



Special Issue on the Impact of Black Lives Matter Movement in the Era of COVID-19 Pandemic

Deciphering the Problem of Change: Socioeconomic Disparity in Marginalized Communities in the Wake of COVID-19

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Aim/Purpose	The following manuscript presents a broad humanistic-existential framework in support of human-centered design strategy, as it explores the axiological assessment of how marginalized community leadership, post-COVID-19, can better understand the dynamics of change to lead and integrate Comprehensive Community Initiative (CCI) models grounded in Community-Based Learning (CBL).
Background	The manuscript commences with a synthesis of literature focused on understanding the problem of change concerning marginalized communities' complex historical origins, which has now become further complicated due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.
Methodology	By developing an in-depth understanding of the foundational elements that challenge marginalized communities, this manuscript explores and identifies the confluence of non-linear methodological system models with blended applications to create human-centric development.
Findings	This manuscript invokes synergistic strategies that can engage marginalized communities to develop collaborative community learning portals that place direct investment in its residents. These efforts can holistically shift community landscapes by enabling residents' socio-economic growth through the acquisition of high levels of knowledge and resources, while achieving ongoing self-awareness.
Impact on Society	This manuscript shows that the integration of strategy even in the face of a volatile future world, as CCIs possess the ability to strengthen and increase levels of independence and autonomy to create sustainable and equitable ecosystems; and ultimately work to ensure a shared vision of change now and into the future.
Keywords	Comprehensive Community Initiative (CCI), Community-Based Learning (CBL), COVID-19, wicked problems, human-centered design, growth mindset, poverty, marginalized communities, social class structure, democracy

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		<input type="checkbox"/> Astronomy
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Human Elements Addressed		
<input type="checkbox"/> Personality Traits	<input type="checkbox"/> Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Wellbeing
<input type="checkbox"/> Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/> Consciousness
<input type="checkbox"/> Cognition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

From a philosophical perspective, change has often been viewed as paradoxical, insofar as to reasoning as to how something can be changed yet ultimately remain the same (Rieppel, 2011). By further researching such paradoxical elements of change, one will discover an epistemological approach that dates back to ancient Greek philosophers and their efforts to solve the 'problem of change.' These collective efforts were crafted to surmise and accurately uncover the elusive elements of change. Through such collective efforts spawned the conceptual theory of dynamic permanence, which in many ways by definition, is a paradox in and of itself (London, 1996). The concept behind dynamic permanence is based on the logical notion that represents an attempt to identify a 'being' that is in an immutable and unchanging state, yet is ultimately underlined by the continual and evolutionary realms of 'becoming' or 'transforming' in an endless changing multiplicity.

Upon initial review, endless changing multiplicity may portray as an unwavering aporia. It may also serve as an opportunity to further understand change from an evolutionary perspective or one that allows for a deeper understanding of humanity's inherent and ongoing challenge to comprehend the logical elements of change and its paradoxical nature. Man's theoretical evolution of the historical theories defining the problem of change can then be segued into a post-modern perspective, specific to the realm of community, and its evolution over time. Evolution, by definition, is an unfolding sequence or process (Form, 2002). As community leadership understands this context of process, it can then understand the sequential chain of events that facilitate change to occur and see community as a complex adaptive system. Miller and Page (2007) identify a complex adaptive system as one in which even a perfect understanding of the distinct and specific parts does not inevitably convey a perfect understanding of the system behavior as a whole. Thereby, the evolving process to facilitate the creation of change within communities, explicitly speaking marginalized communities—has in and of itself—historically been a significant barrier in the achievement of success (Block, 2009).

Attempts to rationalize these barriers in marginalized communities have stifled community leadership for decades. Block (2009) reasoned such barriers to community achievement in change include the advent of 'fragmentation' that has dramatically hindered the process for transformation in today's communal society. The author further opines that even in the highly technological and globalized worlds of modern-day, communities are inherently individualistic,

isolated, and present absent states of belonging to instigate change. The decay of a community's social fabric further creates complexity to institute change initiatives within a community since opportunities can only genuinely occur through collective steps of a process that can be infinite in number. Putnam (2016) further complements this notion of fragmentation; he recognized the critical determining success factor in community is found in its social capital or interrelatedness of its people.

Yet, one may find that pathological elements of community along with profound characteristics that define its constituents, can create enormous difficulties in the development of a collective process to institute desired change (Block, 2009). As the author contends, communities are ever-changing and evolving, and rooted in profound historical influencers, and require analytical research to achieve the development of a comprehensive collective process. In part, community leadership can only begin to formulate the necessary ingredients to ultimately decipher the problem of change in community when it begins to take an anthropological approach.

