressed that the same individuals doing work to give

people a healing space following violence reflect their dedication but also wondered why there

was not more input and participation from other individuals. "Terroristic territorialism" did not seem to allow groups to capitalize on the potential and resource-rich qualities of Greensboro. A nonprofit leader shared:

> Greensboro in particular is resource-rich, but we don't coordinate well and there's too many territory issues…sometimes I think we have more place than we realize, but we're not talking very well to each other. Which ultimately is hurting the very people we're trying to help. (Nonprofit Leader 3 - White, female)

However, community stakeholders felt that collaboration was the best approach to providing needs, healing, and promoting resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence.

Collaboration

Community stakeholders continued to stress the importance of collaboration. Community stakeholders featured in Table 8 thought that collaboration was a means to be able to provide wrap-around services instead of relying upon one particular sector (law enforcement) to address issues outside of their wheelhouse. Instead, partnerships and relationships with nonprofit organizations and government agencies were seen as a need to provide long-term solutions for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Educators and Business Leaders also talked about the need for multiple community-level sectors, institutions, schools, churches, organizations, communities, government agencies, and businesses to work together in preventing violence, working in the best interest of Black boys and young men and their families in mind.

The issue was not that they felt Greensboro was lacking resources, they just needed to be connected through collaboration and partnerships among people services programs in order to

reach and encourage resilience in the lives of Black boys and young men impacted by

community violence in the city of Greensboro.

Table 8. Community Stakeholder Perspectives on Collaboration in Greensboro

Collaboration	
Law Enforcement 3 (Black, male)	"We collaborate with a lot of different entities…we've partnered with a lot of different nonprofits…we added a [position] last year, whose sole purpose was to build relationships with nonprofits, as well as other government agencies. So we created a mechanism where if an officer goes to a home and they've got an issue beyond what we can a-umm can address, they can do a referral to the coordinator, and then they can connect that person to a resource, hopefully, which will give them a long-term solution to whatever the problem is that they're calling us about. So umm, our whole, really, I, one of our main themes is partnership, because we understand that as police we, we simply can't solve all the problems that are out there, and we need to connect people to other people who can."
Educator 4 (Black, female)	"I guess the other piece is just…now what?..what do we do, what's the plan? and everybody kinda mobilize…Greensboro like I said, one of the things I like about Greensboro is it's so many resources here between the universities, the different businesses, the organizations, like when we get everybody on the same page working together that would be, something amazing."
Business Leader (Black, male)	"I think it's important if we're going to try to decrease violence here, communities, schools and government has to work in the best interest of Black kids and Black people."

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The current study investigated resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in Greensboro, NC from the perspective and positionality of community stakeholders. Although we know that Black boys and young men find ways to exhibit resilience despite the deleterious effects community violence can have in their lives, we still do not know the scope of how resilience manifests and what factors promote resilience from the perspective of community stakeholders. The 29 community stakeholders in this study provided diverse perspectives on the ways that resilience manifests and the factors that foster resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Influential community members representing sectors of the community and workforce ranging from grassroots activists to elected officials/civic leaders understood and witnessed resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence as a process of prospering despite the influence of insufficient opportunities and resources, the far-reaching impact of community violence and limited male presence in family structures. Resilience in the face of these adversities was understood to result from internal assets, family strengths, and external resources. Though viewing multiple factors as contributing to resilience for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence hope and future orientation, spirituality, family support, and mentorship garnered the most consensus among community stakeholders in this study.

