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Theorizing the ghetto: The intersection of resources, psychology, and oppression in the construction of Black identity and consciousness

by

Lynette Parker

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Education
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Daniel Perlstein, Chair
Professor Zeus Leonardo
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Abstract

Theorizing the ghetto: The intersection of resources, psychology, and oppression in the construction of Black identity and consciousness

By Lynette Parker

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Daniel Perlstein, Chair

This dissertation examines the structural, political and ideological processes associated with the historical transformation of Compton from a White suburb to a Black ghetto. It addresses the structured racism that kept the city divided despite the class status and achievements of early Black residents. In this study, I examine the history of resource allocation and expenditures, and how resources were mismanaged and misused to the detriment of Compton and its residents.

Using qualitative interviews of 20 African-Americans who grew up in Compton and attended neighborhood schools, and a quantitative analysis of demographic shifts alongside resource changes, this study theorizes the complex ways in which resources, psychology, and identity interplay in the creation of the ghetto and ultimately underachievement.

The major findings were that White ideology of Black inferiority structured much of the history of Blacks in Compton. Resistance to the label of inferiority burdened Compton's middle-class Blacks as they tried every effort to assimilate. Whites had imagined Blacks as inferior and segregated them, discriminated against them, and committed to their failure. Many Blacks ultimately answered the call of inferiority through the process of interpellation, and began to accommodate Whites – and indeed perpetuated the ghetto.

The last finding was that Black Comptonites operated under a complex process of structuring and restructuring their behavior, and navigating their responses and silences through, what I term *fourth-person consciousness*. Through this consciousness, Blacks demonstrated contradictory positioning, (re)humanization of the space, evasion, and a double-bind of (unequal) opportunity. This was a pointed effort to resist the stereotypes projected on to Compton.

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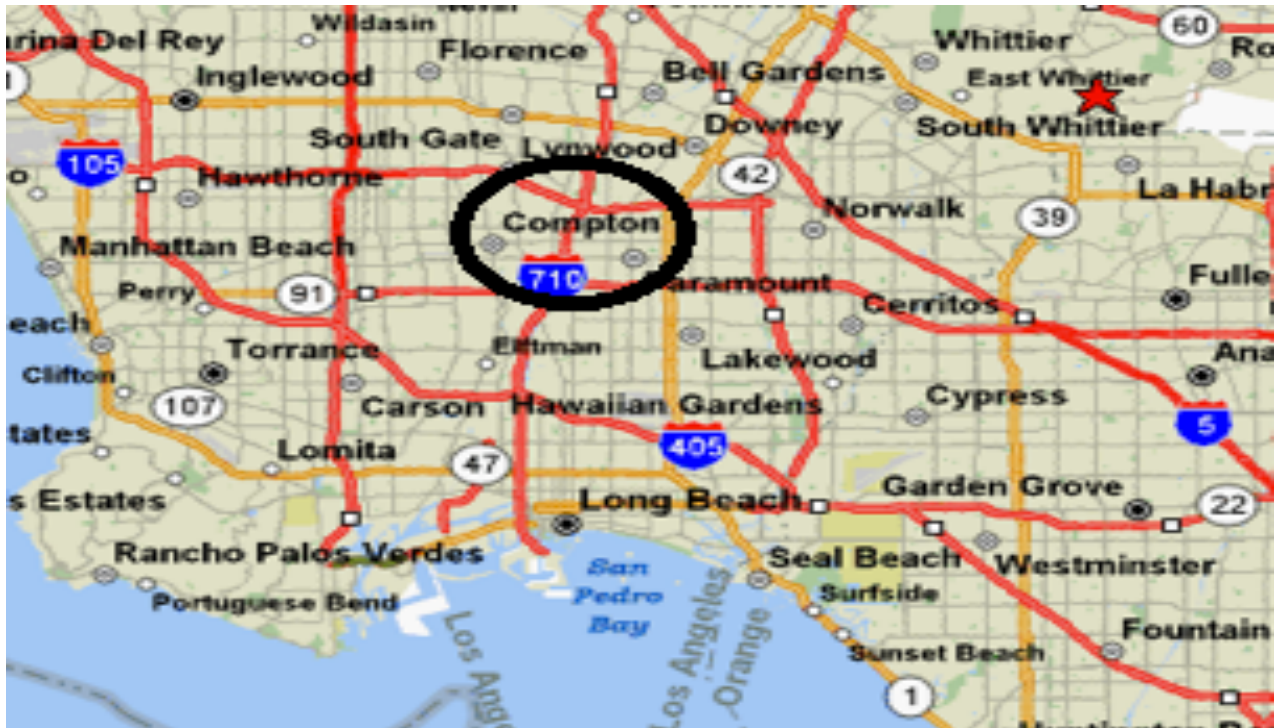


Figure 1. Los Angeles Area map showing Compton and the bordering freeways. Source: Mapquest and Google images 2013.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

During my first year teaching at a middle school in Compton, DaShon, an African-American male student in my 7th grade English class, scored in the 12+ range in Language Arts on his CAT 5 (California Achievement Test).¹ Excited by this result and the promise of the student, I asked him which college he was thinking about attending. His response was, “Ms. Parker, people in my family don’t go to college.” Some years later when I moved on to teaching at the area high school in Compton, Meshia, a female student gang-banger with the Westside Piru Bloods would systematically come to my class late and high. I had spoken to her on different occasions about her behavior and goals. One time in particular I asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. Her response was, “I already am what I’m gon’ be.”

The thoughts articulated above by young Black students and other, similar thoughts shared and internalized by such students daily depict a grave problem related to academic (under)achievement among African-American students. These students’ rash and unrelenting decisions about the trajectories of their lives demonstrate feelings of unworthiness and unwillingness to engage and interrogate the world beyond their limited lived experience in

1. California Achievement Tests were designed in 1993. These norm-referenced standardized tests determined students’ knowledge in various academic areas. Standardized test are by no means an exhaustive determinant of student achievement, but do shed light on academic ability in some area.

Compton. They reflect how internalized oppression influences actions and illustrate thought processes of failure.

Several Black scholars have examined the thought processes of failure. “The Negro’s mind has been brought under control of the oppressor,” concluded historian Carter G. Woodson (1933/2000). “The problem of holding the Negro down, therefore, is easily solved. When you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his action” (p.9).

Whereas Woodson focused primarily on the Jim Crow South, scholar Kenneth Clark turned his attention to the Northern ghetto. Clark defined the dark ghetto as a place where invisible walls have been erected by white society, by those who have power, both to confine those who have no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness. The dark ghettoes are social, political, educational, and –above all—economic colonies... The pathologies of the ghetto community perpetuate themselves through cumulative ugliness, deterioration, and isolation and strengthen the Negro’s sense of worthlessness, giving testimony to his impotence” (Clark 1965, p. 11-12).

In such an environment, Clark concluded, educational failure is predictable. Synthesizing the insights of Woodson and Clark, this study argues that in order to understand the education of Black students one must be attentive both to the psychological processes of dehumanization and to the material and geographic location of those processes in the ghetto (Leonardo and Hunter, 2009).

The approach in this study is to build upon a number of popular ways that Black student failures have been explained. Some scholars for instance, trace (mis)education in ghettos to unequal educational resources (Kozol, 1991; Anyon, 1997), neighborhood factors beyond the schoolhouse walls (Wilson, 1987), and psychological, emotional factors within an oppressive social order that shapes Black identities (Wright, 1941; Moynihan, 1965; Steele, 1987; Tatum, 1999). While none of these explanations is wrong, taken separately they are inadequate to explain the failure of Mesha and Dashon. Rather, I argue Black educational failure is explained by the intersection of these processes.

Literature Review

In order to understand the intersecting forces that shape students and residents in the ghetto, I will briefly review research on school resources, neighborhood effects and the associated psychological impact on identity. I will then discuss how I bring these bodies of scholarship together to build my own theoretical orientation.

Resource Inequities

Resources are central in shaping the ghetto and its schools. Much scholarship has addressed the salience of resources in schools and their relationship to achievement outcomes. Resource quality and quantity, particularly as predictors of test scores and career attainment, have been examined to inform policy. Scholars have examined the quantity and quality of resources in two sometimes conflicting and sometimes overlapping strands: 1) inadequate resources, or 2) misused and mismanaged resources. The question of whether resources are inadequate or misused remains greatly debated.

Education and sociology scholars have dismissed the findings that school resources have minimal impact students’ achievement and engagement, as the Coleman Report (1966) claimed. Card and Krueger (1996), for instance, not only found that school resources have an impact on student outcomes with regards to ultimate earnings, but that there is a racialized component to the impact.

Teacher quality has been identified as a resource that has profound impact on students' achievement. Sobol (2002) asserts, "teachers are not merely fungible, impersonal conduits of information between some exterior source and students' minds. Instead, teachers are real, live humans who establish relationships... Learning depends in large part on the quality of these relationships" (p. 7). And, according to Fine (2004), teachers' content knowledge and general attitudes towards schooling predicts their level of care and commitment to students' learning.

Darling-Hammond (2004) demonstrates that teacher resources are unequally distributed and inadequate in urban areas. Access to qualified teachers is one of the foremost barriers to learning particularly for students of color. Moreover, the cumulative effect for students who have experienced a string of underprepared teachers is particularly harmful (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Darling-Hammond attributes the lack of qualified teachers to "poor working conditions" in schools serving "least advantaged students". Among poor working conditions are "large classes, severe overcrowding of facilities, and inadequate stocks of books and materials" (Darling-Hammond, 2004, 1948). These also have an independent impact on student learning. Kozol's (1991) study of urban schools details the severity of resource inequality. In Chicago's Lathrop Elementary School, for instance,

there are no hoops on the basketball court and no swings on the playground. For 21 years, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, the school has been without a library. Library books, which have been piled and abandoned in the lunchroom of the school, have 'sprouted mold,' the paper says. Some years ago, the school received the standard reading textbooks out of sequence: The second book came to the school before the first (p. 53).

Research confirms what might seem obvious: having books is key in ensuring that students will read and improve. Books are a resource denied to many students in ghetto schools (Krashen, 1997; Smith, Constantino, & Krashen, 1997).

The notion that educational resources correlate with student outcomes has not been without critics. The Coleman Report (1966), which looked at resource inputs and outcomes in the form of test scores to determine equality of opportunity, served as the foundation for decades of scholarship addressing resources. Among the surprising findings was the report's claim that resources like per pupil spending have minimal impact on achievement. Similarly, Hanushek (1997) found that "there is no strong or consistent relationship between school resources and student performance." Still, even Hanushek concedes that his finding no statistically significant relationship between resources and achievement "does not imply that all schools and teachers are the same" (p.148). Such differences are identifiable, for example, in the quality of teachers, which is taken up in the "misuse" arguments.

Misuse of Resources

A number of scholars argue that more nuanced understandings of the way resources are used demonstrate that they do in fact matter. Grubb (2009) has offered one of the most successful framings of misuse of real resources that account for student failure. Wasteful misuse of resources includes:

- Funds spent on inputs that have no effect—sometimes for incompetent teachers and other staff ... sometimes for what economists call rents (like increases in salaries that do not call forth greater teacher effort or reduce turnover), and sometimes for worthless inputs like textbooks, supplies or computers that remain unused by teachers who did not want them.

- Resources used without changing practices—as when weak and old-fashioned forms of staff development fail to change how teachers teach or when reforms fail to change long-established practice.
- Funds spent on purely symbolic practices, for public relations value rather than for effectiveness. For example, a new retention program may be established or a new superintendent hired simply to assure parents that everything possible is being done, not because these practices are effective.
- Resources spent on well-intentioned but ineffective practices—adopting simple-minded forms of “technology,” for instance, or following the reform du jour which turns out to not have an effect on learning. Alternatively, resources may be spent on practices with potential for improvement, but the schools neglect the crucial features that make them effective (p.30).

By replacing ineffective practices with effective ones, educators, Grubb argues can do much to eliminate educational inequalities.

Many African-American scholars who have examined misuse of education resources reject Grubb’s view that the problem is a technical one of determining the most efficient and effective use of resources. They frame the misuse in relation to the purpose of schooling to reproduce a White supremacist social structure. For radical Black scholars like William Watkins (2001), schooling has always been designed by White architects to maintain the status quo. Philanthropic investments in Black education reflect the political economy of White wealth and the contributions that could be made to it by Blacks. Echoing Carter G. Woodson’s assertion that when you control a Negro’s mind you control his actions, Watkins (2001) concludes that the goal of an obedient and stable Black population and workforce underlies schooling. In this sense, education resources are systematically used to oppress and repress Blacks.

The oppression and repression of Blacks is part of a broader system of social domination. A final group of scholars have traced the allocation of resources to the broader system to create ghettos. Wacquant (2004) argues that ghetto spaces (and therefore ghetto schools) are part of the social and political practice of “ethno-racial domination”. According to this argument, the allocation of resources in ghetto schools reflects a commitment to subjugating Blacks and Latinos and ensuring their failure. This process is notably different from that of their European immigrant predecessors because it is not a stepping-stone to the realization of the American Dream (Massey and Denton, 1993). Rather ghetto schooling for Blacks and Latinos is a manifestation of structural practices of resource allocation and discrimination based on class and race.

Anyon’s (1997) seminal text on ghetto schooling provides a foundation for understanding community dynamics, economics, resource allocations, and racial politics in creating failing schools. In historicizing schooling within the broader context of neighborhood transformation and demographic shifts, Anyon demonstrates that resources in ghetto schools are both inadequate and systematically used to perpetuate inequality. Moreover, school phenomena are inextricably linked to the broader political economy that creates the ghetto. Thus, Black schools both reflect the ghetto and help to construct it. “The social class and racial status of overall city and neighborhood population,” as Anyon concludes, “has been closely correlated with the level of the city’s investment in education and with the district’s success in educating its student population...Attempting to fix inner-city schools without fixing the city in which they are embedded is like trying to clean the air on one side of a screen door” (Anyon, 1997, p. 155).

Psychological Impact of Ghetto Schooling

Teachers, textbooks, and facilities are essential to quality of education students receive but a number of scholars argue that the pedagogical methods and tools are not the most essential for explaining Black students' learning. It is the psychological impact and dehumanization associated with the lack. Fine (2002) concluded that the lack and misuse of resources lead to "psychological effects includ[ing]: shame, anger, alienation, and civic disengagement" (p. 3). "When students receive limited or out of date instructional materials, or no instructional materials at all," Sobol (2002) echoes, "the students learn a different lesson: that society doesn't care enough about whether they learn to provide them with books. Kids respond to this lesson in different ways; but often I have seen them feel alienated and/or discouraged and/or hostile and/or apathetic" (p. 8).

Students associate schools in dismal conditions and schools that lack resources with their own identities. It becomes who they are. Identity formulation in ghettos and in other social spaces contributes to students' experience of schooling.

The Impact of the Ghetto on Black Student Identities

Just as the absence of resources alone does not fully convey the dehumanizing effect of ghetto schools, simply implicating the impoverished ghetto does not solely explain the failure. Small's (2008) synthesis of the most influential literature classifies the ghetto as "... a particular type of neighborhood; it exhibits a cohesive set of characteristics, such as deteriorating housing, crime, depopulation, and social isolation, that recur from city to city; it is directly or indirectly perpetuated by either dominant society or specifically, the state; and it constitutes a form of involuntary segregation" (p. 389). The impoverished, isolated environment places particular burdens on youth. Surely, for instance, it is harder for children to do their homework if they are homeless.

Still, poverty in the ghetto, like the absences of resources in the school, explains only partly the dehumanization of Black identities. There is a psychological process of internalization that contributes to identities for these ghetto students. Sung (2013) rightfully identifies the connection of structural and psychological processes of "dislocation." He argues:

The structural processes refer to the material and ideological dislocation of the 'ghetto space' from the privileges of modernity, as represented by the metropole and the modern/cosmopolitan/white citizen. The psychological dislocation of the 'ghetto subject' is characterized by a dislocated or 'double/third-person/contradictory' consciousness that occurs as a response to this structural 'othering' (p. 34).

Unlike European-American immigrant slums, ghettos uniquely mark Black bodies and minds (Kardiner & Ovessey, 1962). As Jargowsky (1999) argues, European-American immigrant slums "served as launching pads for later economic and residential assimilation...[while] black ghettos emerged as an enduring feature in metropolitan landscape" (p. 13).

As DaShon and Mesha had their identities created in Compton, they meshed with the lived experiences of other Blacks who were not only poorer than Whites, but also live in families that are stigmatized by the dominant society. As a result, their identities come to reflect their residence/existence in this place synonymous with brutality, violence, degradation, hyper-sexuality, illiteracy, and political disenfranchisement (Alexander, 2010; Anderson, 1990 and 1998; Barganier, 2011; Clark, 1965; Osofsky, 1966; Spear, 1967).

The pathological impact of ghetto life on the identities and values of its denizens has been the focus of a scholarly tradition grounded in Gunnar Myrdal's *American Dilemma* (1944) and stretching from Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965) to William Julius Wilson (1987) and Elijah

Anderson (1990, 1998 & 2011). The 1965 Moynihan report, for example, argued that Black poverty was the quintessential characteristic of the ghetto and that the breakdown of the Black family was a secondary effect to the culture created by poverty. In his account, Black male unemployment and the rise of welfare dependency had a crippling impact on the community. Although Moynihan powerfully identified the economic forces impacting Blacks in the ghetto, his focus on the family highlighted the effects and trivialized the cause. Moreover, while Moynihan accounted for the political economy of the ghetto, he was less attentive to its racial dynamics.

Like Moynihan, Elijah Anderson (1990, 2011) demonstrates the profoundly destructive impact of poverty on Blacks in the ghetto. Whereas, however, Moynihan reduces Black behavior to pathology and dysfunction, Anderson sees the thuggish code of the street as a rational, even if ultimately self-destructive, strategy in an environment of poverty and alienation. Still, like Moynihan, Anderson ultimately focuses on Black responses to the ghetto rather than the causes of those behaviors. This leads him to exaggerate the pervasiveness of gangbanging among Black youth and to suggest that Black success is dependent upon changing Black values and behaviors rather than changing White domination. Whereas, for instance, Mesha was streetwise and lived on all accounts by street codes Anderson portrayed, DaShon was a “decent” kid who never internalized the code of the streets..

Scholarship in the tradition of Moynihan, like Anderson’s, has been rightly critiqued for a certain victim-blaming quality and for its at times uncritical embrace of mainstream American values, yet it does constitute an important groundwork for this study. As most of that work asserts, there is damage resulting from years of racial and economic discrimination experienced by Black people in America. I argue that this damage, however, is not solely linked to poverty and not manifested only among poor Blacks. Rather the struggles of the ghetto and its pathology are phenomena where race is primary and class secondary.

Scholars have also deepened our understanding of the impact of the ghetto by theorizing the psychological impact of place. This work illuminates the mechanisms and processes by which individuals come to interact with and relate to their environments (Hull, Lam, Vigo, 1994). In a complex industrialized society, neighborhood attributes provide specific psychological backdrops that shape how residents view themselves. “If the socialization of the child brings with it the internalization of significant others,” Proshansky (1974) concludes, the normative attitudes of the groups he belongs to, the roles he has to play, and the unique experiences he has then it undoubtedly also brings the internalization of those places that define and structure these people, their activities, and his relationships with them. His satisfactions, frustrations, growth, and competence feelings must be as much rooted in who care for him in these settings. If the individuals express their self-identities in the way they organize, use, decorate, and maintain given physical settings, then the converse must be true. The nature and organization of physical setting in selected institutional contexts that have defined the expression in the formation and structuring of his self-identity (p. 551).

In this formulation, the neighborhood-specific physical setting grounds people and their self-concept. Though much of environmental psychology is devoid of racial consideration for space and place, this understanding of place is relevant for children in ghettos. Impoverished Black ghettos in particular are places where identity and psychology problems are exacerbated.

Clark (1965) provides a racial component of space missing from Proshansky’s scholarship by arguing, for instance, that for the ghetto resident “housing is no abstract social

and political problem, but an extension of a man's personality. If the Negro has to identify with a rat-infested tenement, his sense of personal adequacy and inferiority, already aggravated by job discrimination and other forms of humiliation, is reinforced by the physical reality around him" (Clark, 1965, p. 32-33).

In exposing the psychic brutalization of the ghetto, Clark never ignored the humanity of Blacks. "The truth of the dark ghetto," he argued (1965, p. XXV), "is not merely a truth about Negroes; it reflects the deeper torment and anguish of the total human predicament." Moreover, Clark was, of course, well aware of the complexity of ghetto life and of the extraordinary African-Americans who achieved greatly despite the ghetto - he himself, after all, rose to the highest levels of academic achievement and celebrated the achievements of Blacks who overcame the hand dealt to them. "To understand Harlem," he believed, "one must understand its inconsistencies, its contradictions, its paradoxes, its ironies, its comic and its tragic face, its cruel and its self-destructive forces, and its desperate surge for life, and above all one must understand its humanity." Still, no Harlemites, he argued, could fully escape the ghetto's brutalizing power. Just as the fact that some smokers endowed with extraordinary genes does not discount the power of tobacco's pathogens, so to the extraordinary achievements of some survivors of the ghetto does not disprove its pervasive power.

Along with Clark, Fanon (1967) also points out the effect of brutality which produces the ghetto. Black identity in Fanon's conception is a social phenomenon designated by how race is defined and constructed legally, politically and socially. While a Fanonian analysis does not discount the impact of the lack of resources in ghetto schools and neighborhoods, it suggests that they are a means by which the dominating power of the hegemonic White society coerces Black people to accept their sub-humanity. This process of creating Black identity in the White society creates a burden and an ongoing internal identity conflict. Although Clark demonstrates the brutalizing impact of race relations and the physical environment on the Black psyche, he discounts the ongoing salience of White supremacist ideology that shapes the relationship. Fanon makes explicit that the fundamental pathology, which has come to define blackness is a manifestation of the colonial/racial order created in the image of Whites.

In the present study of Compton, I attempt to identify the truth of ghetto experiences and the complexities that those experiences entail for Compton residents. While it is not possible to assert that all experiences are lived the same in the ghetto, there are some striking experiences that weigh heavily on the psyche, behavior, actions, and hopes of Blacks in these spaces that are universal. This is because White supremacy underlies those experiences, and because the consistency of the White supremacist practices and beliefs in the US have the potential to send and confine Blacks to the ghetto (Robeson, 1958). There are intersecting social phenomenon that account for the differences among Blacks, but even within the classed and gendered experiences there are similarities and expectations of the Black collective identity.

In recent years, scholars have highlighted the creative capacities of Black people even when living in the highly circumscribed circumstances of post-civil rights era urban America. Thus for instance, Dumas (2010) speaks of the capacity of Blacks to "adjust to new conditions on the battlefield of discursive struggle" and to "create new cultural expressions of blackness which are always in conversation with history but never neglectful of their own historicity" (p. 413). Still, as Clark (1965) argues, the experience and history of the ghetto does have a generalizable impact on the minority who inhabits the space. He concludes,

As minority-group children learn the inferior status to which they are assigned and observe that they are usually segregated and isolated from the more privileged members

of their society, they react with deep feelings of inferiority and with a sense of personal humiliation. Many of them are confused about their own worth (p. 63).

Formulation of Black Student Identities

The opening of this introduction presented anecdotes of DaShon and Mesha, two students raced as Black by a body politic that preceded their births. Once born into Black identity, a discursive process –legal and scientific language, definitions, and positioning – constituted their behavior, expectations, norms, and identity. “The ‘sign of race’”, as Ehlers (2012) argues, is a command or imperative; the individual cannot be recognized, and therefore cannot come-into-being or exist as a certain racialized subject without occupying the regularized norms of that subject position. They are compelled to recite these norms (of blackness or whiteness) in order to survive as a discursively recognized and tenable racial subject (p. 70).

These Black students must act out blackness that has been ascribed to them. This requires both a disciplining process and a performativity that regulates and reifies their racial identities. The comments of DaShon and Mesha exemplify the inculcation of this black identity, but the discursive process of subjecting these students took the entire 12 and 16 respective years of their existence and must be understood beyond the moments of their statements. This process, “the marking of the subject, as raced can be seen to engender a double movement that a) imposes and b) activates as the marking enters the subject into a social existence and, in doing so, requires that the subject occupy this term so as to maintain discursive intelligibility” (Ehlers, 2012, p. 22). The complex racializing of a subject is a continuous process that requires institutional effort of racism and the individual practice of consent.

Ehlers’s theoretical framework of how racial subjects are constituted through discipline and performativity illuminates the ways in which schools and communities condition children into their respective roles within the racial hierarchy. Though she focuses on the law as an institution that formulates policies and disciplines racial subjects, Ehlers acknowledges “the disciplinary fabrication of subjects takes place within particular institutional sites. It is these same sites that must be analyzed in terms of thinking about the constraints of identity and the possibility for agency” (p. 72).

Process of Black Racialization

This multifaceted process of racially subjectifying Blacks occurs not only in schools but in their daily lives outside of schools. This inculcation of Blacks into the social order, like that of Whites, requires psychological, physical, and emotional processes to solidify social and racial positionality (Ritterhouse, 2006; Woods, 2009; DuRoucher, 2011). For Blacks, however, the process is uniquely brutal. The creation of White identity is humane, while indoctrination for Blacks includes violence, disenfranchisement, and psychological abuse from the social institutions that participate.

As Althusser (1971) has argued, the process of brutalization and especially the process of acknowledging brutalized identities requires the actions of ideological and repressive state apparatuses. Through a process Althusser (1971) calls interpellation, the state constructs you, hails you and forces you to respond. Although Althusser does not focus on race, his theory illuminates the process of identity formulation in the ghetto and its schools (see Leonardo, 2012). Baldwin (1971) illustrates the brutalizing power of racialization interpellation:

When I was ten years old – I’m very small now; when I was ten I was much, much smaller – two cops who were not ten beat me half to death. Now was that me speaking there, or my history? Them or their history? How can I claim history as the past if two

grown men –two grown men, not one --- committed a heinous crime on a black boy because he’s black? I don’t want to hear about a thousand years ago or even fifty. I was ten and nearly died because of history written in the color of my skin (p. 190).

Clearly Baldwin, the great American novelist and social activist, was able to transcend the imposed worthlessness or nobodiness that Mesha and Dashon exemplified. However, as Baldwin suggests, when he was child he was faced with the same self-denying hail and thus the same constructed worthlessness as other Blacks.

The discourses of unworthiness and inferiority associated with the Black bodies become a normalized part of the identities, thoughts, and actions through interaction in mainstream society. Racial socialization is the result of interactions and numerous institutions such as family, school, and law (Du Rocher, 2011; Hill, 1999; Ferguson, 2001; Alexander, 2010). Hill (1999) points out “[c]hildren’s self-perceptions are also influenced by the larger social environment as children eventually learn to see and evaluate themselves from the perspectives and standards of the ‘generalized’ others, or the community” (p. 98) For Black students, the construction of themselves as second-class citizens aligns with the normative and regulatory racial discipline mechanisms that helped to construct them.

Black Identity and Academic Achievement

Researchers have identified how Black identity, in the minds of teachers and students alike, has shaped academic opportunity and performance. Black students are hypercriminalized, stereotyped, mislabeled/overlabeled as special needs, and tracked out of mainstream education by teachers, administrators, and the schooling system (Ferguson, 2001). Thus, schools systematically foster conflict with the Black students they claim to serve (Tatum, 2003).

Black identity in schools is linked to the development of racial identity and ideology outside of school. As Nasir, Jones, & McLaughlin (2011) suggest, “students’ constructions of themselves racially and academically are deeply and profoundly influenced by multiple settings that students negotiate daily, including, but not limited to school settings, neighborhood settings, and family. Students’ identities are also influenced by the broader societal context that perpetuates racial inequalities on multiple levels and constrain identity choices for African-American youth” (p. 3).

While Nasir et al. explore Black school identity and neighborhood without implicating Whites, Ogbu and Fordham (1986) suggest that even Black students who desire to resist the dominant White culture carry a “burden” of acting White that challenges their own identities. This burden of acting or appearing White is a psychological response to the institution of White supremacy. Still, like the oppositional culture built on an internalized “black” identity that Ogbu and Fordham (1986) describe, ultimately acting White reinforces racial subordination rather than challenges it. Thus, as Ogbu (2004) concludes educators must be attentive to the historical and community context of Black student behaviors and avoid approaches that focus solely on students and their schools.

Focusing this Study: Intersection of Resources, Identity, and the Ghetto

Dashon and Mesha seem to represent range of academic capability and engagement and the internalization of the code of the streets, yet these students ultimately fail in the same way. Neither graduated from high school and neither went on to college. But their failures are more than the absence of resources, the experiences in a pathological ghetto, and the external construction of “black” identity. I argue that it is the intersection of these phenomena that shapes how and why Black students internalize oppression and become actors committed to their own

failure. The actions and non-actions of students like Dashon and Mesha are part of a deeper construction of an identity. In order to understand how students identify themselves in terms of the stereotypes assigned to them, I look specifically at how the ghetto is formed as an oppressive pathological space, how city and school resources contribute to the pathology of a Black ghetto, and how identities of inhabitants are consciously and subconsciously negotiated reactions to that ghetto space.

As Kenneth Clark has argued, it is virtually impossible for a Black person to live within the ghettoized space without embracing to some degree his inferior state and turning inward on himself or his brothers. Clark cites a drug addict from Harlem who explains his own despair. "I was just born black, poor and uneducated. And you only need three strikes all over the world to be out, and I have nothing to live for but this shot of dope...Your environment is just a mirror of yourself, you know. So what can I do?" (Clark, 1965, p. 195-196) To believe that your very birth has ruined you creates an irreparable psychosis. "The Negro cannot be asked to prove that he 'deserves' the rights and responsibilities of democracy," Clark concludes, "nor can he be told that others must first be persuaded 'in heart and mind' to accept him. Such tests and trials by fire are not applied to others." (Clark, p. 18).