Implications of historical origins & societal class

Community leadership, specifically in marginalized communities, has long struggled with understanding culture, its people, and the history that defines it. Accordingly, Shaw and Mayo (2016) defined the primary and central step in creating sustainable community development strategies that begin first with analysis and an in-depth understanding of societal class. The authors contend that without a clear understanding of a community's defined class structure, instituted community development strategies will only mask the underlying issues. Focusing on understanding the social class status structure that defines a community, one can possess a distinctive comprehension as to how and why an individual's position in the social class hierarchy has an overarching effect in various realms of their livelihood (Escarce, 2003). With such comprehension, Escarce implied that critical correlating factors exist between social class status, opportunity, and access to resources, which in part can directly define one's ability for socio-economic mobility. Vickers (1994) defined this significant importance through social distinction, which by definition, are the social forces that assign value to individuals within society and reflect the implications societal class holds over one's ability for socio-economic mobility. The author identified the historical implications of the initial formation of the United States' societal class structure and how early colonialists created socio-economic development opportunities through inherited wealth structures acquired via their European aristocracy lineage. These defined historical events portray the im-

pact of an inherited wealth structure that still hold influence in modern-day societal class.

Katznelson (1980) further added to this reasoning that historical origins and societal class hold a significant interrelationship of interwoven patterns and represent an enduring influence on human behavior and one's continual emergence in societal class. As Katznelson inferred, history and societal class represent an ongoing relationship that crafts an ever-evolving story to define a community and its people. Wyatt, Brown, and Hayes (2004) contended that positive community development is ultimately determined through comprehensive research and understanding of this ever-evolving story, and its ultimate inclusive representation of the community is through its history. Wyatt et al. continued to address how the absence of such inclusive strategies can hinder community development and limits the achievement of upward mobility and social equity.

Throughout the history of the nation, community development has frequently ignored the various influential realities that exist in societal class and its structural inequalities; and how such realities have continually oppressed and locked segments of the population in situations of futility (Freire, 2000). To such an extent, community leadership has even utilized social myths that inhibited fear and deceit tactics, along with vehicles that continually contributed to systems of oppression and societal caste systems that restrict upward mobility (Alexander, 2012). Alexander defined how society's oppressors continually find ways to institute new policy and legislative procedures into practice in support of the practices of manipulation and oppression while being perceived as methodologies to protect and serve in the best interest of the community. Such an unbridled history has heavily rooted influence within current day societal culture and has generated de facto segregation across the nation's community landscapes (Rothstein, 2017). Results of such current day circumstance has left many in community leadership in a state of paradigm paralysis, often focused on the timeworn problems instead of adaptive solutions to address challenges of an ever-evolving society (Thompson Fullilove, 2013).

Wicked problems

It is by understanding the roots of a nation's historical origin and class structure; modern-day leadership can become more readily equipped to understand the dynamic elements that make up a community. As history unfolds, so too do new ever-evolving elements that rescript society, yet community leadership's efforts still often uncover the presence of wicked problems. Rittel (1973) iden-

tifies wicked problems as a social or cultural dilemma that is difficult or at times often impossible to solve due to four core reasons that include: incomplete or contradictory knowledge of the subject at hand, the various and the diverse number of people and opinions involved, the often-burdensome economic factors, and the interconnection that exists within these problems linked to other problems. While these wicked problems plague socio-economic advancement, Rittel theorizes that these problems can be mitigated through advancements in process of design, which, in turn, develops an intellectual approach to achieve high levels of empathy, abductive reasoning, and rapid prototyping.

In communities across the nation, utilizing such advancements in process of design, leadership can begin to better understand the presence of wicked problems and the seismic demographic population shifts the reshape multi-dimensional landscapes of community over the past decade (Henderson, 2019). Gardner, Lalani, & Plamadeala (2010) recognize the multi-dimensional landscape that exists in community and the challenges that come with it, and how now proposed and crafted community development strategy must generate a multi-dimensional solution. As we begin to understand demographic shifts and how they recreate the makeup of a community, leadership can provide further insight into the identification of root causation.

