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# Community sustainability, from the roots

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Thesis

# COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY, FROM THE ROOTS

by

**STELLA YELICH**

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Approved by

First Reader

Linda L. Barnes, Ph.D.
Professor of Family Medicine

Second Reader

Lance D. Laird, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Family Medicine

Third Reader

Yesim Sungu-Eryilmaz, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of City Planning and Urban Affairs
Boston University, Metropolitan College

*"Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when they are created by everybody"*

*(Jane Jacobs, 1961)*

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my participants and everyone whose faces became familiar to me over my time in the Dudley community working on the urban farm. Your spirits and warm conversations served as trellises for this research.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY: FROM THE ROOTS**

**STELLA YELICH**

## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the nuanced intersection of community identity, grassroots movements and experiences of climate change (CC) within the Dudley neighborhood, nestled between Roxbury and Dorchester in Boston. While existing academic literature explores urban experiences to CC, this study offers an intimate perspective by examining how the history and unique structures of the Dudley community shape the experiences of the residents' and their reactions to CC stressors. This work is accomplished through an interdisciplinary lens incorporating foundations from urban planning, environmental development, public health, and social sciences.

This research is framed as a case study and explores Dudley's transformation in the late 90s, community members organized and obtained unprecedented rights over their community, sowing new norms of land stewardship and agency. My research poses the primary research question, how does a neighborhood on a community land trust (CLT) respond to CC and CC stressors, and how does its unique structure impact community well-being?

I build my argument in three parts. First, I contend that historical neglect and disinvestment have left Dudley vulnerable, causing residents to prioritize immediate needs over explicitly addressing CC. I argue that there emerges a role of a "community

liaison" within the community. This role bridges community members and organizations, enhancing community sustainability. Second, I deduce that Dudley's narrative has become a folklore, fostering social action, stewardship, and agency over the land and futures. Lastly, I examine policy initiatives concerning CC in Boston. I recognize that there seems to be a disconnect between communicated community needs and the needs identified within the governmental decision-making processes.

Building from my fieldwork and participant observations, and interviews, this thesis identifies grassroots movements as crucial avenues between communities and policymakers. I argue that participants in grass roots movements have the potential to act as forecasters for anticipated stressors within the community. This type of small-scale organization and the relationships build by shared knowledge demonstrates the significance of storytelling and “origin” narratives in facilitating community empowerment and activism, ultimately shaping a unified sustainable Dudley body. This entity creates the Dudley body as a whole through its unique structure and story, which lends itself to serve as a model for further research in CC and the use of urban CLTs as tools for fostering resiliency within the community. This research also identifies the Dudley community as a model for examining the complex interplay between human needs, policy, and environmental challenges in marginalized urban landscapes.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BHA…….....Boston Housing Association

BRA…….Boston Redevelopment Authority

BRAG……Boston Resilience Advisory Group

CC……Climate Change

CLT…….Community Land Trust

CMA…….Critical Medical Anthropology

DNI……...Dudley Neighbors, Inc.

DSNI…….Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

EJ……Environmental Justice

FHA……Federal Housing Administration

HOLC……...Home Owner's Loan Corporation

HRSR…….Heat Resilience Solution Report

NGO……Non-Governmental Organizations

PE……...Political Ecology

TFP…….The Food Project

UHI……Urban Heat Island Effect

VA…….Vulnerability Assessment

# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

*Jardim Prometido*

*That green of your name already promises us a lot*

*In a flowery garden, the river is flowing*

*Vale de Paúl is a sampling of fertility*

*When an abundant cloud is giving me its love*

*Water is falling hope is blossoming*

*In that former time when the world was the world*

*That golden apple of yours called giving*

*Rain, anger, and that of goodness*

*Today transformed into a story known by ear*

*But our will and hope is greater*

*That garden in our dream dies here*

*The force of perseverance still is cultivating*

*Cape Verde is green in our heart*

*Our land of our greenery full of love*

*We always wait for that great day*

*Where every child has their part of the greenness*

*We want to live in a land of friendship*

*Unraveling in the middle of happiness*

*A promised garden is flowering full of peace*

(Song translated to English)

I open this with a traditional Cape Verdean folk song made famous by Cesaria Evora, an artist from the islands. I chose this song due to its cultural and contextual relevance to my case study and the community. *Jardim Prometido* (Evora, 2003) is originally sung in Cape Verdean kriolu, a mix of Portuguese and West African dialects. The song tells of a place that either lives within the golden folds of nostalgia or within the hearts of dreamers. It tells of a place that is supple with hope, opportunities, freedoms, and prosperity. This place is represented as a garden in the folksong, the lyrics wind around the soft guitar, planting a of seed of longing within the listener for something greater. A promised garden perhaps, with budding bulbs of an imagined place, rich with possibility for future generations to grow and prosper from the seeds sowed by those before them.

I first became interested in Cape Verdean music, especially Evora, through my time on the urban farm nestled in the center of the Dudley Village. I had many interactions with Cape Verdeans, and my Brazilian Portuguese limited me, so I turned to music to help me get used to the sounds of a popular dialect. Dudley, more broadly, Roxbury, has a long history of im/migration of Cape Verdeans extending back to the late 1800s but with most of Boston's Cape Verdean population arriving in the 1970's (Global Boston, 2016). Since 2000, the Cape Verdean population in Boston has almost doubled (Boston Planning and Development Agency, 2016). Dudley itself is vibrant with the

Island culture, boasting a handful of Cape Verdean owned businesses and murals in the popular dialect. I discovered the high population of Cape Verdean during my time at the farmer's markets where women with hurried hands and exasperated sighs from the heat would whisper in a decorated Portuguese.

Here, we would meet, between the heads of lettuce and the bursting baskets of corn and beans and trade words in the language that we knew. Often, they understood my Brazilian Portuguese and I understood their kriolu, with minor mishaps like me not knowing the word for bag or the pronunciation of pumpkin. I became someone to come to if communication was strained between a Cape Verdean grandmother and one youth staff worker. Soon enough, I was welcomed with warm smiles and called "Brasileria" teasingly due to my dialect I spoke. As I continued my time at the farm, I gained deeper insights into the community. I witnessed personal interactions among the elder women, exchanging playful banter and discussing preferences such as 'not liking when the feijãos é tão pequeno (when the beans are so small). These real-life interactions across language barriers extended beyond the farm workers and into the broader community, offering me a richer understanding of the neighborhood fabric."

When I hear *Jardim Prometido* in particular during my long walks, I think of my time at the farm. I think of the evolution of my research in tandem with the evolution of the seasons. In the beginning, I intended to research CC and its influences on historically marginalized communities. I wanted to understand the modes of support within a community and how/if CC challenged these structures. To achieve this objective, I

secured an internship at an urban farm in Roxbury called The Food Project (TFP). In March, I began working officially on the ground with TFP after many months behind a screen doing community outreach work for them. The ground was frozen and my knowledge of the organization, let alone the community, was minimal.

I think back to my first day on the farm and how it served as a metaphor for the development of my research. I remember standing on the acre of land where tarps covered rows of sleeping seeds, the March ground still cold and barren with little signs of life. One of my first tasks that day was to help uncover a large plot of garlic bulbs that had been carefully planted months beforehand. With these strangers who would soon be friends, we pulled the damp, wet tarps coated in leaves and debris from the matted soil below. There, poking up from the growing mats, were small tufts of green. Some seedlings had strayed from their openings and were stubbornly growing and folding around themselves under the mat. Eight pairs of careful hands went down the rows, guiding the young plants back through. The first signs of spring following a long and cold winter always seem somewhat mystical to me. As March progressed and slowly bowed its way into April, the plants grew along with my research and understanding of the community and people surrounding me.

*Research and Rhododendron in Bloom*

My main form of research was through farm work and conversation. In April, as we pulled weeds from the earth, I learned about the way the ground had served the community prior to being a farm. In May, as we painstakingly planted peas in holes and shooed the sparrows from our baskets, my research took flight. Come late May, my understanding of the community I worked within and the questions I needed to be asking blossomed like the rhododendron that ushers in spring and sunny days. As I will discuss in Chapter Two, the Dudley Village is nestled between Roxbury and Dorchester Massachusetts. These are neighborhoods of Boston that historically have experienced extreme marginalization and disenfranchisement.

Due to this history, these two neighborhoods report disproportionate amounts of resource strain and population stress as compared to other neighborhoods in Boston. These inequalities include housing and food insecurity, poverty, addiction, and lack of supportive infrastructure (Boston Climate Vulnerability Assessment 2016). Dudley was one of the most marginalized areas within Greater Boston, serving as a site for toxic waste disposal, developer schemes, and insurance arson (Medoff and Skylar 1999). Residents of the community had seen how politics and real estate practices had physically and metaphorically poisoned the landscape and decided to take their fate into their own hands. Chapter Two will further develop the story of organizing, though I mention it here to emphasize the role the story of the community had in the development of my research.

As I learned about the history of the neighborhood, I became more interested in how a marginalized community was responding to and understanding CC. Inter-disciplinary modes of studying CC and human experience are budding within literature. Within the last few decades, urban planning, environment development, and public health fields have adopted an interdisciplinary approach towards how they understand and approach CC (Frumkin, Howard, et al. 2008; Wamsler 2013; Mees et al. 2011) Within social science, there is ample research regarding urban responses to CC stressors (Schlosberg 2011; Singer, Merrill et al. 2016; João Biehl 2021). The literature explores phenomenological experiences of CC within an urban landscape, how urban farms are being used to create sustainability, and the utilization of grassroots movements to address adversity.

Where I found research fell short was in the exploration of the personal identity of a community and how its structures create a world view that influences how a community understands and responds to CC. The Dudley community was special in that it was virtually recreated by its community members in the late 90's, giving a whole new definition to the concept of land stewardship and agency. Through extensive organizing and lobbying form, the Dudley residents in the 80's and 90's, the Dudley Village was created on protected land that is overseen by a community land trust (CLT). This will be further developed in the Background Chapter, but from this new perspective of Dudley, my research question was formed. How does a community on a CLT respond and react to CC and CC stressors? Furthermore, I wanted to understand how the community was

structured and how, from its unique origins, did this impact the sense of overall community well-being and self?

In this thesis I will build my argument within three parts. My main argument is that although CC is not explicitly mentioned in community discourse of needs and struggles, that does not mean that they are not suffering from it. Rather, historical negligence and disinvestment has created a vulnerable landscape that causes its residents to prioritize immediate needs such as housing, food, and health. Although these factors are all directly impacted by CC, they are interpreted separately. My first argument I make focuses on the intangible structural support within the community. I argue that certain members of the community, due to their social and professional position, are placed in an advantaged position which allows them to advocate for community needs on a deeper level than others in similar positions. These individuals are what I call, a "community liaison." I've identified three participants within my study who fit this role as they both have intimate ties to community members and are staff members at local NGOs. This positionality, I argue, allows for a deeper connection of community members and organizations that serve them, adding to community sustainability and networks. Next, I posit that there exists a narrative within the Dudley neighborhood that has earned the status of a folklore (Bascome, 1965). This folklore is dispersed throughout the neighborhood and creates a sense of a shared identity and agency.

The storytelling that I witnessed taking place in multiple different platforms and scenarios, themes of environmental justice and community organizing that further creates

bonds and social ties between members. I suggest that storytelling serves as a vehicle for social action and stewardship that the community continues to draw inspiration from. Finally, I end with an analysis of initiatives and reports released by the City of Boston concerning CC. From this analysis, I show a gap in communicated needs within policy versus the needs spoken about by my participants. I argue that initiatives, although involving the incorporation of community voices, do not address immediate needs of residents within facilitation.

In my closing words, I come back once more to the land and the story of the community. I make one further stance, stating that the unique structure; both the physical and intangible, of Dudley lends itself to withstand the storms of the future. I use Dudley as a case study to understand how the community interprets initiatives directed towards them and speaks about CC. I also use this case study to further develop links between the sciences to better understand how spaces are created and shaped by human interactions upon the landscape.

Guided by my main research question, I continued working within the community. I grew food, I planted, I dug, I ate, I learned, and I fostered close relationships with many invaluable participants within my research. Budding from themes of community organization and self-agency, I argue that grassroot programs and initiatives have instilled protective factors that continue to involve and facilitate community. They serve as a bridge between the people and policy makers, fulfilling the role as “liaisons” of their neighborhoods and their community’s expressed needs. They

also serve as “forecasters” for their communities, anticipating and preparing their served population for expected stressors. I used three main participants and their interviews within this chapter, all of whom were staff members from local NGOs and well-known figures within the community. They possessed extensive knowledge on gaps in resources and existing stressors affecting the people and landscape.