Risk

Although community stakeholders in this study had diversity in positionality, overwhelmingly community stakeholders were most consistent in their perspectives about the risks that Black boys and young men exposed to community violence face, noting a lack of opportunity and resources, the impact of community violence, and the family structure as being

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influential. In particular, the lack of resources and opportunities as a source of risk for Black boys and men identified by community stakeholders spoke of the structural poverty that exists in areas that are most vulnerable to community violence. Community stakeholders' views on poverty and violence support literature and commentary that views violence as a symptom of poverty (Shird, 2017). "The line of poverty is violence" was a summative phrase that explained poverty and related structurally imposed conditions such as limited basic needs and reduced access to opportunities that encourage growth and development as root causes of violence. The city of Greensboro, like many other areas with a high prevalence of violence, is marked by concentrated disadvantage in certain areas as a result of social determinants of health that creates conditions under which individuals, especially Black males, are left with limited options in order to survive and navigate poverty (Anderson, 2008; Healthy People, 2021). Resorting to violence in such communities is not uncommon (Parker & Pruitt, 2000). Concentrating on the structural issues that lead to violence can help cities identify targets to improve the lives of Black males as well as acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Black boys and young men surviving and thriving in the midst of such adversity.

The community stakeholder-identified link between lack of resources and opportunities and community violence in particular communities such as East Greensboro highlighted the historical context around segregation and strategic divestment in areas where Black people live, supporting literature on socio-historical and systemic links between poverty, limited resources, and violence (Anderson, 2008; Swanson & Spencer, 1991). Community stakeholders recognized issues of systemic racism and inequality in their discussions of the community dynamics that present barriers to violence prevention and reduction efforts. Greensboro, North Carolina is no stranger to racism and discrimination having a well-documented history of segregation and

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redlining that has shaped the formation of the neighborhoods and communities that are seen in the city today. The emphasis on the structural issues that exist around poverty suggests that the risks that Black boys and men face should not be viewed from the traditional deficit perspective that looks at characteristics of the person as sources of risk but instead are best understood by focusing on root causes of the environmental conditions that characterize neighborhoods and heavily influence decision making for Black males and families forced to find alternative ways to survive. Based on these findings, community stakeholders have a particular vantage point in regards to viewing risk from an ecological perspective. Their positions as well as their lived experiences allowed them to interface with communities of Black boys and young men and potentially see issues from a broader perspective in terms of root causes. The fact that the majority of the sample was Black could also speak to this as well since some community stakeholders acknowledged that they have a level of shared understanding and lived experiences from experiencing adversity by way of being Black.

As expected, community violence was a shared concern amongst community stakeholders regarding the risks that Black boys and young men face in Greensboro who are exposed to community violence. Prompted by the focus of the larger research project as well as the semi-structured interview questions, community stakeholders were asked the most about community violence and its impact on Black boys and young men in the city of Greensboro. In their discussions of risk, community stakeholders' perspectives highlighted a number of systemic issues and forces at play that are interconnected drivers of community violence. A Black female nonprofit leader's quote about systemic issues reveals that it is not the capacity of Black boys and young men that is the issue, however, "the system is not built for you to self-serve your way out of poverty". Informed by the perspectives of Black males in cities with histories of violence

and racial prejudice, Burrell and colleagues (2021) also discussed issues such as structural racism and disenfranchisement as aspects of "the system" that cause and escalate cycles of community violence. One benefit of having such an occupationally diverse group of community stakeholders was that the consensus around the impact of community violence, especially on young Black males, was expressed by individuals that represented law enforcement, grassroots activists, clergy, physicians, and nonprofit leaders demonstrating that these issues are felt and observed across sectors of the city.

Community stakeholder perspectives suggest that community violence has influence across multiple areas impacting the mental health and physical well-being of Black boys and young men. Exposure to community violence is known to have adverse effects on the psychological well-being of Black boys and young men, associated with increases in internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors (Overstreet et al., 1999; Patton et al., 2016; Smith Lee, 2017). Hypervigilance, depression, hopelessness, anxiety, substance use, and engagement in violence are evidence of mental health issues noted by community stakeholders that support previous findings on the impact of violence exposure (Motley, Sewell, & Chen, 2017; Smith & Patton, 2016). Additionally, although mental health issues are found to be linked to community violence as negative outcomes of violence exposure through witnessing, victimization and loss for Black boys and young men, the community stakeholder perspectives captured in this study noted how mental health issues could be a cause as well as a consequence of community violence. The amalgamation of stressors brought on by concentrated disadvantage as well as the impact of community violence can take a toll on mental health which can result in vulnerabilities in developing issues and risky behaviors in Black males.