As Inglis (2016) identifies, community leaders have often cited the diverse and wide arrayed socio-economic disparity along with invasive psychological social stigmas now facing marginalized communities, specifically those members living in poverty, as one of the most detrimental impacts to growth. Modern-day research suggests the necessity for further development of innovative and inclusive strategies that can more effectively adapt to understanding the new landscapes of community and more effectively support fragile psychological paradigms by diminishing socio-economic challenges and deeply rooted social stigmas (Johri, 2015). These deeply rooted stigmas hold an overarching influence and effect on all aspects of community development including, but not limited to, social exclusion, depressed real estate markets and business investment, poor school district ratings, and overall undesirable perception of the residing members of the community who become further inundated by low self-esteem (Walker, 2014). As community leadership begins to more effectively engage in understanding and interpreting the socio-economic disparity and ever-present stigmas that further exacerbate wicked problems placed on the community and its people, it can begin to seek to define offensive tactics to best combat these issues and develop shifting into new paradigms.

While the dawning of the new decade illustrated an unheralded promise in this light, leadership continued in its efforts to adapt and evolve to the new land-

scapes of the 21st century (Ahmad, 2012). Ahmad identifies that as highly technological and globalized worlds and its leadership bodies work to continuously redefine community and its ethos, its constructed public policy can simultaneously drive social and economic boon and bane.

The trickle-down effect

Fast forward to 2016, upon the appointment of United States 45th President, Donald J. Trump, the United States began to witness unparalleled advancement, brought about by immense economic growth, achieving the longest economic expansion in the nation's history (Li, 2019). President Trump touted such historic economic success to the trickle-down effect, or supply-side economics, which ushered in the new wave of economic policy for the nation (Loveface, 2018). In essence, the trickle-down effect that was instituted into policy was established to provide a tax benefit to the nation's businesses and the wealthy (Boak, 2017). This policy was design to promote business growth and went on to stimulate extraordinary growth and investment as national economic reports indicated, specifically, Nasdaq Composite, which reached records highs in December of 2019 (Tappe, 2019). Additionally, a multitude of economic growth indicators illustrated substantial continual quarterly advancement in areas that included steady economic growth, unemployment figures setting 50-year lows, stable inflation rates, and strong consumer confidence index recordings, all of which signaled no apparent signs of falter (Long, 2020).

However, even with such stellar national economic reports, the trickle-down effect did not exactly 'trickle down' to everyone. As reported by recent findings by the Pew Institute, poverty increased in at least one-third of counties in every state between 2016 and 2018 (Henderson, 2019). The socio-economic distress that drives disparity within these communities are often cited as systemic outcomes due to communities' failure to achieve levels of solvency (Giammarise, 2019). That is, as the author contends, marginalized communities lack the adequate ability to possess internal stable economic drivers and fall victim to flat tax bases and asset monetization, imprudent budgeting, neglected finance departments, all of which can further inhibit development and support of human resources and support services.

Over the last three years, poverty increased in one-third of counties in every state, and brings into question the overall effectiveness of the trickle-down theory (Henderson, 2019). As communities classify as financially distressed, they can often require and seek state and federal funding oversight as a remedy. Yet, as these perceived state and federal support actions are established to provide a

remedy in the form of economic relief, it also leaves a community susceptible to budgetary shortfalls and monetary fund reallocation, all the while relinquishing various autonomous elements (Thomas, 2019).

While such paradigms may have significantly influenced the *modus operandi* for the past several decades, marginalized communities, specifically populations with high concentrations of people of color, have become generational victims to a multitude of socio-economic burdens (Alexander, 2012). As evidence continues to suggest, federal and state economic intervention has continually failed to impact the landscapes of marginalized communities adequately, and in some instances, further hindered a resident's socio-economic mobility (Freire, 2000). The author further opines that the lack of socio-economic mobility has translated into discouraging statistical outcomes that illustrate lower educational achievement rates, sizable gaps in wealth equality, and limited access to viable healthcare channels, all of which reflect a direct correlation to a reduced life expectancy. Yet, never have such levels of socio-economic dissonance become so exponentially amplified as to when an abrupt and unforeseen microscopic virus would indefinitely derail the way we as a society view community and its people (Cash, Mair, Gudzane, Sateia, Kotkin, & Scalzi, 2020).

COVID-19 and a nation in peril

In December of 2019, the World Health Organization first reported the epidemiology of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) with believed origins from the capital of Central China's Hubei province, Wuhan (WHO Timeline, 2020). The World Health organization went on to define that COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease that is caused by a severe acute respiratory, known as syndrome coronavirus 2. The disease is rapidly spread between people in close contact, and to date, has no identified vaccination or cure. Within one month of initial confirmation of origin, the virus spread rapidly throughout the nation of China and various parts of the Asian continent; and within two months was identified by the World Health Organization as a global pandemic.