This dissertation examines the interplay of the material and internalized ghetto on Black students by sequentially addressing three questions: 1) How do Whites conceptualize as pathological the spaces in which Black people live? 2) What is the relationship of that conceptualization to the flow and types of resources into Black neighborhoods? 3) How do the experiences of ghetto spaces and ghetto schools shape the way Blacks understand their identities?

Compton, California offers an ideal case in which to answer these questions. Unlike many ghettos, Compton evolved from a suburb. It therefore illuminates, with particular clarity, the processes of action and stigmatization all too often central to the construction of Black identity. Building on scholarship that has addressed the impact on schools and communities when gentrified Black ghettos and their schools are forced to contend with an emergent faction of White middle-class parents (Anderson, 1990; Posey, 2010), I hypothesize that White neighborhoods that transition into Black neighborhoods tell an equally powerful story about power, resources, and oppression. The particularities of Compton's historic demographic shift make it a case in which many questions about the interconnectedness of racial and social oppression, community-school relations, and the development of individual identity can be studied.

To be clear, I acknowledge that the ghetto is a complex space in which cultures thrive, residents love themselves and others, and that many of residents embrace the space as one that builds character and resiliency. I understand that those who live in ghettos are impacted in different ways by its pathologies and possibilities. I focus on Compton as site for political, social, and identity contestation that directly informs the type and quality of education present in the city. And, I purposely direct attention to the pathologies of the space that I argue are most crucial in understanding student failure.

In order to examine the impact of ghettoization of Blacks in Compton, this study is divided into three components. First I examine the historical process by which Compton became a ghetto. Next, I conduct a quantitative analysis of resource allocation and expenditures. Finally, I rely on qualitative analysis of interviews to illuminate how Blacks from Compton to make sense of their ghettoized identity. This mixed method approach is designed to illuminate not only the impact of material and psychological factors but also their interplay.

Outline of Chapters

In the next chapters of this dissertation I expand upon the usefulness of Compton as a site for study and provide an analysis of how the intersection of resources, neighborhood oppression, and psychology contribute to the shaping of identity for Compton residents.

Chapter 2 traces Compton's development as predominately White suburban area. It explores the use of ideology to construct the space and to restrict the movement of Blacks within Compton. It examines the role of racism and the insignificance of interracial class differences in Compton.

Chapter 3 lays out White exodus as a process of exploitation and discrimination that left middle-class Blacks worse off economically. Those middle-class Black migrated to the east end of Compton to take the place of the Whites before ultimately fleeing themselves. Additionally, the chapter examines the role of Blacks in the city's ghettoization. The chapter demonstrates that the transformation entailed not only a demographic shift but also a cultural and ideological shift.

Chapter 4 examines resources in Compton as the demographic shift occurs. Resource revenues to the city and to the schools as well as expenditures were analyzed. Since ghettos are defined partially by the lack of resources and systematic disinvestment, this chapter provides insight into how Compton's ghettoization occurred.

Chapter 5 focuses on the lived experiences of African American residents in Compton during and after the demographic shift. Residents recount their experience and their psychological understanding of themselves and their identities in relation to the City of Compton. This chapter speaks to how the city shaped their identities and how and whether the residents link their identities to broader structures of oppression against Blacks. Chapter 5 examines how residents accommodated, resisted, or ignored structures of oppression and repression associated with Compton's shift from suburb to ghetto.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter that synthesizes how a history of discrimination and racism, resource corruption, psychological and ideological shifts, and oppression operated in Compton. I demonstrate how these processes interact to create a ghetto and shape residents' identities and conduct.

Chapter 2 – White Imagination and the Making of the Ghetto

Introduction

Compton, California is a city with a rich, multifarious history. This community was purchased from a Spanish land grant by G.D. Compton and his business associates and was incorporated in 1888. It began as a farming community, developed into a White suburb, then transitioned into a Black ghetto. In many accounts it went from being a promising investment to a negligible space good for only exploitation.

Compton's history included salient racial, ideological, political underpinnings that shaped that transition. These were most evident in the two incidents shook foundation of this community, which came to epitomize the All-American City (1952) and the suburban American Dream (Widaatalla, 1970; Straus, 2006): 1) the natural occurrence of an earthquake in 1933 which contributed to the city's debt and slow progress and the city's ability to rebuild as if it had never happened; and 2) the unnatural occurrence of Black people, which is taken up here.

In this chapter I focus on Compton's history as its White residents' pursuit of the American Dream intersected with Black people's pursuit of that same dream. I examine White thoughts, ideology, and conceptualization of Blacks in Compton and the ways in which these led to the ghetto. I explore the historical stability of the White racist ideology that defined Compton as a suburban space – which theoretically meant a White space (Locating the Suburbs, 2004).

This historical chapter examines newspaper clippings, oral histories and photographs to illustrate how White imaginations and pathologies projected onto the black body shaped the experiences of Blacks in Compton and underlie the ghetto. It addresses the research question - *How did Whites conceptualize spaces in which Black people live as pathological?*

To Make a White Suburb – Compton

In the early 1900's Compton had no city hall, no fire station, no police station, and no Blacks. But Compton was not defined by lack. In fact by 1909 it was considered 'the center of the dairy district' (Straus, 2006, p. 13) and showed promise of the suburban American dream.

This promise and the act of becoming a suburb, however, reflected complexity because the suburb itself is complicated. It is defined both by its physical location and a singular state of mind (Locating the Suburb, 2004, p. 2003). The singular state of mind was the ideology privileging white supremacy. It defined the area along racial lines as the city experienced steady growth, acquired land through annexation in the 1930s and 1940s, built community wealth, and made a name as a suburb. Three thousand homes were constructed by 1940, leading to a growth of 17,000 residents, and as the population continued to grow, the space began to resemble the American Dream (The City of Wealth and Industry, 1941, p. 1).

Compton strove to attract residents and developers to further its infrastructure and maintain the White suburban life it advertised. In a 1941 brochure, the city boasted of its proximity to 45 municipalities, including Long Beach and greater Los Angeles, and its growing residential and retail areas. The wealth also included schools with modern architectural designs, and comfortable and pleasant classrooms. Compton, the brochure promised potential developers, was "destined to become the leading industrial area on the West Coast...[Its] industrial acreage [was] reasonably priced, most of which [was] located in the county area, thereby guaranteeing the lowest possible tax base." The image of a suburb that was "near enough to [Los Angeles] so employees and families can enjoy all the privileges of city residents" (The City of Wealth and Industry, 1941, p. 1) was one that proved appealing.

The promotional efforts to gain developers led to industrial growth on the outskirts of Compton, while preserving the suburb's residential quality. And as the suburb grew, business in the downtown Compton also grew. Its numerous merchants "seldom had a slack period" (The City of Wealth and Industry, 1941, p.3). The downtown shopping area attracted visitors from nearby cities, which added heavily to Compton's retail tax base.

Still, White Comptonites worked to make sure the city was not too appealing. They constructed and restricted the geographical space according to race by defining which minorities were acceptable within the space and where those minorities could be positioned. Latinos were restricted to an area in the northern part of Compton in spite of their classification in the Census as White (Camarillo, 2004). Japanese residents were part of the Compton community, but their relocation to internment camps dramatically changed their population in Compton. Between 1940 and 1944 the Japanese faction declined from seventy-two to six (Straus, 2006, p. 48). They then became an unwelcomed group. During internment, the all-white Compton city council passed a resolution to oppose the return of Japanese residents. The council petitioned California Governor Earl Warren and Congressman Ward Johnson to voice their opposition (Straus, 2006, p.48).

The Japanese Americans, were not however, the group White Comptonites were most committed to excluding. Compton resident Les W. Arnold claimed that the boom of war "brings with it attendant evil" (Straus, 2006, p. 43-44). Included in that "evil" was the faction of African-American migrants looking for a better life. The opposition to Blacks in Compton was more profound than it had been for either Japanese or Latinos. The first 60 years of the city's history includes no Blacks. But, as Blacks began to find openings to Compton there was a pointed effort to restrict and confine them. By 1949, White residents began to advocate zoning in order, they claimed, to "safeguard" their children from Blacks seeking to move into their neighborhoods. White Comptonites, as historian Emily Straus demonstrates, "united to implement successfully their slogan 'Keep the Negroes North of 130th Street'" (Straus, 2006, 84).

Comptonites strived to protect the image they had built of their suburb as the embodiment of the American Dream. Future Compton NCAAP president Maxcy Filler, who moved to Compton in 1952, recalled the city "was 95% white." (Overend, 1980, p. 24). That same year, Compton received the award as the National Civic League's All-American City. The award meant the city had demonstrated "innovation, inclusiveness, civic engagement, and cross sector collaboration by describing successful efforts to address pressing local challenges" (About the All-American City Awards, p. 1). Addressing the pressing local challenge had meant addressing race. Now the challenge was to maintain the image.

Maintaining the Space and Keeping Up Appearances

Maintaining the image of Compton as an All-American City required political, structural and ideological policing. After all, the making of the suburb is among other things a consumer-preference model. The person who moves to the suburbs does so because it meets his preferences. While entering into the suburb he is "simultaneously issuing a threat of exit if his 'preferences' are not continuously met" (Locating the Suburb, 2004, p. 2010). The use of power and ideology to ensure that those who lived in Compton understood the privilege of Whites was crucial.

Redlining and discrimination were well-known practices in Compton. Even after a Supreme Court ruling had declared restrictive covenants to be unenforceable, homes for sale on Reeve Street had large signs reading "Highly Restricted." "We fought all the way from Normandy to the Battle of the Bulge!" one White homeowner claimed in 1953. "We have a right

to these homes. When we bought 'em—there were big signs all through this Compton tract—'Highly Restricted!'—that's the way we bought and that's the way it's going to stay!'”(Straus, 2006, p. 71). Regardless of the fact that these Black soldiers fought in the same war for the same country, White Compton did not consider Black veterans and their families fit to live in Compton homes.

White residents and leaders even disciplined other Whites who didn't support the collective effort of keeping Compton White. In 1953, for instance, White property owners were beaten for listing properties with South Los Angeles Realty Investment Company, which was known for selling property in Compton to Black families (Sides, 2006). Additionally, “shrewd Comptonites scoured the city codes in search of a way to punish real estate agents who sold property to Blacks, finally dredging up a law that prohibited solicitation within Compton city limits” (p.126). This effort resulted in the arrest of 5 real estate agents.

Suburban Performativity – Culture of Compton

Building Compton required more than the physical space. It required participation in class and culture-appropriate events that would situate the community among other established suburban communities. For all intents and purposes, building a suburban culture meant not only excluding Blacks, but formulating images of how Compton residents and families should look and behave (Siembieda, 1975).

Activities such as the 1951 Compton Community Fair demonstrated the community's values (*Los Angeles Times*, 1951, p. 27). At the fair, 19-year-old Carol Cogswell was crowned queen, representing the community's ideal of beauty and femininity. Compton's Mrs. Ruth Pogor also epitomized White femininity. The 30-year-old mother of three won the Mrs. Southern California contest and the right to compete for the title of Mrs. America. Awaiting the judging, Pogor, for instance, “worried for fear the judges would notice her calloused hands, with which,” the *Los Angeles Times* marveled, she “does the home gardening and makes all the clothes for her children” (*Los Angeles Times*, 1951, p. 17).² Suburban White women like Ruth Pogor performed a difficult balancing act, embodying both beauty and the practicality of the pioneer woman on the suburban frontier.

The community's moral and social activities, like the fair and pageants, reinforced practices of racist discrimination against Blacks. Those practices, however, were not recognized as problematic. In Compton they were normalized and acceptable. Restaurants and other businesses made no secret of their dislike for Negro patronage (Young, 1963, p. 11). The actions toward Negroes were necessary as Compton strove to maintain its image.

Policing –Protecting the Image

Although the early Compton community had no police force, police became an important part of maintaining the White suburban ideal in Compton. The December 25, 1962 police blotter is indicative of a positive relationship with the White Compton community:

Mrs. Betty Martinez, of W. Stockwell, came to the [police] station to say “Thanks for such wonderful service.” She also left two large trays of delicious pastries (that's the second time this fine lady has done this!).

² In 1968 a feminist group protested the Miss America contest because it was both racist and sexist. The group observed that an African-American Woman had never made the finals in the competition and only White women had ever been crowned. The Mrs. America pageant also had a long history of not recognizing African American Women. The contest just recently crowned its first African-American winner in August of 2013. “History.”Mrs. America. Np., n.d. Web. 20 Sept 2013. Retrieved from <http://mrs.america.com/history-2>.

Shortly thereafter, police noted, “a handsome lady came into the station and delivered sandwiches to the station patrol” (Compton Police Annual 1962).

An account of how justice was meted out to White criminals in Compton in the 1960’s illustrates the contradiction between criminalization and the privilege of Whites. White criminality in Compton was mitigated by humanity and privilege. Officer Hague, 1962 police blotter reported, gave “prisoners in jail (23 of them) all the telephone calls they desire[d], and also [let] them buy all the cigarettes and candy they want[ed].” Later, Officer Fette, “took dishes from the prisoners’ meal back to Jay’s Café”, where there was apparently a contract for food service.

Even crime reduction for Compton Whites was tempered with a wink to their racial privilege. In 1955, the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “A four-year plague of hot-rod racing on Artesia street in South Compton came to a somber stop yesterday for 31 young drivers in Compton Municipal Court as the aftermath of a massive police trap which netted 119 as speedsters and enthusiasts” (*Los Angeles Times*, 1955, p. 2). Still, the method of disciplining these White youth was minimal. Before sentencing, Judge Dills lectured, “I know your natural desires are dangerous ones on the public highways and we aren’t going to allow it here. This community has been plagued with your contests. For now on, you are gong to have to find some other place—there are proper places like Orange County and at Mirage Lake—to show your skill, prowess and stamina” (p. 2). The 30 hot-rod drivers had their driver’s licenses suspended and were given 5-day sentences in the county jail, which were suspended. The other White youth were placed on 180 days probation.

The practices for keeping peace and order in Compton were peppered with racial affirmation. White boys were criticized but simultaneously praised for doing what was natural. As sociologist Ann Ferguson (2001) has argued, defining White male behaviors as mischievous is a way to disassociate them from criminality, which is reserved for Blacks.

Mapping Suburban Segregation

In 1960 the population of Whites in Compton was 21,076 and the population of Blacks was 13,946. During the 1960’s, particularly following the Watt’s 1965 riot, large numbers of Blacks moved to Compton. By 1970, the number of Whites had fallen to 20,776 – a reduction of only 300 residents, but the population of Blacks in Compton quadrupled to 55,781. (It was only later in the 1970s that the vast majority of Whites would flee from Compton. In 1980, 5,328 White residents constituted only 6 percent of Compton’s population.)

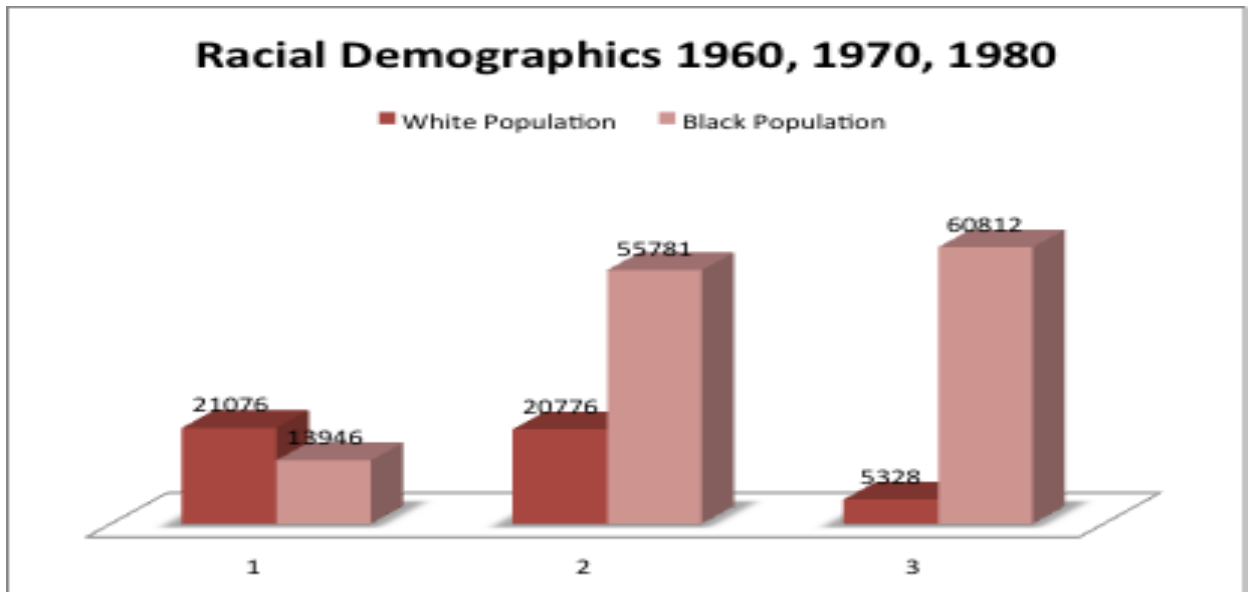
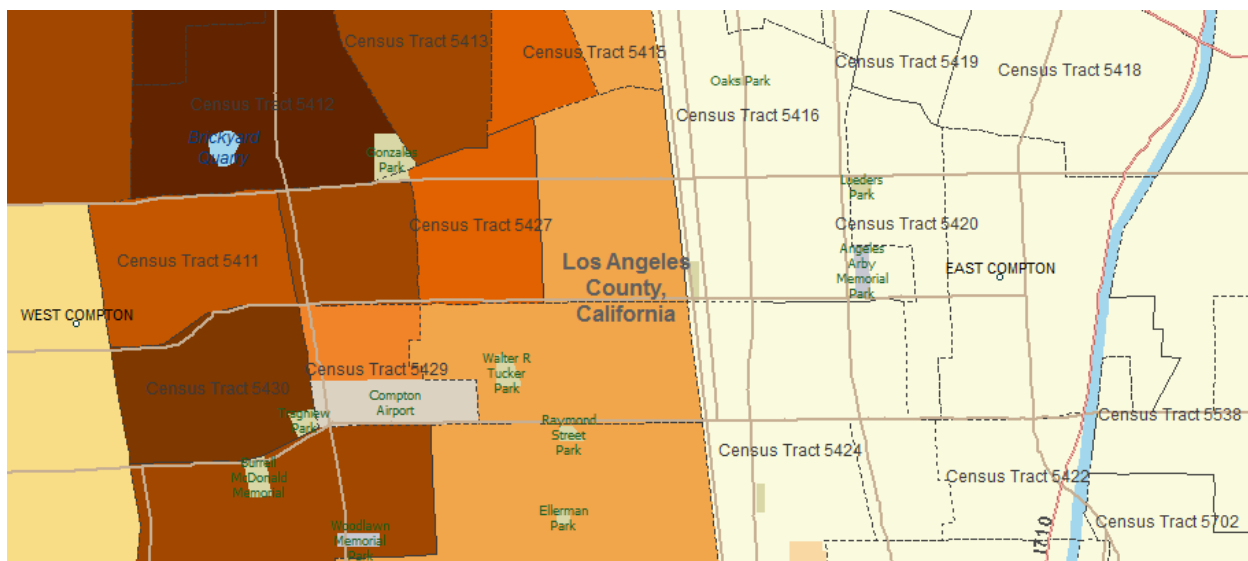


Figure 2. Black/White racial demographic 1960, 1970, 1980. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The number of Blacks and Whites in Compton do not tell enough about the social dynamics as Blacks were moving into suburban Compton. Census data from 1960 and 1970 might erroneously imply a harmonious integrated residency. But, the reality is that during this ten-year period, the spatial location of Blacks and Whites residing in Compton illustrates a pattern of segregation.

The maps below provide a visual narrative of the history and geographic location of Whites and Blacks. The figure demonstrates how the Alameda corridor served as the segregation marker in 1960. By 1970, however, Blacks had moved well beyond the dividing line and Whites remained further along the fringes of Compton.



1960 Census Tract

% Black Persons

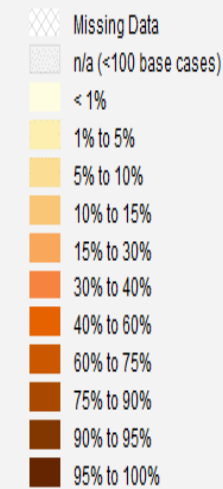
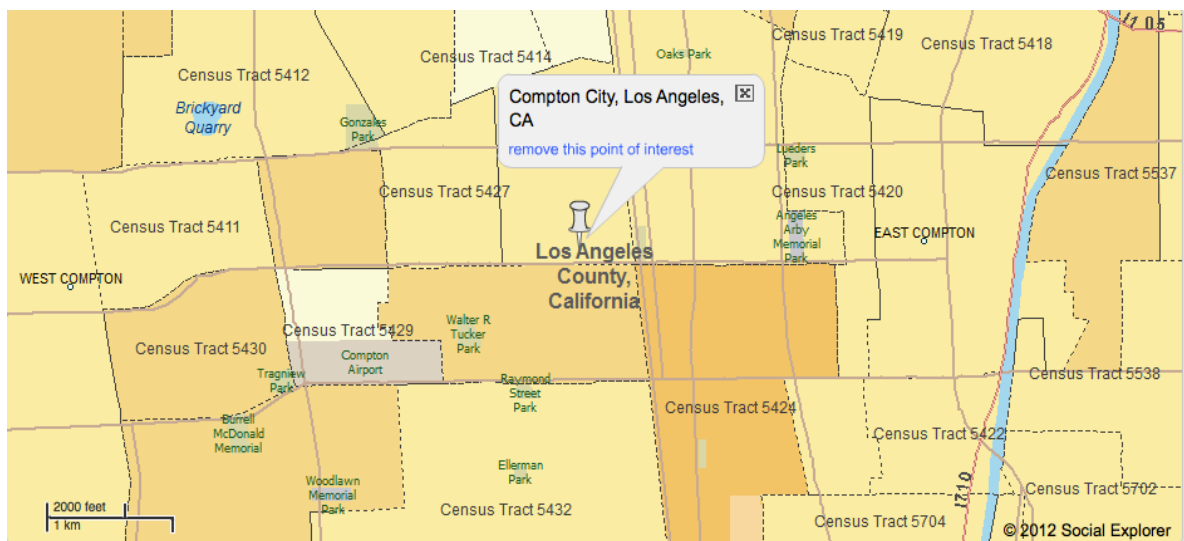


Figure 3. Representation of Blacks in Compton in 1960. Source: U.S. Census Bureau Social Explorer.

As the above map demonstrates, there was a pronounced separation of Blacks and Whites in Compton marked by Alameda Street and the railroad that runs parallel to it. The Alameda Corridor served as what Kenneth Clark (1965) calls an “invisible wall” restricting the mobility and opportunity of Blacks in Compton. Clark’s claim “that invisible walls have been erected by white society, by those who have power, both to confine those who have no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness” (p. 11) is demonstrated here. The pattern of segregation reflected efforts of White politicians, realtors, and businessmen to confine Black residents.

A number of scholars have argued that what Americans take for racial dynamics are predominately economic phenomena (Wilson, 1987; Anderson, 1990, 1998). The next two maps tests whether the racial dynamics seemingly revealed in figure 3 merely reflect socio-economic differences. Since educational attainment and income are closely related, I test each of these factors in turn. As figure 4 reveals, in 1960, when Blacks were relegated to the west side of Compton, the levels of education for Blacks and Whites in Compton were largely the same.



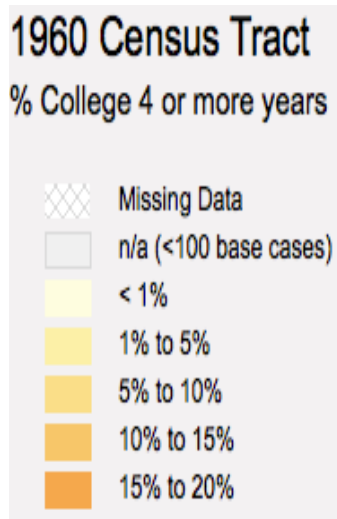


Figure 4. College attainment of residents of Compton in 1960. Source: U.S. Census Bureau Social Explorer.

Educational attainment correlates with economic and income standing. Average family income in Compton increased from \$6,204 in 1958 to \$8,537 in 1967, precisely the years when large numbers of middle-class Blacks were moving into the area (Widaatalla (1970). Indeed, in 1959, the median income for non-whites (of whom Blacks were the vast majority) in Compton was \$5,887, while the White median income was \$6,256. Despite the racial discrimination that existed in employment, the wage disparity for Blacks and Whites was merely \$369.

The map of average income in 1960 (Figure 5) demonstrates that the income of Blacks who resided on the west side of the Alameda Corridor was very similar to that of their White peers on the east side. The highest average income reported in the Census was \$25,000 or more per year. Few Compton residents, Black or White, obtained this. Only 8 tract areas, 4 from the west side and 4 from the east side of Compton had residents who made \$25,000 or more annually.

1960 Census Tract - % Income: \$25,000 and over

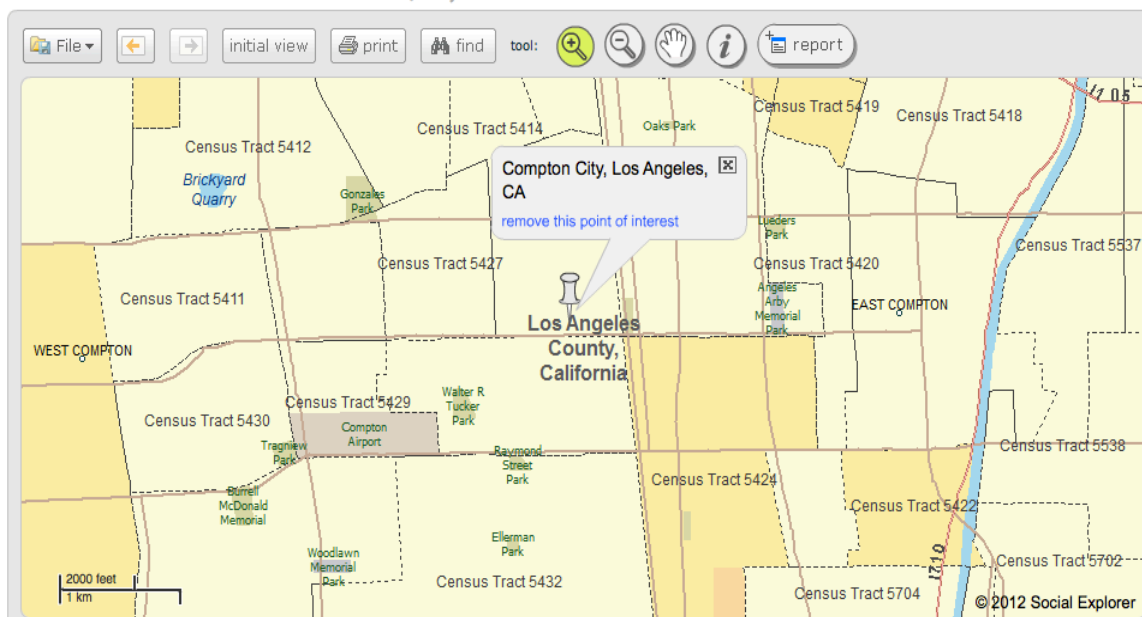


Figure 5. Compton residents' income level over \$25, 000. This illustrated where the highest income earners were located. Source: U.S. Census Bureau Social.

In sum, neither education nor income could explain segregation in Compton. Rather White racism was at play. The Alameda Corridor was a geographic boundary that confined Blacks to undesirable areas. The west end with its 3,4 & 5 bedroom homes were only undesirable because Blacks were there. The racial segregation that defined Compton remained until the 1970's by which time the few remaining Whites had moved further to the east of Compton. The map below demonstrates the movement of Black that had taken place by the 1970 Census.

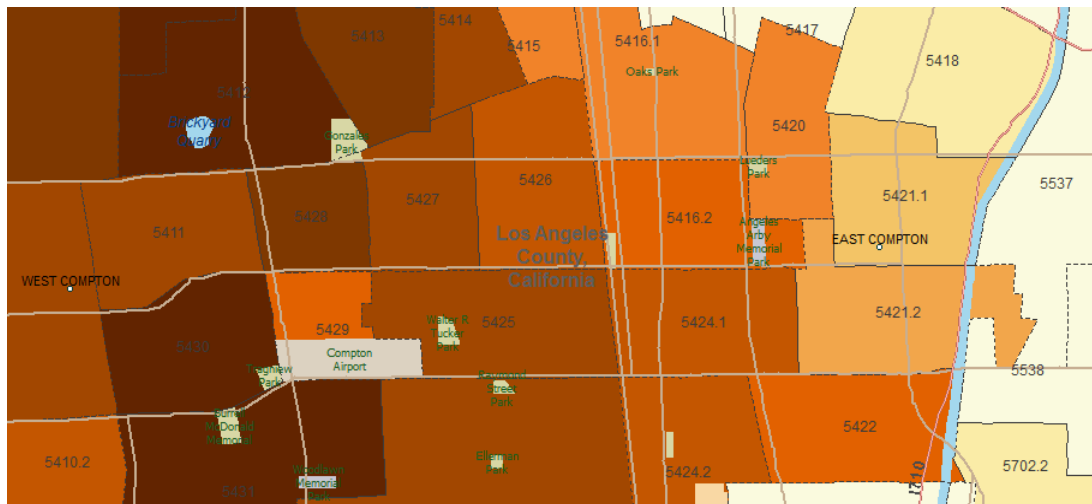


Figure 6. Migration of Blacks to the east end of Compton by 1970. Source: U.S. Census Bureau Social Explorer. (See figure 5 for the key)

Teaching Suburbia - Schools as Reflection of the White Community

As elsewhere, schools were purposed with educating children in Compton to assume their positions in society and become productive citizens. As Blacks moved into Compton, the creation of segregated schooling designed to be separate and unequal reproduced White supremacy. Thus schools in east and west Compton tended to reflect expectations for the children they served. East Compton served predominately White children, while west Compton served the majority of the Black population. Black parents, however, decried that there was institutional injustice. In a letter sent to the Compton Union High School District, Black parents charged that Centennial High School lacked facilities—specifically an auditorium, swimming pool, football stadium, baseball field, or gymnasium—and that Black Centennial students were receiving low grade averages (Straus, 2006). Unfortunately, Black protests were far more successful at documenting inequality and inferior education for Black children than moving White school officials to make necessary changes.