Noted as a significant factor in literature, it was expected that masculinity would surface as a concern for community stakeholders. Masculinity's role in reinforcing community violence through norms around emotion expression for Black males is consistent with previous research that emphasizes emotion suppression and anger being the only acceptable expressions of emotion for Black males (Lindsey, Brown, & Cunningham, 2017). Based on community stakeholder observations, the socialization of Black boys and young men around emotions and appropriate expression affected their ability to process violence exposure and violence-related loss which negatively impacted their ability to effectively cope and engage in healing. For community stakeholders like educators, business leaders, nonprofit leaders, clergy, media, and elected officials/civic leaders these issues inspired them to consider social and emotional learning, conflict resolution, safe environments, mental health services, and relationships as factors that could foster resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence by allowing them to express themselves freely without judgment and gain important skills to express, manage, and understand their emotions. Such resources could assist Black boys and young men in help-seeking behaviors and resist masculinity-driven urges to deal with their emotions, stress, and mental health internally (Lindsey & Marcell, 2012).

Limited male presence was identified by community stakeholders as a community violence-related risk factor for Black boys and young men. Findings from community stakeholders' perspectives suggest that the absence of a strong positive male presence creates an open door for gangs to fulfill a desire for belonging and guidance from male influences that are absent in single female-headed family structures. Access to positive male mentors and role models in the family and community helps Black boys and young men to formulate positive racial identities around what it means to be a Black male (Sanchez et al., 2017). When these role

models are absent, Black boys and young men formulate their identities and understandings based on the available male presence in their current contexts which can reinforce violence engagement as negative male role models tend to be more accessible in communities experiencing a high prevalence of community violence (Butler-Barnes et al., 2011). Negative male influences coupled with other stakeholder-identified aspects of masculinity and identity, the struggle to survive imposed by poverty, and a lack of resources also create a culture in which Black males conform to the "code of the streets" (Anderson, 1999).

Resilience

Findings suggest that resilience in Black boys and young men is not a one size fits all according to community stakeholders. Black boys and young men were observed in multiple lights regarding how they cope, heal, grieve, and move forward following violence exposure which emphasized the complex nature of resilience. Resilience as a process rather than a trait (Luthar, Crossman & Small, 2015) was reiterated by community stakeholder perspectives. Their use of verbs in their descriptions demonstrated that community stakeholders felt that resilience was an ongoing process of "prospering through the process" and "moving forward". Much like the complexity of risk that Black boys and young men impacted by community violence face, their resilience is just as complex. Given that Black males, especially those exposed to community violence, are navigating a litany of systemically imposed stressors ranging from poverty, masculinity norms, racism, and other issues, it speaks to the depth of resilience that Black boys and men exhibit and heterogeneity in how it manifests. Compared to other areas of resilience literature, the findings for this study counter notions that resilience is defined by success in a particular domain (APA Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents, 2008). Although resilience is context-specific, the way that it manifests varies

from individual to individual. As reporters, community stakeholders provide perspectives that deepen our understanding of what resilience looks like in Black males following community violence exposure. These different manifestations are excellent foci for resilience researchers to explore in future studies on Black males and young men impacted by community violence.

Contributing Factors

A range of thoughts about factors that foster resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence were presented by community stakeholders and results revealed a consensus around hope and future orientation and spirituality as key internal assets. Hope and future orientation were identified by community stakeholders as internal assets that functioned as motivators that helped Black boys and young men to keep moving forward following community violence exposure. Hope and future orientation have been shown to be internal motivators for making choices and developing hardiness scripts that keep Black males adolescents safe and alleviate psychological distress when exposed to community violence (Patton et al., 2016). Hope and spirituality are also known to be culturally relevant protective factors that are helpful for maintaining mental health and promoting positive behavior in Black youth and families (Murry et al., 2018).