By March 20th, 2020, the United States reported over 23,000 contracted cases of coronavirus, leaving over 30 deceased (COVID-19 Dashboard, 2020). These events prompted 42 of the 50 U.S. states to institute shelter in place orders to curb the spread of the virus (Ortiz, 2020). The report illustrates how all schools, government facilities, and businesses deemed non-essential life within these 42 states were required to cease operations. Such actions illustrated an immediate and drastic impact on the nation's economy and its devastating effects on employment. By the end of March 2020, the Dow Jones Index closed down 23.2 percent since the beginning of the year, marking the index's worst three-month period since the December quarter of 1987 (Lui, 2020). Accord-

ingly, by April 2020, the nation saw significant declines in gross domestic product, lowest retail sales week and highest unemployment claims on record (Casselmann, 2020). Such events placed small businesses on the brink of eradication. By May 2020, the former Center of Disease Control chief Tom Frieden testified on Capitol Hill that he believed the number of coronavirus deaths in the U.S. would exceed 100,000 by the end of May, 2020 (Kim & Watts, 2020). Yet, these disturbing statistics were even further amplified in marginalized communities, specifically in communities with high populations of people of color (Maxwell & Solomon, 2020).

New stark realities of poverty in the wake of COVID-19

As the ongoing spread of the COVID-19 virus grounded the U.S. economy to a halt, business and industry became crippled by such effects. To provide life support to the economy, a \$2.2 trillion stimulus package was issued by Congress as a counteraction to the shelter-in-place orders that covered 90 percent of the country by April of 2020, causing over six million to file for unemployment (Panfil & Robustelli, 2020). Shortly after these state government orders, President Trump stated that the nation cannot let the virus's cure be worse than the problem itself (Habberman & Sanger, 2020). While this statement created a national debate by pundits and critics alike, it is not inconceivable to believe that the socio-economic cost in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic could very well parallel the projected deaths directly caused by the virus (Bazelon, 2020). While the long-term effects of shelter in place orders on the socio-economic state could be very well never be fully quantified, it is unquestionable its detrimental impact across all sectors of society (Martin, Markhvida, Hallegatte, & Walsh, 2020). As the authors report, raw data and evidence suggests such harrowing assessments appear even more disproportionality stark for marginalized communities across the nation.

While initial response measures were focused on testing the population for COVID-19 adequately were limited at best, proactive measures to readily combat infliction of the disease exhibited glaring cavities (Young, 2020). As the state and the federal government rushed to create more testing units and sites, hospital beds, and respirators, the World Health Organization addressed the importance of personal steps one could take to limit the risk of contracting the virus, including social distancing measures, face mask covers, along with efforts one could take to strengthen his or her immune system (World Health Organization, 2020). Social distancing measures and face mask cover recommendations were instituted to limit the airborne spread of the virus. Research identified that a distance of six feet in space and facial coverings of the oral and nasal

cavity offered levels of defense against contracting COVID-19. Yet, its practicality among marginalized communities was limited at best (Garsd, 2020). Such practicality was limited primarily because segments of the marginalized population were still required to report to work in life-essential roles, often in condensed spaces. As many of these life-essential roles were blue-collar front-line staffer positions, often disproportionately African American and Latino, their jobs require physical labor and group interaction (Thorneback, 2020). Furthermore, many of the positions were housed in facilities that were not designed to allow for assurance of necessary space for adequate social distancing requirements, nor did the companies provide the appropriate updated hazard training or safety equipment to its employees (McNicholas & Poydock, 2020).

The social detriment

These distinct challenges within marginalized communities were further exacerbated by other social determinants, specifically the long-standing inadequate access to healthy foods and nutrition to strengthen personal immunity (Goger, 2020). The importance of adequate nutrition in references to one's immunity is supported by various medical outlets, including the Harvard School of Medical Health Report that reported findings which illustrate the role nutrition plays on the body, and how poorly nourished individuals are at much higher risk of bacterial, viral, and various other infections (Harvard Health, 2020). These insights further align with recent innovative medical research development in human biology, as modern research has revealed fascinating evidence that one's external and internal environments can directly influence, and in some cases, alter genetic control mechanisms (Feinberg, 2008). Also known as epigenetics, the author defines this field as the relationship between an individual's genetic background, the environment, aging, and disease. As cells adapt to fluctuating internal and external environment, epigenetic mechanisms are capable of remembering fluctuations in the normal programming and reprogramming of the gene and its expression.