I also argue that their positionality as NGO members served as an advantage as they were able to use this information of community needs and respond in a heightened capacity within their respective organizations. This argument was mainly built from my field notes and observations of the role that TFP and another NGO played within the community. I developed my argument of community liaison by comparing this status to roles of public health programs that involved community health workers. From my observations of intimate conversations between staff and community members, I began to understand the web of connections and support that is created by NGOs and their staff. This was my most difficult chapter to write as the intricate and intangible is difficult to capture within words or the confines of theory.

Drawing from the history of Dudley, I continue to explore the culture of the community and what makes the Dudley neighborhood a community. I examine the creation of the Dudley Village Campus and the legacy it continues to have amongst its members. I argue that community empowerment and storytelling can be used as a form of activism and engagement that encourages agency and stewardship over the individual and collective destiny. This story-telling and shared narrative foster increased community

interest in organizing and activism. This argument mainly comes from a shared identity of stewardship over a space that I felt when I was in Dudley. Although in the center of one of New England's largest cities, the community has an intimate network, as highlighted by Chapter Three. This network is held together by the connections built from the organizing that took place in the 80's and 90's. Themes of the storytelling follow patterns of environmental injustices, disinvestment, and community organizing. I contend that these connections are bolstered and reinforced through storytelling and a shared community narrative. I view Dudley as a unified body and build this metaphor through the chapters.

Branching from the background chapter and the history of political neglect, I make the claim that the community focus on immediate needs results from a compounding of historical neglect and disinvestment. The long historical narrative of political and social stratification of communities created major themes of environmental injustices and atrocities which to this day haunt the landscape and its people, perpetuating a cycle of hardly fulfilling basic needs. Through an interdisciplinary application of critical medical anthropology (CMA) and political ecology (PE) I explore how the Dudley community continues to be vulnerable to pollutants and resource strain through field notes, government statistics, and key interview excerpts from my participants. These vulnerabilities cause Dudley higher probability to experience adverse climate related health issues and impacts. Here I introduce inter-disciplinary concepts including political ecology and urban planning to demonstrate how biology and policy are active agents within the lived landscape of a community. I also draw upon initiatives and reports

released by the City of Boston that detail CC. These reports include anticipated impacts of CC onto specific neighborhoods.

From my research, I hope, if anything, I was able to capture the nuance of community and human connection. I wish to highlight the dependence on interpersonal connections. Specifically-how grassroots movements and NGOs that serve the community play a vital role in community engagement and wellbeing. My experience with my research and my participants has come full circle and I find myself completing this work as the sun sets earlier and earlier and the ground is yet again frosted over. Revisiting my fieldnotes and interview excerpts when writing this thesis was like visiting old friends. The memories of the year I spent on the urban farm, plucking, washing, pulling, eating, and talking will linger with me like rosy cheeks from the August summer sun.

# CHAPTER TWO: Background

## *Introduction*

Within this chapter, I will tell a story of a neighborhood shaped by policies and initiatives stemming from the industrial revolution following the early 1940's and subsequent urban renewal beginning in the late 1900's. Themes of disinvestment, neglect, and political disregard grew from soils tainted by racism, prejudices and "othering" to create a hostile lived environment. The influence of these larger political and city-wide plans continues to scar the landscape, though, I will illustrate that a community was fostered in opposition to these political practices. I will also introduce the topic of climate change (CC) and CC policy across the Greater Boston Area and the specific neighborhood to demonstrate how the overall city and community is experiencing CC. I will use CC as a lens through which I examine how community members interact with their landscape and how, due to these historical proceedings have created a community that fosters sustainability and resilience.

## *Structural Violence and Vulnerability*

John Galtung, Norwegian sociologist, was the first to coin the term "structural violence." Galtung's original definition addressed the social structures within a society that hinder certain groups from achieving an excelled quality of life. In "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" (1969), he refers to structural violence as built in, subliminal, yet permeating manifestations of barriers that create disadvantages. The "situation is aggravated further if the persons low on income are also low in education, low on health,

and low on power - as is frequently the case because these rank dimensions tend to be heavily correlated due to the way they are tied together in the social structure" (pg. 171).

Paul Farmer builds from Galtung's description, arguing that structural violence becomes perpetuated by all the active agents within society through what Bourdieu called *habitus* **(**Bourdieu, 1977)**.** Habitus involves the learned practices and norms within society, passed down through interactions and observations. Farmer uses Bourdieu's concepts of societal habituation to establish an argument that—just as interactions reinforce social norms—social structures, prejudices, and violence are also included. The victims of these imposing barriers are members of lower socio-economic groups and minority communities who then, in a constant relationship with identity and living, are structurally vulnerable.

From structural violence, structural vulnerability arises. Structural vulnerabilities is built from Galtung and Farmer's theories and identifies the vulnerability of social standing within the hierarchical societal structures in relation to power networks. Often this is tied to one's socioeconomic position, which puts certain individuals and groups more at risk to experience structural violence. Therefore, structural vulnerabilities is the risk of experiencing structural violence.

Social scientists identify structural vulnerabilities as a primary catalyst that interacts with one's social determinants of health. The Center for Disease Controls identifies these determinants as "nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes, they are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life, these forces and systems

include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies, racism, CC, and political systems" (CDC, "Social Determinants of Health," 2022). I use structural violence and vulnerabilities as foundational theories within this thesis to both identify the risks and etiology of these vulnerabilities of the community in relation to CC.

### *Creating a City, Forgetting the People*

To understand the structure and environment of communities, Farmer argues, historical relevance must be first established (Farmer, 2004). I will turn my attention inwards to Boston during the 1930's following the Great Depression when housing was a limited resource. With the intention to promote home ownership and bolster the economy, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was created in 1934, through the New Deal. The FHA's function was to supply loans and mortgages to secure homes and properties through the use of federal funds (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development). In order to assess the allocation of resources and aid, the U.S. government created the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC).

To assure highest payoff, this branch of the FHA was instructed to grade neighborhoods A through D based on their "investment risks." An A reflected what was deemed to be the safest to invest in neighborhoods that were predominantly white upper class. Communities given a D were deemed as the most "dangerous" neighborhoods in terms of investment. Areas graded with a D were almost never considered for a loan due to the grade carrying racial and socioeconomic weight. From these grades, the HOLC then created a color-coded map, neighborhoods with A's were colored green whilst

neighborhoods who were given a D were colored red, a visual representation of the appraisement. This is where the term redlining is born.

Communities graded with a D were deemed hazardous. These communities were predominantly African American neighborhoods This is where the term redlining is born. Appraiser's comments about the neighborhoods were laced with racist, anti-immigrant, and anti-working class conjectures. Regarding a neighborhood called Roxbury in the South end of Boston, one document stated, ""Negro heavily concentrated north of Ruggles St. on the west side of Washington. Jewish centered near Columbus Square. A large territory with some streets showing better experiences than the balance of the section.... Availability of funds for home purchase: Very limited" (NIEHS "Racial Residential Segregation in Greater Boston, 2022). These initiatives were not the first of their kind to display blatant discrimination against specific populations. The National Association of Real Estate Board and Ethics not one decade prior to the conception of the FHA, released an accord stating, "no part of the property should be used, occupied, sold, or leased to black people, unless they were servants, janitors, or chauffeurs living in basements, servants' quarters, or a barn or garage in the rear" (Ofulue, 2021). Not only were property values lowered within predominantly black neighborhoods, but the act of redlining handicapped African Americans from buying and gaining property within higher scored areas. Through these deliberate acts of political neglect, largely minority neighborhoods were rendered virtually incapable of upwards mobility, locked into poorer housing conditions, unable to create generational wealth and gain equity through homeownership (NIEHS, 2022).

While the practice of redlining became illegal in the Fair Housing Act of 1968. This act ultimately made it illegal to discriminate in the nature of the sale (terms, condition, or right of sale) to individuals based on race or nationality. Furthermore, the Fair Housing Act made it "unlawful for any person or other entity whose business includes residential real estate-related transactions to discriminate against any person in making available such a transaction, or in the terms or conditions of such a transaction, because of race or national origin" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "History of Fair Housing"). This Act was a part of the larger Civil Rights Act of 1986, signed by President Lyndon Johnson, shortly after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., Civil Rights leader and activist strongly affiliated with fair housing legislation. Although banned, the influence of redlining continues to affect urban landscapes that were destroyed by this practice.

Following the 1930's, there was an increased concentration on industrial and economic advancements. Boston, a growing urban center, began focusing on "urban renewal." This was a new trend throughout the nation as the Federal Government launched programs throughout U.S. cities. Primarily, this movement subsidized the expansion of suburbia to mitigate overcrowding and building up city infrastructure. This allocation of finances included the building of highways, housing units and commercial spaces that would be able to support more traffic and businesses in and out of the cities. Urban renewal initiatives continued to take place during the 50's and 60's across the nation and mainly targeted neighborhoods and communities of color, disrupting and displacing thousands of families in the process (Trickery, 2016). Due to these

communities having less power in policy, their neighborhoods were often locations targeted by urban developers.

The Boston Redevelopment Agency (BRA), founded in 1957, oversaw the urban renewal process. One of the most controversial initiatives enacted by the BRA displaced over 7,000 residents and bulldozed the entire community to create wealthier housing in the West End. The residents were from communities that mainly marked as red and yellow in the FHA appraisal maps (Trickery, 2016). To further control the rise and fall of communities in the eyes of profit and production, instruments of power were used to manipulate neighborhood environments. One such method called “block busting” relied heavily upon social fears and racial tensions that were festering. Blockbusting is the process in which investors and developers would purchase properties within predominantly white neighborhoods and then rent/sell them to African American families or individuals. With the presence of a growing African American population in the neighborhood, investors would then create a narrative amongst the white community members that their neighborhood was quickly depreciating in value, urging them to sell their homes for a cut of the full market value (NIEHS, 2022). The swift departure of white tenants coupled with the selling of real-estate at a fractioned cost ultimately created a defecite within the entire value of the community. These actions would then result in what is called “white flight.”

White flight was a direct reaction to redlining and the segregation of neighborhoods. As property values decreased within specific urban areas, the more readily adaptable and privileged populations (white) could leave the rapidly declining

urban neighborhoods. The absence of white populations then created a disinvestment within the infrastructure and community members that continued to live there (Wade, 2017).

### *Concepts of deservingness*

Redlining, urban renewal blockbusting, and white flight initiatives all compounded to create a status and sense of "deservingness" assigned to a population. When I use the term deservingness, I use it to supplement the reader's understanding of how policy and policy makers created a narrative that painted certain groups as less than. "What redlining encourages is the perpetuation of a continually staged spectacle in which the unwanted "others" are screened out and forced to live in segregated neighborhoods," (Stermon, 2021). This "otherness" creates a hierarchy of deservingness that I will explore in the following pages. Through this deemed otherness, politics exclude and ignore certain groups while bolstering and supplementing others. In this case, white communities were more seen as more deserving of mortgages, supplementary infrastructure and overall well-being whereas black and immigrant communities were viewed as less deserving. These assumptions held by those in power mirrored within policy.

One study (De Coninck, David. Matthijs, 2020) looked at public attitudes towards migrants to distinguish a working model of deservingness for immigration aid. Although this model was originally intended for evaluation of deservingness among immigration aid, I find it relevant within the application of my own research as I draw comparisons to

both minority and marginalized groups from a policy standpoint due to their social vulnerabilities and heavy social prejudices they face. Authors established five basic criteria of perceived deservingness from dominant society, creating a framework that covered; "*control, attitude, reciprocity, identity* and *need* (Cook & Barrett, 1992; De Swaan, 1988; van Oorschot, Roosma, Meuleman, & Reeskens, 2017). *Control* within this criterion represents the assumed agency of the group and how much their circumstances were self-inflicted versus out of their power. *Attitude* reflects the general demeanor of the group seeking aid. Are they expressing grief and the need for help in a way that is understood by the dominant culture? Are they showing gratitude in a capacity the dominant group sees fit? *Reciprocity* stands for the subsequent actions of the group or individuals. Are they using the resources given to them in a way the dominant cultural group sees fit? Are they moving towards "getting back on their feet"? *Identity* is the largest and most ambiguous section. I correlate identity strongly to socioeconomic standing as briefly mentioned when exploring social vulnerabilities. With identity, race, sex, age and cultural background all weave together to create a body that is judged by the dominant group.