Spirituality's role in fostering resilience as an internal asset is a finding amongst stakeholder perspectives that complements research discussing the historical importance of spirituality as a protective factor for navigating stressors in the Black community (Jones, 2007) and promoting healing as a source of meaning and purpose for Black males exposed to community violence (Smith Lee et al., 2020). Study findings emphasizing spirituality stemmed mostly from clergy which may suggest some stakeholder bias regarding their perceptions of what best aids in fostering resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence.

Based on these findings, churches and organizations may be important aids in cultivating internal assets such as hope for the future and relationships with God or a higher power for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Unlike other studies of resilience in Black males following community violence (Butler-Barnes et al., 2011), other culturally relevant protective factors such as racial socialization (Murry et al. 2018) did not surface in this study although racism was identified by community stakeholders as a barrier that hinders efforts to address violence.

Family strengths regarding support were also identified by community stakeholders as an influential factor that could promote resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Support from family members was communicated by stakeholders as an aid to Black boys and young men navigating the healing process, especially while grieving and processing the loss of a loved one. Findings around family support's impact on resilience are inconsistent (Jacobsen & Hardaway, 2016). Some study findings show family support as having no impact on associations between community violence exposure and internalizing symptoms (Li, Nussbaum, & Richards, 2007), whereas other studies demonstrated that family support can moderate relationships between community violence and depression in Black children exposed to community violence (Overstreet et al., 1999). Another study felt family support's impact was conditional. Exploring the moderating role of social support in the relationship between violence exposure and depressive symptoms among Black adolescents, researchers found that support from families was essential but less effective for teens with high exposure to violence (Hammack et al., 2004). Despite inconsistencies in the literature, this study supports claims that Black families are critical sources of support for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Black families have relied upon the family to deal with racism and other extreme

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stressors for decades. An interesting finding related to family support is that although single-parent family structures were seen as a risky due to the limited male presence in these structures, families including female-headed households are still seen as a strong and equipped with the capacity to provide the needed support that can promote resilience for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Community stakeholders' perspectives gathered in this study around the importance of family support stress the need for greater exploration of how and if family support encourages resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence.

Community stakeholders' thoughts about factors that contribute to resilience and their sources indicated that a range of external resources from organizations, agencies, government, churches, law enforcement, schools, and other institutions would be beneficial for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Mentorship and safe spaces were resources that community stakeholders discussed the most, acknowledging the roles they can play in providing direction, guidance, positive role models, and opportunities for healing through the expressing and processing of emotions in group settings. Studies that focus on community violence and resilience also highlight mentorship's positive influence on emotional and mental well-being and identity development in Black males (Larson, 2006; Sanchez et al., 2017). Connected to risks around Black masculinity, emotion socialization, and limited male presence, findings suggest that mentorship is a needed resource that can provide modeling through relationships with caring adults. Research on culturally relevant mentoring programs geared toward violence prevention demonstrates that mentorship organizations are safe environments where youth can openly communicate with their mentors (Watson et al., 2015). Mentorship programs and organizations and services that establish safe spaces are supported by this group of

community stakeholders in Greensboro and are worth investing in to support thriving amongst Black boys and young men exposed to community violence in the city.

Across schools, community-based programs, rec centers, mental health providers, and other sectors, services could be provided that provide counseling, safe spaces, mentoring, education, and more resources that promote resilience in Black boys and young men. From an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Spencer, 1995), multiple systems levels impact development and resilience beyond just personal characteristics or internal assets. Resilience as a process that can be strengthened and weakened by a number of internal and external factors (Luthar, Crossman, & Smith, 2015) indicates the importance of cross-sector resources to support resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Community stakeholder perspectives align with that of Black youth exposed to community violence, as demonstrated by studies like Woods-Jaeger and colleagues (2019) qualitative inquiry where Black youth regarded actions and responses across multiple community sectors as critical sources of support that could promote health and well-being in Black youth following violence exposure.

Positionality

The diversity through which community stakeholders described risk and resilience in Black boys and young men may be a function of their respective positionality. Their diverse occupations resulted in varied perspectives on what resilience looks like since their encounters with and observations of the resilience of Black boys and men are filtered or governed by their roles within their respective sectors that engage Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in different capacities. Their residential proximity, lived experiences, and race and gender add further complexity and distinction to their individual perspectives.