As the medical community continues research on the vast field of epigenetics, it has placed significant emphasis on further understanding how predetermined genotype interacts with our environments, and subsequently impacts one's health and well-being (Thunders, 2015). Through this innovative research, one can begin to infer that positive external environments and influencers, which include limited exposure to toxicity, healthy dietary habits, and active lifestyle practice, can hold potential to reprogram expression of damaged genetic traits while exposure to poor external environments and influencers can hold the converse effect. So while this medical research is still in the infancy stages of understanding, such research findings offer a fascinating insight into the future

world of immunology. Yet, while developments in the field of epigenetics may hold vast potential to achieve optimal levels of personal health and wellness, it can also serve as an unsettling reminder of the disproportionate gaps for those residing in marginalized communities.

Little doubt can be cast on the generations of residents in marginalized populations who have suffered health consequences from residing in such communities (Benfer & Wiley, 2020). Common themes in marginalized communities that detrimentally impact health include limited access to healthy and fresh foods — often identified as food deserts, substandard housing, absence of accessible medical and health professional — specifically in the realms of preventative medicine, and constant psychological stress burdens from poverty-stricken lifestyles (Hilmers, Hilmers, & Jayda, (2012). Rudimentary understanding of epigenetics can lend one to infer that high-level exposure to these detrimental environments lead to degenerative genetic health conditions (Feinberg, 2008). The development of degenerative genetic health conditions, often chronic, can include but not limited to type II diabetes, asthmas, high blood pressure, and various other chronic illnesses, all which are found disproportionately at higher rates in marginalized communities, most specifically in populations of people of color (Thorpe, Ko Chin, Cruz, Innocent, & Singh, L, 2017).

While degenerative health issues, i.e., chronic illness, are common health themes within marginalized communities, these themes can become more alarming as medical professionals continue to identify the influence it has on one's immunity (Baah & Teitelman, 2018).

The Cleveland Clinic provided insight illustrating how a weakened immunity, or immunocompromised individuals, can become more susceptible to not only contracting a disease or virus but face higher odds for a full recovery as their bodies possess reduced ability to fight off infection (Infectious Disease, 2020). Unsettling medical reports to support this insight have been released that depicts such relation to the COVID-19 pandemic; as medical doctors have identified two significant characteristics among individuals failing in the battle with COVID-19 — obesity and chronic disease, as both drastically weaken one's immunity (Hyman & Mozaffarian, 2020). The medical reports depict that ninety-four percent of deaths from COVID-19 were hospitalized patients with an underlying chronic disease or condition, often rooted in the causes of excess body weight. Recent studies further identify an even more harrowing detail as a significantly higher level COVID-19 contraction, and death was found by those residing in marginalized communities, most specifically people of color (Erdman, 2020). The Foundation for Aids Research reported that while dispropor-

tionately black counties account for 22 percent of all nationwide counties, these locations account for 52 percent of contraction rate of reported coronavirus cases and an alarming 58 percent of deaths from COVID-19 (Williams, 2020).

The cost of living in marginalized communities

To add further insult to injury, marginalized communities as a whole almost instantaneously felt the stark financial realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a vast number of non-essential life businesses were ordered shutdown beginning in March of 2020 (Kantamneni, 2020). The author identifies the massive rolling closures wreaked havoc on the nation's economy, but how marginalized communities even more drastically felt its effects as the shutdown was a prelude to substantial layoffs in the labor force. The business and industry with the highest rate of layoffs were within retail, entertainment, and accommodations, which comprise over 50 percent of the employment placement for marginalized populations (Ross & Bateman, 2020).

Such a crisis was further exacerbated, as unlike more affluent community counterparts, marginalized community residents often live paycheck to paycheck, possess limited access to credit, and have limited to no emergency reserve of funds or resources (Weiner, 2020). Vast evidence suggests through a multitude of socio-economic statistics and comparisons that marginalized communities were not insulated against prolonged recessionary periods, let alone the consequences of high-level threat of pandemic and economic depression (Rushe & Aratani, 2020). Economic turmoil from 2007 to 2016 aided in producing such realities, as Black and Hispanic households witnessed a forty-eight percent and thirty-six percent loss of their wealth, respectively (Maxwell & Solomon, 2020).