Within this study, immigrants of color were deemed less deserving than migrants of European descent. Within my study, I argue that communities with higher Black populations were actively discriminated against and deemed less deserving than white populations. Lastly, the article uses *need* as a determinant of assumed deservingness. Need covers *how* the group looking to receive aid expresses their status and situation. Need captures the situation of the group and how they ended up where they are. This

category is heavily driven by media and larger society ideals, thus it is so tightly bound to the overall concept of deservingness.

De Coninck and Matthijs (2020) found that groups who media and news outlets labeled as refugees were more likely to be seen favorably by the larger population. This is opposed to migrants who were not granted this title. Although this group may have been fleeing equal if not worse conditions in their homeland, the lack of given status created an assumption within the public that these migrants had a choice, as well as some agency over their circumstances, which refugees did not. Therefore, they were deemed to be less important and deserving of support. “So the concept of a Black neighborhood as a bad neighborhood comes right out of that process. They were made to be bad neighborhoods. And neighborhoods that didn’t have any Black people were made to be better neighborhoods.” Put another way, the federal government’s maps became a “self-fulfilling prophecy,” (Elton, 2020). I relate deservingness back to the environment created within Boston’s urban areas starting in the 1930’s and continuing into the 1960’s where neighborhoods were actively being targeted, through political and economic devices to create lived environments where communities could not create an excelled wellbeing for themselves.

### *Building theory within the streets of Boston*

Through the concepts of deservingness that become woven into the fabric of the society, policies and initiatives follow suit, reflecting the values and assumptions of the groups in power. I utilize Gramsci’s definition of hegemony to further my argument of assumed and almost subconscious delegation of deservingness within society. Gramsci

was heavily interested in political activism and Marxism, with a specific focus on the construction of larger societal ideals. Gramsci, in his theory of cultural hegemony, argues that the dominant worldview (i.e. values and beliefs) of a society is controlled by the ruling class. The members of the ruling class are those in higher positions of power in a society. In the United States, the ruling class has historically been dominated by the upper class, white population. The views and values of the ruling class create a worldview that through interactions and cultural vehicles such as media, disperses through larger society. This spread of the dominant perspective continues until it becomes a form of common sense, largely accepted and unquestioned. Influenced by cultural hegemony, deservingness is distinguished and expressed through acts of power within politics that actively and deliberately target the livelihood and well-being of certain groups. This "targeting" can either be through explicit policies that negatively impact certain groups, like the displacement and destrcutuion of 7,000 residents' homes by the BRA or more implicit actions. These more subliminal expressions of power and allocated deservingness can manifest in policy as the absence of voice and representation of certain groups. In later chapters, I will argue how CC policy in the Greater Boston area lacks strong incorporation of community voice. This lack of presence of community input in policy strips the underrepresented group of their power and agency.

These politics create a state or a lack of well-being and quality of life that I argue represents aspects of necropolitics. Coined by Achille Mbembe, a political theorist, necropolitics builds from Michel Foucault's theory of biopower. Both theories concern themselves with the use of governmental and political power in regard to human life and

bodies. Foucault, through biopower, explores how life is curated, controlled, and encouraged through policies and society (Foucault, 1976). Biopolitics can relate to health initiatives such as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that creates a baseline of care and coverage for insurance companies or more gray areas such as reproductive laws and regulations.

While Foucault was concerned with the exercise of power to perpetuate life, Mbembe uses necropolitics to look at how governmental power is used to actively eliminate or discourage lives within certain groups (Mbembe, 2006). A necropolitical government assigns different values onto a human life. Extreme examples of a necropolitical government actions can be the practice of slavery, refugee camps, or Brazilian favelas (Alves, J., 2014). Research within social science utilizes Mbembe's theory to argue that exclusionary policies, as well as the allocation of governmental aid to the benefit of one group and detriment of another, is an expression of disregard for human life and wellbeing (Rapozo, P. 2021, Charkiewicz, E. 2009, Santos, H. L. 2020). This is to say, that through the practice of prescribed deservingness, environments that do not support life are perpetuated through exclusionary politics and larger societal values. Within my research, I use Mbembe's theory of necropolitics to evaluate the climate of Dudley, a specific neighborhood in Roxbury, that was the beneficiary to some of the harshest expressions of these sociopolitical expressions in the mid to late 1900's.

*Bad People, Bad Land*

As investors utilized local demographics to assess the value of different neighborhoods, judging some (predominantly white) worthy and others (predominantly minority) as not "deserving," money and resources followed suit. Through these actions, not only were the people within the communities seen as less valuable, but the land in which they resided was also marred with the same assumptions, leaving it vulnerable to harmful infrastructure and development (Kjellstrom, T et al. 2007). Examples of harmful infrastructure include any sites that create an aggravation to the landscape or to the health of a population including waste disposal sites, pollutant industrial facilities, and large highways. The placement of these sites follows a national pattern as they normally are found to be in or have close proximity to poorer urban neighborhoods (Mohai and Saha 2015). This theme of hazardous city planning can be attributed to not only to the population of neighborhoods being seen as less-than within policy and urban development but also because the land itself was cheaper to build on than in whiter, more wealthy neighborhoods (Mohair and Saha 2015). This allocation of locally unwanted land uses (LULU) creates vulnerable living conditions (Mannarini, T. et al. 2009). This type of infrastructure paired with political and economic neglect through policies and initiatives poison both the landscape and its hosts.

Previous studies of low-income vulnerable environments including housing have shown that both the indoor and outdoor environments showed heightened exposure to agents suspected to cause adverse health effects. These include pesticides, smoke and air pollution, combustion byproducts, and heavy metals (Adamkiewicz, G. et al 2014). This

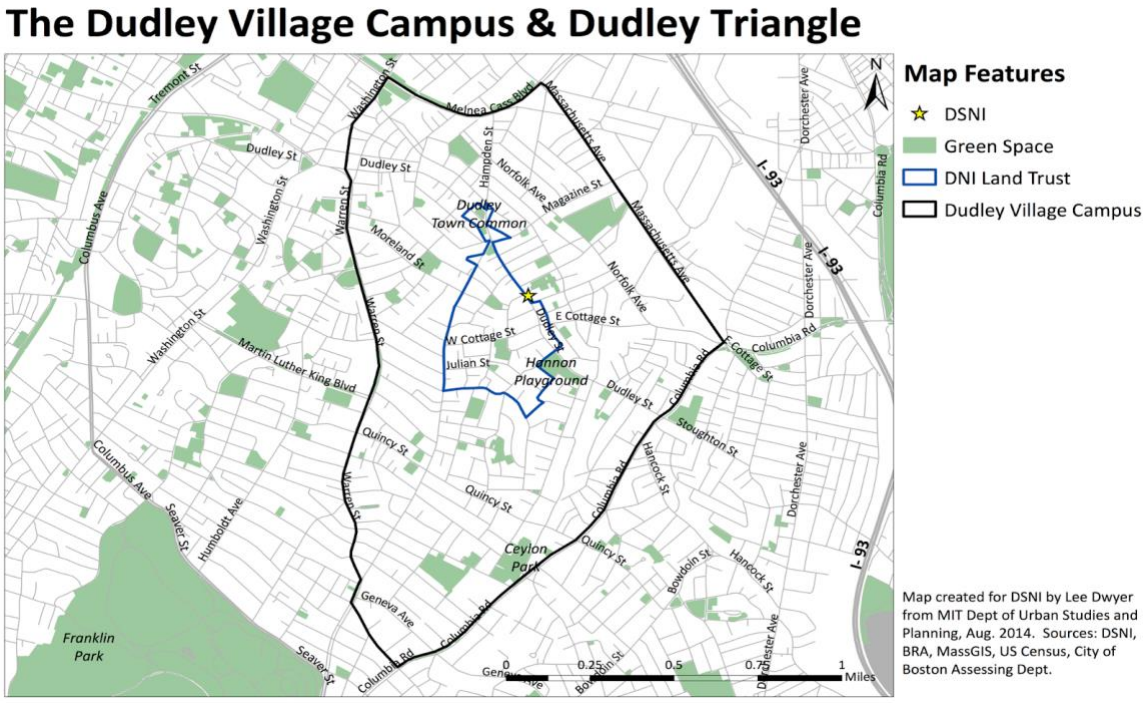
exposure puts communities at an increased risk of experiencing health disparities and developing greater health issues down the line, including respiratory illnesses, heart issues, and developmental disorders among children (Adamkiewicz, G. et al. 2011). The CDC defines health disparities as, "preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations" (CDC, "Health Disparities" 2023). This impact of health impairs a community's overall wellbeing, leading and tie into themes of structural violence and necropolitics as discussed previously. This combination of vulnerable peoples, landscape, and environment creates what Müller-Mahn and Everts (2013) first identified as *riskcapes.* This term connects social involvement to the built environment to identify "landscapes of risk" (Müller-Mahn and Everts 2013). Riskscapes "Riskscapes may […] be understood as landscapes of multilayered and interacting risks that represent both the materiality of real risks, and the perceptions, knowledge and imaginations of the people who live in that landscape and continuously shape and reshape its contours through their daily activities." (Müller-Mahn, Detlef, et al. 2018).

The theory of riskcapes has been situated in environmental justice and climate change discourse and can be better understood to the aforementioned locally unwated land use (LULUs) to better understand how neighborhoods who are hosts to riskscapes and land use experience higher vulnerabilities. I draw upon research done by Gebreyes and Theodory (2018) which connected riskcapes to community vulnerabilities in correlation to CC. Gebreyes and Theordory explore how risks are constructed through sociopolitical actions and how these risks compound to create a vulnerable environment for farmers in Ethiopia

and Tanzania. I utilize Gevreyes and Theodory's use of riskcapes in relation to my research to better understand how the community in my case study experiences CC and how CC risks manifest in their local environment.

*The Dudley Community*

The Dudley community lies nestled between the borders of Roxbury and Dorchester, two neighborhoods within Greater Boston. While technically located in Roxbury, Dudley  is distinguished by its history of grassroots organizing that have allowed this community to define specific boundaries that fall within a "village campus." The community is geographically identified as extending from "the east by Columbia Road from Grove Hall to Edward Everett Square; to the north via Massachusetts Ave. and Melena Cass Blvd., reaching Harrison Avenue in Dudley Square; and to the West by Warren Street, intersecting with Washington Street in Grove Hall" (DSNI, 2014)



As the result of redlining, white flight and acts of urban renewal, the Dudley area had deteriorated into “one of the poorest in Boston" (Soifer, Steven et al. 2014). Due to this, Dudley’s landscape and people were experiencing a constant pattern of abuse and neglect from larger powers. In 1950, the white population in Dudley, which had been almost 95%, dropped to less than 14%. This decrease was in stark contrast to the demographics of the black population, which saw a sharp increase from 5% to 55% in the same period (Medoff and Sklar, 1999). This pattern of demographic exchange is representative of governmental policies and initiatives at the time. As discussed, white flight and blockbusting practices within the neighborhood rendered homes and plots of land abandoned or owned by third party investors. As explored in a previous section, when a population becomes less white, they become less deserving and the landscape within Dudley become a stage for LULU’s and extreme political neglect. As for today, a look at a self-reported canvas of the Dudley population in 2014 reveals demographics as follows; 38% African American, 29% Latino, 25% Cape Verdean, and 7% white. These populations were mirrored in the mid 1900’s and onward (DSNI, 2014).

Dudley’s physical landscape was as vulnerable as its people. Policies and initiatives sprouted during the 1950’s onward ravaged the landscape, leaving one third of the neighborhood host to abandoned properties and vacant lots. These vacant areas in the Dudley area led to illegal dumping of waste and abandoned stolen cars (Medoff and Skylar, 1999) from outside companies and neighborhoods. One community member during this period described the area as a “virtual landfill for surrounding communities” (Dyer, 2013).