Community stakeholders are under-examined sources of insight on resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence and exploration of their positioned perspectives provided a fresh lens on resilience and community violence. Investigation of community stakeholders' perspectives on resilience deviated from research that concentrates on the viewpoints of Black boys and adolescents (Diclemente et al., 2018; Zimmerman et al., 2011). The reports of community stakeholders rarely surface in resilience research and when they do they typically focus on intervention (Murry & Brody, 2004) or another risk context altogether (Yoon et al., 2020). Given the structural forces impacting risks that Black boys and men face, community stakeholder perspectives are essential sources of insight that can greatly inform the practical applications of these findings. These different and similar perspectives represent an opportunity to explore the positionality of community stakeholders in future research on community violence and resilience.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study of community stakeholder perspectives on resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence was not without limitations, however, those limitations are great opportunities to visualize the future of how this work can be expanded and refined. As a function of the larger study, interviews with community stakeholders focused on community violence primarily. While discussing resilience in their descriptions of healing, coping, grieving, and the strengths of Black boys and young men, the majority of community stakeholders (22) were not asked directly about resilience. Researchers wishing to expand upon the findings of this exploratory study could benefit from interviewing community stakeholders with an emphasis on capturing their perspectives of resilience and factors that foster resilience in Black boys and

young men exposed to community violence by allowing resilience to be the focal point of the semi-structured interviews and the questions they develop for the protocol.

Community stakeholders in this sample were diverse in multiple ways which strengthened the findings through strong consensus amongst stakeholders' perspectives on resilience and internal and external factors that foster resilience for Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in Greensboro. Although others may see the racial diversity in the sample as an opportunity for improvement, I see it as a strength that Black individuals across sectors represented the majority of perspectives in this study. Reflecting on community stakeholder comments about a shared connection and understanding between Black people, their perspectives could have been more acutely aligned with the actual experiences of Black boys and young men by way of having similar lived experiences around community violence and a greater empathy and understanding for the adversity faced by Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Such a finding and perspective may not have surfaced as a strong theme with greater input from non-Black community stakeholders. Future researchers wishing to expand upon this work can consider the benefit of matching participants by race or gender. Another diversity consideration would be to identify relevant occupations that were not captured in the current study and actively recruit stakeholders with positions in those sectors.

Lastly, scholars wishing to advance this work could compare community stakeholder perspectives on resilience in Black boys and young men to the direct perspectives of Black males. Exploration of whether these perspectives align or not would be telling and could provide context around any misalignment that exists between the identified needs of Black males and the priorities embedded in the efforts and initiatives at the community level to reduce community violence and improve the lives of Black boys and young men affected by violence exposure.

Implications For The City of Greensboro

As the city of Greensboro seeks to reduce and prevent violence and promote resilience in the lives of Black males heavily impacted by community violence, valuable insights from the community stakeholders represented in this study can inform such efforts. I will approach expressing implications for Greensboro in a way that mimics how community stakeholders discussed their own hopes for the city during their semi-structured interviews. My hope for the city of Greensboro following this study of community stakeholder perspectives is that greater awareness of the context of risk that Black boys and young men face and concerted efforts to recognize and promote resilience in this population will become reality.

Given the influence, power, and privilege that community stakeholders have in the city of Greensboro, NC, it is important to consider how aspects of their positionality converge to shape the lives of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. The sample of community stakeholders in this study comprised individuals who hold varying degrees of influence and power in their respective positions which is inherently impacted by their race, gender, lived experiences and other aspects of their positionality such as their place of residence. Positionality shapes awareness, understanding, and priorities of community stakeholders concerning issues such as community violence and the resilience of Black boys and young men impacted. Whether through socialization, education, public safety, employment, policy, health care, mental and behavioral health, spirituality, athletics, enrichment programs, or advocacy, each occupation represented in this study has the capacity to shape the lives of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in Greensboro. More attention should be placed on which individuals hold certain positions and how their positionality shapes the way they

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influence and exercise power in the city to promote resilience in Black boys and young men who have been exposed to community violence.