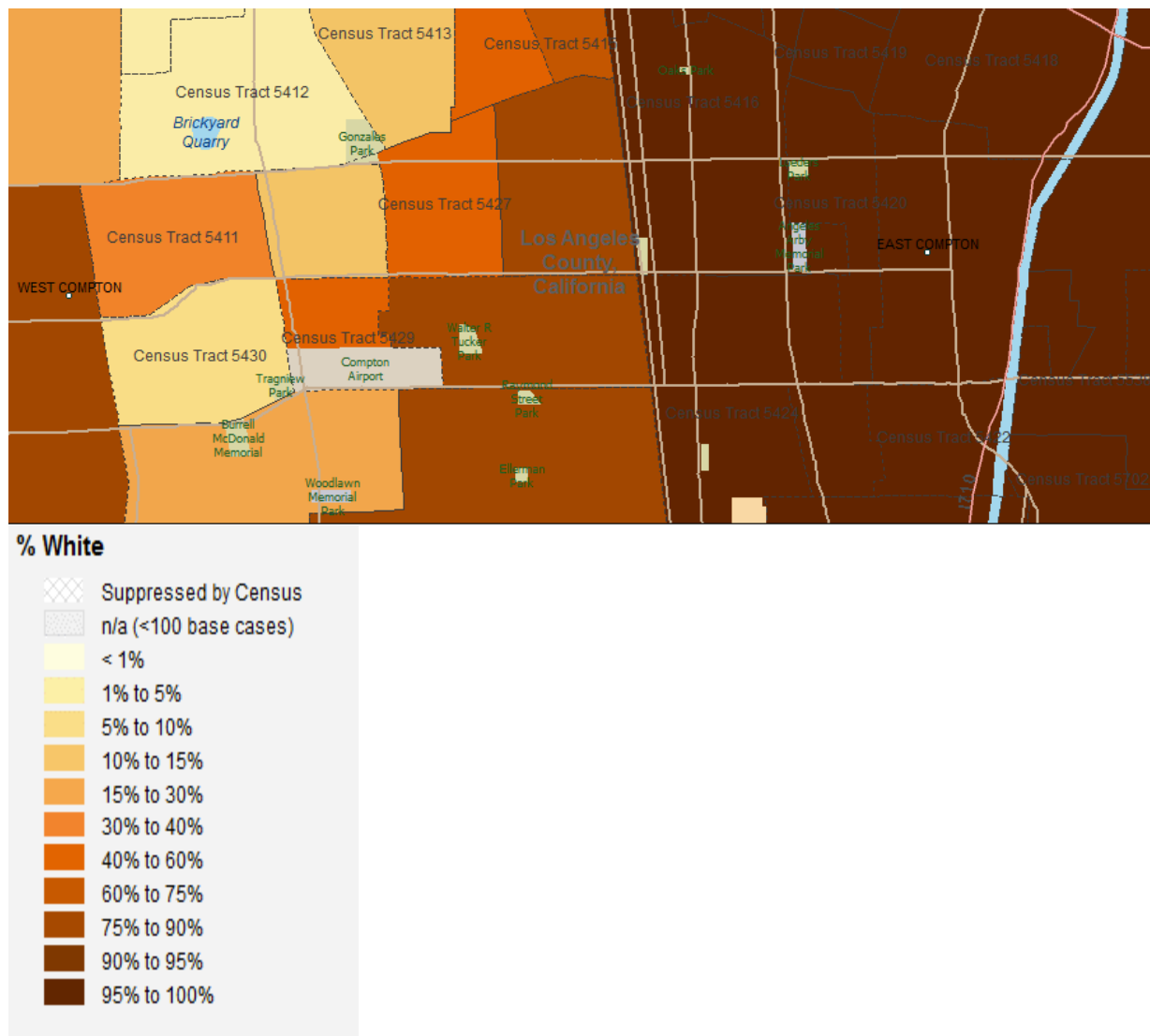


Figure 7. Percentage of White in Compton and the visual representation of segregation in 1960. Source U.S. Census Bureau Social Explorer.

Fight or Flight – Beginning of the White Exodus

Compton Whites had been successful in keeping a racially pure enclave for themselves. In the 1960's they had segregated the community and prevented Blacks from integrating. Black political leaders recognized this success as a slight. National Urban League Executive Director Whitney Young Jr. decried the segregation in Compton. Young charged that Compton exemplified the “many suburbs preening ‘all-American’ city image” while simultaneously, “hav[ing] a segregation index rating that only the Ku Klux Klan would cheer.” Indeed, he noted that “Compton (84.4)...beat out Los Angeles (81.8)” (Young, 1965, p. 11). But for Whites, cordoning off Blacks in the west end was an effort to slow the rate of integration, which was becoming a problem that encroached upon Compton and its image.

The image of Compton was getting more and more difficult to protect. In fact, when reporter Richard Elman went to do a story in Compton during the summer of 1966, he quickly realized the city was “mostly Negroes”. Although his editor ordered him to “shoot around the

Negroes,” this had become difficult. The presence of Blacks couldn’t be ignored and they could no longer be confined to the west end.

Whites had a heightened awareness of the Black sprawl and tended to “regard any attempts by Negroes to participate in the affairs of the larger community as a form of ‘takeover’” (Elman, 1967, p. 91). For Whites who viewed Compton as a place where the American Dream could be lived out, Black newcomers to Compton, especially those from the agrarian South, embodied pervasive and problematic stereotypes.

They are much poorer. They live in overcrowded housing and generally have larger families than their predecessors... Still others lack jobs of any sort. Their children get in trouble with the law. They have difficulty meeting rent and mortgage payments. They are chief customers of the bail bondsmen who have been setting up shop all along Compton Boulevard. They, it is said, are the reasons all the Compton stores now sport elaborate systems of theft-detection mirrors. The lengthy charge sheet against the newcomers grows daily (Elman, 1967, 28).

Elman (1967) described how White ideology and stereotypes about Blacks came to impact local business. “The local merchants complain about the new trade and don’t bother to renew their leases; and even Compton welfare state liberals are starting to bellow a good deal about ‘the strain of middle-class wage-earners supporting the disadvantaged’” (Elman, 1967, p. 29).

The majority of Whites believed that while they were in Compton living and maintaining the American Dream, the presence of Blacks in Compton was making it a ghetto nightmare. As Elman argued, Whites had constructed an image of the ghetto and participated in bringing it to fruition. “By the time Watts rose up [in 1965], Negro migration to Compton had become such an ugly self-fulfilling prophecy to the White man. On every block the ‘for sign’ signs appeared. The upper [and] lower-middle-class White man may have been cutting off his nose to spite his face” (Elman, 1967, p. 26-27). Whites were willing to abandon the suburban dream they had built in Compton because they believed that Blacks of any class were changing the space into an urban ghetto.

White city leaders acknowledged the shift of Compton from the suburban to the urban. “Until 1960,” the city planner wrote in a 1970 report, “Compton could be considered a part of the suburban fringe surrounding Los Angeles and other densely populated sections of the Los Angeles-Long Beach Standard Metropolitan Statistical area. The results of the 1970 Census indicate that Compton is no longer a suburban fringe area” (Report on 1970 Census). Elman (1967) noted that in addition to frantic White “panic selling creat[ing] a glut on the housing market; the number of new building permits that were issued [in the city] declined sharply. Compton’s White city manager began to worry about the financial future of the city” (p. 27). The steady disinvestment in Compton followed, impacting Black Compton suburbanites and the city as a whole.

Black Suburban Compton

Whites painted any Blacks as “niggers”, and so the presence of any Blacks rendered Compton a ghetto in the White imagination. White Comptonites, as historian Josh Sides (2006) argues, “viewed Black migration to Compton as ‘ghetto sprawl,’ or an extension of the Black ghetto”(Sides, 2006, p. 129).

Middle-class Blacks had a different idea. In pursuit of the American Dream they had been moving to Compton. To do so often required paying more than their White neighbors, sometimes two or three times the mortgage for the same homes. Not surprisingly, high

percentages of these Blacks were employed and Black women (28%) worked in clerical occupations. Thus Black Comptonites' incomes were almost twice that of the Blacks they left behind in Watts (Sides, 2006, p.129). "As a result," as historian Emily Straus notes, "Compton began to shift away from a virtually all-white population to a growing population of middle-class African Americans" (Straus, 2006, p.73).

Blacks in Compton were part of the faction across the nation who had demonstrated their status and lauded recognition. Both White and Black Comptonites struggled to reconcile Black success with America's racist ideology, which seemed to instigate and expect their failure. As Sides recounts, "A White businessman" in Compton grudgingly admitted to a White reporter: "[Negroes] are moving into our city and there's nothing legal we can do to stop it. But you would be surprised...some of the streets are as clean as anything you want to see" (p. 129). For the White businessman, no amount of cleanliness could dispel his view of African-Americans as "niggers" whom he wished to exclude from his community. Middle-class Black Comptonites on the other hand, struggled to identify themselves as intelligent, productive citizens in a community that despised them.

Such Blacks were caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, they were committed to distancing themselves from Watts and the negative stereotype associated with it. On the other hand, they sensed the degree to which the American Dream remained, even in Compton, off limits for them. Middle-class Black Comptonites, Elman observed, "tended to look down on many of their white neighbors as definitely mediocre, failures of a sort." They held firmly that, "if it were not for the impediments of color, they might never have been obliged to live among" (Elman, 1967, p. 91).

One of the prime examples of Black middle-class status and style was the Sanders family. In 1963, the Sanders were honored as the National Urban League's Family of the Year. One of the Sanders' sons—Stanley—won a Rhodes Scholarship. Another son, Edward, was an Olympic athlete. And their daughter, Margaret Ann married Minnesota Twins player Earl Battery. The Urban League praised Mr. and Mrs. Sanders, "in recognition of their success in rearing, motivating, and educating a family under stresses and circumstances that over the year were considerably less than advantageous." In spite of a racially hostile environment, the Sanders had accolades of which White Comptonites would be proud, yet they weren't enough to convince Whites of Black equality or humanity.



URBAN LEAGUE'S WINNING FAMILY

The happy clan which was cited as the Urban League's '63 Family of the Year poses with the league's national president and its executive director. Shown are (Back row, left to right) Henry Steeger, president of the National Urban League, Stanley Sanders, Margaret Ann Battey,

Donald Sanders, Whitney M. Young, Jr., executive secretary of the National League. Front row, left to right: Earl Battey, Donald Sanders, Jr., Mrs. Hays Sanders, Juan Edward Sanders (on lap), Hays Sanders, Barbara Battey, Brenda Battey and Michele Sanders.

Figure 8. Exemplars of Black success. The Sanders illustrate the type of Black families that resided in Compton. Source: *Chicago Defender*.

The problem was that White suburbia could not include Blacks. Black suburbs were not only conceptually oxymoronic, but their existence began their undoing. The very classification of ethnic suburbanization ruptures the "suburb". "Black" destabilizes it and relocates it. Once it becomes an ethnic, racial suburb, the suburb itself becomes relocated to another space – a pure space reminiscent of the imaginary space that White Comptonites envisioned. A Black suburb led Whites to flee from space previously thought to be safe (Locating the Suburb, 2004, p. 2015). The drastic racial and economic transformations altered Compton's demographic landscape.

Still Keeping Up Appearances

Blacks in Compton were well aware of anti-Black images and stereotypes, and they made pointed efforts to disprove stereotypes and assimilate to acceptable cultural norms. For example, the city's Y-Teens club groomed 8th and 9th grade African-American girls to be socially acceptable. According to the sponsors, Mrs. Betty Graves and Mrs. Jerry Wells, "the club [was] intended to promote the social, cultural and civic interests of girls" (*Chicago Defender*, 1962, p. 17).

What these girls in the Y-Teen club would come to be was epitomized by other Black women in Compton like Joyce Henderson. One of the first Negro stewardesses, Henderson embodied the hope that despite the bigotry, assimilated Blacks could move freely in an integrated America. The Black press regularly portrayed Compton as an exemplar of that hope. The *Chicago Defender* deemed suburban pioneers like Joyce Henderson worthy of national attention. "The smooth cut of her uniform, her hair-styled fashionably, yet simply, her smile, polish and poise are a sure indication that the lady is a United Airlines stewardess. Take another look. Right. She is a Negro" (Washington, 1965, p. A-14). These examples demonstrated the degree to which Blacks imagined they had successfully assimilated.

The *Chicago Defender* touted Compton as a destination for African-Americans moving on up a deluxe community. When G.G. Jones and his family visited their daughter in Compton in 1964, it was national news. "The Joneses' two-week stay was very nice at 1521 W. 166, Compton, California. The newly built ranch style home was purchased by the Joneses. (*Chicago Defender*, 1964, p. 19).

Blacks who were Compton's first African-American residents deemed themselves worthy of getting their piece of the American Dream and their attitudes reflected it. Elman (1967) acknowledged, "you weren't going to get Black Compton to strut around topless. They still thought they have a claim to stake out for the dignity of man. Having staked those claims chiefly through the rhetoric of the Constitution, they were still convinced believers in the Social Contract" (Elman, 1967, p. 108).

The Mirage of Black Success

Participation in politics and business as well as professional organizations added to Black Compton's image as it demonstrated its commitment to uplift. Against social odds, Black businesses grew and associations among Black elites created successes of which the community boasted. Black businesses in particular saw support on various levels in patronage and financing. A Black-owned business in Compton received a General Services Administration (GSA) grant as part of President Nixon's Task Force on Procurement for Minority Business. The Watts Manufacturing Company of Compton, as the *Chicago Defender* noted with obvious pride, received what was at the time the largest contract ever awarded to a minority business firm by GSA. The contract worth three-quarters of a million dollars would allow the company to manufacture and pack containers to ship GSA goods to Southeast Asia (*Chicago Defender*, 1970, p. 35).

Similarly, the United Methodist Church included in its program to support Black business a financial award to Compton's Gallimore Candy Company (*Chicago Defender*, 1970, p. 32). And, when Atlantic-Richfield deposited \$1 million in minority banks from coast to coast, one of the minority-owned or managed institutions was in Compton (*Chicago Defender*, 1971, p. 31).

Some of America's political, religious, and corporate elite seemed finally to be including Blacks in the American Dream. These businesses epitomized Black hopes that Compton heralded a liberal post-racial society in which Blacks could realize full citizenship.

Business was not the only arena in which Black Compton excelled. Among its greats was track and field athlete Charley Dumas, who set the world record in the high jump. Still Black athletic success could feed racist stereotypes as much as it could offer examples of hard work and discipline. Compton's junior college football teams won an unprecedented five national championships, but Blacks from Compton continued to experience discrimination even at the height of their success. Before the 1955 championship game, Mississippi's Jones Junior College Board of Trustees President Fred Bynum announced that his team would play in the

Junior Rose Bowl even though Compton Junior College fielded eight Negro Players. “I don’t like the idea of Negroes playing against our boys,” Bynum said, “but it’s too late now to do anything about it.” Even though the individual bigotry of students and school leaders might be overcome, the racist treatment of Blacks remained. Later that week, television executives decided to cancel the scheduled broadcast of the game rather than show Blacks’ ability to compete on a level playing field (*New York Times*, 1955, December 6, p. 32).

Would You Believe “Niggers”?

The presence of the type of Negroes whom Vice President Joe Bidden would later characterize as clean, articulate and bright (Thai & Barrett, 2007) was not enough to convince Whites that Blacks suburbanites should be part of the American Dream. Dolly (a waitress) and Rex (her husband, a chef at a place they did not own) recounted to reporter Richard Elman their thoughts about a Black couple who approached them about renting a room in Compton. “Would you believe niggers?” the man exclaimed to Elman. “He said he was some kind of minister.”

“Would you believe it?” his wife echoed.

“He didn’t look like a bad sort to me,” Rex acknowledged. “The only thing is I don’t see why I have to put up with a thing like that.”

The minister had come up to Dolly and said, “How dya do? I’m your new neighbor.”

“Not for long he is,” Dolly told Elman. “It’s bad enough having to wait on them. Would you believe it?” (Elman, 1967, p. 157).

Dolly and Rex voiced a widely held belief in Black inferiority in spite of their social positions or acceptable appearances. The construction of Blacks as inferior has a long history. Historian George Fredrickson (1971) argues that although the ways White Americans have imagined Black subhumanity has shifted across the 19th and 20th centuries, the social construction of Black inferiority is long-standing and robust. Psychologist Courtney Bonam (2010) argues that when Blacks inhabit spaces, those spaces become conceptualized as pathological and lead to housing discrimination. As such, the experiences of Blacks in Compton were tempered by a history of racism that impeded their pursuit of the American Dream. Blacks nevertheless struggled in Compton to prove their worth.

Chapter 3 - The Formation of Ghetto Compton

Black Takeover of White Space and White Exodus

Compton began as a White suburb. Middle-class Blacks moved in despite efforts to keep them out. Even though in some cases they paid exorbitant rents and mortgages, they moved in to secure a piece of the American Dream. These middle-class Blacks, even Blacks like the Sanders family, the Y-teens and Joyce Henderson, were segregated because of White racism in Compton. They were kept to the west of the Alameda Corridor, while Whites resided on the east side.

Then two related phenomena led to White flight from Compton and the full realization of the Black ghetto. The first was that poor Blacks were moving into Compton; the second was that middle-class Blacks could no longer be segregated by the Alameda Corridor. Whereas in the 1960's Whites constituted a majority of Compton's population, by 1970 they were no longer the majority. There were still over 20,000 White residents as there had been the previous decade, but the number of Blacks who had moved to Compton increased drastically. With this dramatic increase, Compton witnessed its first wave of lower-class Blacks.

Middle-class Blacks for whom the move to Compton constituted an effort to distance themselves from the ghetto sought with new intensity to cross the Alameda Corridor. And for the first time they were successful. Thus the Alameda Corridor, which now served as an economic frontier, no longer served as a racial one. Every family earning less than \$7,000 annually resided on the west end, but residents on the east side earned between \$7,000 and \$15,000 annually. This included the majority of Whites remaining in Compton. Confronted by neighbors with whom they shared class but not racial identity, Whites fled Compton.

White homeowners first disassociated themselves from the community by moving out and becoming landlords. As landlords, however, they did not take the same care as they had when they occupied the properties. In 1969, the Compton Community Development Agency found housing conditions "unsanitary and unsafe ...and a shortage of safe and sanitary dwellings" (Widaatalla, 1970, p. 223) for low-income residents. The agency adopted a resolution authorizing the local housing authority to develop, lease, own, and operate low-rent public housing. After lease agreements were made with homeowners (many of whom were White), units were subleased to low-income families. Accordingly, "while the homeowner is paid a fair market rent for his unit, a low-income tenant is charged a relatively smaller amount" (Widaatalla, 1970, p. 224-225). By the end of the 1960's only 46.5% of the properties in Compton were occupied by owners (1970 U.S. Bureau of the Census Housing Characteristics). Thus, while White homeowners received rents appropriate for middle-class units, they allowed their property to fall into a state of disrepair appropriate for the ghetto.

In addition to moving out of Compton, Whites also closed or moved their businesses elsewhere. In 1967, Compton's Committee on Business and Employment reported that there were few employment opportunities in the city, that many of the business and commercial properties were in disrepair, and that the quality of goods and services produced by business had begun to decline (Widaatalla, 1970). Companies like Flo Bailey's employment agency, which had a 30-year history of job assistance and training in Compton, relocated nearby to largely White Lakewood, epitomizing a loss of city tax revenue and employment opportunities. (*Los Angeles Times Classified* – Southeast, 1981, p. 9).

Historian Josh Sides (2006) found that as White residents and businesses moved out and Compton approached a Black majority, its Black residents recognized they were getting a raw deal (p. 190). Despite success in business, politics, social upkeep, and education, Compton's middle-class Blacks were lumped with lower-class Blacks as inferior. As the city was

ghettoized, property values fell and middle-class Blacks lost their wealth and status. They saw themselves being restricted by the stereotypes and doubts about Black capability.

Whites had already voiced their fears about what the city would become as Blacks moved in, and Blacks themselves began to make wagers about the future of Compton under Black leadership. In an article “What does it mean as blacks take over cities,” Black educator and leader Benjamin Mays (1971) predicted that in cities like Compton that became majority Black there would be a disturbing trend:

It will be interesting to watch the census in 1980, and 1990 and particularly in the year 2000. My prediction is that most of the large cities in America will be predominately black. This will be true because white people will be running to get away from black people. If this trend continues, there will be a financial crisis in supporting the school system in cities that are virtually black. Negroes being poorer, the black public school system will likely get less money from ad valorem tax. Then too if it is a black school system, the state legislature will be less inclined to appropriate the same amount of money for a black school system as it would for an all-white school or even a highly desegregated school system (*Chicago Defender*, 1971, p.8).

Whereas Benjamin Mays focused on the unwillingness of Whites to fund Black equality, the history of Compton illuminates the participation of Black elites in the exploitation of the ghetto.

White Ideology at Work

Because the pervasiveness of White supremacy ideology dominated social thinking, the new Compton with its majority Black population often operated by accommodating beliefs of Black inferiority, worthlessness, and disassociation. These played out in Compton even at the hands of Blacks who were in leadership roles. Both the city and schools began to reflect ideology of Blacks as worthless and reflect the ghetto as an internal colony (Allen, 2005; Blaut, 1973; Ture & Hamilton, 1967/92) from which wealth is extracted. Black violence, drugs, mismanagement, and corruption came to define Compton, and even worse, came to be embraced by its population.

As areas of the city shifted to a ghetto, leaders began to protest the city’s decline, but their actions actually reflected their participation in it. They voiced uncertainty about being able to maintain the city and blamed the new Black young majority.³ There was a faction of youth, who leaders claimed, interfered with progress in the city by drawing attention and resources to their hoodlumism. In a newspaper article, Reich (1969) reported, “Compton’s new leadership—in both City Hall and the schools—[was] pressing an imaginative array of development programs in an atmosphere,” however, they felt “impatience and hints of trouble from the young” (Reich, 1969, p. b1).

The prevailing thought was that the city’s and school’s abilities to perform under the new Black leadership would be stymied by behaviors of Black youth. School leaders began to highlight the behaviors of young Black (males in particular). For example, the entire Centennial senior class was taken to Griffith Park for a long discussion about city and school problems. The youth were derided because of instances of hoodlumism in both downtown business districts where store windows had been smashed, and fights at high school football games. Other events also served to focus discourse on the image of heightened Black male criminality. It was reported

³ Widaatalla (1970) explains that as the demographics shifted, and lower-income Blacks moved in, they tended to have younger children. There was a marked difference in the young population. Widaatalla provides a full census count of the differences in the number of children per household.

that after a night game between Centennial High School and Warren High School of Downey, one school administrator from another district attending the game was struck in the head with a hatchet and critically injured by a youth. According to the news report, the incident prompted the majority White Downey school district to leave the Coast League (Reich, 1969, p. 2). Such incidences of violence could not be rationalized and further solidified the belief among outsiders, as well as some Blacks in Compton, that the Black residents were indeed pathological.

In addition to those issues, Compton teachers reported being fearful of working on some school campuses. According to a survey, teachers stated “[d]isorderly students roam the halls and ground, particularly in the high school.” They noted that “while most students [were] well behaved, ‘thugs’ ha[d] the upper hand and created] a ‘siege of terror’ and vandalism in high schools” (Los Angeles Times, 1972, p. 3).

Other accounts of school violence in Compton included witness reports of Willie Frazier who walked into a math class on one of the high school campuses. He allegedly tried to rob a 16-year-old student, and after an exchange of words, the 16-year-old suddenly drew a .22-caliber revolver from his pocket and shot Frazier in the chest (*Los Angeles Times*, 1972, p. D.1). Reports of continuous violence and degradation in Compton fed the stereotypical White image of Blacks and the idea that Blacks make the ghetto. Allen (2005) asserts that these actions and media reports about violence were part of systematic efforts to repress Blacks and justify increased policing. He posits that after the Watts rebellions, “the demonization and criminalization” of young black men began in earnest. Many African-Americans were fearful that concentration camps were being set up for rebellious Black youth. Certainly, in and around Compton, Blacks were being increasingly policed.

In the city of Watts bordering Compton, an event commemorating the 3rd anniversary of the Watts riot, reflected the increasing police repression of which Robert Allen (2005) wrote. Police arrested a woman on suspicion of drunkenness, and bystanders reacted by hurling rocks and bottles. Reinforcements were called and sixty police officers were sent to the scene. By the end of the evening there had been an exchange of gun-fire, and some 200 officers swarmed the area around Will Rogers Park at 103rd and Compton Ave (*Chicago Defender*, 1968, p. 2).

City and School Politics under Black leadership

City leaders and school administrators in Compton were in a place of contradiction. Numerous accounts suggested that Black leaders promoted positive images of Compton and strived to improve the plight of the Black residents. However, Black exploitation, and instances of internalized racial oppression were demonstrated in political decisions and actions.

Compton’s first Black female mayor, Doris Davis, urged Blacks to use their economic power to support Black businesses and strengthen the Black community (Kuttner, 1974, p.13). Davis advocated support of the Black businesses and the Black community as part of self-determination and uplift. A year later Mayor Davis was criticized for living in a “plush residential section of Palos Verdes,” according to an article in the *Chicago Defender*. A suit had been filed by former Mayor Douglas Dollarhide challenging Davis’ right to hold the job as mayor as a non-resident (Payne, 1975, p. 8). Many viewed her disassociation from the city as a slight and as a sign that she was not truly invested city.

Other city leaders were charged with infractions that continued to weaken the struggling city. A news report noted that City Manager James S. Wilson was suspended for misusing city money on three trips without council approval. Additionally, Wilson was disciplined for poor job performance including: a municipal budget not prepared in a timely manner, hiring an

assistant city manager with no prior urban planning experience, and failure to submit certain police reports.

Compton's schools were also in dire trouble because many school administrators, like those leading the city, used the school for their private gain while claiming to serve students' interests. For example, Compton Unified School District Vice-President Saul Lankster protested the installation of plastic sprinklers because "standards specifications for public works constructs" mandated the use of metal sprinkler heads. He called the plastic sprinklers "inferior" and argued that the school district was in violation of federal law (Gorman, 1978, SE8). Whereas Lankster claimed to desire the best materials for Compton's children, maintenance and operation department chief Henry Wilson argued "the use of plastic heads was widely accepted throughout the country and that the city and county building codes permit plastic sprinkler heads" (Gorman, 1978, p. SE8). Plastic sprinkler constituted a rational and efficient use of district resources.

Soon, however, both Wilson and Lankster demonstrated where their real interests lie. The men, who were so vociferous in stating their positions to get the best material for the students and to save the district money, were part of the district's corruption. Lankster received raises of over \$10,000 per year for a doctorate and other degrees obtained from St. Stephens Bible College, an unaccredited college considered a diploma mill (Farr and LaRiviere, 1980, p. A6). In 1981, Wilson was fired for what school district attorney Melanie Lomax characterized as an example of "the corrupt activities and self-dealing of a few district employees which have plagued the district" (Einstein, 1983).

The activities that the board and superintendent identified as plaguing the district could also be seen in the actions of Compton Unified School District Assistant Superintendent Clinton Benton. He was fired by the school board based on charges that he helped then-board president Bernice Woods get a state credential to teach typing by falsifying her employment record. Benton 'blatantly misrepresented the length of her (Mary J. Woods) employment and the nature of her duties' the board said" (Currie, 1981, p. SE4). This along with the raises from unaccredited college meant that money that could have gone to students' instructional needs and operational needs were being used for salaries received dishonestly.

While Compton school board leaders and city leaders were in the throes of internal conflict, the city of Compton had a parallel history as it began to redirect its efforts from progress and development to policing. *The Los Angeles Times* reported, "City Manager Burton K. Willis began efforts to hire 10 new policemen" as part of the city's crime abatement plan which it has deemed the "number one project". But there was a sacrifice. "The 10-man expansion, when coupled with new hiring in the Building Department, threatened to pull the financial rug from under three other high-priority city projects—construction of a new civic center complex, development of the central business district, and development of a data processing system" (Los Angeles Times, 1973).

Increased policing was welcomed by Compton residents, many of whom voiced strong opposition to cutbacks in the police department. "I'm not frightened by a 30% cutback in the Police Department," Beverly Bennett confessed. "I'm scared to death". Her fears were shared by other residents who opposed Compton police cuts. Resident Anabelle Booker argued, "[p]erhaps we're mixed up. There are other places to look if something has to be cut. To have enough policemen in Compton should be a priority" (Gorman, 1976, p. SE7). Although the police force had its own issues and was split along racial lines as far as promotions and the purpose of

policing⁴, the force remained intact and grew steadily. Unfortunately, many other cuts in non-police spending were made between 1973 and 1976 and Compton had increasingly become a community where there were few business opportunities, recreational opportunities, and employment opportunities.

In 1975, Glenn Reeder, one of 23 members of the Los Angeles Grand Jury to provide insight into the condition of the community, visited Compton and found the following:

- 68 per cent of the people in Compton are on some kind of welfare
- Unemployment is an estimated 48 per cent.
- Last year there were 4,000 burglaries in Compton
- Its schools have a 40 to 50 per cent dropout record
- Two thousand homes have been abandoned because of residents moving out in fear or unable to keep up payments.
- The mortality rate at birth is twice that of the rest of the country (Fox, 1975, p. 20).

“The unemployment and crime rates [we]re high,” one community activist recalled, and “some of the neighborhoods look[ed] like a war zone” (Overend, 1980, p. G1).