Following continuous neglect and alienation of people from their local and state government, community members created the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) in 1985. This was a community-led, grassroots organization that was founded on principles of community sustainability, development, and collective leadership. This organization came at a time when the BRA was beginning to focus its efforts onto Roxbury. This area including Dudley and its 1,300 vacant plots of land owned by the government or privately by speculators who were holding the land, waiting for it to increase in value. Community members and leaders, worried about the presence of outside developers and, scarred from past initiatives, made a large political move pushing for agency over their community (DSNI, 2015). In the late 1980's DSNI organized and campaigned for eminent domain authority over the outlined campus, shown above. This campaign led to something that was historically unprecedented as what was normally reserved for governmental power was granted to the community. In a historical win, the Dudley neighborhood was granted the power of eminent domain. This authority allowed for "development without displacement" (DSNI, 2015) by giving the community and DSNI the political control of the plots of land and what is developed there. A propagation from DSNI and its acquired eminent domain was the growth of Dudley Neighbors Incorporated (DNI), a community land trust.

Community land trusts "are nonprofit organizations that own land and lease it out for mission-aligned uses. CLTs don't sell [our] land- we remove it from the speculative market and protect it for community use" (DNI, 2014) In this case, principles of DSNI and their CLT surrounded community empowerment and development through

affordable housing, supporting infrastructure such as schools and commercial spaces, as well as urban farms. Through the CLT, DSNI and the Dudley community were essentially able to create a story of self-determination, rejecting and rewriting the long history of displacement and disinvestment. DSNI nurtured campaigns and neighborhood revitalization agendas as well, such as “Don’t Dump on Us” (1988). This campaign was a major movement that opposed the illegal dumping of toxic waste within the Dudley neighborhood (Medoff and Skylar, 1999). Not only was this campaign successful in its fight against larger movements of displacement and development, but it helped unite community members and propelled future clean up initiatives within the area (Soifer, Steven et al. 2014). In 1993, DSNI worked with the community to create a “Declaration of Community Rights.” The declaration was a testament to the history of the community, its landscape, and its residence. After a decade of door knocking, cold calling, and community organizing Dudley members finally articulated their own demands in the "Declaration of Community Rights”

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## Declaration of Community Rights

*We – the youth, adults, seniors of African, Latin American, Caribbean, Native American, Asian and European ancestry – are the Dudley community. Nine years ago (1993), we were Boston’s dumping ground and forgotten neighborhood. Today, we are on the rise! We are reclaiming our dignity, rebuilding housing and reknitting the fabric of our communities. Tomorrow, we realize our vision of a vibrant, culturally diverse neighborhood, where everyone is valued for their talents and contribution to the larger community. We, the residents of the Dudley area, dedicate and declare ourselves to the following:*

- We have the right to shape the development of all plans, programs and policies likely to affect the quality of our lives as neighborhood residents.
- We have the right to quality, affordable health care that is both accessible to all neighborhood residents and culturally sensitive.
- We have the right to control the development of neighborhood land in ways which insure adequate open space for parks, gardens, tot lots and a range of recreational uses.
- We have the right to live in a hazard-free environment that promotes the health and safety of our families.
- We have the right to celebrate the vibrant cultural diversity of the neighborhood through all artistic forms of expression.
- We have the right to education and training that will encourage our children, youth, adults and elders to meet their maximum potentials.
- We have the right to share in the jobs and prosperity created by economic development initiatives in metro-Boston generally, and in the neighborhood specifically.
- We have the right to quality and affordable housing in the neighborhood as both tenants and homeowners.
- We have the right to quality and affordable child care responsive to the distinct needs of the child and family as well as available in a home or center-based setting.
- We have the right to safe and accessible public transportation serving the neighborhood.
- We have the right to enjoy quality goods and services, made available through an active, neighborhood-based commercial district.
- We have the right to enjoy full spiritual and religious life in appropriate places of worship.
- We have the right to safety and security in our homes and in our neighborhoods.

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*Responses and Resistance*

This relationship between community and the physical landscape connects two larger themes that I will use to trellis my thesis arguments. The first being Political Ecology that draws on a historical understanding of the urban renewal practices detailed earlier and principles of environmental justice movements. Together, they create a field called Political Ecology (PE). PE utilizes an intersectional approach to understand how historical human interaction with the land including colonialization and political interactions have created lived environments within communities that leave them

structurally vulnerable to CC and environmental issues. PE builds on an understanding of how policy and human interaction with the land has led to detrimental consequences where the landscape itself takes on a life itself, interacting and in conversation (within policy and concerns) with the residents. In subsequent chapters, I will argue how the built landscape of the Dudley community continues to harm residents and leave them more exposed to environmental impacts anticipated to occur within the decade. Thus, PE uses an "investigate relationship between social, economic, and political systems, the ideologies that prop them up, and the natural systems they directly impact in the era of climate crisis." (Critical Ecology Lab, 2020). PE is applied popularly within biology and physical sciences; I readily utilize this branch of study to better highlight the connection between land use and community outcomes.

During the late 1900's, nearly one-third of land within the Dudley community sat vacant following blockbusting and abandonment. Abandoned buildings, often painted with lead were burned down to collect insurance. The homes were gone but their toxins remained, the lead seeping into the soil below it, creating heavily contaminated soil. Within the borders of Dudley over 50 reported state-listed hazardous waste sites populated the land (Settles, 1994). Dudley became a hot spot for Environmental Justice as soon as its community members took initiative to address these issues. Through campaigns such as "Don't Dump on Us" that, as mentioned previously, sought to clean up empty lots and fight illegal trash dumping in the area, Environmental Justice (EJ) blossomed. When I use the term environment within EJ, I do not mean climate nor overall weather patterns. I refer to the definition supplied by David Harvey, a British

anthropologist known for his work on globalization and social change. Harvey identifies environment as a more localized form, compiled of local landscape, people, resources, and endemics (Harvey 1999). Although the term Environmental Justice remains rather elusive even within EJ grassroots movements like the one, I argue for here (DSNI), I find it necessary to trudge through the semantics of it to get to the heart of the term.

Experts find difficulty in defining EJ as it concerns itself with social issues along with ecological factors, therefore the term remains flexible in definition (DeLuca, 1999). While others contend that the emphasis on human and social justice overshadows ecological preservation, thus limiting the term (Dobson, 1998). Above all else though, there is an agreement that EJ concerns itself with race, class, and socioeconomic status. The roots of EJ can be traced back to Civil Rights movements and within minority communities where unrest grew from the placement of hazardous waste plants and other environmentally unfriendly practices such as "lead-based paint in inner-city public housing projects and the lack of basic infrastructural needs in many Native American reservations, migrant farm worker camps, and *colonias* along the United States-Mexico border" (Holifield, 2001 pg. 81).

Dudley's response and organization to address the injustices placed upon them aligned with other Environmental Justice movements going on at the same time. In 1982, four years before DSNI's "Don't Dump on Us" campaign, Warren County North Carolina was hosting what is thought to be the first official Environmental Justice protest. The initial protest was instigated by the county plans to develop a hazardous waste landfill within proximity to a majority African American community. In response to these city

plans, community members along with National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) staged a protest that lasted over a six-week period where over 500 arrests took place (University of North Carolina, 2022). Protestors actively used their bodies to block trucks carrying hazardous waste and contaminated soils as well as marched and picketed within the community. Ultimately, the state dumped over 7,000 truckloads of contaminated soil and waste, though the voices and scope of the protest served as a spearhead for future EJ movements.

Through the CLT managed by Dudley Neighborhood Inc.(DNI), an affiliated NGO within DSNI, the Dudley area was able in the late 80's and early 90's to gain a sense of stewardship and self-actualization (Medoff and Skylar, 1999). To reiterate, a CLT is an organization—typically a recognized nonprofit—that stewards and oversees the land within a designated area of a community. This status allows the CLT to hold the land, keeping it off market and available for the development of infrastructure that aligns with the interests of the organization and the community in which they serve (Center for Community Land Trust Innovation 2023). In Dudley's case, these interests aligned with creating affordable housing, encouraging home ownership, and community gardens. Arguments made by many authors state that CLT's establish a non-capitalistic form of governing and ownership, fostering community resilience (DeFilips et al. 2019;Abromowitz, D.M. 1992; Greenstein, R., & Sungu-Eryilmaz 2005; Davis, J.E. 2006).

*Community Centered Movements*

These grassroots movements such as the one from the Dudley neighborhood can serve as a vehicle for sense of place and connection through senses of agency and community that uniting on a related front creates. Grassroot movements can be defined as the organization of community and activists on a micro level to inspire and encourage change within the community, typically targeting broader policies and initiatives. This "micro" level is through community organization and empowerment. These on the ground organizations are opposed to larger forms of transformation that focus on a top-down approach that include policy and government-led initiatives that have a much wider breadth in terms of targeted populations. Grassroots movements generally grow from community-based needs and leaders who recognize a specific issue and organize accordingly to address it (G. Seyfang, A. Smith 2007;Gibbs 1982; Shiva 1988; Bullard 1990; Hamilton 1990; Pardo 1990).

Within Boston at the time of urban renewal, to address growing concern and outrage at the developments occurring within their neighborhoods, grassroots movements and community members staged protests. One major development was the proposal of the "inner belt"—an eight-lane highway that cut through redlined communities across Boston, displacing nearly 7,000 people from their homes. Through the organization of community members, local urban planners, and policy makers, six years following the belt's conception, government officials reallocated funds to supplement the subway system, and the threat of the eight-lane beast was eliminated (Nally 2022). Grassroot movements and community organization continue to create a form of connection and

longevity within communities through shared interests for community betterment. These movements spark a sense of unified agency normally inspired in times of stress from outside pressure, normally stemming from governmental policy and larger structural powers (Batliwala, S. 2002).

### *Climate Change in Boston*

Currently, the world is going through what many label a "climate crisis" (United Nations, 2020) Climate Change itself is an ambiguous term. The United Nation identifies CC as "long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Such shifts can be natural, due to changes in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of CC, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas" (United Nations, ND) The manifestations of CC are various and are felt by communities in different ways. What could be extreme flooding in Fiji (World Bank 2014) could also be droughts in California (Sommer, Lauren, NPR 2022)

The expressions of CC are dependent upon the local geography. Weather patterns may be disrupted or exacerbated, or certain geographic features may increase a population's vulnerability (i.e. rising sea levels). What *is* a uniform fact of CC is that poorer communities with fewer resources and ability to adapt to these changes will experience CC the worst (Benevolenza, M. A., & DeRigne, L. (2019);Ngcamu, B. S. (2023) White-Newsome; J. L. 2012)**.** This is due to poorer and more structurally vulnerable populations having less resources, money, and flexibility needed to respond to external stressors from CC. This includes but certainly isn't limited to rebuilding of

homes following a natural disaster that was aggravated by changing weather patterns lack of food due to disruption in local farming practices, to the financial stress from cooling and heating your home more (Barbier, Edward B., et al. 2018).

Boston reports (Climate Ready Boston 2016) foretell a future of increased temperatures, rising sea levels, flooding, and resource stress. Climate Ready Boston was the first official document to address future plans for CC within Boston and since, subsequent reports and initiatives were rolled out. Coupled with Climate Ready Boston (2016) was a Climate Vulnerability Assessment (2016) that identified Roxbury as holding a vulnerable status across “multiple social vulnerability factors" (pg. 13). Social vulnerability is defined as “the disproportionate susceptibility of some social groups to the impacts of hazards including death, injury, loss, or disruption of livelihood” (pg.31). These social vulnerabilities identified in Roxbury correlate to its increased population which lives under the poverty line as well as Roxbury’s high number of immigrants who lack English proficiency.

These are identified social vulnerabilities within Roxbury, yet the physical landscape is also one that has potential to aggravate these problems. Roxbury within the VA (2016) had been identified as being at increased risk of experiencing higher temperatures and heat waves during the summer months. Naturally, across Boston there will be higher temperatures but what the assessment refers to is a convergence of CC and physical environment coming together to create a phenomenon called Urban Heat Island Effect (UHI). Urban heat island effect is “when cities replace natural land cover with dense concentrations of pavement, buildings, and other surfaces that absorb and retain

heat. This effect increases energy costs (e.g., for air conditioning), air pollution levels, and heat-related illness and mortality" (EPA, 2023).

Within Roxbury for the last half decade, summer temperatures were reported to be three to five degrees warmer than in other communities. This extreme heat can cause financial, physical, and psychological stress on a vulnerable population (Climate Vulnerability Assessment 2016) during the summer months. Heat stress from UHI onto a vulnerable population highlights major inequities born from a history of disinvestment and neglect. These stressors remain constant through the seasons. Lack of financial resources creates conflict in adequately heating and cooling one's house, compromising the personal space of the individual. Neighborhoods suffering from UHI as stated normally have infrastructure that hinders well-being. This means more concrete and industrial spaces, multi-lane highways, concrete lots, or gray fields. Historical disinvestment often correlates to lack of public transportation, meaning individuals need to walk further in exposed areas and poor weather conditions to travel.