Findings on race and gender in this study demonstrate the salience of positionality and why it plays a role in shaping the lives of Black boys and young men through community stakeholders. White female stakeholders felt they were not the best reporters on observations of risk and resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in Greensboro. However, each of the white stakeholders in this study hold extremely influential positions of power as elected officials / civic leaders, nonprofit leaders, law enforcement and media which directly and indirectly influence the lives and narratives of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Though it is certainly important to gather data from the source, in this case Black boys and young men, it is just as important to hear the perspectives of those in power and influence. How could this preference of White women stakeholders to differ to Black boys and young men also influence their perspectives on which individuals should be invested and engaged in creating spaces for Black boys and young men to express their experiences and access opportunities to support their resilience? Insight on the perspectives of people who are considered stakeholders in the city of Greensboro is essential in assessing the current climate, priorities, and opportunities to support resilience in Black boys and young men following community violence exposure.

As community stakeholders acknowledged, there is great potential and a wealth of resources in Greensboro, NC. Given that community stakeholders with varied positionality reached a consensus on what risks, resilience, and contributing factors were most influential, there is potential for the development of a holistic approach to surround Black boys and young men with support and services that can aid them in surviving, thriving, healing, and "prospering

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through the process". With such consensus there is a prime opportunity to leverage accord and build partnerships across sectors to actualize the ideas around contributing factors and support the examples of resilience demonstrated through the perspectives of community stakeholders in Greensboro in this study. Collaborating organizations, agencies, and institutions could create a network of support to promote resilience in Black boys and young men that have been impacted by community violence.

Based on findings around community dynamics, action is needed to create a collaborative culture and environment for organizations, agencies, and people to work together across sectors, neighborhoods, races, and classes, actively resisting the "terroristic territorialism" of working in isolation in the city. Additionally, community dynamics around Greensboro's history of racism and systemic issues of poverty must be addressed in order to achieve collaboration across and between sectors and have a long-lasting impact on communities of Black boys and young men in areas like East Greensboro. Black boys and young men are said to be the best reporters on their experiences, therefore including Black males impacted by community violence in conversations and decision-making around what resources are needed to promote resilience is essential.

Community stakeholders in this study sample represented institutions of religion, education, law enforcement, government, healthcare, media, and community-based nonprofit organizations and grassroots activist groups. Touching almost every institution that impacts the lives of Black boys, young men, and families in Greensboro, community stakeholder perspectives are vital in assessing the state of the city in supporting resilience in Black boys and young men impacted by community violence. Community stakeholders represent influential facets of the Greensboro community and hold titles and roles that can be leveraged to implement policies, programs, services, and interventions that are directly targeted to not only reduce and

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prevent community violence but also to support Black boys and young men to be resilient while initiatives are being developed and executed to adequately address the environmental conditions that beget violence.

Conclusion

The current study's investigation of Greensboro community stakeholders' perspectives of resilience and contributing factors that promote resilience in the lives of Black boys and young men impacted by community violence proved to be insightful. Community stakeholder perspectives influenced by their positionality revealed more ecologically-based understandings of risk and resilience in Black males exposed to community violence. Their observations of resilience and contributing factors of resilience for Black boys and young men impacted by violence demonstrate that resilience in this group is complex and requires multifaceted methods and sources of support, especially from multiple community sectors. Findings from this study can inform the initiatives and development of organizations, agencies, and other community-based resources created to support the healing, coping, and thriving of Black males following the witnessing, victimization, and loss of close friends and loved ones to community violence. This study was an expansion and complement to former research that does not highlight community stakeholder perspectives on resilience, especially resilience in Black boys and young men. As researchers and cities develop and investigate strategies to combat violence and promote resilience, city-wide and cross-sector initiatives that include input from various community stakeholders may be most effective and critically important to assist Black boys and young men impacted by community violence in "prospering through the process".

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