As Compton became a Black city, it became increasingly difficult to undertake projects that would address the economic consequences of ghettoization. City officials argued that the racial and socio-economic status of its residents placed Compton in an impossible Catch-22. Efforts to secure private financing for a downtown shopping center, Redevelopment Director Margueretta Gulati argued, “would be bankable in any middle or upper-middle-income community, but it isn’t in Compton because we’re Black, poor and redlined.” The city could not attract private funders without a Federal Urban Development Grant, but, as Gulati observed, “without such financing being assured, it cannot comply with regulations” required to win the grant (“Being Black, Being Poor”, *Los Angeles Times*, 1979, p. SE6). Forced to settle for less, Compton’s city council had to “bow to reality and to what the city [could] both support and afford.” It endorsed a “limited-scale” shopping mall anchored by discount department stores or drug stores” (Faris, 1979, p. SE_A1).

The downtown district was not the only place city officials had to accept devaluation and disinvestment as a reality. In an article entitled “Compton Development: Was the Price Right?” *The Los Angeles Times*’ Frank Clifford described efforts to build a second shopping center. The city sold land which had been appraised for \$1.4 million to developers for \$500,000 and agreed to waive the first payment for five years (Clifford, 1982). Under the agreement “the city [would] not share in the profits of the [shopping] center, which was to include four major chain stores, a bank, a restaurant and several small shops” (p. C 1). Outgoing mayor Walter Tucker called the project “a give away and a gift of public funds”. Maxcy Filler defended the decision, “We’ve been looking since 1969 for a developer to work with us. In order to get something, you have to give up something” p. C 1). The discounted land for the mall was yet another instance in which the Black city faced a lose-lose choice.

Rather than continuing to play a losing game, city officials began to make peace with efforts to exploit the ghetto. The new Black leadership took on the role of sub-oppressors who began to oppress the community themselves (Freire, 1993). “There has been a total of lack of

⁴ A 1976 article in the *Los Angeles Times* indicated sharp division among officers in the Police Department – a split primarily along racial lines emerged with both black and white officers exchanging charges of discrimination, internal power grabs within the department and lack of concern about the community” (p. SE1) The majority of Black police offices left the Compton Police Officers Association because of the philosophical differences around the nature of policing Blacks in the community and because they were passed over for promotions.

discipline by the administration of this city,” City Manager Rouzan contended. “There has been very little commitment to the city from some of its officials and workers” (Overend, 1980, p. 25). In one example, Los Angeles County superintendent of schools’ office refused to process payments to for contractors who had charged the Compton Unified School District \$188,000 for maintenance jobs. The reason was that the projects were not put out to bid, and according to the California Education Code, the district is required to put out to bid any project that exceeds \$8,000. Over time, the city attorney was suspended by the State Bar for irregular financial practices in his private law firm; the superintendent for schools received his doctorate degree from a local diploma mill (Overend, 1980, p. G1).

Comptonites pointed the finger everywhere except toward themselves. Parents blamed police, school principals, and city and state officials for school violence. “If they can’t do the job,” one mother observed at a public meeting, “they should get up out of the seat.” City Councilman Maxcy Filler, in turn, placed the blame back on parents. “We know when our children commit crimes... I submit to you that we could stop crime tomorrow if we stop buying hot goods that come around our homes; if we stop our youngsters from bringing home that \$200 bike that we know we didn’t give him money for.... I think its time we start laying the blame where it should be, and there’s only one place for that,” Filler concluded, “the home” (Einstein, 1983, p. SE1). “Some of the parents work all the time,” Superintendent Ted Kimbrough conceded. “They don’t know their child is in a gang.” Still, he claimed, once the school district join with police to identifying gang members and let parents know about their children, “the parents won’t have the privilege of saying that they don’t know their child is in a gang” (p. 12).

The bar of achievement had fallen so low that the idea of just surviving in Compton was viewed as an accomplishment. “The best thing about Compton,” Mayor Cade claimed, “is that we have survived. After 13 years of Black control, the city hasn’t folded” (Overend, 1980, p. 26).

Answering The Hail – Black Ghetto Comptonites

The structures of poverty and discrimination do not fully explain the degradation of civic and political life in Compton. Rather, the Althusserian (1971) notion of interpellation, which requires the subject to constitute himself by answering the hail and performing accordingly, is also relevant to the shaping of many Comptonites. The city’s Black denizens—both its leaders and its lower-class residents facing poverty and discrimination, heard the white supremacist call that named them as gangsters, and they answered that hail. Through their criminal behavior and moral vice, they began to play out the ghetto pathology. It was the process of interpellation that provided ammunition for politicians and conservatives to justify policing, disassociation, and stereotyping.

The media highlighted the negative behaviors of Blacks in order to call into question their ethics and humanity and demonstrate how Blacks epitomized the stereotypes. For example, countless newspapers were preoccupied by Compton residents Ruby Jean Murphy and her cousin Barbara Williams, who were convicted of a \$240,000 welfare fraud. The pair used phony birth certificates to claim 30 non-existent children. Prosecuting attorney James Cooper called it “the biggest case of welfare fraud in the nation” (*New York Times*, 1978, p. A3), and it contributed significantly to the “politics of disgust” (Hancock, 2006) in which the image of the Black welfare queen was used in political discourse to justify conservative agendas and disinvestment in social welfare programs ranging from education to Aid for Dependent Children.

Even more than welfare fraud, however, reports of drug use, drug dealing and violence in Compton defined the city and shaped the image of Blacks as heavily dependent upon, and

exploiting the state. They added to the already pathologized image of the Black ghetto inhabitant. And Black Comptonites increasingly embraced the interpolated identity. A Compton man stabbed another Compton man to death over disagreement about a \$10 narcotics sale. Saved from death by a passing California highway patrolman after a chemical explosion in a Compton motel, 24-year-old Duane Davis was later booked later into a County-UCS Medical Center jail ward on suspicion of operating a PCP factory (*Los Angeles Times* – The Southland, 1980, B2). Through such behaviors, Blacks both reflected and facilitated the emerging War of Drugs, which, as legal scholars Kenneth Nunn (2002) and Michelle Alexander (2010) explains, was a central weapon in the systemic process of mass Black incarceration that she deemed the “New Jim Crow.”

Music as Interpellation

Ghettoization was also reflected in Compton’s music. From 1947 through 1962, Compton’s Civic Symphony Orchestra operated under the motto: Living Music for our Community; by the late 1980, gangster rap was the music of Compton. The change in music reflected not only Compton’s evolving demographics, but also the change in mentality

As Compton moved toward a ghetto, music and media were major contributors to the perpetuation of the image of pathology. N.W.A.’s 1988 album “Straight Outta Compton” was a landmark in this process. Full of threats, obscenities and gunshots, the album sold millions and spent 79 weeks on Billboard’s Top 200 album chart (Mills, 1990, p. G1).

In the title track, members of the N.W.A group boast of their identities as Compton-constructed thugs. First, “straight outta Compton, a crazy motherfucker named Ice Cube” claims to “squeeze the trigger” of his sawed off shot gun and have “bodies hauled off” in response to having been “called off.” Next MC Ren, “straight outta Compton, another crazy ass nigga” brags that the more “punks [he] smokes” the bigger his reputation gets. Easy E. is the third artist who positions him coming straight outta Compton. He is “a brother that’ll smoke yo mother, and make your sister think I love her.” The lyrics paint a portrait of Compton as the epitome of Black youth violence.

A number of scholars have argued that rap constitutes an oppositional culture resistance. Chang (2006), Quinn (2004), Kelley (1994), and others have suggested that violence, misogyny, and poverty is capitalized upon by rappers as an alternative to an existence of poverty, or working a low-skilled, low-wage jobs. “[A]s subcultural style,” Chang concludes, “hip hop created alternative economies of value. As a site of commodification and entrepreneurship, it created alternative economies” (p. 546).

Similarly, Tricia Rose (1999) argues that rappers push back against institutional and ideological power within hip-hop discourse. As young Black men, rappers confront the “public school system, the police, and the popular media [which] perceive and construct them as a dangerous internal element in urban America—an element that if allowed to roam about freely will threaten the social order, an element that must be policed” (p. 279). Through rap, they expose the reality of ghetto life and give voice to the alienation it produces. It thus constitutes a political statement against the social and political structure. Even if, as Theresa Martinez’s (1997) argues, rappers like N.W.A. “may never act on their grievances,” or even “not yet have discovered ... a discourse of resistance; may be effectively barred from voicing opposition by economic and/or political constraints” (p. 269), it nevertheless suggests the complexity of resistance against the dominant culture.



Figure 9. The album cover for N.W.A's "Straight Outta Compton" illustrates the positioning of Black males and the image of violence that is willingly portrayed.

Still, rap scholars exaggerate the counterhegemonic elements of rap and understate its role in the internalization of Black inferiority. The possibility of escaping the ghetto by the use of rap was a pipe-dream for most. This option for the few, like the exploitation of the ghetto by Black "leaders," comes at the sacrifice of the many. Moreover, it requires rappers to embody the very sub-human identity used to oppress them. It romanticizes artists who boast degradation. Leading members of N.W.A, as critics noted, were middle class, college educated poseurs; their purposeful construction of themselves as Compton gangsters seemingly indicates either the internalization White supremacy and/or a privileging of opportunism over cultural integrity.

The cover to N.W.A.'s "straight Outta Compton" album epitomizes its compromised politics. It represents a carefully constructed discourse of Compton and what comes out of Compton. Positioning themselves around what appears to be an open grave with the viewer positioned as a victim of gun violence, N.W.A. group members perpetuate the violence that had come to constitute Compton. The scathing gaze of six Black males, one of whom is pointing a gun right at your face, reminds holders of the album that they are victims of repression and violence at the same time as, by enjoying the album, they embrace and perpetuate it. The cover does not reflect anger or resistance against the police because the artists could not direct the violence toward the police without risking retaliation. Instead, it made the young person of color (the consumer) the victim of violence and anger. This photo, staged for the purpose of promotion, demonstrates how these youth have consented to projecting a pathologized image of Compton as a place of violence and death.

With songs like "Fuck Tha Police," "Straight Outta Compton" implicates and criticizes institutions that contributed to the making of violent gangsters is a complex as well as celebrating violence and gang life (or so it seems). Indeed, "Fuck Tha Police" carefully names

the colonial policing structure. Still, the political consciousness is not revolutionary. Rather, it constitutes the internalization and willing reproduction of the subhumanity. The songs verbalize and portray the ways that gangsters in Compton project the pathology about themselves. As a result, the city became the quintessence of ghetto, and its rappers became the messengers that pushed the ideology of Black degradation. They thereby made it easier for others to consent and answer the hail – the external construction of a subject's identity through the ideology, action and discourses of social institutions.

The glorification of gangbanging and violence in Compton echoed in ghettos across the United States. In his 1992 hit “Jus’ Lyke Compton,” DJ Quik described how violence, gangbanging, and “set trippin” extended to neighborhoods that had “never even seen the Shaw”⁵. Quik’s lyrics were a product of artistic license, but elements rang true nationwide in neighborhoods that matched Compton’s racial and economic demographic. Whatever their unique elements, Black ghettos are defined by their poverty, racial dynamic, limited economic and social mobility opportunities, poor economic systems, and policing (Clark, 1965; Spear, 1967; Glasgow, 1981; Jones 2010; Wacquant, 2002). Compton demonstrated that the mentality of the ghetto is more than the constructed physical space. Those for him gang and drug-ridden, violent Compton was an acceptable image of who they were and how young Black residents of the ghetto began to romanticize, reproduce and prefer those spaces. The ghetto was established and internalized. The ending of DJ Quik’s lyrics exemplify this.

After about a month on the road
We came home and I could safely say
That LA is a much better place to stay
How could a bunch of niggas in a town like this
Have such a big influence on niggas so far away?

For DJ Quik, the pathologized “niggas” of Compton/LA modeled of the internalization of their surroundings and a colonized mentality.

Conclusion

By the late 1980’s when the rappers and gangsters in Compton were celebrating the city’s violence the population was only 6% White, and steadily declining. The culture of Compton changed because White racism forced all Blacks into the same category. The White imagination ghettoized the Black body resulting in a space in which its members were exploited and its culture negatively impacted.

Death of the Native Culture

The cultural experience of Blacks has been stymied by a history of oppression in this country – namely slavery. However, even within the confines of slavery, Blacks created culture in the form of music, food, dance, and art. Fanon argues,

The setting up of the colonial system does not of itself bring about the death of the native culture. Historic observations reveal, on the contrary, the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression” (Fanon, 1967, p. 34)

⁵ In the lyrics, the author describes the behaviors of people on the notorious strip of Crenshaw in Los Angeles. The violence, low-riders, side-shows and gangbanging had become part of “cruising Crenshaw”. It is shown in movies like *Boys in the Hood* (1991) and *Menace II Society* (1993).

In its fixed colonial state, the culture of the native, then, will reify colonial expectations, which are essentially pathologized. Leonardo and Hunter (2009) argue that because of the cultural forms perpetrated in the media, “an archetype of white urban imagination is that *blacks are a rap video*, complete with accompanying expectations that they should behave in such a manner” (p. 151) The music of N.W.A. and others is fodder for this expectation.

The culture, “present and mummified, it testifies against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal” (Fanon, 1967, p. 34). The cultural mummification leads to mummification of the individual and the perpetuation of ghettoization. Blacks in Compton became fixed in the colonial state. Although a few Blacks escaped out Compton or were able to enrich themselves within it, they did so by answering a hail which required the degradation and oppression of all.

Chapter 4 - City and School Resources and the Masking of the Ghetto

Introduction

The previous two chapters focused on the racist ideology that defined the Compton ghetto. This chapter builds upon that analysis by focusing on how this racist ideology manifested itself in resource allocation and expenditures in the city and its schools.

Scholars have long noted that the type of resources in ghetto and urban neighborhoods impacts Blacks socially and psychologically (Clark, 1965; Lewis, 1966; Wilson, 1989; Hanushek, 2011). These factors in the broader neighborhood are reflected within its institutions and structures. As such, scholars have further argued that inequality of resources in the schools is a significant source of academic failure among Black students (Anyon, 1999; Kozol, 1991; Hanushek, 2011). Some have further demonstrated how ghetto schools foster a ghettoized mentality among black youth (Ogbu & Fordham, 1986). This chapter combines these two strands of scholarship, examining how resource allocation serves as a mechanism through which the white racist ideology that shaped Compton gets transmitted into the minds of Black youth. Moreover, because resources in the schools are a microcosm that reflects the broader pattern of resource inequity, I explore both city and school resource expenditure and allocation in relation to the emergence of the Compton ghetto.

This chapter answers the research question, “what is the relationship between resource allocation and ghettoization?” In order to answer this question, I use two methodological approaches. I first explore how resources and allocations operate under the specific racial positioning of Compton residents. Building upon the previous chapter’s findings that White residents and political leaders in Compton segregated and oppressed Blacks based upon a belief in White superiority and Black inferiority, I explore whether data on spending and revenue reflected that ideology. I examined the resource shift in the city focusing on parks & recreations and police resources because of their particular relationship to the ghetto and its pathological construction. I then examine school resource allocation. I synthesize the various forms of data to illuminate how resources are connected to the racial/racist history of the city and the schools. Lastly, through quantitative data discourse analysis, I discuss how the very data used to illustrate Compton city and school positionings are themselves a reflection of the racialized process of domination.

Methodology

Although scholars have framed resources as a key issue impeding educational achievement in urban and inner city schools, few scholars have addressed how resource expenditures and revenue decisions over a time period contribute to the transformation of the neighborhoods and schools. Anyon (1997) examined some underlying political and class issues that shaped funding and the ghettoization of schools, and Massey and Denton (1993) detailed how the ghetto has been constructed by examining segregation and the distribution of resources within segregated areas. Neither study, however, offers a chronological picture of how resource expenditures and revenue reflect the role of the White racist ideology that created the ghetto for Blacks regardless of class status.

In order to conceptualize the role of resources in creating the Compton ghetto, this chapter employs a mixed method design in which I use quantitative data analysis, and a qualitative method that I am terming quantitative data discourse analysis. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allows for an examination of how racist ideology operating in expenditures, allocations, and resource data related to Compton’s transformation.

In the first section of this chapter, I address the research question – “what is the relationship of resources to ghettoization?” - by examining monetary resource data. While there are other substantial types of resources like caring, qualified teachers, and facilities (Siddle-Walker, 1996; Grubb, 2009), I focus on monetary resources in Compton city and schools with the understanding that many other resources are acquired when funds are available.

The most descriptive monetary data were housed in the Annual Report of Financial Transactions Concerning the Cities of California, and the Annual Report of Financial Transactions Concerning the School Districts of California. These along with Census data illuminated per pupil spending. The annual reports provided all fiscal year data reported to the California State Controller’s office. If a city did not have data for a particular category (for example, Compton has no data for Ports and other Harbors), it is expected that there would be zero reported for that category.

In California city data for July 1, 1960 – June 30 -1961 through the 1986 fiscal year, there were 25 expenditure variables in 6 different categories. The categories, which were defined by the California Controller’s office, included City Management, Government Debt, Government Non-Debt Operational Expenses, Public Safety, Public Works and Miscellaneous Expenses. The dollar figures were divided into expenses and outlays – payments made by cash, check, issuance of bonds or notes, or other non-cash equivalents. These figures were combined to account for the total expenditures.

Though numerous variables reported in each category, police, public safety, and parks & recreation were selected for deeper interrogation. These are most relevant to understanding the relationship and intersection of resources, race, and community that contribute to the formation of a ghetto.

The school data were gathered in a similar method, relying on the predetermined categories for reporting data provided by the California State Controller’s Office. I focus on the categories Personnel Expenses, Instructional Expenses, and Operating Expenses for analysis. These three areas are conceptualized in literature about ghetto schools as having the most salient impact on the achievement of students (Anyon, 1999; Grubb, 2009).

In order to conduct an historical analysis of financial data, I used a cost index that provided a dollar conversion value. According to Economist Eric Hanushek (1999), “[t]he idea behind price indices is that they should provide an indication of how much more it costs today than yesterday to purchase the same amount of a given commodity” (p. 19). The financial resource data for both the city and schools were transformed into constant dollar value to make this historical comparison plausible. I selected the Consumer Price Index because of its widely accepted use in the US Department of Labor Statistics reports of trends in Federal, State, and Local spending. I constructed simple graphs and tables of changes of revenue and expenses over time in order to provide a visual narrative of how resources allocation evolved. I then used the Bureau of Labor Statistics index and CPI calculator from CSG network⁶. The difference between dollar value in 1965 and 1986 reflect a 3.48 influence index (i.e., \$1.00 in 1965 = \$3.48 in 1986). There is a 247.9% change in value. City expenditure data is explored from 1961 – 1980, and the conversion value is \$2.76 (i.e. \$1.00 in 1961 = \$2.76 in 1980).

⁶ Consumer Support Group has a consumer price index calculator similar to that of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The calculations only differ in rounding. CSG rounds to the 10’s place.

Quantitative Data Discourse Analysis

Data had to be cleaned to account for missing values and discontinued categories. For example, the city resource data did not include revenue from 1973. Those data were not available in the California Annual Report of Financial Transactions Concerning Cities housed in the UC Berkeley Northern Regional Library Facility and no explanation was provided for the omission. As a result data trends do included that year. Similarly in California Annual Report of Financial Transactions Concerning School Districts, most 1970 categories have values of \$0. No explanation was provided for the omission. As a result, 1970 values have been omitted from the data analysis and charts in order to provide more accurate picture of data trends. Other such cleaning was done throughout to account for omissions.

As I will discuss in greater detail, the quantitative data was frequently unreliable. Moreover, quantitative reports bore little relationship to numerous other claims about the level of resource available in schools. Rather than treat this as a limitation of the data, I treat this as a finding to be discussed. After I lay out the ways data narratives are constructed, I offer a quantitative data discourse analysis of revenue and expenditure data.

This work on quantitative data discourse analysis explores how neutral data reports of resource categories obscure racist ideology and politics of domination. Unlike the work presented by social scientists like Tukufu Zuberi, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Angela James and others (See Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva, 2008) who rightly demonstrate racial biases embedded in statistical methodology that uses “race” as a variable without accounting for the social construction of race, I argue here that numerical data is also impacted by racism and biases. Specifically, categories where numeric resource or expenditure data were presented contrasted with actual realities of resource lack in Compton.

In the quantitative data discourse analysis, I draw from Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992) and Norman Fairclough’s 3-dimensional framework in which he asserts, “[d]iscourse constitutes the social. Three dimensions of social are distinguished 1) knowledge, 2) social relations, and 3) social identity.” These three dimensions of discourse are “shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies” (p. (1992). They apply also to social forces and ideologies underlying decisions and perceptions prevalent in constructing data reports.

Through this process, the annual financial transactions for the city and school districts, were examined alongside historical primary sources – newspapers, city manager reports, letters, and archived material related to Compton City and Schools. This examination of the data reporting addressed the rationale of two data collection processes: 1) compliance and 2) use. The data in the city and schools were reported to the State of California Controller’s office for compliance, not for use (Guidera, 2013). These data were not audited, nor were they scrutinized for accuracy, but they remain trusted reports used by scholars and the state to triangulate state and federal fund allocation with local education agencies.

Data reported is for compliance/storage (one-directional) or for political, social, and educational use and dissemination inform the quality of data. In fact, quality of data, more than its availability, was crucial to the narratives constructed and conclusions drawn. The data in the city and schools were reported to the State of California Controller’s office for compliance, not for use (Guidera, 2013).

Census and resource data described are further expanded upon in the sections below. While each section concludes with a discussion of relevance and a critical analysis of the data, the chapter must be viewed as a collective of these components. To recall from Chapter 2 middle-class Blacks moved to Compton for a search for a better life. Poorer Blacks moved to

Compton for the same reasons but had less mobility. In each case, the move to Compton had much to do with the resources in Compton and the opportunities associated with a well-resourced city and schools. The resources in Compton would determine how many opportunities Blacks would have to pursue their American Dream. I take up city and school resources in the next section.

City Resources

While the previous chapter illustrated how Black presence impacted Compton's spatial dynamic, this chapter focuses on whether the financial resources changed, accommodated, or resisted Black presence in Compton. Where the majority of funds were spent spoke to the city's priorities during this time period. Figure 10 details Compton spending over two decades during which the population was changing drastically.

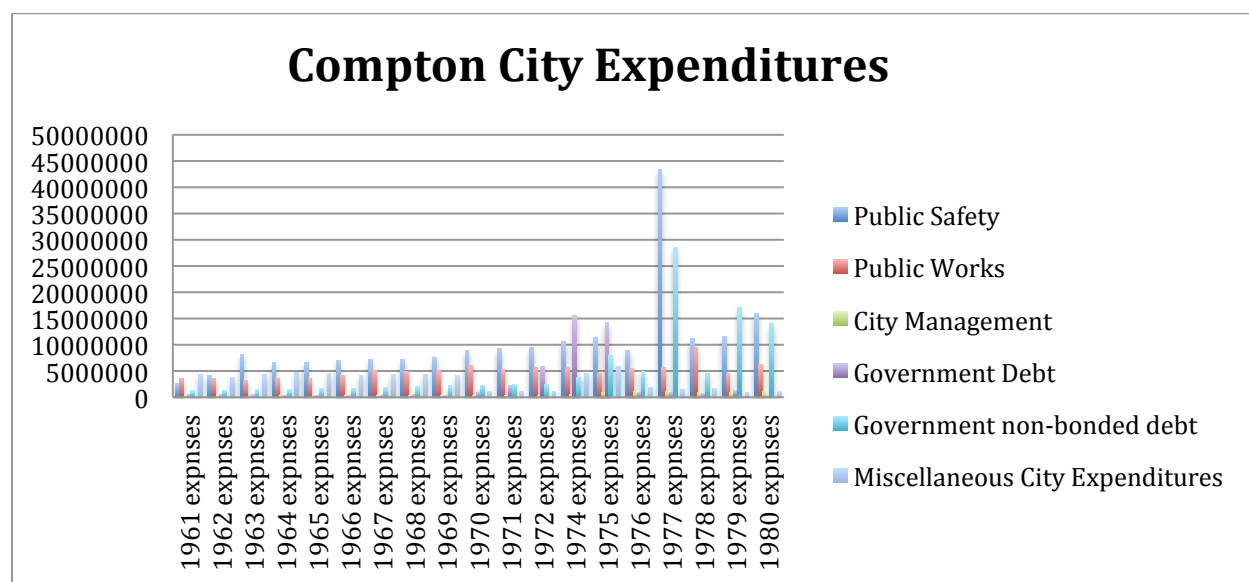


Figure 10. This figure demonstrates how major city categories changed overtime. Source: *Annual Report of Financial Transactions Concerning the Cities of California*.

The categories constituting city expenditures in 1986 dollars show that Public Safety had always been an important part of city spending. In 1961, the public safety total was \$2,589,705. This figure was 16% of the total budget. Nearly ten years later in 1971, the \$9,203,775 Public Safety budget was 31% of Compton's \$110,066,401 yearly budget. In the 1980, Public Safety dollars were 55% of the total budget- \$51,280,662 of the \$92,585,867 city budget.

Compton's investment in Public Safety included several data points and it fluctuated over time, but what was consistent within that category was an increase in police and fire expenditures. Public safety showed steady incline from 1961 through 1976, with policing expenditure being highest. Yet, in 1977 (the year in which policing data were low and problematic), public safety spending drops \$32,274,862 from \$43,382,664 to \$11,107,802. There was a steady increase through 1980, but in 1981 a \$35,011,984 decrease. However, that same year, police spending had increased and now constituted 57% of the Public Safety budget.

Policing expenditures were examined more closely because of the relationship between policing and the ghetto (Blauner, 1969; Weitzer, 2000; Rios, 2011). And since the ghetto is partially characterized by the amount of violence that exists (Spear, 1967; Osofsky, 1966; Clark, 1965; Wilson, 1987), examining the nature of "public safety" through police expenditures in

Compton reveals the ways in which safety was prioritized to protect against real or imagined violence. Because scholarship has generally pointed to policing as a mechanism for repression and oppression (Althusser, 1971) in Black communities, the data for policing expenditures are presented as they relate to the Public Safety category. The policing expenditures (converted to 1986 constant dollars) are presented in the chart⁷ below.

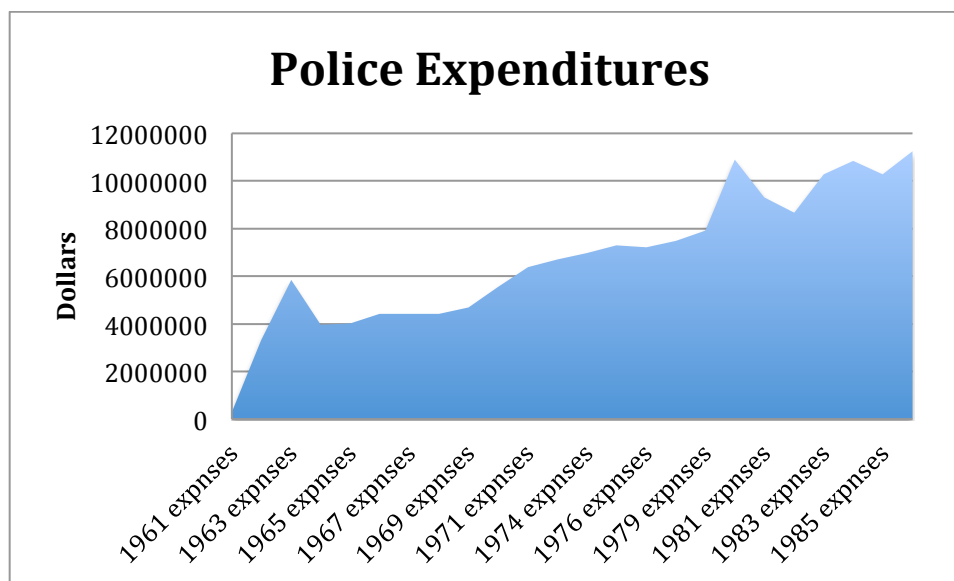


Figure 11. Shows steep increases in police spending through as the demographics shift. Source: Annual Report of Financial Transactions Concerning the Cities of California.

In 1961, police protection was \$292,572. This amount is so miniscule that the graph appears to be a zero. However, the increase in spending that began in 1962 when the amount spent rose from \$3,020,392 to \$3,312,969. This began a trend of increased policing in the city. The figure below details the importance of policing over the decades. Revenue figures also demonstrated that increased funds for special police services in the city.

⁷ The chart for police expenditures omits the data for 1977 because the drastic drop in police spending is unaccounted for in the report. The data is such an outlier in the data that keeping it in would mask the trend of Compton's investment in police as the demographics shifted.

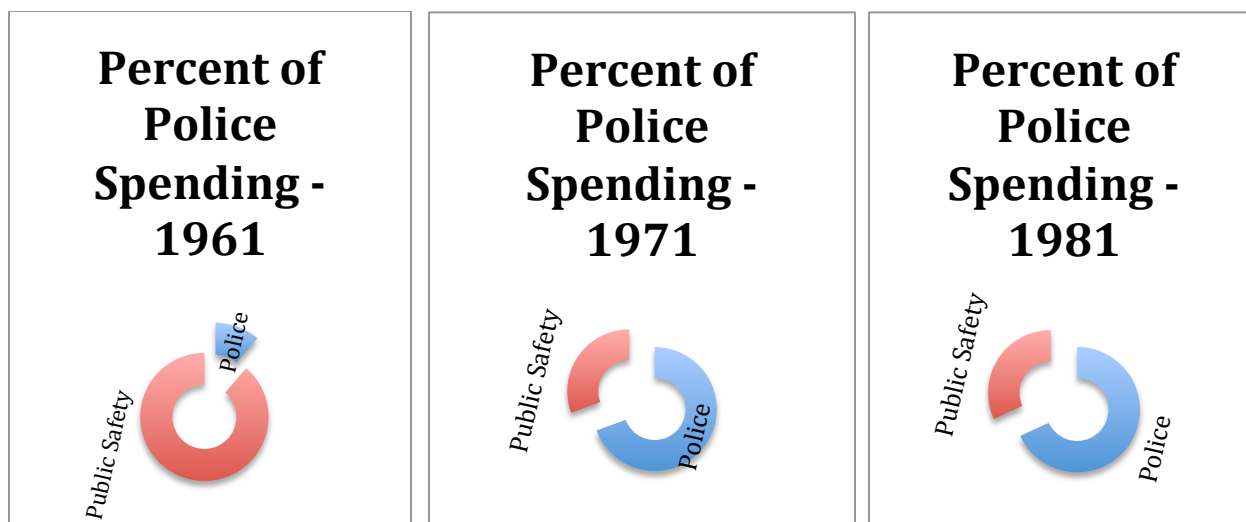


Figure 12. - Police spending from 1961, 1971 and 1981. 1981 police spending increased to 68% of public safety dollars. Source: Annual Report of Financial Transactions Concerning the Cities of California.