### *Conclusion*

Ultimately, the Dudley landscape during the 1900's and onwards was shaped by social structures that inflicted harm onto residents and land that was seen as less deserving of resources and aid. The environment of the neighborhood, although consistently being rejuvenated by it's residents, remains increasingly vulnerable to CC stressors. The story of Dudley showcases broader themes of environmental justice and

community resilience whilst echoing the relationship PE identifies between socioeconomic status and environmental degradation. Although this is a of a neighborhood that experiences a happier ending than many, the layering of structural violence and necropolitics create a web of poignant discriminatory policies that still threaten the people and landscape. This systematic neglect resulted in the exacerbation of hazardous infrastructure and increased concentration of locally unwanted land use (LULUs) that proliferated health disparities and perpetuated social inequities.

Ultimately, these inequities leave Dudley and it's residents at an increased risk to experience more adverse CC symptoms. Through this chapter and within this thesis, I build from foundational theories to weave together a story of community organization and blossoming agency which is renewed through the sharing of stories grounded in the struggles of political neglect.

## CHAPTER THREE: Methods

*There was sweat trickling down the back of my neck as I trudged through the tall grass full of wildflowers and roadside litter. Passing the sign, "Tierra Livri" that stands in the middle of the empty lot, I get a text from Sunny asking me to meet them and the crew at the garden a block from TFP's greenhouse. I walk through the back door of the greenhouse, hoping to quickly drop off my lunch and refill my water bottle that had been drained on my walk in before joining the group. As I enter, a gust of warm, heavy heat embraces me. This part of the greenhouse is always suffocating as the June heat becomes trapped by the climbing, seven-feet tall tomato plants that stand like Sequoias throughout the entire room.*

*I enter the middle room, filled with community and private raised beds as well as our most recent harvests and seedlings. There are always two or three familiar faces of community members who are tending to their individual plots, usually calling me over to excitedly show me their developing plots. Today, I feel a bit rushed due to Sunny, my supervisor's text and it being the first day of the season for the community farmer's market so I make my interactions short and hurry to the crooked white fridge covered in announcements and a poster with excerpts from Thich Nhat Hanh's "5 Contemplations" about mindfulness of eating and gratitude.*

*1)"This food is the gift of the whole universe, the earth, the sun, the sky, and the stars and the hard and loving work of many beings and natural forces."*

*2)"May we keep our compassion alive by eating in such a way that we reduce harm to our body and our community, preserve our precious neighborhood and planet, and also gain enough strength to continue our fight for food justice."*

*3)"May we chew with mindfulness and eat with gratitude so as to enjoy every taste and every bit in the presence of this wonderful environment."*

Excerpt from researcher's field notes (06/29)

Little did I know how deeply these quotes would tie into my research, nor did I know how my research and its detours would land me in the middle of a community organization that allowed me to tell such a meaningful story. This specific organization, TFP (TFP), is nestled between the border of Dorchester and Roxbury. TFP focuses on food justice and community sustainability, stewarding three plots of land in the

immediate area that serve as urban farms as well as one larger farm located in the suburbs of Lincoln Massachusetts. My placement with the organization was fueled by my desire to conduct my research in CC and community. My research was heavily inspired by the Climate Ready Boston Report (2016) that outlined specific climate stressors and initiatives targeted to address these issues within the Greater Boston area. Through these series of interventions Boston would make moves towards a more "affordable, equitable, connected, and resilient future," (Climate Ready Boston 2016 pg. 15).

### *Research Design*

My placement within TFP began in late October and I was paired with the Community Program Manager from the nonprofit. Originally, I had hoped to work on the farm as I could attend in person, and I felt that being physically present would be far more compatible with my research as my intended methods were deeply ethnographic and qualitative. The work of an urban farm is heavily based on the seasons though and October was when the land and much of the work was being met with a slower pace as whispers of winter moved across the community. My supervisor also mentioned that Sunny, who runs the farm, is normally incredibly busy and is  at saturation with volunteers and facilitation, making my optimism for an "on the ground" placement wilt.

Being primarily virtual within the organization created a bit of a disconnect from my desired research and the understanding of the facets of the organization I was working with. From my laptop screen, folded up on my bed, I often worked on excel sheets and with Arc GIS, a mapping software. The main project we were working on together was identifying community assets within different neighborhoods across Dorchester and

Roxbury that TFP was hoping to use to identify which populations were most in need of their services. Identified assets by TFP could be as small as bodegas that had ATMs or provided fresh produce to something as large as a local community center or park. Through this work with TFP, mapping assets and identifying vulnerabilities, my research began to take form. I decided I wanted to understand how historically disenfranchised communities were reacting and speaking about CC. Seeing the different neighborhood's qualities physically mapped out before me nudged my research towards wanting to understand how communities are seeing CC and CC initiatives expressed within their landscapes. I decided to cast a wide net within my research and understand how Roxbury and Dorchester communities were experiencing CC. This breadth, I thought would allow me to compare and contrast these two neighborhoods and the support (or lack thereof) that they received through initiatives born from Climate Ready Boston (2016).

Roxbury and Dorchester have historically experienced disenfranchisement and structural violence through redlining, zoning, and political neglect (Medoff and Skylar 1994). The ghosts of these acts of omission and commission within policy scar the landscape where these imposing social structures then create a legacy of impeded socioeconomic statuses and underrepresentation within the communities. From this history, I was especially interested in themes of structural violence (Galtung, 1971), vulnerabilities (Schuller, 2015), and necropolitics (Mbembe 2006). As my research was concerned with how policy affects and influences the landscape in which people live, I felt that a research design gleaned from Critical Medical Anthropology approaches would best facilitate my research. Critical Medical Anthropology (CMA) is an approach born

from medical anthropology that focuses on "the importance of political and economic forces, including the exercise of power, in shaping health, disease, illness experience, and health care" (Singer, 2004).

I was also mindful of the history of the neighborhoods as I constructed my research design. Dorchester and Roxbury have some of the most diverse and heavily representative populations of Black, Hispanic, and Asian cultures across Boston, I wanted to ensure that I was instilling practices of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2013) within my research. Crenshaw identifies intersectionality as a framework sowed from critical race theory. When utilized, it analyzes how the lived experience of those most vulnerable within society are negatively affected through different facets and actors of power within society. Crenshaw identifies three forms of intersectionality within her research; structural, political, and representational. Although Crenshaw formed her theories from her roots as a black feminist, I found her research within political intersectionality to be a contextual source in relation to my research. Political intersectionality, Crenshaw explains, is the understanding of how policy and regulations intended to promote equality have in turn smothered voices of marginalized populations and decreased their political visibility (Crenshaw 2013, pg. 43).

### *Research Methods*

As I was conducting ethnography, I thought it only appropriate to utilize a phenomenological lens within my research. I felt that conducting ten to fifteen semi-structured, open-ended interviews would allow me to gather enough information to adequately tell a story that reflected the lived experiences within the communities. The

sample size reflected my concerns with capturing a narrative that reflected the community members as well as a narrative from larger political bodies that were involved with policies and government on a local and/or state-wide level. It was important for me to incorporate voices from the community residents, members of local NGOs and policy makers as I wished to compare the political and organizational presence within the local landscape with how it was then experienced and interpreted by those actively living within the area. Through my work with the organization, I understood that the communities themselves and the physical landscape was just as alive and full of information as those that lived within them. Upon reading a handful of articles about interviewing techniques, I settled on one method that specifically facilitates the exploring of local knowledge through the landscape. These are called "go-along" interviews and are intended to allow conversation to blossom through visual cues given by physical landmarks or personal memories of places and space (Carpiano 2009).

As my research was beginning to focus on how people interacted with their landscape and local environment, I thought that this would be a perfect method for inciting meaningful conversation and storytelling prompted through walks through the informant's neighborhood. For the go-along interviews, I intended on conducting upwards of 10 interviews with community members specifically. The inclusion criteria for this group were anyone who had lived within the community for over ten years at one point in their life. I felt that a decade was an adequate amount of time for an individual to create connections with the land and the people, creating a handful of meaningful experiences that could be explored in semi-structured, open-ended interviews with me as

we walked on a route of their choosing. The remaining five to ten interviews I intended to conduct were reserved for local NGO members or policy makers. I hoped that the incorporation of their experience working within the community and responding to the concerns or needs of the communities could create a well-rounded compilation of data from both sides.

### *Recruitment*

My recruitment strategies within my research design were primarily going to be through flyers passed out during community events as well as virtual formats added to the organization's newsletter. My work with the Community Program Manager for the organization gave me access to editing the monthly newsletter our organization sent out. I was also given access to the mailing list that included over twenty local nonprofits within the organization. In-person events that would be beneficial to my recruitment were community meetings with other local non-profits that TFP was closely tied to, as well as TFP's own events such as farmers markets throughout the summer months and land opening ceremonies at the beginning and ending of the growing season.

I knew, through speaking with my supervisor, that the farmers markets, especially ones in the center of town, about one block from TFP's greenhouse would be rich with members who had lived in the community for decades. Though, through these two mediums of recruitment, I was hopeful that I would be able to secure and reach all targeted audiences.

Another avenue for recruitment and general participant observation would be through events and meetings within the Greater Boston area. Since my onboarding to TFP, I attended a handful of hearings on dockets concerning environmental infrastructure and initiatives within the communities of focus. Often, these meetings consisted of me alone in an official courtroom, furiously typing away on my iPad's keyboard as I listened to four or five committee members cover the details and concerns around the proposals. As my face was more often than not the only informal face there, I was confident in my ability to approach and strike up conversation with relevant members when I received IRB approval.

### *Getting Started*

The majority of my field notes and participant observations stemmed from these lonely and awkward courtroom attendances and virtual meetings with the Community Program Manager until late-March when my position at TFP was ripped from the roots when 20-minutes into my monthly check-in with my supervisor, I was notified that they were leaving their position with the organization for a research job with Northeastern. Turnover rates for non-profits are relatively high in general and them leaving seemed to be a continuation in a pattern that TFP was experiencing since December. With a flurry of open positions and things in limbo, the picture they painted for my continuation at the organization was looking less than fruitful. To preserve what I had been working towards for the past five months, I reached out to Sunny, the Boston Farm Manager.

Growing up in upstate New York, I had been surrounded by agriculture and had a deep connection to the land there, understanding the relationship of food and people. I

also hoped that my experience in AmeriCorps, where I lived and served on a small Alaskan Island as an after-school facilitator would help my case. There, I developed and facilitated a handful of outdoor and gardening programs including a successful hydroponic station where youth were able to feed themselves and family members through the bi-weekly crops we grew and harvested.

Planting all my experiences into a desperate email, I waited anxiously for Sunny's response, hoping I made myself sound competent enough to sound like an asset and not someone to be babysat. Over a week later, I received a short email back from Sunny, asking me to call them at 8:30 am the following day as they were on their way to a meeting in Western Massachusetts and had some free time to speak with me about my placement on the drive over. The phone call itself was brief, my hands were shaking, and I was conscious of the time. If a drive to a meeting was any indication of "free time," I wanted to make sure that I was being concise and considerate. The phone call ended with Sunny and I finding a day, once a week, that would be compatible with both of our schedules for me to begin working at the greenhouse. Primarily, I would be working with PowerCorps, a branch of AmeriCorps. PowerCorpsBOS serves as "a green jobs program that provides young adults with training, career readiness support, and connections to employers in the green industry" (City of Boston 2023). TFP is one of many organizations that host PowerCorpsBos members, giving them hands-on experience.

My first day on the farm was a chilly April morning where teases of spring filled the air, yet the ground and surrounding flora remained stubborn and frozen. It was my first time being in the community and the greenhouse itself. Seeing the physical

manifestations of this organization that I had been working with for almost half a year was encouraging to me as I felt a bit disconnected. Upon entering, the immediate temperature change ushered me to remove my scarf and gloves I had on during my walk in. I found Sunny quickly, as they were fluttering around the greenhouse, gathering all the tools needed for PowerCorps that day. We quickly greeted one another, and I was immediately given a task to bring three, five-gallon buckets to one of our local farms to collect compost. Sunny reassured me that it was less than a five-minute walk and I would be fine, giving me quick directions. As I got closer to the corner where the farm lay, I first saw the large brown fence with a bare Cottonwood tree peeking from above the posts. A sign for TFP stands above the entrance. The land is brown and gray, covered in tarps and sandbags to preserve the beds through the slumber-seasons.