As a massive influx in unemployment compounded financial instability, millions sought refuge from local community service providers (Jones, 2020). Such a massive influx overwhelmed many local community resources centers, especially local food pantry banks, within the first week of shelter in place orders (Kulish, 2020). The author identifies that tens of thousands of unemployed residents who were no longer unable to meet financial obligations now had to contend with limited access to affordable fresh food and other life-essential resources. Delays in unemployment compensation, reduction in public transportation services, and the ever-present digital divide all added to the complexities of the pandemic with no real solutions yet in sight (Strauss, 2020).

At the time of this composition, the reported damage impacting marginalized communities due to the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic may only serve as a prelude to the stark realities yet to still come. As the world's leadership now places great dependence on the global medical community to discover a medical vaccination for COVID-19, with hopes to control and ultimately

stop the pandemic, marginalized communities, most especially people of color, remain wary of such medical agendas by its own federal government. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration October 2020 survey study reported an overwhelming hesitancy by the Black community to partake in COVID-19 vaccinations due to systemic racism, as participants in the study often cited historical examples of deceptive government agendas, including the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study (Weintraub, 2020).

Impetus must now also be placed on community leadership at the local, state, and federal levels to collectively embark upon concerted outreach efforts to educate and provide full transparency while simultaneously developing new innovative paths that further insulate marginalized communities from socio-economic collapse caused by future pandemics, natural disasters, or acts of terrorism. While no actions can ever truly create an impenetrable force protecting any community, society must collectively explore innovative ways to create and enact a shared vision that is equitable and sustainable, and ultimately, more adequately empowers the masses against the external forces of nature and the detriment of humanity.

Opportunity for a shared vision of change

As COVID-19 pandemic exposed various faulty foundations in our current society, one of the core questions that remains is how does community leadership proceed forward and develop equitable and sustainable change that empowers the masses? Community leadership, especially in marginalized communities, must now explore and attempt to create communities that cultivate transformative shared visions of change. Ultimately, to decipher the problem of change of the complex adaptive systems that are community, leadership must understand the dichotomy between change management and change leadership to achieve such desired equitable and sustainable development (Kotter, 2012). As Kotter identifies, change management creates the control of functionality within system processes, change leadership enables for a development of an adaptive set of processes that inspire, motivate, and empower toward a shared vision of change.

Throughout history, marginalized communities have been most especially vulnerable to static processes, which inhibited the development of a shared vision of change and often correlated to generational, socio-economic disparities (Austin Turner et al., 2014). Postmodern change leadership efforts within community settings are designed to utilize change leadership tactics to necessitate a forensic approach that is flexible and adaptable in design and is devel-

oped through blended applications that implement integrative methodological system approach models. Such blended applications can create reciprocity of relationships (Kotter, 2012). These reciprocal relationships created upon trust can provide a community more significant opportunity to instill change leadership practices that can begin to collaboratively transform the community narrative.

When a shared vision of change is developed through a holistic approach it can address the collective needs of the group or community (Quinn, 1996). Hill (2008) illustrated how perceived relationships exist between a leader and subordinate, and defines several distinct relationship models that lack reciprocal practice and approach. The author emphasizes that due to today's ever-changing global markets, the need is further heightened to create models that induce a reciprocal relationship, which, in part, creates empowerment and purpose for all involved parties.

With such understanding, community leadership can now explore innovative strategies, that can invoke a trickle-up theory on development that directly invests in the strength and empowerment of its people. Such alternative strategic change measures would better equip the community against ongoing issues, challenges, and dilemmas, as it places emphasis on the reciprocity of relationships at all levels (Oakley & Krug, 1994). Utilizing such an integrative methodological system approach driven by collaborative relationship, a community and its people can begin together to drive a shared vision of change.

Methods in human-centered design

To achieve a desired shared vision of change set forth, the development of an integrative methodological system approach first must lend itself to community psychology research to further acquire a foundational understanding of community through the specific lenses of ecological levels of analysis. Ecological analogy holds high levels of significance in the realm of community as it provides the opportunity to expose and understand how individuals and environmental settings are interrelated (Kelly, 1966). In such realms, understanding the interrelationship becomes the focal point of interest. Through non-linear progression development, Kelly's works focus on the emphasis to achieve cognizant understanding and awareness as to how humans in their community environments function and relate.