The changes in police spending coincide with the increase of Black residents in Compton. Figures demonstrate the increase in policing from 11% of the public safety funds to 69% in 1971 and 68% in 1980. The expenditures were \$2,589,705, \$6,384,848 and \$9,314,467 respectively. This increase where police spending constituted the majority of public safety spending delineates a commitment to policing. In spite of other cuts to the budget, police expenditures became larger and larger portions of the public safety budget, which itself dominated spending in Compton.

The language of public safety in reports from the city remained racially neutral, and other cities have likewise practiced a commitment to public safety (Reid, 1988). However, the racialized character of increased policing in Compton suggested by its centrality in the emergence of Gangsta Rap and its protests against police brutality in Compton. Increased investment in policing was a central component to repression and maintaining the *internal ghetto colony* (Ture and Hamilton 1967/1992).

Parks and Recreation

While policing itself is a well-known component of ghettoization, a more subtle form of the process can be attributed to parks and recreation as part of city leisure and opportunity. Parks and recreations detail levels of neglect and demonstrate resources for youth that ultimately determine experience and opportunity. Older Compton residents in this study delineated the change in available activities in the parks, arguing that a recreation centers has been a key cause of how youth became wayward.

Numerous studies detail how social inequities play out in city parks, and scholars like Loukaitou-Sideris and Stieglitz (2002) and Wridt (2004) contend that the inequality in spending and offerings exemplify racialized differences in society. Wridt notes that the social, spatial, and environmental experiences of children are shaped by their park opportunities and by the activities available within the spaces.

The possibilities and perils of parks are part of the history of Compton's historical shift. The data for parks and recreation spending is provided in the following table.

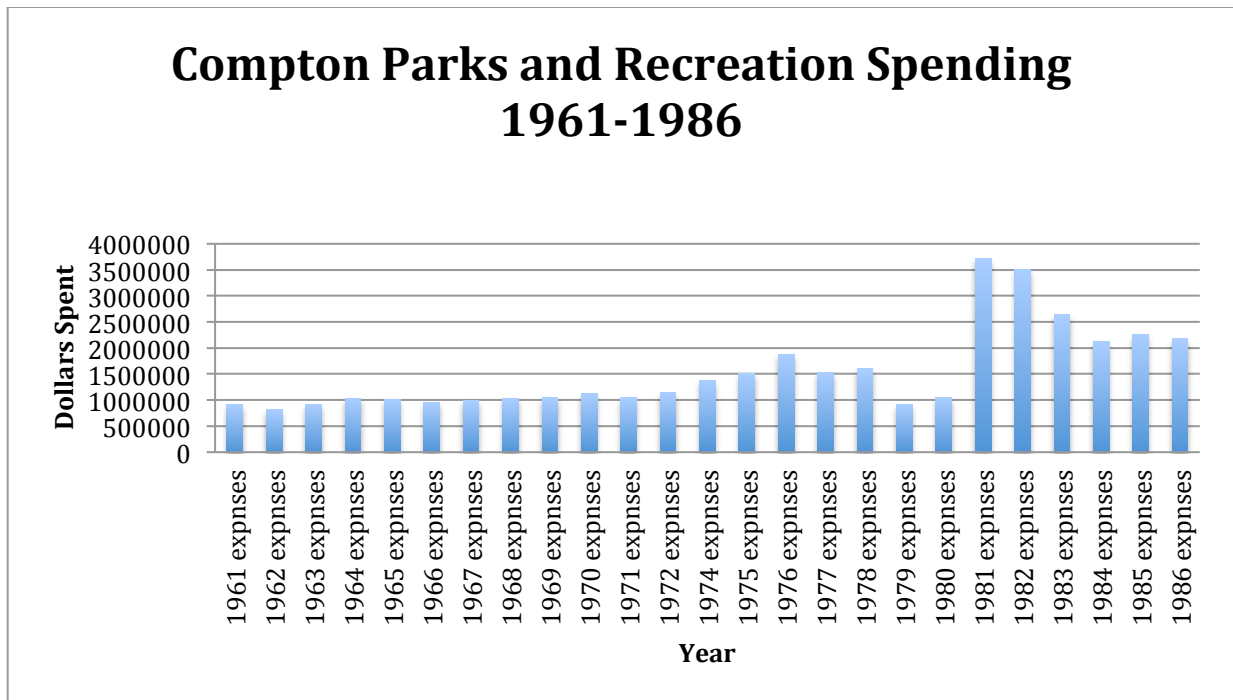


Figure 13. – Compton Parks and Recreation. This figure illustrate historical spending patterns document in the city. Source: Annual Financial Transactions Concerning the Cities of California.

These figures in parks and recreation spending, however, do not blatantly demonstrate a disinvestment or inequality of which Wridt (2004) and others speak. The amount of city funds allocated to parks in 1961 was \$906,954. This figure, in constant funds, made up 25% of the total budget of \$3,609,811. Two decades later by 1981, over \$3.7 million dollars were allocated to parks in Compton. During this time, the population of Compton was majority Black. The increase in funding to the park is laudable, but the decline in park use during this period appears to demonstrate waste, especially as residents reported a reduction in activities.

The reduction in activities is not corroborated by the city data. The Compton Park and Receptions department kept no record of the change in activities, so systematic ways in which Blacks and Whites in Compton were accommodated were demonstrated in park and recreations only by an understanding of how park use is structured. Value placed on Black use versus White use of facilities ultimately began to shape the types of services. Gold (1972) posited that parks began their decline because of non-use. He further argued that as city planners began to accommodate users instead of nonusers, quality changes. To this point, Revell (1967) states “the very word park raises in most minds the image of a formal area nearly empty or partly field with disreputable characters” (as cited by Gold, p. 370). As more Blacks used the parks and recreations facilities in Compton, White residents were grouped as the nonusers. For Gold, the implications for [White] nonuse on the support of park and recreation systems contributed to park decline.

Revenue from parks decreased, while expenditures for parks in Compton increased, and the parks themselves began to be associated with Black youth who used the space. Fletsch (1988) reported that Compton police were able to return two gang-ridden parks back to the people of Compton after establishing strong police substations. She asserted noted that for years the park was underused and the services were not taken advantage of by residents. In Fletsch’s

conceptualization the criminal pathology rather than social inequality defines the historical transformation of the parks. The data about park spending and revenue miss both frames.

Education Spending/Revenue Resources into Schools

While city spending, especially in policing and recreation, casts some light on Compton's historical transformation, I argue that spending in Compton's schools is also a significant factor for understanding the construction of a ghetto. Schooling and indoctrination determines the type of citizens and how they are shaped for employment (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Cookson & Persell, 1986). The types of schooling are in many senses shaped by resources (Brown v. Board, 1954). Categories of resource revenue into the school from Federal, State, County/Local entities show a difference in contribution.

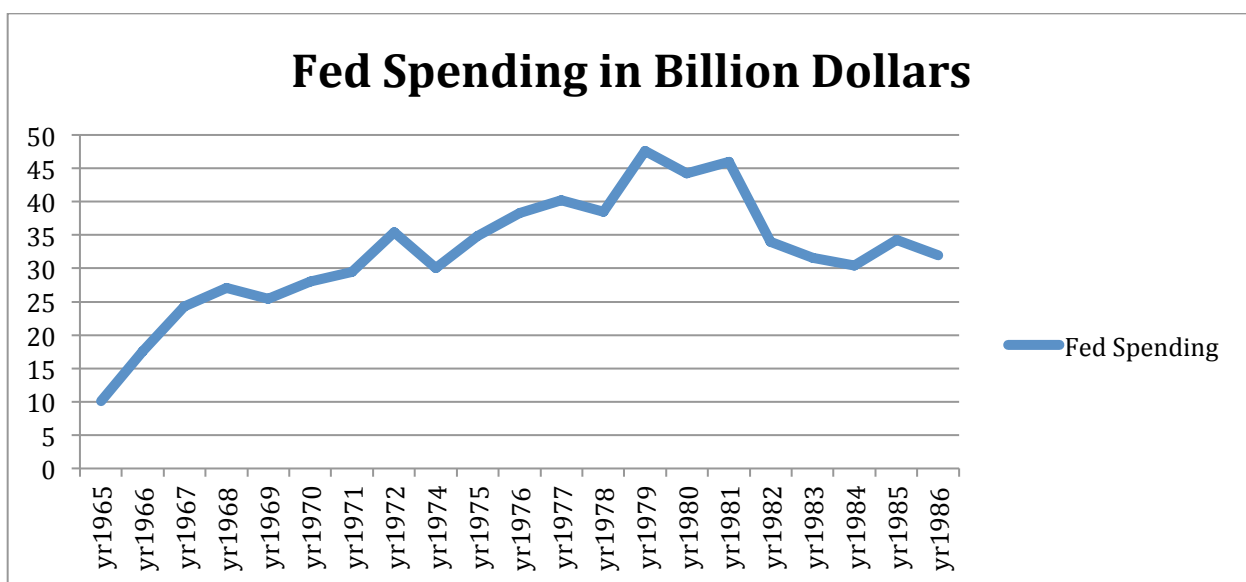


Figure 14. Illustrates the Federal spending on education from 1965-1986.

Federal spending on education steadily increased, peaked and began to decline in 1978. In 1965, Federal spending for education in California was \$10.1 billion. Over the next 2 decades, 1975 and 1985 the values were \$34.8 billion and \$34.4 billion respectively. The peak in federal spending on education was 1979 - \$47.6 billion. The 1980 fiscal year marked the slow downward trend. This decline in federal spending on education coincided with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

The federal contribution to Compton's school districts, however, has never been the largest portion of revenue. California education data indicates decades of state disinvestment. So though the state remained the largest contributor to Compton Unified School District, the percentage waned dramatically over years. See figure 15 below. It details the period 1965 -1986 for which the data were gathered, the amount of State funds remained the largest amount of funds contributed to the school district.

The State of California has had a tumultuous history of funding. In 1957, California was ranked #1 in the US in per pupil spending⁸. But, beginning in the 1970's the state had decades of

⁸ Per pupil spending is the General Spending total for the State divided by the total enrollment. These figures were taken from the U.S. Census Bureau: Finances of School Districts and Public School Systems. I use this formula to calculate the per pupil spending for Compton Unified School District as well.

disinvestment in education, according to the California Budget Project report (2011). California began investing less than other states nation-wide, and by 1987, California was ranked 21st in the nation with \$4,150. This amount was \$5,198 less than Alaska who led the nation in per pupil spending at \$9,348. The decreased financial investment in education, according to the report, means that the state was less able to meet the needs of students in California.

The state has traditionally been the largest source of education revenue. The year in which the state contributed the most to education funding was 1979. During this year that followed Proposition 13 and the drastic reduction of local tax funds into the school, the state contributed \$83, 969,110 to Compton Unified School District of the total \$104,648,436 received. This constituted 80.2% of the funds received. The local fund contribution was only \$8,992,361. During this period, the state supplemented funds to school districts that were impacted by the fiscal pressure created by a cap on local property taxes (Reid, 1988)

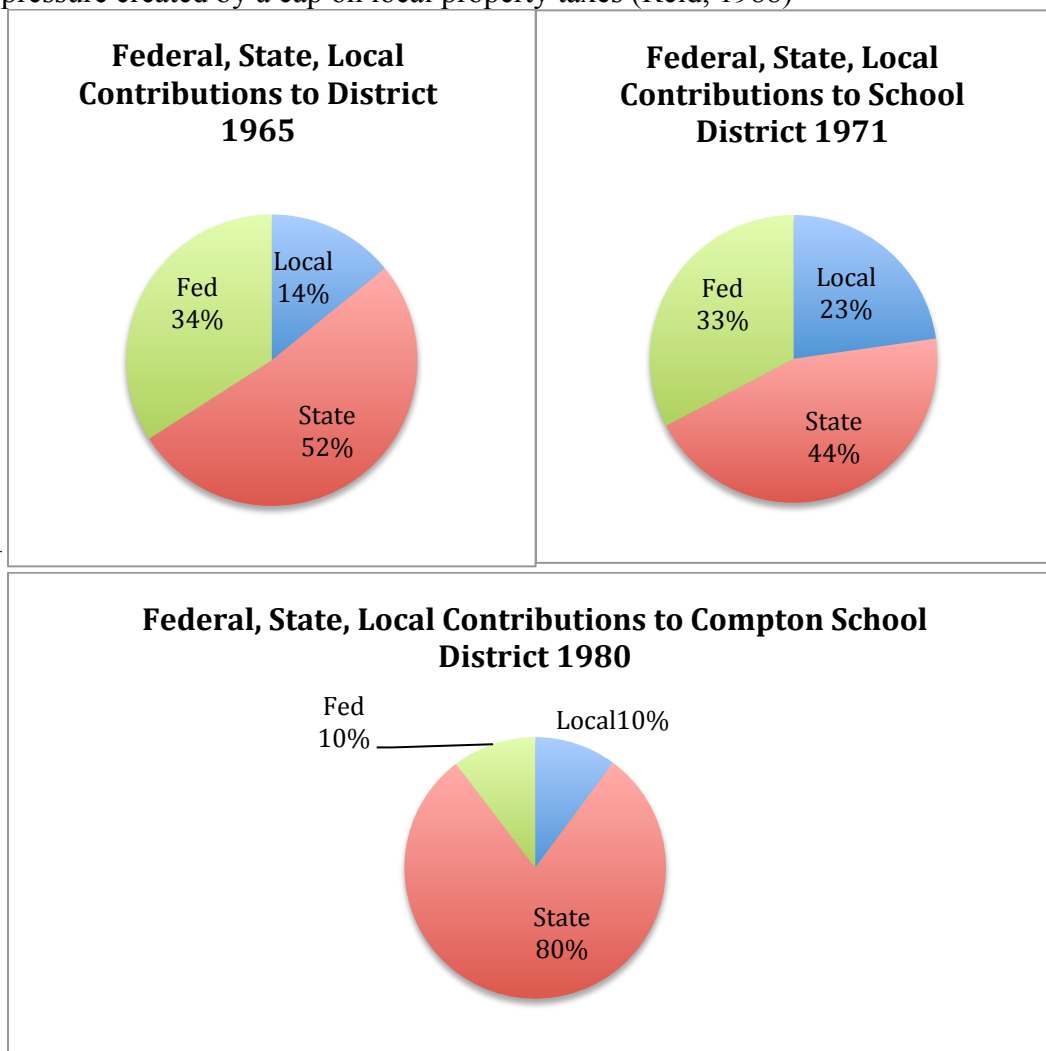


Figure 15. The percentage of funding in Compton overtime demonstrates that California State has always been the largest contributor to the city.

School Expenditures

Per pupil spending in California has changed notably in its ranking. There had been steady funding but less commitment to funding education than other states. According to the report by the national school finance data, the state funding declined drastically from #1 in the

1950's to 21st in 1987. This proved problematic for Compton schools even as Compton's district funding kept consistent with the state average.

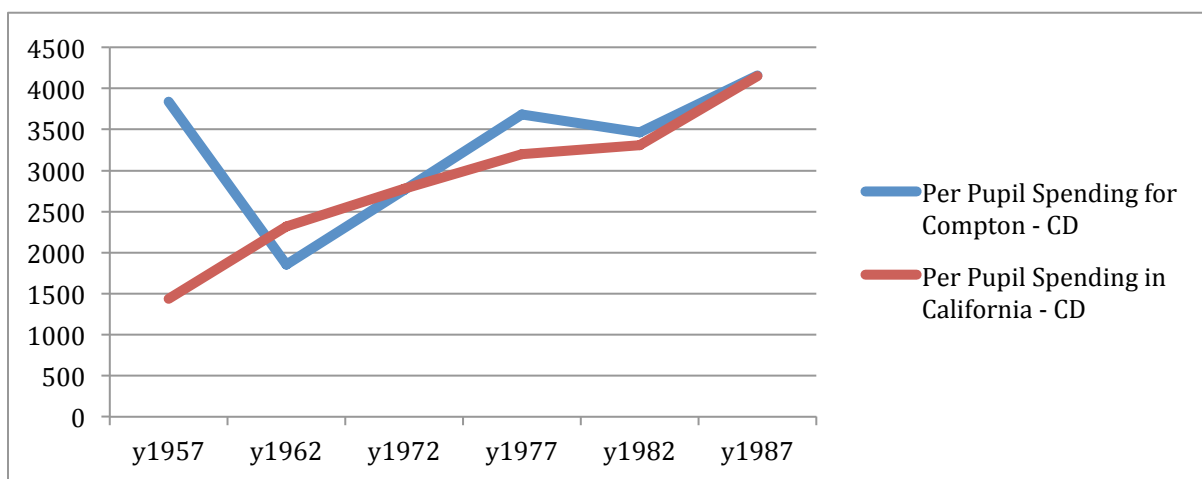


Figure 16. – Per pupil spending in California and Compton . This figure illustrates Compton's per pupil funding in comparison to the state. Source: Finances of School Districts/Public School Systems, Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census 1957 – 1987.

According to the 1957 Census data for public school finances, Compton district spent \$950 per pupil⁹. By 1962, the district spending figure had dropped to \$493 per pupil annually. This drastic drop in per pupil spending would be best understood by looking at the next reported data figures collected by the Census Public School Systems in 1967. Unfortunately, Compton officials did not provide a full set of data for the district during that time.

⁹ This pupil data combined Compton's Elementary School District and Compton Union High School. The district did not become a unified district until 1970.

**Table 8. Financial Statistics for Individual School Districts Enrolling 3,000 or More Pupils:
1966-67-Continued**
(Dollar amounts in thousands)

District (by county)	Enroll- ment October 1966	General revenue						General expenditure				Total debt out- standing at end of fiscal year	
		Total ¹	Taxes	Intergovernmental revenue			Charges and miscel- laneous	Total ¹	Other than capital outlay				
				From Federal Govern- ment	From State	From other local Govern- ments ²			Per. and services	Interest on debt	Other ³		
													Capital outlay
CLAREMONT UNIFIED * * * * *	7 038	3 113	2 761	74	1 787	11	372	3 661	2 176	167	760	1 718	3 299
COMPTON CITY ELEMENTARY * * * * *	17 069	10 634	3 953	163	5 898	18	601	10 816	7 355	278	1 700	1 484	6 270
COMPTON JUNIOR COLLEGE * * * * *	5 102	2 719	1 608	(NA)	935	36	103	2 463	1 877	89	333	163	2 750
COMPTON UNION HIGH * * * * *	15 511	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)

Figure 17. - Per pupil data for Compton 1966-67. This figure illustrates missing data regarding Compton's general revenue and expenditure for Compton Union High School District. Census of Governments: 1967, Finances of School Districts, Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

The data for this year does not show Compton Union High figures. Without that data, the trend of spending as the population shift remains obscure.

Even with the missing figures, Compton per pupil spending remains slightly higher than the State on average. But the large \$3,840 (converted value) amount allocated per pupil during the 1957 year when the student population was White is the second highest per pupil allocation in nearly 3 decades – the next highest being the 1987 comparison year. The table below details Compton spending in comparison to the state figure. These figures were converted to 1987 constant dollar values for the purpose of comparison.

Table 1. Per Pupil Spending in California and Compton 1957-1987

Year	Actual Compton Per Pupil \$ Amount	Actual California Per Pupil \$ Amount	Compton 1987 Conversion	California 1987 Conversion
1957	950	355	3,840	1,436
1962	493	616	1,854	2,317
1967	---	756	---	2,571
1972	1,017	1,023	2,764	2,780
1977	1966	1707	3,685	3,199
1982	2,943	2,809	3,465	3,307
1987	4,157	4,150	4,157	4,150

Source: Census of Governments: Finances of School Districts & Finances of Public School Systems - Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

These per pupil spending figures relate to the district's general expenditures. The expenditures for operating and instruction provide the foundation for students' educational experiences. In the next section, I take a closer look at the spending for operation and instructions and the average daily attendance.

ADA and Spending

In examining the change over time, the average daily attendance (ADA) demonstrates how resource funds and revenue relate to changing student population numbers. In 1965, 32,360 children attended Compton schools daily. According to the NCES Digest for Education 2001, \$3,400 was the average education expenditure in 1965. The conversion to 1986 dollars is approximately \$11,830. Per pupil spending for Compton children in 1965 was above average. During this time, the student make-up reflected the demographics of the city. Yet, the segregated nature of the city meant that a larger percentage of African American students were in schools on the west end of Compton.

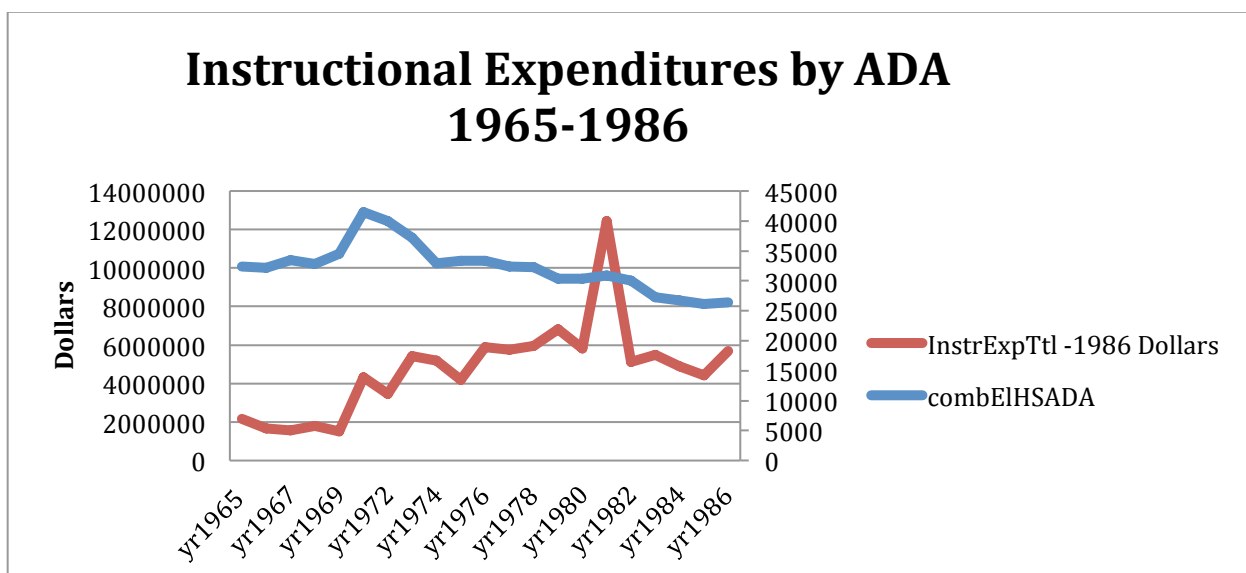


Figure 18. Instructional Expenditures increased steadily as the population decreased slightly and as the racial demographics shifted over time. Source: Annual Financial Transactions Concerning the School District

The operating expenses and the instructional expenses had the most bearing on students' experiences in school. These expenses fluctuated from 1965 – 1980. In 1980, the amount allocated for instructional expenses was \$5,816,430; it had steadily declined to \$4,887,956 by 1986. Likewise, the expenses for operating Compton Unified School District fluctuated and had a steady decline beginning in 1976. Expenses decline from \$8,660,369 to \$5,552,852 respectively. The table details the amount of these resources by average student count.

Table 2. Compton School District's Instructional and Operational Spending 1965-1986

Year	Instructional Expenses	Operating Expenses
1965	2176946	4406091
1966	1683574	4639402
1967	1553734	4758303
1968	1802875	5010198
1969	1515231	6593198
1971	4336784	14045271
1972	3455848	12992519
1973	5431962	12792308
1974	5179508	5874569
1975	4177496	6466025
1976	5894646	7228014
1977	5757115	7883025
1978	5940291	8443737
1979	6815317	8660369
1980	5816430	6575225
1981	12422832	0* ¹⁰
1982	5122512	6457301
1983	5483553	6115490
1984	4887956	6287760
1985	4418554	6243505
1986	5683371	5552856

This category on instructional expenses included textbooks and instructional supplies. The first year that these data were disaggregated was in 1974. The district's allocation of funds for supplies made it difficult to tease out how much was funded to textbooks for the White population of students. The data in many ways does not allow for a true understanding of resource spending. This is part of a larger issue with the data, which is the focus of the next section.

Quantitative Data Discourse Analysis

Quantitative data analysis is a methodology with components that merge ethnography and discourse analysis. Data reported are the unit of analysis in very much the same way that people are the subjects of ethnographic observations. Data ethnography is the first step in quantitative data discourse analysis. I begin with its connection to ethnography and its implementation.

Quantitative Data Ethnography

In taking field notes of the data reported, as a *data ethnographer*, I engaged in practices of note taking that other scholars have encouraged as part of qualitative research. Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995) advise that ethnographers be aware of the temporal and arbitrariness of the stories of the field notes because the story can change daily. I gathered notes about the quality

¹⁰ This figure was entered as 0, but if the amount reported in the instructional expenses category is divided, the amount is similar to what had previously been reported in the category during previous years. It seems as though the operational expense funds may have erroneously been reported as instructional expenses.

and quantity of data reported in the California Annual Report of Financial Transactions Concerning the Cities and School Districts and their narrative. Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995) argue that in pursuit of members' meanings, "ethnographers collect materials relevant to members' meanings by focusing not on members' decontextualized talk but on naturally occurring, situated interactions in which local meanings are created and sustained" (p. 140). I, however, took notes about the decontextualized data, and the changes in the reported data in attempts to make sense of the "naturally occurring, situated interactions". From this, a sense of disparity between resource data and actual availability, along with questions about purpose of reported numbers, emerged.

On July 5, 2012, the field notes about Compton city data included both summaries of the data and my initial thoughts about them. The change in parking facility expenditures increased from 0 to \$18,830 in actual dollars plus an additional \$59,523 in total outlays. Also one data entry in 1964 "elections" category was for 4 dollars. The category in parking expenditures had increased to \$78,354 from 0. This increase was not documented in any articles about the city building infrastructures. I double-checked the entry of \$4.00 allocated for elections. When a city dedicates \$4.00 to a category, it begs a question about the nature of book keeping and the importance of the particular category.

In field notes from July 17, 2012, I noted, "1976 fire protection funding was reduced but police increased; there was no funding for health services." The change in funding for policing was so extreme that I made a specific note, "1977 check the history – Funding is crazy." These ethnographic data, hinted at an emerging narrative regarding a steady increase in expenditures on policing and fire services. "The number is not increasing exponentially, but is growing rather rapidly." The increase in funding coincides with scholarship about the salience of policing in inner cities (Allen, 2005). The privileging in the 1970's of police funding and a reduction in health services can be read as colonial practice of policing and a disregard of life and health in the community (Ture & Hamilton, 1992).

The category of "other" was increasing steadily and at times contained millions of dollars. It is not clear what was masked under the "other" category and why such category could go un-interrogated. But since a previous report had eliminated funds allocated to audit, it seems less likely that auditing financial data on an annual basis was as important as it had once been.

In the field notes for August 2, 2012 there was,

No assessed value information for 1973-74 fiscal year. 1973-74 Compton gets combined federal and state vocational aid. There is a huge increase in county funding under the category of "other". As of 1974-75 there is a maintenance and operations fund from the federal government as well as education professional development and manpower and training categories. Veteran's education is missing as of 1974-75 (Parker, 2012 field notes August).

These notes point to the changing categories. The category veteran's education was eliminated in this year's report, but there had been not any funds in the category except for \$100,833 allocated in 1968. Whether or not veterans in Compton benefitted from the federal funds was not the topic of any news article or report available in the archives.

In the field notes for September 14, 2012, I found that the 1986 federal income did not include an allocation for ESEA. Instead, the large income contribution the district was from the E.C.I.A (Education Consolation and Improvement Act of 1981). The act was designed to provide "financial assistance to state and local agencies to meet special education needs of educationally deprived children". In 1986, there was no revenue from the county. The schools in

Compton were steadily declining. The data figures did not show a decline. But, the large amount of funds allocated under a federal program designed specifically for “educationally deprived children” was an indication that the city’s youth were recognized as having and being victims of subpar education.

Making sense of the above series of data distortions in the categorical funds that shape Compton city and schools requires a deeper analysis.

Data Discourse Analysis

The nature of resource reports stands in contrast with historical account of Compton. This contrast provides its own discourse about social structures, power, and ideology that shapes resource data. In the Annual Report of Financial Transactions concerning School Districts of California, the State Controller furnishes the report but makes no attempt to edit or audit the figures. Therefore, the information is taken with caution especially considering that later probes by State and Federal Departments of Education found evidence that Compton City officials did not report a gross underfunding or mismanagement of funds that eventually led to the state takeover in 1993. Every year, the data reports claimed that there are “the shortcomings, conditions or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher that place restrictions on your methodology and conclusions.”

While this could be viewed as a limitation to the study, the fact that such a disclaimer is added to the report of data forces a critique of the politics of data collection. The structure and report of the data are interrogated here using *quantitative data discourse analysis*. From Fairclough’s 3 tenets, Knowledge, Social Relations, and Social Identity, I lay out the discourse of the data.

Knowledge

Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that knowledge is constructed. Our knowing is a manifestation of how information is conveyed for our consumption. Data reported informs us of how certain numeric values attached to a practice, belief, or an action. In theory, the city and school data presented by Compton’s city manager or controller captures the revenue and expenditures for public consumption, constructing knowledge about spending in particular categories related to the city and school. On its face, the collection data narrates strategic planning, thoughtfulness, and truth about city spending.