Two volunteers, Poppy and Douglas, both pseudonyms I've given, were already there, shoveling a pile of compost into bags that would be used for a program called "Build a Garden," that will be explored more in depth in subsequent chapters. I started helping them, immediately grabbing a shovel and filling the bag with heavy, wet, compost. Sunny soon joined us, and we all spoke as we labored. Most of the attention was focused on me for the first 20 minutes or so until they felt satisfied with their knowledge of me and my reasons for being there. Both Poppy and Douglas have served as volunteers within the organization for over two years and seemed to know both the organization and the staff well.

We moved to the garlic bed that slept under the Cottonwood tree to uncover their nudging bulbs. There was a sign that also lived under the looming tree that read, "Say NO

to vacant land, say YES to community farms!" I asked Sunny what this plot of land was previously, and with a deep sigh, they simply told me to read, *Streets of Hope: The fall and rise of an urban neighborhood* (Medoff and Skylar, 1994). Intrigued, I ordered it within the same breath of their recommendation. I didn't understand then how that book and my work on the land that was written about would so drastically alter my research objectives.

From then on, each Tuesday, I'd make my way to TFP. There, I would work with the land, PowerCorps members, volunteers, and staff members to prepare for the summer season from 9am until around 4pm. Immediately I noticed the influx of field notes and participant observations I was conducting. The first few weeks were overwhelming as I was struggling with gaining tacit knowledge of the organization as well as attempting to record field notes summarizing an average of eight hours of fieldwork. I felt my priorities and intended data collection begin to shift towards a heavier focus on field notes and participant observation within the organization. I had also begun to read the book recommended by Sunny, a case study of the immediate community I was working within. The book serves as a case study of the neighborhood detailing political unrest and organization from the 70's to the early 90's. I learned through the book and through conversations that the farm with the Cottonwood was once an apartment complex that was burned down during white flight and disinvestment within the neighborhood in the 70's (Medoff, 1994)**.** The book later details how the neighborhood and its residents organized to establish eminent domain over a designated area within the neighborhood, creating a community land trust that continues to be stewarded into the present day. I will

go into even more detail about the remarkable story of community and voice in another chapter.

Every week I walked through the streets of a neighborhood that had such a unique story of agency and stewardship that I decided somewhere between the budding garlic bulbs and the first flowers of spring that I would focus specifically on the community that TFP worked within. The history of the community and the land, along with the residents themselves who had literally cultivated their landscape and ways they were governed to create a better quality of life was a story that I could not glaze over. I decided to concentrate my research into a case study as it serves as an "intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units ... observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time" (Gerring, 2004, pg. 342). Through this practice, I believed that I could develop a more holistic understanding of my research questions through the lens of the urban farm.

This shift of scope from a macro, multi-community policy research design to a micro, case study called for some adjustments to my design and approach. Instead of attending once a week, I decided to work in the gardens twice a week to give me as much experience within TFP and the community as possible. Participant observation in the field allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the community at large, to the point where I could move through spaces and conversations with others and be seen as an active member of the whole (Bernard 2006). Participant observation and field notes from these interactions proved to make up the most substantial part of my data collection. More so than ever before, I was moving forward with a phenomenological lens (Merleau-

Ponty 1965) and adopting a participant-led approach as I wanted my case study of the community to be told and led *by* its members.

My main research question remained largely the same, even if my parameters of study had shrunk. I still wanted to understand how community members were experiencing and interacting with their local landscape with a focus on CC and CC policy. Through my position at TFP, I also was seeking to understand how community members interacted with the urban farm and how staff members, volunteers, and the general presence of TFP fit within the community. This concentration on community and engagement did alter my secondary questions and their structure to better understand how members identify their needs and responses of larger organizations. One subliminal theme I was using to contextualize my research and interviews was the concept of land stewardship and place within a community. This was inspired through my readings, my developing understanding of the history of the neighborhood, as well as political ecology (PE). PE is a newer practice that rests in the bio-social field. This framework explores and explains how social structures and historical events impact the lived land, creating a landscape that influences the health of its members for generations to come (Ward 2022). I felt that as I continued to learn from TFP and the community, PE gained more and more relevance, quickly becoming a main theme within my research.

The nature of my work also created space for informal, un-structured interviews that were not recorded due to them normally occurring in the middle of a muddy field during a labor-intensive task. These conversations were primarily with PowerCorps members or other volunteers and consisted of personal accounts of living in the area or

personal anecdotes for wanting to help with an organization or career that helps build community. One volunteer who I'll call Violet is also a community member of the neighborhood and has helped steward the land since the early 70's, growing a communal plot on one of the farms with medicinal herbs for residents who may need them. She seemed to be incredibly knowledgeable about the nature of the plants and the people who need them, planting ones specifically for people who she knew would benefit.

> *"Miss Willow has been having real bad joint pain and so I told her that they yarrow I've got growing would help her out if she made a tea out of it."*
> -Excerpt from researcher's field notes (05/11)

These unstructured interviews were serendipitous in nature as became my recruitment practices for my semi-structured interviews. Instead of deliberate net casting and waiting through flyers and different forms of media, recruiting and securing my interviews was more opportunistic and purposive in nature. This mainly was due to the positioning I had within the community, working with TFP that exposed me regularly to the populations I was interested in interviewing. Through conversations of the community or gardening, my role as a researcher would naturally sometimes come up. From there, I would extend an invitation for an interview either immediately if the time allowed or in the future.

### *Recruitment, Participants and Interviews*

As I was working on the farm, now two days a week, not only was I constantly in communication with community members, but I was also invited to volunteer or attend community events and meetings. These opportunities allowed me to make connections

with both community and non-profit organization members and set up or conduct interviews on the spot. Although my recruitment methods trailed off my expected path, my sample groups had not and I was still very much interested in speaking with both community members and NGO members. I thought it was even more important to obtain as many narratives from both groups as possible in order to create a narrative of the community and the organizations that immediately serve them.

What I did not anticipate was the blending of status that I would encounter. Out of the seven interviews I ended up conducting, four of the participants identified as both community and nonprofit members. As the community is home to over five major non-profits in the immediate area, all of whom are in active communication with one another, this in hindsight should have been anticipated. The contributions of these participants became incredibly valuable, as their lived experiences within the neighborhood paired with their knowledge of community needs through the nonprofit sector allowed me to better make connections within my data. The number of participants was also a bit lower than I had anticipated in my research design. My seven interviews met barely half of the interviews I had hoped to conduct. This could be for a plethora of reasons from late IRB approval that hindered me from interviewing until late-June to busy pace of summer for a community or NGO members where contacts get buried in day-to-day tasks.

Summer is when the neighborhood seems to burst to life and every member of the community seems to be in a rush to squeeze as much out of the summer season as possible. My days at TFP were filled with bed preparation, weeding, planting seedlings, and then preparing seedlings for the new rotation. The farmers markets were just as

intense, a frenzy of squashes and SNAP cards. It may have been because of the pace of life that summertime evokes within the neighborhood or the opportunistic nature of my interview recruitment, but I was unable to conduct any semi-structured go-along interviews much to my dismay. For interviews that I set up and conducted in the immediate moment, participants were happy to speak with me but were normally tabling at events or unable to leave the premises due to other obligations. Interviews I set up on site and scheduled for another time were done over zoom or via phone call due to time constraints or scheduling conflicts. In total, I had four, in-person and three virtual interviews. These interviews ranged from 45-60 minutes, never exceeding the one-hour mark (See Table One for overview of participants and interview details).

Although I was not able to conduct any semi-structured interviews, I was exposed to the community through my work at TFP and took full advantage of my time outside of the greenhouse. Twice I was able to deliver compost with Sunny and Douglas to local households/gardens. One was to a local convent, home to a handful of Cape Verdean Nuns. The convent lay behind what was once Roxbury Community College, now an empty plot of land that Sunny tells me is a brownfield, a plot of land that is left abandoned or underused due to contaminants from prior use within the soil (Environmental Law Institute: *Brownfield Basics* 2022*).* Douglas, who immigrated to the United States in the 70's from Jamaica told me about how he had friends who attended the college that had previously been a car dealership before the college took up residence.

Another instance of utilizing the concepts of go-along interviews without conducting them was when I was driving with Sunny back to the greenhouse from one of the farms. It was truly only a five-minute walk but they needed to take some tools back and had an extra seat so I hopped in. Due to the nature of the one-way streets in the neighborhood, I was taken down a set of roads I hadn't ever been exposed to. Along them where seemingly newly built homes and businesses and I asked Sunny about them. As they had been working with the organization for over 20-years, they lamented about how much the community has changed since they've been there. Telling me a story about how the man who came to drop off the porta-potty for one of the farms grew up in the area and was astonished by how different the landscape was. He was especially amazed with the greenhouse itself which sits on an old body and essentially a "chop shop" that worked on and sold parts from cars that were left abandoned on the neighborhood's streets.

Sunny, Douglas, along with other volunteers and community members quickly became familiar to me as my time at TFP continued into the spring and summer months. By June, I had amassed a master list of these "characters," giving any relevant background that I learned from them as well as any interactions I thought were profound or gave insight to their personality. This was not in my original research design, but after conversation with my cohorts one day about the peculiarities of the people I had grown so close to, they suggested that I create a separate document to record the day-to-day qualities of the "TFP Gang." One such instance documented was with a volunteer I'll call, Terra. Terra is an avid gardener who often goes barefoot on the farms during the

summertime. She often keeps to herself, and you can find her tucked away in the corners of the farms pulling Japanese Knot Weed with vengeance.

*I was helping Poppy weed and as I was negotiating a plot of stinging nettle and Poppy comes over to me and points at the Witch Hazel tree that stands rather low but has wider branches, creating a brambled umbrella of shorts. "I call this the potty tree," she says with a small smile, "I use it when I have to go since we don't have a porta potty any more but one day I was weeding under it and I guess you really couldn't see me because someone came in and took entire bag. Luckily I had my keys on me but they lucked out with my wallet, I had a $200 charge on one of my cards from a Walgreens, I think they may have bought diapers to resell or something."*

-Excerpt from researcher's field notes (06/20)

This type of interaction serves multiple purposes within my research and has been such a colorful way to decorate my developing data. Not only does the list add a personal quality to my research, giving it a localized and quirky flavor, but it gives insight to how these characters interact with the organization and the land itself in certain spaces and time. TFP had to remove the porta potty on the farm that the witch hazel resides due to a series of break-ins and misuse of the facilities. The farms themselves have no locked gates and remain "open" to the public at all times. Normally, the spaces are respected, though there have been some scenarios on the witch hazel farm specifically, such as entire hostas going missing stumbling upon discarded condoms and needles. These layered insights are what foster the details that breathe life into the ethnography I conducted. The people, the land, the stories, and the little moments between them all triangulate to create rich data that I've been lucky enough to weave into my telling of a collective story.

**Table One: Interview Nature and Participants**

| Participants | Demographic | Interview | Status | Major Themes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sunny | Self identified as white | In-person through TFP | NGO member | Food Justice/ Environmental Justice/ Supplementary Support through policy/ Urban Farming/ Community Engagement |
| Eris | Self identified as Black | In-person through TFP | NGO member Community member | Storytelling/ Youth Programs/Food Justice/ Connection to the Land/Community Engagement |
| Juniper | Self identified as Black | In-person at community event | NGO member Community member | Community Engagement/Housing/ Activism/Changing Landscape |
| Lily | Self identified as Latino | Phone call | NGO member Community Member | Community Engagement/ Housing/ Disenfranchised Communities/ Public Aid/ Community Land Trusts/CC |
| Ray | Self identified as Black | In-person at community event | NGO member Community member | CC Policy/ Community Resources/ Community Engagement/ Housing |
| Skye | Self identified as Asian | Zoom Interview | NGO member | Community Land Trusts/Housing/ Sustainability/ Community Engagement |
| Zinnia | Self identified as Black | Zoom Interview | Community policy Maker | Sustainability/CC Policy/ Urban Heat Island/Community Vulnerabilities |

### *Coding the Data*

The bulk of my data collected was from field notes, participant observation, and memos. Sporadically, I would write down little quotes or observations on my phone if I had it readily available, but normally field notes and memos were handwritten in haste on my hour-long walks home on any available piece of paper. These notes were then typed into a secure, Microsoft Word Document and then uploaded into Nvivo, a third-party software used for coding. My notes from readings and excerpts ripped from policy dockets and published reports were also made into documents on Microsoft Word and then uploaded into Nvivo, as were my transcribed interviews. Audio recordings from my interviews were uploaded from my Boston University's Zoom account or recorded and transcribed in real time through transcribing software, Otter.ai. I had previous experience with this software transcribing interviews for a radio station I worked with and I found it to be incredibly reliable.