This non-linear progression as defined by Kelly and the adaption of a methodological system approach can begin to define the interconnective elements within a community. These developments are ultimately rooted in human engagement, as it seeks an understanding of the existence of the interrelationships or interconnectivity within the community (Block, 2009). Human-

centered design methodology then can take such an approach as communal efforts are built upon participatory action research that directly provides the opportunity to extend beyond participants' involvement and produces platforms for engaged solutions (LUMA Institute, 2012). This postmodern effort shifts away from theories of architectural build development as the core driver to create social reform, and instead emphasizes the community's human capital (Simonsen, 1990). Thereby, these efforts align and position human-centered initiatives that possess the necessary and adaptive elements to institute frameworks that develop desired paradigm-shifting. As human-centered design research drives collaborative inspiration and ideation, it also enables the implementation to more effectively create an ever-evolving praxis model that can blend strategic with tactical, encapsulating the organic elements of engagement and empowerment, with the continuous process of collaborative experimentation, learning, adaptation, and expansion (Austin Turner, Edelman, Poethig, & Aron, 2014).

Pedagogy of the empowered

As human-centered design can begin to generate engagement and empowerment, it can also begin to unlock doors of oppression. In Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the author cites liberation as the awakening of critical awareness and cognitive thought processes in the individual. As the author opines, community leadership works to liberate its people and build an ever-evolving praxis model, and through a human-centered design methodology, opportunity may exist to allow leadership to evolve levels of awareness and cognitive thought, further drive words and actions, and ultimately develop new habits and behaviors. This methodology allows communities to shift from a monolithic point-of-view to more diverse and open systems while also enabling the opportunity to blend or integrate with heutagogical approaches that challenge the often-perceived binary point-of-view. That is, by continuing to gather and synthesize information, one can view the optics that define community through an alternative lens, and enable a once static or fixed point-of-view, to become more fluid and growth-oriented, and ultimately allowing critical awareness for a more adaptive response to change.

Implementation to achieve heutagogical environments may require the introduction of blended applications that can support engaged empowerment through a process of relation, reframe, and repetition (Deutschman, 2007). One such application process that exists is found in Dweck's (2006) pedagogical application of growth mindset, as it defines intelligence and knowledge as something that can be developed through a process, as opposed to the belief that it

is a fixed trait. Within the growth mindset approach, challenges become not only recognized but welcomed elements as part of an ongoing learning process while embracing the importance of continuing efforts and measures toward achievement. Most notably, Dweck's growth mindset application is foundationally rooted in removing cognitive bias by the learner through the creation of scaffolding or support systems to strengthen abilities. In effect, this alters detrimental belief systems instilled overtime that inhibit success.

While Dweck's pedagogical application has primarily been utilized in educational classroom settings, the opportunity exists to expand its potential and integrate with human-centered design methodology. The practicality of this integrated approach to address modern-day disparity in marginalized communities is vast; as Lord (2019) reports, 'depressed mindsets' in marginalized communities serve as an invisible weight that constricts progress for its residents. Such integration holds the opportunity to now lift these invisible weights, and focus on strengthening and recalibrating the collective community socio-economic paradigm through the investment of human capital. This integrated approach can also result in empowered learning communities, i.e., a community that engages and empowers its people to work within the maniacal nature of community and develop pure awareness to areas of need, which can thereby be translated into custom build solutions.

Community leadership can thereby further bridge theory and practice and custom craft build solutions through Community-Based Learning (CBL) which enables a development based on reciprocity and partnerships between higher educational college and university instructors and student body coactively with local community groups and community residents (Hammersley, 2002). CBLs possess the capabilities to utilize community settings and its contexts to initiate non-university focused outcomes that enable and empower community and its residents to have an active participatory role in change initiatives (Mooney & Edwards, 2001). As higher education is increasingly called upon to deliver public good, community-based learning pedagogy can vanguard holistic growth through the engagement of service-learning platforms (Furco, 1996). Through this, one can begin to infer that CBLs can potentially offer instrumental methods to become transformative within community efforts to empower the knowledge and resources necessary to create a community model that can begin to identify inherent socio-economic gaps; and thereby collectively connect the design of comprehensive custom-based solutions that more adequately meet the unique and diverse needs of the community and its people.