Likewise, the data is requested by the state as part of an annual upkeep of spending. This situates the state as an equitable actor requesting the same information from every district and city. However, errors in reporting go unchecked and there is little accountability for the cities and schools to report data or to report in earnest. Not checking the data has allowed for fiscal abuse in areas like Compton that serve low-income students. The knowledge of these income and expenditure numbers alone does not illustrate how oppression and racism might be operating, however. This is why quantitative data often requires its qualitative counterpart. The data itself – especially unaudited data that contains errors and omissions - are perpetrators of false knowledge.

An example of this false knowledge is illuminated by the 1977 Compton Police Protection expenditure, which dropped by \$5,541,387 dollars – from \$7,203,856 in 1976 to \$1,662,469. Since the majority of police dollars is allocated to police salaries, such reported data would imply that there were drastic cuts in police personnel. Nothing in Compton’s news reports indicate such a reduction in police force, in fact the city government on several occasions articulated a commitment to maintaining public safety. That data point was removed from the

data in order to provide more realistic evidence of police spending trend. But this data, which falls under the compliance data, points the weakness of public data, and the false knowledge such data constructs.

False knowledge is particularly salient in describing Compton Unified School District's fall into academic and financial bankruptcy. By 1993, the school district had a \$4,000,000 fiscal deficit and was taken over by the State. Yet, reports of the district's mismanagement, and the role of the State which comes in to oversee the district belie this point. The neglect is not demonstrated by numeric representations of Compton city and school data. So, the data narratives collide with other quantitative data obtained by newspapers reporters and with qualitative data from Compton resident interviews. False knowledge created by data shapes both social relations and social identity.

Social Relations

Social relations theory proposed by Weber (1978) entails a "mutual orientation of the action of each to that of the others. Its content may be of the most varied nature: conflict, hostility, sexual attraction, friendship, loyalty, or economic exchange" (p. 27) This Weberian notion of social relation would situate Compton City and its relation to Black citizens as a relationship of conflict or hostility. This relationship of disproportionately funded schools (Straus, 2006), and strategic confinement and restriction of Black citizens was guided by Whites who held positions of power.

Yet, the data effectively skews societal perspective about resources. Because funds look only to be increasing in Compton in many categories, it is not clear why students in Compton could be failing or the city could be in disrepair. The theory behind Kenny and La Voile's (1994) social relations models can be used here to shed further light on how the city government's reporting of data, and the state's reproduction of the data deepen a hostile relationship with Blacks in Compton. Their model deals with the two-person social interaction involving "perception, interpersonal attraction, bargaining, non-verbal communication, pro-social behavior, and persuasion" (p. 142). In the relationship with the city and school, Black citizens are actors, whose devalued status is communicated non-verbally - through the numeric data.

Institutionalized practices of resource misuse in schools serving Black students is part of a broader problem of dehumanization and devaluation of that population of students. Grubb (2009) contends, "[w]hat is troubling about public schools is not that they occasionally misspend resources... but that they seem structured to do so. The resources identified here arise not primarily from venality or stupidity or carelessness, but from several structural features of public education" (p. 33).

As in the schools, in the city, mismanagement was demonstrated by practices that came to light in local audits about spending practices. For example, an independent audit of Hub City Urban Development, which handled a \$2.1 million Urban Development Action grant awarded to Compton in 1978, found the company had poor accounting and had demonstrated mismanagement of funds. The company had missing data or records that had not been maintained (Nottingham, 1986). For Grubb, when there is underfunding, misuse, and mismanagement of funds in schools serving Black populations, the problem is that such practices are widely accepted and institutionalized. The practices of the institution project messages that are read by students and their families, and contribute to the shaping of their social identities.

Social Identity

Social identity theory drawn from social psychology (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) details how people collectively and individually strive to maintain their identity. It focuses on interpersonal and intergroup distinctions and is buttressed by power, rank, status, and privilege. It is “that part of the individuals’ self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together the value and emotional significance of that membership (Tajfel, 1984, p. 24). The social identity of Blacks in Compton is shaped by two particular aspects of social identity theory: intergroup social comparison and social accentuation.

For Blacks in Compton, their group identity has been impacted significantly by social comparisons. When considering the segregation practices in Compton, Black identity was defined against the faction of Whites who resided on the east end. Whites were privileged and given reign in the city. During this time when Whites ran city government, Whites prospered while Blacks of similar class status were stymied.

Beginning in the 1970’s, news media which had ignored the behavior of White leaders increasingly vilified Black administrators and children for the fiscal crises and poor conditions in Compton schools (Leff). Such practices of data reporting and media reporting perpetuated the already pathologized images of Blacks in Compton. However, the way in which Blacks contributed to the ghettoization of Compton is part of the second component of social identity theory that is relevant.

Social Identity theory engages social accentuation principle. In this principle, within group differences are minimized while differences between groups are overstated. In Compton, middle-class and lower-class Blacks were seen as the same. The differences of class were minimized and race came to define the group, making it easy to ghettoize all Blacks in the west end.

Middle-class Blacks were ghettoized, described as “niggers” (see chapter 2) and relegated to the west end of Compton with lower-class Blacks¹¹. Whites saw them as essentially same, but heightened the difference between Blacks and Whites. Middle-Class Blacks, however, vehemently resisted leading to a second wave of flight. Lastly, the lower-class Blacks who remained began to act out and internalize the stereotypes of worthlessness that had long been perpetuated by whites.

Chapter Discussion

This chapter aimed to understand the connection of resource allocation to ghettoization. Even in the midst of a demographic shift in which White exodus occurred, businesses moved out, local property taxes were cut, the ability of the city to obtain bonds and loans diminished, and the population becomes majority poor Blacks, revenue earmarked for Compton city and Compton Unified School District maintained a continuous flow. Resource data reported in categories associated with city and school operations do not openly disproportionate disinvestment.

As Blacks moved into Compton, the flow in revenue was maintained in most categories. The fiscal cuts and disjunctures were part of larger statewide and nation-wide responses to fiscal

¹¹ Black middle-class residents were not designated by class. The racial dynamics seemed much more relevant. Just as middle-class Blacks in Elijah Anderson’s 1998 study of an inner-city in Philadelphia were “disturbed by the inability of some whites to make distinctions between middle- and lower-class blacks or between people who are out to commit crime and those who are not” (p. 71), so too were Blacks in Compton.

pressures created by Proposition 13 and like legislation. Relying solely on reported financial data, one risks obscuring the racialized nature and impact of resource allocation. Using the same data explored here (Annual Financial Transactions Concerning the Cities of California) Reid (1988) found that “expenditure cuts were concentrated in non-essential services, such as parks and recreations and libraries, while essential services such as police protections and fire protection saw their real per capita budgets rise” occurred across California (p. 34). Reid’s study of cities in California responding to the fiscal pressures created by Propositions 13 normalized the increase in police spending by cities, and explained away the decrease in parks and recreation spending necessary fiscal adjustments.

In 1973, a teacher strike in Compton shut down 41 schools. The district, which employed mostly Black teachers, paid educators the lowest salaries in Los Angeles County. Teachers protested working conditions such as a lack of heat in school buildings, along with pay. Students also complained about the lack of resources. “We don’t have anything,” Roosevelt Junior High School student body president Sherman Johnson told *Los Angeles Times*’ reporters Mike Goodman and Harry Bernstein, “no pencils, no paper!” (1973, Nov 30). A school official admitted that “There has been mismanagement of funds,” but the *Times* efforts to investigate the problem were stymied. “There are just no accurate records of financial conditions of the school district,” a source confided. Whatever resources were earmarked for Compton, it seems likely that a significant portion was sidetracked by those exploiting the ghetto for their own gain. Neither the source nor *the Times* turned to the data submitted to the State of California which is discussed in this chapter and on which Reid relies for his claim that Compton’s resources were much like those across the state.

In 1984, *the Los Angeles Times* reported that four Compton students were struck by falling ceiling tiles and water puddled in school hallways. Compton parents kept 195 students out of school in a boycott protesting chronic teacher absenteeism, together with a lack of heating and educational resources, and poor facility maintenance (Kelley, 1984, Nov. 15). Findings by Widaatalla (1970) that racial discrimination impacted Compton’s tax base was also invisible in the data reports. The process of ghettoization occurring in Compton was not apparent solely through an examination of the data.

Wealthy communities were able to increase local tax revenues and were able to supplement the losses from exogenous revenue from State tax. Although the State disproportionately supported cities, California’s state government,” Reid concludes, “exacerbated inequalities among cities between 1977-78 and 1984-85. It did this, in part, by reducing real per capita aid the most to cities who faced the most dramatic reductions in property tax revenues over this period” (p. 33). Compton was among these cities.

Racial Formation Theory posited by Omi and Winant (1986) would explain the decrease in Federal funds to Compton in 1980’s as part as an effort to reposition Whites. The claim is that the conservative Reagan years beginning in 1980 aimed to undo gains made through the Civil Rights Movement. Among the gains were access to education and education funds through Education and Secondary Education Act of 1965. However, this theory does not explain how reports of data obscure the systematic exploitation in communities of color.

The process of ghettoization in the city and school is far from transparent. The underlying power relations and the knowledge constructed by resource data obfuscated the process in many ways. At a time when state data reports showed relatively little change in school funding, news media reported parents and educators protesting against declining resources.

The failure of school officials to use resources for children's betterment sends messages about self-worth and value. Sobol (2004) contends,

“Children are learning all the time lessons; they learn not only the lessons their teachers intend to teach them but also the lessons their school send them about their value and relative place in the world. Children who see rats in their classrooms and schools, for example, learn wholly apart from their teachers' lessons, that their schools are places where no one stops rats from running across the floor and where people in authority must not care very much about student learning and about the students themselves because the people in authority fail to prevent the presence of the rats” (p. 8).

The way in which residents from Compton who experienced poor conditions in their schools or saw disinvestment in their neighborhood have their identities, personalities, and in psychology shaped by their experience is the focus of next chapter.

Chapter 5- Intersecting Identity of Place, Resources, Psychology

Introduction

The previous chapters focused on social and structural manifestations of the racist ideology that ghettoized Compton. They also provided an historical account of changes in the community and school resources as Whites moved out. Those findings are important, yet insufficient to explain the creation of the ghetto and underachievement of Blacks in it. I argue in this chapter that residents' classification of Compton as a ghetto and the ways they react to Compton's classification as a ghetto by mainstream society are central to the internalization of racial oppression. The driving research question for this chapter is, "How is the profoundness of ghetto pathology internalized, resisted, denied or accommodated by Blacks?"

Methods

In order to address this question, I have designed a qualitative study. I used interviews to focus on the distinction of Black experiences in Compton. Because, as Jargowsky (1997) argues, the racial pathology of the ghetto differs from that of a Latino barrio or a white slum, I explored the unique characteristics of the Black ghetto (Jargowsky, 1997; Massey & Denton, 1993; Clark, 1965) and focused solely upon the experiences of Black residents.

Sample

I interviewed African-Americans who lived in Compton from 1965-1986 (*the period of ghettoization*) and beyond (*the ghetto*). Twenty African-American residents who grew up or spent significant portions of their lives in Compton participated. There were 12 males and 8 females.

I used snowball sampling to acquire the interviewees. I made initial contact with a former student and her mother who both served as sample participant locators. Additionally, a former colleague from *The Oakland Post* newspaper who grew up in Compton, and a former teacher colleague served as locators. These locators, who were also participants, distributed the study summary including my contact information to those they felt represented the population of interest. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) note that using locators in snowball sampling "assumes that knowledge is differently distributed and that certain persons as a result of their past or present situation, have greater accessibility and knowledge about a specific area of life than do others" (p. 152). I relied on locators because I had been disconnected from the Compton environment since I left teaching there in 2001. These locators provided me re-entry into the environment.

The use of snowball sampling caused a project limitation to the study. Informants had an impact on the study because they sought out certain types of participants for the sample. This impact substantiates Biernacki and Waldorf's acknowledgement that snowball sampling is a phenomenon that proceeds independently of the researcher. In order to remedy this, they argue, "the researcher must actively and deliberately develop and control the sample's initiation, progress, and termination" (p. 143). In this study, one locator told me she had told a potential participant that during the interview I would ask how the ghetto is defined. She then proceeded to tell me that I would "love his response because he broke it down." As a result, I had to restructure the interview questions and omit that formulation of the question.

Snowball sampling constituted a threat to the study validity - selection bias. The locators' own sense of what they thought, and who they believed to be "good participants" for my study influenced their selection. The informants had an idea of what they wanted me to find out. Their desire to help influenced what I would learn.

Finally, snowballing resulted in a non-representative sample. Those I interviewed were better educated and more affluent than the average Black Comptonite. Still, rather than constituting a limitation, this bias in the data allowed me to test for the internalization of racial oppression among those least likely to be marked by it. Any findings of the internalization of pathology are therefore all the more powerful.

Interviews

I used a qualitative research method in the form of interviews to answer my research question. According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2008) qualitative interviews are "inter views" in which the interviewee and interviewer interact to construct knowledge. In this case, the interviewees were Compton residents who had specific views of the social structure in Compton during various time periods. Although I had a list of prescribed questions, their responses and my probing were essential for an "inter view" to take place. In this way, the content of the interview was determined neither by the interviewer nor the interviewee but rather by our interaction.

I utilized Lichtman's (2006) qualitative interviewing guided method, which consisted of one-to-one, semi-structured questions. I posed twelve initial questions based on foundational and theoretical research about identity (Clark, 1965), community and neighborhood effects (Wilson, 1986, 1979; Proshansky, 1974), as well as background research about the City of Compton. These questions derived from the literature about resources, identity, and neighborhood effects fit into the qualitative domain posited by Lichtman (2006) in that they "address meaning or understanding or interpretation; address sociological, psychological, or political aspects; and focus on human beings and how they interact in social settings or how they see themselves or aspects of their environments" (p. 29).

The format of open-ended rather than yes-no questions allowed for in-depth interviews, described as "conversation[s] between interviewer and participant" that provided a rich account of participants' experiences (McCracken 1988; Rubin & Rubin, 1995 as cited by Lichtman, 2006). With such rich interview data, a small sample size was possible. While Crouch and McKenzie (2006) described a small sample size as less than 20, I included exactly 20 participants¹² in my study and viewed the difference between handling data of 19 versus 20 participants as negligible. Therefore, I still drew upon Crouch and McKenzie (2006) and their understanding and logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research. They advocated for a realist approach that "formulate[s] sociologically both the subjective and social meanings in the respondents account" (p. 486).

Crouch and McKenzie (2006) frame interviewing as the articulation of respondents' experiences and their accounts of those experiences "located in domains of social life which contain (in both senses of that term) the experiences under investigation" (p. 489). In this case the initial 12 questions allowed the participants to respond to the questions posed and move beyond them to tell related or connected stories. The interviewees varied in whether or not they did this. The 20 interviews ranged from 12 minutes to 1 hour and 8 minutes. The shortest

¹² I use the term participant, respondent, interviewee, and subjects interchangeably in referring to the people interviewed. It should be understood that there is not specific hierarchy in the relationship, but rather role of knowledge seeker and information/knowledge provider on level fields.

interview was that of a participant who was noticeably resistant. She did not provide answers beyond one or two sentences. In fact, many of the experiences that had been shared about this respondent by her recommender were dismissed. The interview that lasted for 1 hour and 8 minutes was that of an older resident who expanded in detail about his experiences and the experiences of his childhood friends. He also extrapolated beyond his experiences to discuss why he believed today's youth behave as they do.

Transcriptions

I used a multilayer transcription process to analyze the audio-recorded interview data. I, along with a paid transcriber, transcribed the interview data. The decision to use transcription as a supplement to fieldnotes was the first step of this process. The next step was determining the process of transcription. McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig (2003) suggest, "a researcher must make choices regarding whether a textual document should include nonlinguistic observations" (p. 66). I decided that denaturalized (Davidson 2009) verbatim transcriptions were best for capturing the feel and narrative of the audio data. Denaturalized transcription require the transcriber to include nuances, pauses, and fillers that provided more context to interviewees' interpretations of questions; such transcription also provides social and psychological contexts.

The literature pointed to some potential limitations of hiring transcribers because their analytic/interpretative lens may differ from the researcher's. Yet, I provided specific directions regarding verbatim, denaturalized transcription, which captures filler words such as um, uh, and long pauses. However, as Tilley (2009) notes, "[t]here are no guarantees that other individuals hired to transcribe will exert a similar amount of energy to decipher the complex meshing of voices" (p. 759). To combat this methodological issue, I reviewed all transcribed data by the paid transcriber alongside the audio recording. By doing so, I was able to fill in missing terms, muffle phrases, and account for the context (i.e. school and street names described by the interviewees) that were mislabeled by the paid transcriber.

The importance of this transcription process is delineated by Green et. al (1997)). They argues that transcription "is not merely the mechanical selection of notation symbols." Instead transcription involves definite choices about how the data and which data are represented. As part of this process, consideration was given to "what [was] represented in the transcript (e.g., talk, time, nonverbal actions, speaker/hearer relationships, physical orientation, multiple languages, translations); who [was] representing whom, in what ways, for what purpose, and with what outcome; and for how analysts position[ed] themselves and their participants in their representations of form, content, and action" (Green et. al., 1997, p. 173, as cited by Davidson, 2009).

Coding

Emergent themes were discovered using several coding processes outlined by Saldana (2009). After using "full transition" or verbatim transcriptions (Powney & Watts, 1987; McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003) that captured short pauses, long pauses, and filler words, I placed the interview data in a column titled *interview text*, while next to it a column was titled *initial code*. In it, I wrote "descriptive codes" that summarizes main themes in the sections (Saldana, 2009, p. 3).

The codes from the first interview provided a host of themes. I used the codes from that interview as baseline measures for coding other interviews. The next interview transcriptions were set up similarly and the codes built upon the baseline interview transcription or added new themes.

Interview Text	Initial Code
<p>Okay, I'm going to start by asking what your age is?</p> <p>24</p> <p>And how long have you lived in Compton?</p> <p>About 10 years.</p> <p>10 years? And how would you describe the area where you grew up?</p> <p>Well the area where I grew up its neutral.</p> <p>Okay, neutral meaning what?</p> <p>Neutral meaning its gang attire than again like it's I stay like in the middle, middle section where it's like neutral zone from two sides of one gang and another gang.</p> <p>And what are those gangs?</p> <p>Uh neighborhood <u>piru</u> and Palmer block Compton Crips.</p> <p>Okay, what blocks are those?</p> <p><u>Uhm</u> it's like 900 <u>palmer</u> and 500 <u>Arbutus</u>.</p> <p>And why is your block neutral?</p> <p>It's a separation zone.</p> <p>And is that agreed upon by <u>everybody</u>?</p> <p>Well, it's, it is and then it's not. It's like, it's</p>	<p>Grew up in a neutral zone.</p> <p>A block that is separation zone.</p>

Figure 19. Sample of coding using Saldana (2009) framework.

Analysis

The analysis of the data from the qualitative interview sessions was complex as there were many units of analysis beside the interview information. Powney and Watts (1987) define analysis as “the detailed examination of the database that ensues from single or multiple interviews. That is, analysis can be about the detail of what occurs within a single analysis interview or across several.” As a result, “analysis is every bit as much an act of constructing interpretations as is the interview session itself...” (p. 143) With this in mind, I analyzed my fieldnotes alongside the interview transcriptions to create a full picture of who the respondents were. The interview coding resulted in several salient findings that I present in separate sections.

Chapter Highlights

Interviews of Compton residents yielded four major findings. These findings relate to how residents structured their understanding of Compton and their understanding of how Compton pathology impacted their identities. The findings emerged as separate narratives and behaviors, but analytically these components fell under an overarching theory that I term *fourth-person* consciousness. I label the four findings 1) contradictory positioning, 2) (re)humanization, 3) evasion, and 4) the double-bind of (unequal) opportunity. They were related to these residents' knowledge of stereotypes, their Du Boisian warring double consciousness, and their Fanonian third-person consciousness. I explain these components at length. I then explain the overarching theory of *fourth-person consciousness* and how it shaped how Compton residents behaved and structured their identities. I then conclude by revisiting the link between Compton, identity, and education.

Introduction – The Internal Struggle in Defining Compton

One key argument made by psychologist Kenneth Clark (1965) is that ghetto pathology becomes internalized by its inhabitants. Similarly, Proshansky's work in environmental psychology presents place and space as crucial to shaping people's beliefs and attitudes. The interconnectedness of people to their community means that the defining components are

interchangeable and can be projected from the place to the residents. This point was made by one resident:

LP: Do you describe it as ghetto where you grew up?

Blkfemale 43: No.

LP: Okay, and why?

Blkfemale 43: Uhm, because I'm not ghetto.

It thus becomes necessary to establish the relationship of the perception of Compton as ghetto to the identity of its residents. For the 20 African-Americans interviewed for this study, defining Compton was crucial to how they could be viewed. All twenty acknowledged that Whites viewed Compton as a ghetto, and either in interviews or afterwards, 17 (85%) confessed that they themselves believed Compton to be a ghetto. This understanding of what others thought of Compton was a point of departure for many responses. Throughout the interviews, whatever the question, respondents returned time after time to the image of the ghetto. Whether they agreed with that portrayal or, like the woman quoted above and two other outliers, sought to reject it, they continually answered the hail that framed Compton *and therefore themselves* as ghetto. In my findings, I will discuss in detail the impact of this identification with the ghetto.

The table below details the responses to whether or not Compton was a ghetto and whether Whites thought of the space as ghetto. It provides a backdrop for interpreting all other responses.

Table 3. Participants' Responses – Determining whether Compton is Considered Ghetto

Age	Gender	Do you consider/describe Compton a ghetto?	Do you think Whites consider Compton as a ghetto	Still resides in Compton
24	Male	Yes, it's still a ghetto.	Yes	Yes
27	Male	No, I wouldn't	Yes, I do	No
28	Female	I don't know, because I never to be honest I never really fed into the whole 'the ghetto' kind of word. So I don't really know. I know, I mean I understand what people kind of mean by the ghetto so I know to other people it's considered the ghetto. I don't know if I consider it the ghetto and if I do, not all of it. No.	I'm sure for outsiders in general regardless of what race they are, but specifically Caucasians I'm sure they would consider it the ghetto	No
28	Male	(long pause 3+ seconds). Yes	Yeah. Yeah. If a person was to say – I've often said yeah I come from the ghetto, well I haven't often said it, but I've referred to myself as from the ghetto or the hood its basically synonymous. So, yeah. I guess I would	No
29	Male	No.	Yeah.	No
29	Female	Yes. I mean I love my city but it is definitely ghetto.	Yes.	No
29	Male (#2)	No, I don't describe it. The projects is the ghetto.	{Laughter} Yeah	Yes
43	Female	No, not at all.	That whites? Yes.	Yes
43	Female(#2)	I describe Compton as paradise	Yes.	Yes
46	Male	No, it isn't	Perceive it as ghetto? The ones that never been there because there's a lot of whites, Compton was all white at one time.	Yes

52	male ¹³	---	---	Yes
55	Female	No. Never did.	Most definitely, yes.	No
55	Female (#2)	No. It's not a ghetto. What constitutes a ghetto? Is it poor housing, poor living conditions, poor resources? Where would you get a ghetto? No. It's not a ghetto.	Yes. I would think that they do.	No
56	Female	I wouldn't	Oh yes.	No.
58	Male	No.	Whites? Oh yeah.	No.
60	Male	No.	Yes.	Yes. (Just coming back – left in 1974)
64	Male	No because you have all home ownership, you have beautiful homes around here.	---	Not sure
67	Male	That's a hard one. Because okay, then they would have perceived it as ghetto but we were living in better homes than they were	Now or then, I might even I might perceive it as that now.	Yes
69	Male	Now, yes. It's ghetto now because there's no opportunities for the kids	Yes.	Yes.
70	Female	I think the riot uh put Compton in that position. I think it was not considered ghetto until – it was more like suburban kind of – you know atmosphere uh – because of the residents uh the kind of – I mean people who moved into Compton – until after the riot.	Yes.	Yes

¹³ This male participant was not asked directly whether or not Compton was a ghetto because he was primed for the question by another interview who excitedly call and stressed that she had secured him as part of the snowball sample and he would give great answers. Instead I asked him about other issues about Compton and community.

The belief that Whites, who represent dominant society, think Compton is a ghetto demonstrates that these Comptonites are aware of the city's defining characteristic. This sense could extend even to how Black Comptonites imagined other Blacks perceived them. One 28-year-old resident added that "outsiders, regardless of race" view Compton as ghetto. For that resident, Compton was a problematic space to all outsiders – including other Blacks. For her, the space created a negative and alienated positioning even within Black nationhood.

Statements made about the city's defining characteristics were juxtaposed to residents' responses to the question "what types of things does Compton have that other cities should have?" For many, responses came after pauses and hesitations. A 24-year old conceded after a long pause that he couldn't answer the question. Other older residents offered that perhaps if the question had been asked in the 1970's a better answer could be provided. Still others provided hope that "despite how dysfunctional we can get, there's like this empowerment." The table below lists the respondents' answers in their entirety, but a few statements stand out and call into question whether statements made about Compton as a "paradise" could be taken seriously.

Table 4. What Compton Has That Other Communities Do Not

Blk male 24	I, uhmmm {long pause}. I can't answer that question neither.
Blk male 27	I don't think Compton has anything that other communities should have. It should be the other way around.
Blk female 28	Well, I don't know if I can say that I don't, that other cities may not have this, but I do know that despite how dysfunctional we can get, there's like this empowerment and it's just like something inside of us as a whole and this might be African Americans in general. Okay, but even the city if need be we really can come together if we need to.
Blk male 28	Um. Um. (Long pause 5sec) I would have to say the people. I can't think of anything institutionally that I would choose Compton for over – except, its close to the freeways, its very close to the freeways...
Blk male 29#1	Nothing I can think of.
Blk male 29#2	Wow. I can't say more liquor stores {laughter}, no just playing.(LP: You can.) No, uhm more Black people.
Blk female 43#1	Honestly at this point and time, I don't see anything that we have that would compare with another community.
Blk female 43#2	We have - Compton is a place where you can come I don't care who you are and where you're from you can come in and find your fit. You can fit in it won't be, you know you don't run into to uh the rejections as much and their more accepting to different cultures.
Blk male 46	Strong churches. That was a strong part of my life too. I always had to go to church and that the kids have got away from that now.
Blk male 53	-----
Blk female 56	To me we still have neighborhoods that are still family orientated to where each one reach one and where it says it takes a village to raise a child we still have communities that still have that same theory and that same connections to where we're all looking out for one another. And a lot of communities don't have that.
Blk male 58	Well the only thing I can say is unique around is the school system structure with the middle school and the high schools and the feeder schools.
Blk male 60	Ooo. You got me there. Now, if you would have asked me that question in the 70s I'd have something to say.
Blk male 69	Compton doesn't have anything going for it except the little shopping center. That's the only thing that they have.
Blk female 70	Compton has (pause) I think right now, there's a few things Compton have. The Senior center complex that coming, it going to address or meet the needs of senior citizens

One resident mused that liquor stores were something that Compton had that other cities do not have. In his joke, however, there is the truth that liquor stores are among the most profitable businesses in Compton. His final answer was that Compton has more Blacks than other communities. While no judgment was attached to this statement, part of what is understood is that the presence of Blacks in Compton is notable.

In sum, Black Comptonites knew that Whites saw the place as a ghetto. Although reluctantly, they largely conceded that Whites were correct. They were convinced that a ghetto is not only a devastated place; they also believed that it is one characterized by the disreputable behavior of its inhabitants. The view of Compton as a ghetto thus became a burden shaping how they viewed themselves.

Contradictory Positioning -Compton Ain't a Ghetto

The first finding emerged as residents responded to one of the initial questions and described the areas where they grew up. In interview after interview, residents provided *contradictory positioning* in which they situated Compton in opposition to the stereotypes. They defined the area through negation by describing what it is "not". They used the idea that Compton ain't ghetto to push against widely disseminated beliefs.

Because the stereotype of Black Compton has been highlighted in the media, people have preconceived notions of what Comptonites are and how they behave. In 2010, a fraternity at the University of California at San Diego threw a "Compton Cook Out" party. According to the flier, party-goers were to epitomize Compton's "ghetto" residents. The posting for the Compton Cook Out was as follows:

February marks a very important month in American society. No, I'm not referring to Valentines day or Presidents day. I'm talking about Black History month. As a time to celebrate and in hopes of showing respect, the Regents community cordially invites you to its very first Compton Cookout.

For guys: I expect all males to be rockin Jersey's, stuntin' up in ya White T (XXXL smallest size acceptable), anything FUBU, Ecko, Rockawear, High/low top Jordans or Dunks, Chains, Jorts, stunner shades, 59 50 hats, Tats, etc.

For girls: For those of you who are unfamiliar with ghetto chicks-Ghetto chicks usually have gold teeth, start fights and drama, and wear cheap clothes - they consider Baby Phat to be high class and expensive couture. They also have short, nappy hair, and usually wear cheap weave, usually in bad colors, such as purple or bright red. They look and act similar to Shenaynay, and speak very loudly, while rolling their neck, and waving their finger in your face. Ghetto chicks have a very limited vocabulary, and attempt to make up for it, by forming new words, such as "constipulated", or simply cursing persistently, or using other types of vulgarities, and making noises, such as "hmmg!", or smacking their lips, and making other angry noises, grunts, and faces. The objective is for all you lovely ladies to look, act, and essentially take on these "respectable" qualities throughout the day.

Several of the regents condos will be teaming up to house this monstrosity, so travel house to house and experience the various elements of life in the ghetto.

We will be serving 40's, Kegs of Natty, dat Purple Drank- which consists of sugar, water, and the color purple, chicken, coolade, and of course Watermelon. So come one and

come all, make ya self before we break ya self, keep strapped, get yo shine on, and join us for a day party to be remembered- or not.