### *Data Analysis*

Ultimately, all my data landed in Nvivo and any duplicates or original recordings were deleted once they were fully transitioned to the coding software. My approach to coding is based heavily on a grounded theory approach. Introduced by Glaser and Straus (1967), grounded theory is an interpretive approach to coding and includes the researcher and their experience to build and interact with the data. Through the analysis of the data, theories begin to sprout, and themes are identified. I decided to use grounded theory predominantly within my coding of my field notes and interview transcripts due to the detailed and subliminal, tacit knowledge that was layered within the lines. The first round

of coding was normally accompanied with a notebook where I recorded memos and observations of the data being reviewed. From there, I moved onto the second round of coding, inductive or open coding. This is where themes and interpretations of the data were assigned codes, giving specific, phenomenological relevance. These steps heavily involved memoing, both analytical and reflexive as I would revisit specific codes and interpretations repeatedly through my process to ensure that my understandings and categorizations were able to be understood and digested.

Being that I had both primary and secondary data, all data was triangulated as codes were being developed. The incorporation of public policy and initiatives caused a semi-stratification within my code book. Policy jargon and concerns were not being mimicked in any fashion within my interviews or field notes, and there seemed to be a disconnect between the conversation that policy makers and district representatives were having versus what I was hearing from community leaders and members. Codes born from my interviews and field notes were mainly centered around community values, characteristics, and relationships between organizations and identified assets and vulnerabilities. Codes born from text analysis of policy and reports generally followed themes of; contextual/historical background, infrastructure developments, macro-concerns of CC, and identified demographics. As my codebook developed, the divide between my primary and secondary data increased.

To ensure that I was interpreting the data correctly and not allowing my positionality to misrepresent what I was seeing, I utilized my position and access to community members I had interviewed to conduct “member checking.” This process

allowed me to confirm that my interpretations of the data were relevant and complementary to the lived experiences of the residents. Later chapters will discuss the emerging themes of intersectional environmentalism, displacement, and stewardship of community. Subsequent chapters will also dive into the connection of land to people, a narrative fostered and nourished by the community I've begun to view as a living organism through my work at TFP.

# CHAPTER FOUR: Community Liaisons

## *Introduction*

Throughout this chapter I will present examples of people who I have come to recognize as "community liaisons." The function which is served by these community liaisons is that they help to create a "bridge" between day-to-day community needs and those of other larger, external systems (e.g., local non-profits, larger political initiatives) which are intended to help support that community. The intimate and emic knowledge of communal needs which is held by these community liaisons helps to create their heightened status. In this role, the community liaisons help to inform, connect, and create a shared narrative that can be used to help voice needs in their respective organizations. This dynamic between community members and community workers becomes operant through the "body politic" (Harvey, David. 2020; Rasmussen, et. al 2005), where these community liaisons may serve as interdisciplinarians, working within their organizations while also being guided by the flow of information granted to them through their respected social positions within the community. Thus, they adopt a role that extends beyond either their social obligations with neighborhood friendships, or through their role as an NGO employee.

This metamorphosis is created through their social ties within the community and the information that is shared by and with them through conversation and interaction. This shared knowledge then allows them to carry a level of deeper narrative of the community's needs, that they may then leverage through their professional standings

within both NGO's and in larger political conversations. I relate this role to that of a community health worker who is recognized as an integral part of the community health system (CHS). This system is a *set of local actors, relationships, and processes engaged in producing, advocating for, and supporting health in communities and households outside the formal health system* (USAID, *Strengthening Community Health Systems).* Through this definition and the interactions that I have witnessed regarding the three persons upon whom I will expand upon shortly, I argue that their status within the Dudley community extends beyond simply that of being an NGO staff member to something that is larger. They help to create a bridge and serve as an agent and voice for community members, highlighting many of the needs and barriers that may have been overlooked in larger initiatives.

### *Sunny*

Sunny stands tall; her legs are normally adorned by faded jeans and work boots that always seem to be moving. However, there is also a patience that Sunny seems to naturally possess. She can work through the blazing summer sun and juggle hordes of questions and small issues with a nonchalant grace. When Sunny speaks to you, you feel heard. Regardless of her busy schedule of running a farm and taking care of hundreds of rows of growing plants, she asks how your sick mother is, which you mentioned a week ago. Sunny has a way of taking care of people and working through the intricacies of interacting with hundreds of different personalities, all while seemingly being adored by all of them. There is not a moment when her phone isn't going off, or that there is not a request for her presence by one community member or another. They know her by name

just as she knows them. I believe Sunny sees the community much like she views the farm. Just like the plants, people need to be tended to and taken care of. Sunny seems to understand each individual community member's needs and does her best to take these into consideration.

I remember one time, as we were working in the July Summer sun planting beans (an incredibly tedious task), that Sunny mentioned how a community member had recently lost her daughter. She said, "so it was so strange, but I went out to the compost pile, you know, the one in the back of the green house, and there was a balloon from what I can only assume was from the funeral. I think that was her daughter telling me that I should go visit her" (Field note excerpt 06/06/23). Another time, when I was helping Sunny on a particularly slow day at the farm, I asked about a crate of shampoo and conditioner samples. Casually, Sunny told me how she had helped a community member and their family move out of an apartment from which they had been evicted from. The family had hundreds of toiletries that they were set to throw away, which Sunny decided to save for anyone in the community who may find themselves in need.

These relationships and deep understanding of more intimate events within the community create a web of security that extends beyond the functions of an NGO. Within the neighborhood of Dudley, I have witnessed a support system created from the deep and strong roots of relationships which the community members have with staff members like Sunny. This role as a community liaison was created by me in my data analysis while reviewing my fieldnotes. Instead of this role being one that had specific qualifications the

appointed individuals needed to possess, I found patterns in their line of work and personal connections which led me to giving them the role of community liaison.

Later, I will introduce Eris and Lily, two other members of DSNI and TFP who also represent deeper relationships between residents and NGOs that allows them to serve within an "liaison" positionality. While Sunny is the Boston Farm manager to TFP, she is also a dear friend to many of the community members. Although Sunny does not live within the community nor does she represent a popular demographic within Dudley as a middle-aged white woman, her interactions proved to be the most potent and meaningful in my observations. In these dual positions of NGO staff member and friend to residents, Sunny can serve as a respected spokesperson for the neighborhood. These shared roles also interact to create a status that affords Sunny tacit knowledge on community needs. As the farm manager, Sunny has access to resources and her position within TFP allows her to voice concerns or to cater programs to better serve the community (i.e. Build-a-Garden). Community members seek out Sunny, asking her about small things, like questions about gardening, to give advice regarding larger issues, such as financial worries following the discontinuation of a specific famer's market coupon.

These subsidized coupons were first released by the Food Justice program with the City of Boston during the COVID-19 pandemic. The coupons come in $25 packets and are divided into five $5 slips that residents who signed up for the program can then use at any farmers market in the Greater Boston area. Released monthly, these coupons flooded the summer farmer's markets for TFP, allowing full bags of produce and goods to be exchanged with little to no personal funds being paid. Many of Sunny's anxieties

surrounding the community and it's needs tie back to the potential termination of this program in the upcoming Summer of 2024. What has been born from this concern is something that is embedded within the roots of the community, activism, and organization. Following conversations with community members, Sunny detailed how community members intend to approach this issue.

*"I had a conversation with one of the residents last week about the Farmers Market coupons. And I was like, I'm trying to just make sure that people understand that like this, the coupon program came out of pandemic money, it's going away. The city really doesn't know if they're going to fund it next year [*summer 2024] *and we have to start to prepare people for the fact that it might not be here to support them. And the resident who's like an older, she's a greenhouse grower, and an older woman, she's like, well, I'll just call my city council woman. And I was like, Well, I'm like, That's a great idea. I don't know if it's going to do anything. And she's like, "Sunny, if there's anything that we have learned in this neighborhood, is that you can't just take what people are giving you and you have to organize to make sure that we get what we need in order to have healthy lives."*

*She was probably involved with the Don't Dump on Us campaign. She's very good. She's on the board of DSNI and she's somebody who I believe that story of community organization has resonated with her for sure. And as so I think of that as like a motivating factor of like we have been able to, with political will, come together. We can make changes in this neighborhood. And we want to continue to do that. So they* [community members] *definitely draw their engagement from a historical perspective*

Once the coupons for the Summer of 2023 expire at the end of October, Sunny wanted to sit down and write letters to the Food Justice Department with community members who have relied heavily upon the program. As my time on the farm continued into the fading days of autumn and the sun began to slope in the sky, more energy around the coupons picked up. Community members would trickle into the greenhouse and sit at a folded table dusted with planting soil and markets to write a personal statement about the coupons and the importance of this type of aid. If these residents could not or did not want to write, Sunny would. The discussions normally went for about half an hour, I

would hear snippets of the conversation. “Okay, and how often do you use the coupons? What do you buy with them? How have they impacted you?” The residents would often leave after giving Sunny a hug and with a bag of some free vegetables Sunny used as incentive to get them to make time to speak with her. Sunny later explained to me that she will use these personal statements and send them to the staff members of the Boston Resiliency Fund (2020). She hopes that the personal statements of residents of a well-known marginalized community may create some type of traction within the allocation of funds for the year 2024.

*Eris*

“The land is poisoned, you know? It goes deep,” says Eris matter-of-factly. He shovels massive piles of loose dirt into a nearby wheelbarrow, sweating slightly with the effort. He wears a Food Project shirt, it’s vibrant purple now a dulled brown, faded by time and long days in the sun. His brow is furrowed with concentration, or maybe with pensive thoughts about the community he grew up in and now serves. The same streets he lived on as a child are now the place where he grows food for TFP. Eris used to play football in high school and his large presence is muted by his calm demeanor and stoic presence on the farm.

Eris is in his mid-twenties and, as mentioned, grew up in the Dudley Village Campus. He and other siblings were also involved with TFP as youths through the running summer programs. Now, Eris works as a farm manager, carrying a valuable understanding of the community he works within, as well as of the NGO for whom he works.

*“ Gun and gang violence in general was a big issue for Dudley growing up. Just because the community was like, kind of like riddled with it, especially with like the constant what do you call it? The use of alcohol? There used to be like a really bad bar, like right where I used to live called breezeways. And that's where like, all the violence would kind of stem from just because it was like, you have alcohol, you have people in the community. Some people may not like each other, that's kind of like a middle ground where like, everyone from everywhere kind of meets. And it would be like, every single Saturday, there’d be like a shoot out. And then to wake up six o'clock, Saturday morning, I’m looking outside the window, like, ah, there's police everywhere things are taped off. There’s been another shooting. So like with TFP I think they can offer a lot of support and I felt that like, as my time as a youth, like sitting down with like other youth, we're also experiencing, like, you know, like friends being like, murdered due to like gang and gun violence and like all that other stuff. You get the time to really like, sit down and talk about with other people who like truly understand that environment at TFP.*

*And being like, those types of settings where you're like working and talking to people who really understand it, because they've gone through it, whether it's like, family related or personal. I would even say like there’s a meaningfulness from like being from the same plane of existence of living inside of an underserved community. Because like, it's much more easy to understand what your peers are going through, if you're both living inside the same jungle, then someone just being like, “it's okay, you'll get better.” And it's like, it's not, it doesn’t really work like that. Like the intent is there, but the impacts like not there at all* (08/13/23)

The argument I make in this section is that DSNI and TFP serve as a means to allow for the communication of intimate community needs which are not expressed within larger public policy. I do not claim that NGOs are the miracle solution to solving and meeting every community need. Nor do I argue that relationships between community members and NGOs are free of conflict or tensions. Eris was the most vocal about the shortcomings of the TFP regarding the historical lack of diversity within TFP. This created a sentiment within some community members that TFP was a “white” organization that had come into the neighborhood and created tension and mistrust. This mistrust is something that Eris dealt with extensively during his time as a youth at TFP, detailing how some staff members made him feel as though he was the “token black kid

for TFP." Now, as a full-time staff member for TFP, Eris recognizes TFP's shortcomings but also its capacity to serve the Dudley community.