Comprehensive community initiatives

As comprehensive custom-based solutions are developed collectively through the aggregate, they possess the opportunity to generate an overall reduction of dependency for community human resource support and service, and thereby generating independence and empowerment models. By creating CBLs that instill empowered learning communities, communities can view development through an alternative lens that is founded on equal partnerships, then the often-gentrified community development models of the past (Angotti, 2012); and define itself through credence and trust developed through mutual recognition of meaning and purpose (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). It is through recognition of meaning and purpose, CBIs possess the inherent ability to serve as a platform to construct Comprehensive Community Initiative (CCI) model. Von Hoffman (2012) defines that a CCI encompasses a broad view of community problems that include social, economic, political, and geographic; and works to engage all sectors of the community to develop solutions. CCIs are an extension of community building, share the belief that job access, family supports, and affordable housing are all predicated by a strong community foundation; and collaborate the resources of both of government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), (Stagner & Duran, 1997). As CCIs have grown in communities across the nation, they offer a collective calculated response and reformulation to prior social and economic community development efforts. Emphasis of broad inclusive efforts that engage all community capitals replace previous fragmented approach techniques (Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, & Dewar, 2010).

As broad inclusive efforts take the forefront of community development, CCIs are established and instituted on its core functionality predicated on dynamic system change approach as a result of collaborative working community relationships (Von Hoffman, 2012). Ultimately, as the author suggests, CCIs encourage participatory decision-making and generally develop non-hierarchical systems that required all stakeholders unify in the decision-making process. As CCIs possess the opportunity to align holistic partnerships comprised of community agencies and organizations, along with the residents they serve, the model invokes the development of a symbiotic relationship of continuity, reciprocity, and interconnectivity (Tamiggi, 2018). The author identifies the CCI model serves as a cohesive driver of change to create solvent and autonomous ecosystems that attract and build diverse channels of resource and development that further insulates against external threats and enable opportunity for future independence. As CBLs can become the gateways to new CCI models, the cre-

ation of new sustainable and equitable communities; can develop and channel efforts that can ultimately rekindle and strengthen the collective social fabric of the community. As community restores its collective social fabric, it too can begin more adeptly orchestrate its defined shared vision of change to best ensure the strength and democracy of its people (Putnam, 2016).

Our finitude in flux

As we begin to explore innovative community models that possess real paradigm-shifting abilities, the episodes that defined the COVID-19 pandemic have, in many ways, reshaped society's axiological assumptions. Rational presented by Becker (2020) is of great relevance in these current times as the author constructed theoretical reasoning on how death anxiety and human's overall avoidance of our finitude has led to strategies humanity utilizes to develop denial mechanisms, or immortality projects, to function in the world as if we will not die. But the advent of the COVID-19 epidemic has forced individuals globally to grapple with their mortality, maybe more so than ever before. Almost overnight, multi-generations of people had to become consciously aware of their finitude as such catastrophic events put life's purpose into a new perspective.

In Huxley's (1932), the classic novel *Brave New World*, Resident World Controller Mustapha Mond states, "One believes things because one has been conditioned to believe them" (pg. 159), when he is directly asked about contemporary belief systems. As current day society enters into our version of a brave new world in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become paramount for society to question our conditioned beliefs and espoused value systems. Belsky and Fauth's (2012) research identified how community development stood at an inflection point, yet even in the wake of COVID-19, we still in many ways stand at such point but now at even greater heights. While it is undeniable the destruction and carnage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it offers a great opportunity to reinvent the way we as society approach diverse challenges.

In part, are we as a society readily able and willing to truly reflect on the harsh realities that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed, and thereby work to institute new measures of change to narrow disproportionate achievement gaps and address the wicked problems that exist across communities throughout the nation? While current day realities truly necessitate innovative, inclusive, and interconnected strategies that are as unique as they are dynamic, are we as a society readily able and willing to engage and empower the diverse demographics of community? Are we prepared to accept that such action will cause collateral effects which will, in many ways, force us as a society to now accept community

development models that are often disruptive to modern-day oppressive societal caste systems, and are ultimately instead replaced with models of empowerment to drive and decipher the problem of change? We as a society now possess a finite period to answer these questions and decide necessary actions as to how we rescue, revive, and reinvent communities and insulate against future external forces and threats.

CONCLUSION

This manuscript has provided an observational humanistic discussion on the current state of community development in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, while providing an opportunity to facilitate further dialogue to generate collective strategies for transformative change. Understanding and theorizing the potential architectural structure of a CCI holds distinct challenges, yet integrative applications through postmodern interventions provide potential avenues to achieve high levels of success. By instituting conversations that are guided by human-centered design elements, engagement provides the opportunity strategy development that invest in the resource of people, and empowers the people to control their own destinies. And, while this manuscript may only offer a microcosm of understanding and perspective, it is with great hope this initial research triggers future discussion that coincides with more intrinsic studies on how engaged and empowered communities and its people hold the ability to decipher the problem of change.

The views expressed are solely the perspective of the author and do not necessarily represent the views or policy of Point Park University.

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