This flier delineates what is widely believed about Compton and its residents; the performance of ghetto Shenaynay and 40-chugging gangsters are mocked as the antithesis of normal behavior and appearance. The flier demonstrates a myriad of stereotypes about Compton that are prevalent in society among which are the following:

- 1) Black males wearing oversized and baggy clothing are automatically associated with ghetto.
- 2) Ghetto girls are Black girls. They are loud and classless.
- 3) There is a negative connotation for Black hair texture. Black features are pitted against European notions of beauty.
- 4) The amount of gold and quality of gold chains is painted as a deep cultural pathology. This symbol of wealth in White communities is an example of lack in Black communities.
- 5) Language, gestures and ways of being are associated with subhumanity.

The flier captures central elements of White supremacist ideology. Everything ghetto is Black, and everything Black is ghetto. Blacks appear to be pathological because of their behavior, but in reality the behaviors are pathological because they are Black. The flier articulates the view that Blacks are not only absent of values, but their very nature prevents them from ever obtaining values. Blacks are the essence of the subhuman and are hopeless spectacles to be mocked.

Fanon theorizes this phenomenon in terms of the global color line. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values (Fanon, 19).

Compton residents were well aware of the stereotypes articulated in the flier. They positioned Compton in opposition to them. Their denial of ghetto characteristics in many ways brings to bear what Fanon calls a psychoexistential complex. It is the conscious and constant tension derived for a Black man because of his externally constructed identity as violent and subhuman. For Black Comptonites, the media, the fraternity, and other social institutions help construct what Fanon (1967) calls a “massive psychoexistential complex” and the “epidermalization of violence.”

At first glance Comptonites I interviewed seemed to resist the colonial construction of Black ghetto-ness described in flier. This was apparent especially in the manner by which they classified and described Compton. The majority of those interviewed actively described Compton in contrast to the stereotyped pathology. This first substantive question “How would you describe the area where you grew up?” triggered the consciousness of Compton’s pathology. Many residents spoke in opposition to the stereotypes and carefully framed their responses. One 28-year-old woman framed Compton in this way:

Specific areas that I grew up in - is one of the more decent parts of the city. I mean that when I grew up I lived on a culdesac and I was able to play outside and I didn't have to worry about somebody doing a drive by on my street. Not on my street (Black female-28).

Some participants framed Compton as both “family oriented” and “decent,” contrary to its impoverished and violent stereotypes. For example, a 56-year-old Black female said the area

was “very community orientated, family driven,” but then immediately added, “whether it was single-parent or husband-wife structure”. Others demonstrated their understandings of those socially held stereotypes of Compton and described the environment during their upbringings by acknowledging and refuting them.

Blmale29: Uhm, it was cool. Laid back, it wasn't - I didn't stay in a gang neighborhood or a violent neighborhood.

Blkfemale43: Nice, Uhm, family you know I didn't live in a gang filled area at the time when I was coming ups so just you know suburban neighborhood.

For them, Compton had decent homes and a sense of family. But, this framing was not solely an articulation of values. It was a defense mechanism that could be read in the bodies of the respondents. As the residents put forth these contrastive definitions, their attitudes shifted and most respondents became noticeably defensive. Some folded their arms; others repositioned their bodies. Most of their responses reflected a poignant effort to defend the space from its association with pathology. The task for them seemed to be to situate themselves as human in a space that others considered subhuman. This very act however entailed an invocation of that very pathology and, thus, in a certain fashion, an acknowledgment of it.

One could get the impression that for the residents, there was an assumption implicit in my original question, *How do you describe the area where you grew up?* They seemed to instead be answering the question, *“What was it like growing up in the ghetto?”* Residents who offered contradictory positions of Compton were in a sense protesting against an image of Compton as a ghetto. But, as Shakespeare put it, they “doth protest too much.” Interviewees’ insistence that where they grew up was not the ghetto reflected a deeply internalized sense that it was.

The protests were not simply in the form of contrasting analysis of the space. Some participants also provided alternative interpretations of the ghetto. In contrasting Compton with the “real” ghetto, residents claimed that Compton possessed something of whiteness. Because Compton had 4-bedroom homes and tree-lined streets, it possessed elements of suburbia. In fact, one 58-year-old male, who moved from Compton because he didn't want to raise his children there, used Compton's appearance to insist that it was not a ghetto. For instance, Watts, he believed, was “more run down” than Compton; he used stories from outsiders to confirm his view:

I had some friends that were from other parts of the United States. And so I brought these brothers out here with me and they were like "Man when we getting to the ghetto"? So we got off the freeway - we driving down the street, I said "we're here". They said "Man this ain't no ghetto, this looks good", compared to where they come from so it kind of depend on your background on what you consider ghetto. But they said the rats would meet you out on the stoop where they come from.

This resident allowed others who had lived in a “real” ghetto to substantiate his claim. His friends’ experiences in spaces that had a more pathologized appearance served as verification that Compton was not a ghetto and in fact that the ghetto was elsewhere.

However, the ghetto, for other Compton residents was more than a physical built space. Both a 24-year-old male and a 70-year old female shared that the ghetto is a mindset and that Comptonites sometimes have that mindset.

(Re)Humanizing the Space

Attempts at what I call humanizing the space were practiced along with contradictory positioning. The history of Compton as a White suburb meant that for that period the city exemplified the human experience. And having been previously awarded the 1952 national honor as an All-American city meant it represented American values. But Compton's transition to a Black community redefined the space as subhuman. The residents, though they may not have been aware of the history, were clear that their presence diminished Compton's reputation.

As a result, residents not only described Compton in relation to the stereotypes through contradictory positioning, many reframed the people, the environment and experiences in Compton as "regular" human experiences. (Re)humanization overlapped with the contradictory positioning of Compton and descriptions were again juxtaposed to the stereotypes. It constituted an attempt to normalize Compton residents' experiences as regular experiences. So much so that one 29-year-old Black male went so far as to simply classify Compton as "just like any other suburb."

Whereas contradictory positioning entailed claiming what Compton *was not*, humanizing the space entailed exaggerated claims of what Compton *was*. Just as many of the residents defined Compton in comparison to some ghetto elsewhere, they painted Compton as a "good," family-oriented area in an effort to humanize it. Some respondents described their homes by the numbers of bedrooms and their sizes. They often compared them to project houses and slums, which they argued were the real ghettos. The figures below show Compton homes in 2012 as compared to the images of "project" apartments or "PJs", which some Comptonites denoted as exemplifying the "real ghetto."



Figure 20. Images of Compton [photo] Lynette Parker January, 2012. The top picture is West Compton. The area is very near the area of West Compton identified by residents as the "front line" – one of many references to warzones.



Figure 21. The above image of a brick project building, similar to those found in Harlem or Southside Chicago, in the minds of most people epitomizes a ghetto.

As with contradictory positioning, attempts through humanizing the space to distinguish Compton from the stereotypical understanding of the ghetto unwittingly invoked it. Describing his area, one 27-year-old male moves effortlessly between the ghetto and “normal” life, unaware of the contradiction. “It was pretty rough, nothing like the past. (*Italics added for emphasis*) You know, a lot of the gang violence, uhm...typical life, a day in LA really” but still he added, “[the houses] were fair, pretty modern homes...4, 5 bedrooms.

One 43-year old Black woman (#2) not only claimed that Compton was not a ghetto, she went on to portrayed Compton in a fantastic way. “I describe it as paradise” was an attempt to endow the space with a far greater value than what it had historically offered. Then, as she elaborated, she used an apocalyptic analysis explaining that should a natural disaster occur Compton could sustain itself.

We have the most fertile soil. In the event of a- a -um, whatever, in the event we have um what they call it – a hurricane or some fluke of nature, freak of nature should happen, we have sustaining powers. For instances my yard instead of flowers in my yard I got collard greens, vegetables, I have herbs so in the event I’m unable to get to the store...you know we won’t be on the ropes like they were on Katrina waiting on you know people to come take care of them (Black Woman 43#2)

This particular woman, college educated and lower-middle class, positions Compton as a paradise not in contrast to the stereotypes, but to a natural disaster or an apocalypse. Kenneth Clark (1965) argues that most Blacks living in ghettos who have attended college and are considered middle-class seek to humanize “blackness” and their position as residents in the ghetto. “The middle-class prisoners of the ghetto,” Clark argues, “are ashamed of these elements in the community which bring disgrace to that community. They view themselves as an example of respectability” (p. 55). Thus, the very effort to assert respectability does not constitute an escape from the ghetto but rather entrapment within it.

Evasion and After-taping Confessionals

Evasion

The third finding from the interviews was *evasion*, which is the protective practice of avoiding or evading association with Compton. Residents’ knowledge that they and their environments had been constructed as pathological shaped their own actions, and structured their words and their silences. They evaded conversations and resisted revealing their Compton identities. In one exchange during the interview, a Black male shared that he never volunteered his connection to Compton when first meeting a person.

LP: How do you navigate when you tell somebody you're from Compton and when you tell somebody you're from Los Angeles?

Blkmale29: Uhm, maybe when I'm out a lot of people don't know that it's different cities in L.A. and they figure you know, if I just say LA and somebody said to me what part of LA? Inglewood, something like that. And then now I know they know I be like like oh, well Compton. So that's how they find out.

A 28-year-old female demonstrated how the practice of evasion occurs even to mask her connection to Compton from other Blacks. This lengthy excerpt captures the logic of evasion:

I was hanging out with this girl I met in my first semester and my first class [at Cal State Northridge] and she's from San Diego, one of the nicer parts of San Diego.... We probably knew each other at least 2 or 3 months before she said something to me and it made me say, “Oh yeah Compton.” And she said, “What?” She's like, “What did you say?”

“Yeah, I’m from Compton;” because I had told her Los Angeles, she doesn’t know the area. So she didn’t know to be specific but at any rate it came out that I was Compton and she thought that I was lying. And we were in the drive through at the fast food restaurant and she literally stopped. Like she stopped moving and she’s just like, “I don’t believe you.”

I’m like, “Why do you think I would make that up?” like you know, who’s going to say, who would lie and say they’re from Compton if they’re not?

And she’s like, “But I would have never thought that.”

And I asked her, I said, “Well why not?”

She’s like, “because it’s Compton.”

And I said, now I want to make her say it, I’m like, “Well what does that mean?”

And she’s like, “Well, I mean, you know...like they say it’s like ghetto,” and she’s like, “You don’t act like that.”

Well I was like, “Well I don’t. That’s where I’m from, born and raised. I grew up there.”

And she was like, “I would have neeeeever thought that,” and that’s kind of, and I knew that, that’s why I never told anybody, so she confirmed it and she was African American, so I could only imagine what my white and other races, cuz Cal State Northridge is completely diverse.

This excerpt from the interview is particularly telling of the depth of the stereotype of Compton. Residents are not just Black; they are Compton Black. Therefore scholars like Claude Steele (1997) who suggest that Black students in college or in the broader society face similar sorts of pathologies miss the fact that there are layers of blackness that further deepen the fears and behaviors. Both the 29-year-old male and the 28-year-old female residents, as well as others, shared that the information about growing up in or being from Compton is meted out with caution. They have on occasion redefined their residential association to more acceptable spaces like L.A. Doing so gave them a better chance at being judged merely as Black person as opposed to a Black person from Compton.

People living in suburbs typically describe their homes in relation to the more well-known city markers because outsiders are not typically familiar with the suburban area or name (Locating the Suburb, 2004). This rationale does not hold for Compton residents. Their failure to disclose their home base as Compton is strategy for protecting their images.

After-taping Confessional

While some residents described engaging in evasion while outside of Compton, the practice of evading was being performed during the actual interview sessions as well. During the formal interview, some respondents refused to answer questions or voice experiences that they believed might further degrade Compton. After-taping confessionals demonstrated a process by which silences, voices, and behaviors were shaped. In this process several residents spoke during tape-recorded sessions about the humanity and beauty of Compton. After the final question had been answered and the audio-taping had concluded, however, they confessed contradictory viewpoints. These after-taping confessionals further revealed a consciousness about identity and community.

The confessionals illustrated some of the conflicts with which Compton residents contend when talking about their community. While many of the residents signaled Compton as an empowering place, the reality is that most of those same residents moved out of Compton and admitted not wanting their children raised there. Their actions were in contrast to claims

that Compton was decent, non-violent, family-oriented, and safe. Fieldnotes of a respondent's after-taping confession demonstrate this point:

After-taping confession from Blckfm29– this young woman said that she didn't want her daughter and son growing up in Compton. The children are at their father's house while we were completing the interview. She mentioned that she doesn't even like them playing in the front yard of the house. Though in her words living in Compton had made her stronger, she shared that she has to constantly resist the urge to react to things in the way she had previously reacted while in Compton. She stressed that there was no need to act certain ways outside of Compton. It is crazy or abnormal to do so. She also mentioned that degradation of Compton, like seeing prostitutes or seeing men jacking off (masturbating) on the corner and seeing drive-bys, had become normalized.

This woman's account of the many issues she saw in Compton is not at all revealed in her interview responses. Instead, she praised Compton for making her strong and giving her voice. But her admission that the way she had to perform in order to navigate in Compton was not helpful in spaces outside of Compton illuminates why some Comptonites feel the need to disassociate themselves from what they learned in Compton or even from their upbringing there. They sensed that Compton was abnormal and required them to be abnormal.

This 29-year-old Black woman understood that the normalization of public masturbation, or of a life where young school children walk beside prostitutes on their way to and from school is not something to which she wished to expose her own children. Her thought process around protecting her children is both sane and rational. But this Comptonite could not share this sane and rational position formally during the interview. That she offered an alternative, critical account after the taping signals the burden which ghetto pathologies place on residents in spaces like Compton.

A Black male who had stated in the interview that Compton was like any other suburb and that he didn't feel the area was particularly violent even though his home was near the intersection of four competing gang sets made several claims after the taping was complete. He stated that he wasn't going to say for real what the area was like because he was trying to figure out what I (the researcher) was trying to do. He said, "while you were trying to figure me out, I was trying to figure you out." Though this participant had signed the IRB consent form and agreed to participate, his true beliefs were being filtered through a lens of distrust for the researcher and a working consciousness of the prevailing stereotypes about Compton. This participant also clarified what he meant when he claimed that the area he grew up in wasn't violent. He went into detail about how his mother, who he painted as protective, would not let him go outside. He went to school, to his sports practices and home. His mother made sure he did not get "caught up".

The information that was withheld by residents during the formal interview and the language they used carefully presented a picture of Compton, but it is an image constructed for acceptance by those who have perceived Compton as a subhuman space. Their after-taping confessionals revealed internalization of the negativity of Compton, and a constant struggle to resist. Fanon (1967) explains this. He asserts, "to speak is to exist absolutely for the other. The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellow, the other one with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with another Negro. This self-division is a direct result of colonial subjugation" (p. 17). The researcher with the tape recorder represented the White university.

Lynette without the recorder represented another Black person, with whom their guards could be let down.

In extrapolating beyond the black/white binary to the ghetto/non-ghetto binary, the after-taping confessionals exemplify the two dimensions of residents from pathologized space. There is an understanding of the perceived subhumanity that residents navigate by shaping their words and behaviors during the interview. The confession afterwards is a shameful admission of truth of the space from which the residents aim to be disassociated.

Like the 29-year-old male and 29-year-old female interviewees above, many residents filtered their words and actions. However, the purposeful filtering of information for consumption is very much linked to the salience of consciousness in shaping action and perception. The perceptions were constantly filtered and shaped in order to make Compton more presentable or at the very least to keep residents from adding to the negative image. These actions were both consciously and unconsciously done. During the interviews residents were asked to divulge their beliefs about Compton and the opportunities within the community. The responses and ideas that people held called into question the ways in which their perspectives had been skewed unbeknownst to them in many cases.

The Double-bind of (Unequal) opportunity

Residents' understanding of opportunity is the fourth finding. This understanding took two forms. Some residents treated the highly constrained opportunities available in Compton as "normal" and adequate. This belief led them to accept minimal opportunities as fair and reasonable. No doubt this perspective provides some comfort to residents, much like the (re)humanization of space. Still, what I label *skewed opportunity perspective* is the warped perspective of what constituted viable opportunities for social uplift and survival in general. It potentially shapes decisions to engage in school, to go to college, and to imagine a future, and legitimizes ghetto space; it suggests that it isn't a bad place to live. Other residents have a more realistic sense of the way opportunities are circumscribed in the ghetto, but this often leads to disengagement: if the game is rigged, what's the use of playing? This too can constitute a strategy for psychic protection in an oppressive environment, but like *skewed opportunity perspective*, it discourages genuine resistance to the forces of ghettoization.

Skewed Opportunity Perspective

Scholars like Zubrinsky (2005) and Briggs (2005) who explore the geography of opportunity have noted that inequalities in opportunity are geographically determined, and the acceptance of unequal opportunity is as psychological process of consent. They acknowledge that today's racially segregated communities and schools continue to foster poor opportunity choices. They suggest that whether or not residents view opportunities as unequal determines whether the inequality will ever be addressed. Briggs (2005) argued that residential race and class segregation is invisible in political discourse concerning educational inequity. Instead the focus has been on the achievement gap. While Briggs attests to the significance of the gap, he proffers, "the lack of attention to persistently high segregation is dangerous in at least two respects. First, it ignores the huge contribution that segregated living makes to inequality in education, employment, health, and other areas. Second, it presumes that gains in economic success will be mirrored in more integrated living patterns over time" (p. 13).

The case of Compton as it transitioned from a segregated city with Whites on the east and Blacks on the west into a segregated ghetto space demonstrates that racial segregation and inequality do not depend on economic differences between Blacks and Whites. I argue here

that the impact of Compton's segregated space on residents' understanding of their self worth can be seen by how they perceived opportunity.

The tension around the nature of opportunity and what that meant while growing up is clear in the interview responses of one 52-year-old male:

LP: were there lots of opportunities? So when you think of opportunities...

Blkmale52: Were there opportunities to gang bang, yes, were there opportunities to get loaded, yes, were there opportunities to go to school, yes.

LP: Okay.

Blkmale52: So when you say opportunities, do you mean specifically to be positive things?

LP: Well...

Blkmale52: The word opportunity has a lot of different connotations.

LP: Right, I guess originally when I wrote the question, I was thinking that people would respond with positive opportunities, but in some people minds the opportunity to gang bang is a positive opportunity. So even though...

Blkmale52: Or it's just the opportunity. I mean if you don't have a lot of opportunities, the opportunity to gang bang or to play football or to chase girls or to fix cars, those are opportunities. If you talk about opportunities for self-development, no.

This response was offered with an air of hostility, but at the heart of it was a frustration articulated in the last line of the response, "[i]f you talk about opportunities for self-development, no." Skewed opportunity perspective constituted a mechanism for self-protection rather than an authentic sense of possibility.

Skewed opportunity perspective constituted what Fanon calls "cultural mummification". Whereas, hip hop exemplifies the mummification of native culture, the belief in the opportunity ghetto Compton offered to pursue the American dream constitutes the mummification of American culture among American Blacks. The dream of equal opportunity does not disappear. Rather, it "becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members" (Fanon, 1967, p. 34). Rather than serving to enable individual and collective agency, assertions of opportunity become explanations for failure.

This mummification of the notion of opportunity is exemplified in the following response to the question "[d]o you feel that there were lots of opportunities for you in [Compton]?"

Blkmale29: Yeah, yeah.

LP: And what kind of opportunities did you think that there were?

Blkmale29: Uh, they were in sports, jobs

LP: What kind of jobs?

Blkmale29: There used to be a church right there off of El Segundo right past Wilmington on the right that used to give like summer jobs to the kids. I don't remember the name of the church though, but I know it's still there.

LP: Okay, what type of summer jobs were they?

Blkmale29: Go to the park and clean up, help in like activities, uh I worked at the school district in the summer. The Compton Unified School District.

LP: And what did you do there?

Blkmale29: Filing.

LP: Filing? So you consider jobs where you can clean up or file as opportunities
Blkma29: I mean, I guess if you look at what were offered and our community, yeah. If you go outside, I mean no.

LP: Okay, so outside of the community then what happened in Compton didn't seem like it was.

Blkma29: They weren't, yeah, well I mean what you had to go on in Compton was basically, that was the opportunity but you go somewhere else, that could be looked at as minor opportunity, to them it was going on.

Changes in Black Comptonites' sense of opportunity as the ghetto intensified suggest the accommodationist roots of skewed opportunity perception. As demographics shifted, there were fewer opportunities and activities in Compton. Whereas older residents reflected upon parks and recreation jobs, and a "Teen Post" where they had opportunities to congregate, do homework, read, and play games, younger residents did not have the same opportunities. Even more so, the younger residents recognized low skill jobs as opportunities regardless on the dead-end-ness of the opportunity. Opportunity as an indication of expectation and worth speak to the shifting mentality of Compton residents once the city became a ghetto. The responses of Comptonites manifest either a complete realization that no substantial opportunities existed or either a distorted view of what served as opportunities. The response for one young resident was swift and clear.

LP: And did you feel that there were a lot of opportunities for you in Compton?

Blkfm28: No.

When asked about opportunity, the majority of residents in Compton responded that the change in opportunity was tangible. They traced the change to demographics. Although one respondent claimed that the exodus of Whites actually increased opportunity for Black Comptonites, this required a trivialization of opportunity. Asked if she felt a sense of opportunity when she was growing up in Compton, she replied,

Blkfem55: Not initially.

LP: And how did that change?

Blkfem55: As the demographics changed the opportunities changed.

LP: And what were the initial opportunities.

Blkfem55: There was very little because Compton was a White community when we first moved in and there was still racial unrest.

For example Black women couldn't wear pants or short pants downtown.

One need not discount the right of Black women to wear pants to note that at a time when the city was being transformed into a brutal, impoverished ghetto, other forms of opportunity were more salient.

For this particular resident, discriminatory restrictions were lifted as demographics shifted. Whites no longer policed the Black behavior in the same way. Her understanding of opportunity and its conflation with freedom and citizenship is widely understood as part of the Black struggle in the United States. The Blacks who had had to be conscious of themselves in relation to White society were able to some degree stop monitoring their behavior. But this effect cannot be disentangled from the ghettoization of Compton as the city itself became a black space. What appeared to be freedom was actually the withdrawal of investment and genuine self-determination.

Opportunity and identity were co-constructed for residents. Most participants viewed the opportunity to learn in school as being crucial to the type of opportunity they would have in society. They also viewed opportunity within the city as a determinant of how they begin to identify themselves and how they began to conceptualized success. The participants' perception of what constituted opportunity emerged as a salient theme that clarified how a Compton upbringing impacted life expectations.

Opportunity and Education

Opportunity and access to learning shaped what residents thought about their worth. The opportunity to learn intersected with access to resources for many and shaped how they viewed themselves within the larger social structure. This section first lays out the impact of schooling on identity by examining the availability of books at Centennial High School in Compton. Then, it addresses how opportunity was ultimately mitigated by that resource, and how the decision to engage in school or not was a psychological process of self-protection.

Schooling and Identity

Numerous scholars have identified that lack of resources as a link to academic underachievement and failure. However, there is less scholarship about the connection between identity and resources. Kenneth Clark analyzed the effect of separate and unequal funding and materials on Black children's sense of self worth in the 1950's, yet these findings appear to have little consequence on the current issue facing students. In expanding upon how residents understood their identities in Compton, this study also revisits this issue by laying out the residents' own responses to lack of textbooks.

The absence of books has tremendous causal effect on literacy and achievement (Kashen, 1996, 2007). While the presence of books in school is part of the resource argument, it also demonstrates how resources interact with opportunity, self-worth and identity. As Compton residents revisited their schooling experiences and made claims about the quality of experience, the availability and quality of books were central to their accounts of themselves and their worth.

One resident observed that even though he attended Centennial High school during the segregated era of the early sixties, the school had up-to-date supplies. He believed that it did in fact rival the White schools. At a time when Southern and Northern Whites were resisting the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, first-class materials at predominately Black Centennial High School was the epitome of separate but equal. Then, as Compton's population shifted, maintenance of high quality resources waned. One 67-year-old resident remembered, "I enrolled at Centennial - it was only three years old, four years old. The books were up to date. In 1962 in my science class I had a book that was copy written in 1962. And that's when I knew the school had fallen - when I went back to coach in 74, that same book was there."

This disinvestment in the schools once Whites left Compton was evident to children in the school is demonstrated by the following Compton resident account:

I graduated from high school in 1976 and one of books said in science, one day soon man would land on the moon. And man had stopped going to the moon by the time that I graduated. See what I'm saying. Even if I do good, if I get an A, I'm 10 years behind. (52 year-old male)

The sentiment that even at his best this student was ten years behind had huge implications on his psyche. He understood that as a student he was being groomed to be

inferior and chronically behind academically. This point is particularly relevant in tracing how the inferior quality in the city and school could come to be taken up by residents. Considering Mesha's statement, "I already am what I'm 'gon be" in this context means that she saves herself from retrogressing by disengaging from a school that has antiquated books. The school with no resources and poor resources can then become a place of unlearning and stagnation. Dashon eventually dropped out and is labeled a failure by society's standard. But in relation to a lack of resource and facility that constantly reminds him of his worthlessness, his was an act of resistance.

Thought process of a student in this environment with insufficient resources is clear. Two younger residents responded to the lack of books as hindrances to what they saw as future opportunities.

Blkfm28: My trigonometry class we had about maybe 20 or so students maybe a little bit more, and we had maybe 10 books in there. So we were like two or three people trying to share one book. Uhm. So that's unrealistic, I can't learn properly if I can't even look at my own book and decipher what's going on. So, if- the class is hard enough on its own to have, then to have to share books with 2 or 3 other people.

And,

Blkma28: Centennial was kind of bad. It would be like 40 students in a class and only 20 books. Some of us didn't have chairs you know what I mean. And honestly if it hadn't been for some girl in the class and I'm sitting there talking to them I might have wanted to leave. I don't have a chair, I don't have a book, well what am I doing here you know what I mean so.

In short, the quantity and quality of books as a crucial resource for student learning epitomizes the role of the perception of opportunity in the broader social issue of Black worthlessness. As Clark (1965) and Sobol (2004) noted, the material conditions in both cities and schools can lead to psychological damage. In Compton, the changing availability of books mirrored stereotypes about the community that eventually played out and reinforced fourth person consciousness.

Emergent Theory - Fourth-Person Consciousness

The above sections reveal a consciousness held by Blacks in Compton. This consciousness shaped their actions, and led them to them to define themselves in relation to the confines under which they operated. For Blacks growing up in a ghetto like Compton, to become conscious entails awareness not only that anti-blackness is pervasive in this world, but also to be further debilitated by the stereotypes associated with the ghetto spaces in which they live. This heightened psychological burden, which I call fourth-person consciousness builds on the DuBoisian notion of double vision and the Fanonian theory of third-person consciousness.

The types and nature of consciousness have continuously been explored by Black scholars who recognize its importance in navigating the world. For Du Bois (1903/2003), double-consciousness had the ability to unnerve the Black man and upset his very being. He argued that there was a duality:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two

warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 9)

Du Bois claimed that it was the mental strength that kept the body from breaking under the pressure of this duality. But for Fanon, the body does break. The Black man gives in and performs in ways that are against himself, negating him from his reality.

What Du Bois has conceptualized as double consciousness is optimistic, while what Fanon proffers is a less hopeful third person-consciousness. Fanon sees the position of the Black man through alienation and negation. He (1967) explains the difficulty of the bodily schema, in terms of negation. “Consciousness of the body is a solely negating activity. It is a third-person activity. It is a third person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty...And all these movements are made not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge” (p. 110 -111). In Fanon’s formulation, the Black man is not only Black but is so in relation to the White man. The Black man’s actions reflect this consciousness. He moves about fully aware of his unassimilable nature and his history as an alienated “other.”

Scholars who have studied Fanon’s theoretical framing of a Black man’s neurosis have explained third-person consciousness as an objectification of self. The self is viewed as an object, an “it”, that moves specifically under the watchfulness of the White man’s eye. Sullivan (2004) contends that Fanon’s alienation from himself and his consciousness of his body as a 3rd person object is the result of ethical slippages, shattered horizons, and the zebra striping of his unconscious. The ethical slippage occurs when the White values are transferred into Blacks through social and educational indoctrination. The shattered horizons are when White society reminds the Black man, in spite of class status or education, is still a Negro.

For many of the residents growing up in Compton, their awareness of Black identity and understandings of a pathology attached to the ghetto informed their actions when entering the world outside of Compton. Their fourth-person consciousness – degree of consciousness associated with belonging to a objectified pathological space and consciousness of the stereotyped behavior, language, and culture of that space—is the psychological impact as they grapple with their identities shaped in black space. It builds upon and overlaps with the previous forms proffered by Du Bois and Fanon and operates on top of the third-person consciousness in which one watches his behavior.

According to Fanon (1967), “the body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty;” the movements of the Black man are, “made not out of habit but of implicit knowledge” (p. 111). Blacks living in the post-civil rights era American ghetto teeter on the edge of subhumanity all the time. Any small step that would be a forgivable misstep in human (White) society can push you over the edge. Ghetto residents internalize this knowledge that White society deems them inferior and worry either that it is true or that they will appear to confirm its truth. This added, almost unbearable pressure on ghettoized Blacks leads to fourth-person consciousness.

When fourth-person consciousness is operating, the objectified self operates in opposition to who the person believe he/she really is, or it operates with a hope of how he/she wishes to be recognized. Let me clarify. For residents who come from ghettos, but have not totally internalized the ghetto pathology, fourth-person consciousness allows a Du Boisian optimism when they engage with others and operate outside of the ghetto. They are simply aiming to merge their Black identity with the American identity. However, while within the

ghetto the fourth-person consciousness evokes the Fanonian notion of “black” body in which many are performing as an object separate from themselves¹⁴.

Fourth-person consciousness that structures Black identity within different geographical spaces involves the Fanonian concept of blackness as subhuman violent and fearful while within the confines of the ghetto. The behaviors of those in the space are in some sense survival mechanisms in the ghetto. They are acting ghetto or speaking “ghetto” to survive the ghetto. Their ghetto Black selves then become the object that performs separately and in tandem with the externally constructed ghetto, which is itself an object.

This consciousness alters the residents’ behavior, silences, and leads to avoidance. It is intensified by a fear of being found out. The below interview excerpt demonstrates how this fourth-person consciousness plays out:

LP: Have you found ever that you've gotten further by not revealing you're from Compton? Is there a time that you purposely didn't divulge that information?

Blkmale29: Yeah.

LP: And why was that?

Blkmale29: Cuz I didn't want them to take me saying ah I'm from Compton and think something different of me than what I am. I don't want people looking at me like ah I gotta watch my things around him, he'll be stealing or you know, he may sell it for drugs or something like that.

This particular resident knew that attached to Compton is a stereotype. This underlying knowledge, this working consciousness of the city pathology structured his actions and his words. His consciousness caused him to script in his mind the interactions he would have with others, and reshape his words to avoid an association with Compton.

¹⁴ For some residents, who have internalized the racial oppression and pathology of the ghetto, they may not see themselves as having an American identity. But, they are aware of the difference. This is not the experience of the majority of younger Blacks in this sample who demonstrated fourth consciousness.

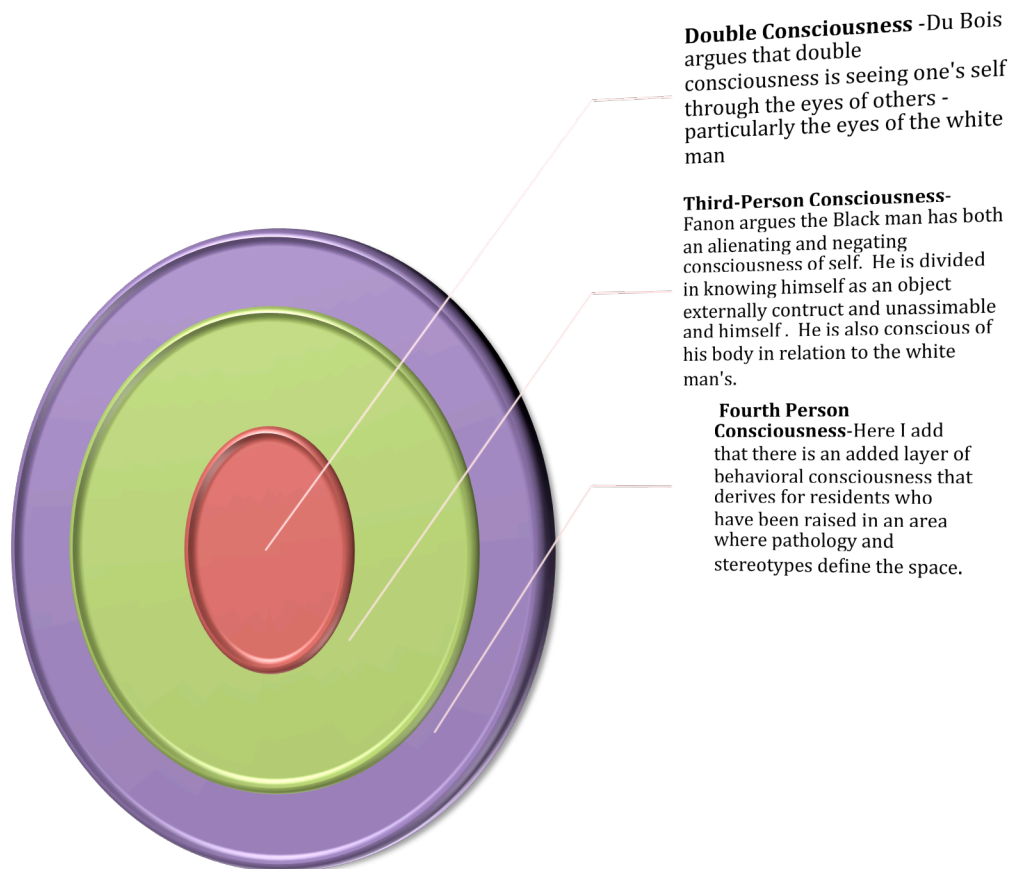


Figure 22. The emergence of Fourth-Person Consciousness. Fourth-person consciousness builds upon double consciousness and third-person consciousness. It overlaps them but also employs them at different moments and in different special dynamics.

I contend that while fourth-person consciousness builds upon the other forms of consciousness, in the operationalization of fourth consciousness it is manifested only when a Black person comes from a pathologized space, and it is itself triggered by the spatial location in which one finds him or herself.

Fanon explains the dichotomy in terms of the colonizer and colonized, which does not allow for a fusion of identities. The residents understood this by demonstrating when and where they hid their Compton identity. In response to the question “can you get ghetto”, those who responded stated that they could when necessary. They navigated different spaces with consciousness of what the expectation of the black in different spaces and when, the ghetto card needed to be played.

Black Female 43 #1 Well, ghetto I think is a frame a mind and how you just feel like yeah, you know I can go there with you. I can be as loud as you can be or I can be as quiet as you can be, it's just if you take me there.

Ghetto Blackness is ever present and can be evoked, but suppression becomes necessary for those Blacks who are navigating outside of a ghetto space i.e. in regular society. Compton residents, then, understand themselves in relation to Compton, and situate themselves within their other urban and suburban spaces. For example, this 28-year-old female would reveal that she is From Los Angeles:

Blkfemale28:

Okay, so and this was from another African American, a female. So when I went to college, I went to Cal State Northridge, and because I knew the stereotypes I never said I was from Compton. I used to say, I'm from Los Angeles, so whenever anybody asked and this was at Northridge so I was just say Oh I'm from Los Angeles. People who did not know the area, would leave it at that. People who knew the area would say where in LA are you from? So then I would have to say from Compton and their voices would change. Ohh, like as if really.

The residents in Compton are particularly shaped by their consciousness of how blackness is intertwined with their black bodies and how Compton residency links them even more to pathologies of blackness. They are conscious that their residence in and relationship to Compton as the city where they grew up morphed their blackness into a more profound pathology. Their reactions, and actions fell into four themes: contradictory positioning and rehumanizing (in comparison to other spaces), evasion, and skewed opportunity perspectives which fourth consciousness captures.

Chapter Conclusion

What emerged in this chapter is how Compton residents' consciousness and identities are related to the cultural stereotypes and structural racism with which they had to contend. Compton residents in this study exemplify the complexities of how identity and consciousness is an amalgamation of cultural and structural factors (Damon, 2006; Du Roucher, 2011; Fanon, 1967; Feagin, 2001; Hill, 2006; Mills, 1999; Ritterhouse, 2006), and in most cases the interaction of cultural and structural practices on the identities are evident. What is often negotiated and contested are the stereotypes that are embedded in many social institutions, like schools, operating within Compton, and how the culture of Compton residents evolved out of the discrimination and racism within those institutions. Lewis (1966) names a culture of poverty as a explanation of behaviors of certain minority groups, but this culture is in fact an end result of systematic racial oppression and disinvestment in "black" areas.

In addressing how members of Compton community understood their school experiences and their identities in relation to the city of Compton, I posed a series of questions to participants to situate their understanding of themselves and the relation to the community. The aim was to determine how they identified themselves and whether their identities were shaped by their community. The identity of the Compton residents interviewed for this study demonstrated internalization, resistance, and accommodation of structures and ideology that often construct and define blackness and ghetto spaces.

Compton in particular is a place where its identity has been constantly constructed from external entities like media, entertainment, and politicians. They contribute to what Hancock (2006) calls a politics of disgust in which the characteristics of the stereotyped inhabitants are concretized in the minds of others. Many of the residents were well aware of the stereotypes and pathology that define Compton, and as such often spoke in circles or contradicted defining characteristics of Compton and themselves. This was both a methodological issue and a finding of fourth-consciousness that delineates the pervasiveness of Compton environment on

the thinking. It also reveals how contradictory positioning and (re)humanizing is a commitment to expressing Compton as a human space and its residents as humans. Additionally, contradictory moments in which residents circumvented questions or provided answers contrasting their beliefs and experiences, what I term evasion and after-taping confessional, evinced consciousness of their identity in relation to Compton. But the true evidence of opinions or claims of humanization were revealed in why most Comptonites I interviewed no longer live in Compton. Most want different identities and experiences for their children. Moving out of Compton, while a method of escape, fails to disrupt fourth-person consciousness or the constant internal struggle for subjects who navigate the world with the burden of the ghetto ever-present.

The answer to Compton's woes also rests within its history. Compton's older Black residents were one faction of residents that was inoculated from the psychological turmoil derived from internalizing the stereotypes. Those residents who grew up in Compton as the city shifted, and participated in the Black power movements of the 1960's offered an alternative to the stereotypes that were not just an opposition to the stereotype. Older residents who had admitted to reading and educating themselves about the history of Blacks and sought knowledge outside of school curriculum were able to disrupt the ideology of white supremacy by name its falsities. They did not defend themselves against it; rather they called it out as patently wrong.

Evasion and Older Compton Residents

In contrast to younger residents who evaded their association with Compton, residents who had been part of the Black Power Movement of the 1960's and 1970's were demonstrably strengthened by and proud of their upbringing in Compton and thus did not feel the need to evade. Older Compton residents' resistance to the racial oppression and the pathology of the ghetto was mediated by consciousness of Blacks in Compton and history of a unified struggle. The interview data revealed a clear generational chasm that coincides with knowledge and pervasive of social movements at particular times.

These residents in the study had to contend with the overt racism, legally sanctioned oppression, and black inferiority ideology that was plaguing the nation at particular points in history. Because the 1940's – 1960's (Dowd Hall, 2005) marked the heighten time in a continuing civil rights era (Parker, 2010), substantial and significant difference exists in how residents who were adolescents in the 1960's understood their identities and the role of African-Americans in larger systematic power structure of oppression. Historical events such as the emergent Black Power Movement, the ongoing struggle of for Black liberation in the Civil Rights movement and the emergence of young leaders led to a consciousness among adolescence in the 1960's.

Some respondents recalled Compton and its relation to Watts riot and similar uprisings in the 1960's and they situated their identity and consciousness as a manifestation of the city, and as an opposition to the schooling structure and broader structure. The older generation's identity as Black revolutionaries attributed to the social consciousness garnered by living in Compton. This was in conflict with the younger generations - as they did not share in the ways in which Blacks from Compton fought against oppression and participated in revolutionary movements. One Black male age 67 reflected upon the Watts riot:

Yeah, the revolt. We referred to it a revolt and that's something else that people need to understand, we were literate young people. We were conscience and cognizant of the fact that our people was getting a raw deal. They said we were revolutionary

in our thinking; they're right, now in a way that saying that it's bad but that you have to have revolutionary thought of change. You look at the different people the different struggles that were going on around the world at that time, you had changes of government or revolutions in Asia. You had it in Latin America you had it in all the African continent. As you can see I still have that mentality as far as my art. We were listening to things like message through the grassroot, Brother Minister Malcolm. We were listening to speakers who were speaking about our plight as it existed. So we would go down to 103rd there in Compton and see how our people were being exploited with triple interest and all this type of stuff.

Black consciousness and historical social movements that happened in the 1960's were shown to directly impact responses about identity and worth for older Comptonites. It aided their ability to resist Black inferiority and prevented them from internalizing the dominant cultures' notions of inferiority. The still spoke with and embodied a sense of Black pride and were able to articulate the nature of identity problems that the Black resistance movements fought against:

Blk male 60: The number one problem was low self-esteem. However when the pride thing hit, and everybody was standing up lean with pride. You don't have to be ashamed. People were ashamed of their skin color, they're ashamed of their hair. And oh my goodness don't have a nose. You see. But when the pride thing hit, people started coming together.

...You see equality was real to me. And you're going to notice in general. In general. I lived this. That this was not books, history, once I learned how to study and study reading and actually getting history and find out how things were evolving - out here in the city of LA evolved and Compton evolved...

Older African-Americans worked against the definitions that had historically defined Blacks. Through consciousness of social plights, they understood the impact of their racial identity as exclusionary from mainstream society and they resisted through a Fanonian concept of liberating violence. Fanon (1963) argued that the process of decolonization, mental and otherwise, potentially included violence. He asserted,

The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life, that same violence will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters. To wreck the colonial world is henceforth a mental picture of action which is very clear, very easy to understand which may be assumed by each one of the individuals which constitute the colonized people" (p. 31)

In contrast to younger residents who evaded their association with Compton, residents who had been part of the Black Power Movement of the 1960's and 1970's were demonstrably strengthened by and proud of their upbringing in Compton and thus did not feel the need to evade. Older Compton residents' resistance to the racial oppression and the pathology of the ghetto is mediated by consciousness of Blacks in Compton and history of a unified struggle. The interview data revealed a clear generational chasm that coincides with knowledge and pervasive of social movements at particular times.

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The structure of racism and oppression continued in Compton (as demonstrated in Chapter 2 and 3), but the generations reared in the 1980 and 1990's were combating the crack cocaine epidemic and intense violence. The revolution had become one of internal strife of the Bloods vs. Crips (Sloan, 2005; Bargarier, 2011), and the mentality of many of younger people as unified revolutionaries against the societal forms of oppress is missing. They demonstrate a tension between the source of anger and the evasive action – their reaction, unlike the generation of the 1960s and 1970s, appears inward. They internalize those stereotypes about Compton as true, and hide themselves or distance themselves. The work for educators, then, is to address the mechanisms by which oppression becomes internalized.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to theorize and explain the construction of the Compton ghetto in order to understand how students like DaShon and Mesha, who were schooled in a ghetto environment, came to internalize the pathology of the space and ultimately fail in school. These two students, whose views were presented in the introduction, made claims about their worth and the mentality with which they approached school. They ultimately came to fail in the same way, neither completed high school, and neither went on to college. However, I argue that their abilities were not the cause of their failure. Neither was it solely resources, neighborhood effects, or psychology. Rather, it was a manifestation all three of these things along with the social and ideological ways in which ghettos are constructed and internalized.

The case study of Compton clarified how the ghetto is internalized and demonstrated how a ghetto constructed upon anti-black racism, an ideology of White supremacy, and a belief in Black inferiority shaped the failure in the schools. Scholars like Jean Anyon (1999) laid a foundation for this study by demonstrating the political, economic, and racial components involved in ghetto schooling. However, I wanted to understand which actions and what psychological elements may have contributed to the making of a ghetto and ghetto schools.

Compton began as a community founded by Whites. The carefully structured built environment looked like a suburb. There were large roadways, tree-lined streets and large homes. This suburban space was an enclave where Whites protected their belief in their superiority and their right to a space free of Blacks.

As Whites in Compton built the suburb, they were conscious of its relationship with other communities. Street signs solidified the suburban neighborhood and highlighted White efforts to position Compton in the larger, racialized metropolis. Compton Boulevard, which names the suburb, reflected of the pristine image that had developed. The street signs posted in 1950 demonstrate that Compton epitomized the American Dream. The signs celebrated Compton as both a place and a relationship. They constituted claims about Compton and connecting Compton to Los Angeles.

In tracing the history of how Whites constructed the suburb of Compton, this dissertation points also to their involvement in the destruction of the community, and their contribution to the physical ghetto. The quality of the community, the classification of its citizenry, and the level of opportunity changed drastically. As Whites fled the city and Blacks moved in, Compton's Committee on Business and Employment summarized the problems which had engrossed the city by 1967:

An alarmingly high percentage of job seekers in Compton fell into the "unemployable" category.

No large parcels of land were available in Compton for industrial expansion

The number of businesses in the city had declined.

Physical deterioration of property in wide spread in the city commercial area

Potential businessmen were discouraged by the lack of business loans and high insurance rates in the area.

The quality of goods and services were generally poor in the city.

There was a lack of communication among businessmen, the city government, and the citizens. (Widaatalla, 1970, p. 200).

Numerous other findings by the Committee point to the decline of the city, and the changing value placed upon the land and businesses as a result of the new population. With

Whites and middle-class blacks dwindling and businesses now gone, Compton's destination as a ghetto began to unfold.

Larger structures of white dominance allowed Whites in Compton to abandon businesses, homes, and schools. Their belief in Black inferiority shaped the ghetto transformation. In short Compton's making as a suburb and unmaking as a ghetto is attributable to Whites' racism.

Josh Sides (2004) explains Compton's trajectory as an ideological shift as well as a physical transformation. Compton became the epitome of the ghetto and was erased because of this classification. As Sides notes, adjacent cities petitioned to have it removed from maps. Lawndale, Hawthorne, Redondo Beach have been successful in renaming the stretches of what had been called Compton Blvd. in their city limits.

Compton as an inferior space is a specter in the minds of its residents and in the stereotypes held on a statewide, nationwide, and global scale. Sides (2004) uncovers the ideological component of Compton as he traces the association of its name with the pathology, and how surrounding cities opted to eliminate reminders of Compton. The idea that the ghetto is present yet unmappable builds on Blaut's (1970) assertion that the ghetto does not have a fixed space. Rather, the ghetto is rooted in an association with a particular place, but its invocation becomes a weapon against all Blacks and it is internalized by them. This framing of the ghetto as visible and invisible adds to the paradox and contradictory positioning of its residents as both beings and non-beings simultaneously. They are constantly negotiating and accommodating and resisting.

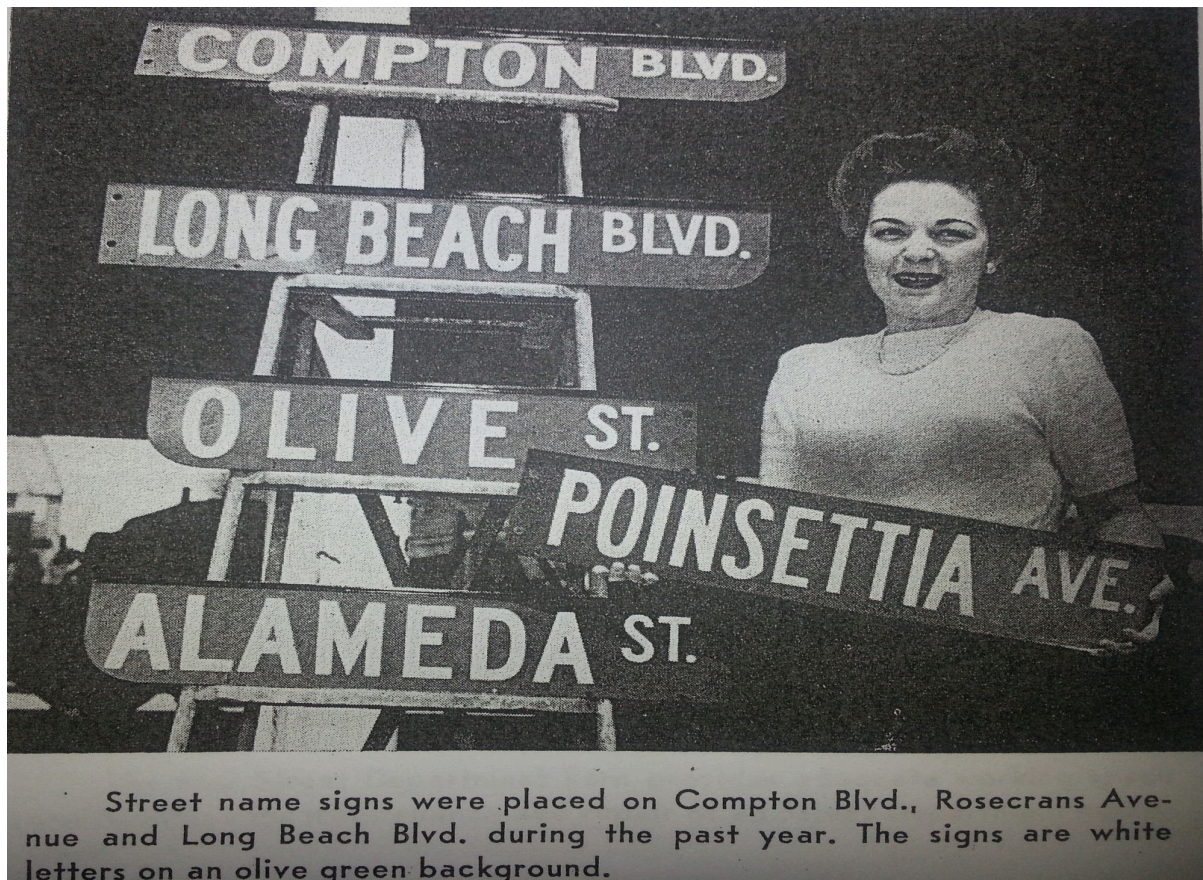


Figure 23. This image of Compton sign is indicative of the building of the city. Josh Sides (2004) later points out that the street sign denoting Compton Blvd had been erased from neighboring cities as part of an effort to disassociate from the pathology of Compton.

Compton's role had been exacerbated by the hyper criminalization of its residents and exaggerated reports of gang violence in the media. In its transformation from suburban dream to urban nightmare, Compton, Sides argues became a "metonym for the urban crises." It has been subjected to exploitation of its image, but has yet to reap any economic benefits. Sides implicates gangsta rap by "artists" such as N.W.A. and films like *Menace II Society* and *Boys in the Hood* for distorting Compton in the minds of Americans and of people internationally. Still, in focusing on Black performers and attributing agency to them in Compton's ghettoization, Sides masks the process of interpellation through which they are called to enact a ghettoized Black identity.

Resource allocation and expenditures in Compton aided in the construction of the city as a ghetto. The resource flow in many ways belies the way in which a ghetto is constructed. The city slipped into despair despite a steady flow of funds allocated for schools. In this study, the contradictions and paradoxes lie in the fact that resources continued to go toward the Compton district and city but never quite arrived. The ghetto and its schools were *not* created and maintained primarily because of the absence of resources. Rather, it was through a process by which funds were available as profits for outsiders but not as resources for Compton's children.

White racism, discrimination, and supremacist ideology operated in the disinvestment and alienation of Blacks Compton, but internalization of oppression could be seen in the

actions of Blacks. Blacks took up the act of oppressing one another. As they did so, the profoundness of the ghetto pathology was internalized. Ghetto consciousness deeply structured people's lives and behaviors. Both Black opportunists and Black residents accepted stereotyped worthlessness as fact. This internalized oppression proved to be extremely detrimental to Blacks in Compton as it continued the ghettoization process began by Whites.

Indeed, even among Blacks who finished high school, went on to college, and built careers, the reproduction of the White ideology of worthlessness and ineptitude had lasting effects. The ghetto, one such Comptonite reflected,

could be a mindset.... If you see graffiti every day, if you see your area or the place of where you stay, your schools and everything, if you see all of that run down and nobody's taking care of it, then why wouldn't your mindset be, "if they don't care, I don't care" (Blkfemale55#2).

Among the lasting effects were the psychological impacts in which students like Dashon and Mesha would deem themselves worthless, and others would remain in Compton's box without any desire to leave, while still others would develop what I have called a fourth-person consciousness that affected the way they navigated spaces outside of Compton.

The Du Boisian concept of double consciousness is essential to understand the Black person's warring personalities. Du Bois' theory posits that the African and American identities are in constant conflict because of the limitations within and beyond the veil. Whereas the ability to be Black and American seems plausible for Du Bois, Fanon argues that such a synthesis is not possible. Through a historicized theory attentive to the carcereal and epidermic force of racism, he suggests a third-person consciousness that guides the Black man's thoughts, behaviors, and actions. The third-person consciousness is a debilitating state in which the Black man is an object always striving to perform in the manner that is acceptable in (White) society. He watches his body perform and conform under the racist ideology that shapes it. Whereas Du Bois sees tension, Fanon sees objectification and negation.

Fourth-person consciousness was a key finding that built upon DuBois and Fanon's theories of the psychic impact of racism. When one comes from a ghettoized space there is an added level of pathology, a sort of hyper-pathology. The ghetto constructs an identity antithetical to the human that is so powerful that it defines even middle-class Blacks living in the ghetto and follows the Black body even if it leaves the physical ghetto. Fourth-person consciousness explains contrastive positioning, rehumanization, evasion, and skewed opportunity perspectives. The added layer of stigma for residents in pathologized ghetto spaces complicates the way in which scholars have articulated the psychology of Blacks in both social and academic spaces.

Blacks who had been raised in and had their identities and behaviors shaped by ghetto spaces revealed a deeper pathological identity from which they were unable to fully escape. They believed that revealing their relation to the space would affix the spatial pathology upon them. Moreover, the conflict they felt in describing the ghetto as a problematic space demonstrated that they participated in its degradation. While in Compton, certain stereotypes may be embraced in order to survive the space. Outside of Compton, there was a hope to be viewed as Black rather than Compton (ghetto) Black.

Black educators in Compton and elsewhere operated under an extreme contradiction while trying to educate Black children. Siddie Walker (1996, 2001), Fairclough (2009), Sowell (1974) Joyce King (1991, 2004), and Ladson Billing (1997) have rescued Black teachers who have been erased by the integrationist discourse about segregation and inferior education from

oblivion, restoring their position as valued, competent educators. Still, Black educators and administrators cannot be romanticized beyond their actual achievement because doing so ignores their role in failure. The educators are themselves victims of education discrimination and victims of oppression, but have participated in the oppression as well. In the case of Compton, Black school administrators and Black city leaders were full participants in the ghettoization of Compton and its schools. Numerous instances of administrative neglect, mismanagement, misuse of funds allocated for the children evidence internalized oppression. The educators were themselves exhibiting a belief system that mirrors the ideology of racist and conservative Whites in America.

Marvin Lynn et.al.'s (2010) study of Black teachers' beliefs about African-American males demonstrated the deficit view of African-American children. Lynn noted that these educators blamed the students, their families, and their communities for the students' persistent failure. This study reveals a disturbing, but all too true articulation of ideological damage internalized by and disseminated by Black educators. The teachers perceptions, Lynn et. al. concluded, "might best be viewed as a result of internalize oppression, in which oppressed people can easily become what Freire call 'the oppressor within'" (Lynn, 2010, p. 314).

Not surprisingly then, African-American children continue to fail under Black and White educators alike. In the case of Compton, internalized oppression shaped not only teachers' actions but also the way the Black city and school officials deceived the Black community, and stole and mismanaged funds to the detriment of their own people.

The internalized oppression also shaped the way in which residents conceded to the spatial limitations. When asked what other communities had to offer, for instance, one 24-year-old Black male responded:

Uhmhhh, I wouldn't know. Compton - I say is like a box. Compton is my box I really don't go out of Compton.

LP: Why?

It's my comfort zone. I just call it my comfort zone.

For this resident, his confinement to Compton, and his participation in gang banging were good enough, and he had little desire for anything else. He dropped out of community college to take gang banging to "a different level".

Compton's Future

Ghettos as can be defined as futureless space, a place with no opportunity. This is clear to many older residents who understood and experienced the shift in Compton. According to one 69-year-old male:

It's ghetto now because there's no opportunities for the kids...the kids are just out here on the corner, doing nothing. They used to have programs; you know work programs for kids, get jobs in the summer and all that stuff, they got nothing now.

And when asked what do other cities have that Compton should have, a 70-year-old female resident simply responded, "things for the children. Things for the children to be involved in and uh I just – that part you know I think that's the crest of the problem."

Opportunity means more than the existence of programs in which one can enroll. In response to what makes Compton ghetto, one 28-year-old Black male responded:

Ummm. I guess – Damn without trying to sound too hard it's just the – the feel of it. Like it was a feel 'cause even though the houses didn't seem run down as you see in Washington DC or even in New York – it didn't look like that but the feeling was still

the same there of like they call it a trap. So this is our trap. It was - still felt like this was our trap; this was our hood.

Another resident added, “how you really feel inside and how you conduct yourself that makes it ghetto” (Black female age 70). Compton, and all the Comptons, must be able to inculcate the feeling of the ghetto.

The Boiling Water

When you put a lobster in boiling water, it knows immediately that it is boiling; however, when you put a lobster in cold water and slowly heat it, it is not clear to the lobster at which point it begins boiling. There is unawareness and normalization of Compton’s ghetto/spatial pathology. This effect epitomizes the experience of many of the residents who grew up in Compton didn’t realize they were boiling within the problematic space of the ghetto.

Concluding Statement - Getting out of the ghetto is like believing in the tooth fairy

This dissertation opened with anecdotes of two former students, one of whom I had an opportunity to interview. Dashon is the 28-year-old Black male in this dissertation. His brilliance in 7th grade struck me because I was surrounded by so many students who had struggled. What was disturbing in that 1995 interaction was to hear the firmness with which he had determined he would not go to college because people in his family did not go to college. Unlike many of his peer, Dashon is still alive and not in prison 17 years after junior high school. But must we accept such a low standard for students?

Compton is a place where resources, psychology, and identity coalesce to create paradoxes and contradictions for the residents. A ghetto is a place of being and non-being simultaneously where the inhabitants own nothing, but kill one another over turf; and a place where the income level is low, but high enough to be exploited by markets that sell liquor, clothing, and hair products. It is an ideology, a behavior, and a feeling; it is a physical, geographic location where Black people and, by extension, blackness real or imagined in the minds of Whites, resides. That geographical location is the base by which ghetto pathology is transferred to the Black body. Escaping the pathology of the space both psychologically, and actually for some is fantasmic.

Blkmaile28 (DaShon): As a kid like I can say I’ve always done kind of ok in school so there was an opportunity that comes with that like oh doctor, fireman, police, lawyer or whatever the case may be. So there were those. But those - those were like story book – you put your tooth under this pillow, you’ll get money in the morning – Santa Claus and all those type of things. Like ok I guess what you’re telling me happens but as I grew older ... I saw that like I didn’t see anybody get that. You know what I mean it was - I didn’t see anybody get the doctor or the lawyer or the police officer or even fireman, so it just changed from not what I thought I could achieve but what was in the world was real for me achieve.

If educators are to really close the achievement gap and disrupt the current pathway of academic failure for African-American students, we must address the ghetto and the way the ghetto is being internalized. Failure in schools does not happen in a vacuum; it is part of a larger social structural environment that includes numerous institutions and the ideology that promotes and rewards Black student failure. We must change the thinking of students. To do so, we must create a world that nurtures their sense of worth and values the possibility of their humanity, rather than systematically crushing it. Their sense of worth and value should never

be a question. For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7, King James Version). Students must think in their hearts that they can be successful, and nothing should dissuade them of that thinking.

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