I stopped working closely with Eris in September when he began his transition to a new position within TFP. I posit that Eris' history of growing up within Dudley as well as working for almost a decade with TFP gave him a high value status within the NGO. His assets of being a community member as well as knowing so much about TFP propelled him into being offered a role as Community Programs Manager. This position works directly with community members, serving as a bridge between individual resident voices and initiatives within TFP. Eris spoke to me about his excitement with the new position as well as his understanding of the challenges the job brings as he tries to remain conscious of the dynamic between TFP and some residents.

As of my last communication with Eris, he asked me to send him a map I worked on with the previous Community Programs Manager that showed geographic areas of groups most in need within Roxbury and Dorchester. These areas were represented with lower reports of green and public spaces, social services, grocery stores, and education buildings. Eris hoped to use this project to partner with other local NGOs to leverage and target support to these neighborhoods.

### *Lily*

*"Yeah, uh Stella hold on for a second, I've got to give out these coupons for Sunny…." Lily says to me ten minutes into our telephone interview. The conversation is muffled and I hear sparse conversation in Spanish in the background. Lily is gone for about five minutes and I wait patiently under the weeping willow. It's early Summer and the world seems to have come back alive with an urgency and vibrancy that is reflected in the interview. "Hey, yeah, thanks for waiting Stella, I'm sorry, I had to get those passed out*

*before I left for vacation. Anyway, you were asking about CC?* (Notes and excerpts from interview with Lily 06/22/23).

Lily is a long-time employee of DSNI, working mainly with the sister NGO, DNI as of recently. Her position now with DNI is that of serving as a "community liaison", wherein her primary responsibility is to assist with the organization of community outreach programs, working closely with community members in order to better understand their most demanding needs and how DNI can work to address them. As the organization works predominantly with the land trust that makes up the Dudley Village Campus (see background chapter), Lily's main concern is that of addressing the housing crisis that both Dudley and all of Boston is experiencing.

A major concern for DNI since its inception alongside DSNI and the Community Land Trust which DNI shepherds, is that of housing and housing affordability. Lily focuses on what she's called, "development without displacement" where the Dudley community continues to advance economically and continues to build infrastructure, all while safeguarding and ensuring that their residents are not driven out through the rising cost of living. Lily's position as a community liaison puts her physically in conversation with residents. Whereas Sunny's position as a community liaison was more circumstantial, Lily's role is directly related to her job within DNI. Through her job and the subsequent building of relationships with community members, Lily fulfills the role of community liaison. Community members know Lily by name and also know the resources and support that she and the organization can offer.

Through her work, Lily engages in conversations with the neighborhood to better understand how she, as an extension of an organization, can better fulfill their needs. I

argue that Lily is a community liaison in the same respect as Sunny and Eris. This is mainly due to her standing within the neighborhood. Although Lily's job is specifically to speak with community members, she is known and greeted by name by the Dudley residents. Often, people are pointed in Lily's direction when they are in need of supplemental aid or advice concerning housing vouchers, coupons, or enrolling in governmental assistance programs. My phone call with Lily only deepened my understanding of her relationship with the community as I was repeatedly put on hold during our one-hour conversation as people came in and out of her office, requesting to speak with her or set up a meeting with her.

I draw a comparison once again to community health workers and the community health system as identified previously by USAID. All three examples, although variable in terms of the degree and nuance of the subject's position, serve as agents within the community they serve in order to foster support for the residents. Sunny does so through an intimate understanding of the community and individual events, so that she either personally responds, or garners support from the TFP. Eris does so through his emic positionality of having grown up within the community, therefore inherently having that connection. His work with an NGO that serves the neighborhood also allows him to enunciate what needs that may be overlooked. Lastly, Lily works as a bridge within an organization that actively seeks out means to involve and incorporate community members in their processes (i.e. the development of infrastructure, building housing ect.).

The role and potential for community liaisons is extensive and I argue in later chapters how they can serve as vital informants when creating larger policies. I do wish

to draw a distinction between the advocacy done on a community-wide level compared to a more macro, governmental level. Although all three participants have the capacity and capabilities to intervene and advocate for Dudley on a larger platform, I only witnessed Sunny do this during my time on the farm explicitly. Sunny's hands-on involvement with writing testimonies from community members that she intended to use to sway governmental funds as well as her direct involvement with city-wide lead testing of soils are direct examples of advocacy. Meanwhile, there exists a different type of liaison and advocating that was highlighted within all three identified participants. This advocacy is community and NGO centered. I view this as more of a natural system of checks and balances, or rather, maintaining a form of community homeostasis. On this level, community liaisons receive information from residents through their developed relationships and use their roles of NGO staff member to advocate for the community members and address any possible gaps that can be filled by the resources supplied by the NGO.

### *Understanding the collective community*

Although the Dudley community houses a handful of nonprofits that directly serve the neighborhood, I focus exclusively on TFP and DSNI in my NGO review due to my research capacity. This being said, I argue that community-led and community-based organizations like DSNI and TFP produce people who serve as "liaisons," allowing them to voice intimate and dominant needs of those that they serve and which might be overlooked in larger scale policy and initiatives.

DSNI is a community-led organization, spearheaded and informed through elected community officials. The board is composed of members who represent the population of the Dudley community. Therefore, for this community, the primary resident categories include youth, African American, Cape Verdean, Latinx, and White. Appointed community members can run for election and their peers of fellow voting aged community members can cast their ballots for the candidates whom they believe to be the best fit. The board meeting for 2023 consisted of over 30 candidates, all of whom had an opportunity to come up to the podium, or to send in a video of themselves giving a two-minute speech on why they deserved to have the seat on the board.

Organizations which are run and informed by community members directly correlate to stronger community bonds and relationships (Bess, K.D et. al 2011; Galaskiewicz 2006; Hum 2010). This strengthening of community is achieved through the sharing of resources, improved communication, and the stronger connections between community members spurred by activism. Research has shown that inclusion of various voices from different racial backgrounds also provides a broadening of perspective and understanding which helps to create a body politic resulting in greater feelings of representation and connectedness within a community (Kelleher C. et al, 2009; Smith S., 1993). The term body politic is an older term, originally stemming from Greek and Roman philosophy with Plato's introducing the phrase in *Republic (*Annas, Julia. 1981*).* The term was used to metaphorically describe the society as a collective unit, analogous to a biological body. Edmund Husserl, German philosopher elaborated upon this theory while studying the functions served by the community and applied an understanding of

the body politic to include intersubjectivity and collective spirituality (McIntyre, 2012). These two terms, Husserl argues, focus on the formed body of a community and the collective experience of living and interacting within that community (Miettinen, Timo, 2013). Husserl, who is generally recognized as the father of phenomenology, and he focused heavily on community relationships. I incorporate Husserl's use of body politic within my research as a theory by which to explain and explore the social bindings and individual experiences that then translate into the larger understandings of need and community culture.

In an interview with a DSNI member, highlighted how the themes of diversity and connection help to create a pipeline for the expression of community needs. This staff member has worked with DSNI for over a decade and explained how the democratic, community-based structure of the DSNI helps to establish a body politic that informs community leaders and NGO staff on explicit community needs.

"*So in the projects that we do at DSNI, that is a model [community led], right? There has to be a community process. That is part of our model. Always have been and always will be. Where the community gets to design or gets to say, right, what is needed or what is not needed. They [community members] made this organization and we listen to them because we are them. We pay attention to what they say they need and we try to give them the resources they need to continue, right?*"

When I asked four local nonprofit and community members what they identified as the community's greatest strengths, their individual responses each incorporated the key words "Community", "Unity", and "Diversity'. I argue that the framework of community-based organizations and of the personal interactions within them helps to create an environment within the body politic of Dudley, wherein these three terms undergird the common community and a shared value for the land and its people. These

interactions and the incorporation of residents within CBO's allow for NGOs serving the neighborhood to possess detailed knowledge of intricate community needs that might be overlooked or underreported in larger research and canvassing. In the following sections, I will present policies from Boston for Dorchester and Roxbury and then detail how the understood needs within the initiatives align or fail to align with the Dudley communities expressed needs, which were gathered through interviews and participant observation during my research. These needs mainly cover the broad width of environmental justice and how both policy and NGOs within the area identify and understand this topic.

TFP does not directly have a board of community members that advise them. Instead, they are a separate NGO that resides on land from the CLT managed by DNI. Although they have this degree of separation from the community, the theme of conversation and relationships explored earlier circles back into play. TFP has three main points of contact through its services that I have identified within my research as deeply community based. I understand them to be community based due to the direct services which they afford for community members. The strongest example of these services is "Build a Garden'', which Sunny explains originated from growing community needs and from the desire of many community members to have a safe growing space within their yards. These services create a strong relationship between the residents and certain TFP farm staff, such as Sunny and Eris, which then allows them to serve as "liaisons ' concerning community and land needs. The three services through TFP that I have identified which t facilitate these connections are the following;

1. **Raised Beds in Greenhouse:** The greenhouse holds a room of raised beds rented to community members on a yearly basis. This location and service grants those who purchased a plot and anyone who decides to stop by a safe and open space to cultivate their gardening skills and to also speak with others who share the same passions. An excerpt from my field notes (04/17/23) details how an elderly African American couple came into the space while I was planting seeds with another volunteer. They had rented a plot there years prior but had not rented a plot in the greenhouse for quite some time. Instead, they came to the space for warmth and ambience, bringing with them a packed lunch and staying for an hour or so. Growers are community members who come and go, often stopping to speak to one another or Sunny about gardening issues, or for a general and friendly catch up. Sunny seemed to know everyone by name, as well as all of their life updates such as major surgeries or travel plans. The greenhouse also serves as a space within which community members can find refuge, whether they are active growers for that year or not. People come and they go. Small conversations are held, and meals are shared within the building.
2. **Build a Garden Program:** This is a service introduced in the early 2000's when community members, mainly Cape Verdeans, were unable to plant and grow their crops in the lead-contaminated soils. Through conversations with residents, TFP then created the program that is now

available to any resident in the area who wishes to grow. In an interview with Sunny, themes of community voice and NGO responses were highlighted, as well as tones of environmental justice that I will explore in a later section.

*"So the raised bed garden project as a whole was spurred by people on the ground asking for it. One of the reasons that I love Build a Garden too, is that I think anytime you can give people something like, when people come to Build a Garden, it came from the people. Like, I really want to grow food, and understand my soil is toxic. I don't have a vehicle, like how can I set up a garden, I just, it seems impossible. And I'm like, it's so easy for us, we do have the resources and the volunteers to be able to like bring you a garden. Then you must care for it and take care of and grow it and people get so excited about doing things for themselves. First, I think that's key in terms of the long term, we're going to have to be able to do more shit for ourselves because things may get harder, I believe. I think we always have kind of been like, "Oh, yeah, that's an interesting idea. And we have all these young healthy bodies, we have youth and volunteers, and we have space to get things delivered. This seems like a great idea." So I think it's more like we've just kind of followed where people have asked us to go."*

**3. Farmers Markets:** Farmers markets are held in two locations over the Summer, Dudley and Ashmont. In the colder seasons, TFP moves indoors and limits the farmer's markets to only the Dudley area, holding them inside the greenhouse where the raised beds are located. Attendance wanes following the end of summer. The other market ends in late September for all vendors and the Dudley market sees a drastic drop in attendance after October once the state funded farmer's market coupon program ends. My experience with the Dudley markets was extensive over the summer, and the town seemed to come alive during the markets. I was the only volunteer at the markets, and it was run primarily by the market manager and the youth who were a part of the summer programs hosted by TFP. Through these markets, faces became familiar, and I began

getting nods of recognition from residents on my walks to and from TFP. Sunny was also a major character in the farmer's markets, her presence requested weekly by community members stopping by our stands when she couldn't attend. Perplexed by the high demand of two items called "magda squash" and "shell beans" by the Cape Verdean women. Sunny asked a local grandmother she knew well to share the recipe with TFP staff. The next week, after the first rush of frantic bagging and flying produce, the women showed up with a full crockpot of the famous dish with the sought-after produce of magda squash and shell beans. Although these interactions are endless within my field notes, the largest transaction-based service—farmer's markets—provided a space and time for community members to be present within and further create deeper relationships.

### *Conclusion*

In subsequent chapters I will explore the web of community and the creation of the body politic through storytelling and narration. This deep connection of community, land, and the people is full of nuances that are profoundly difficult to dissect and capture by the process of writing. I called upon the use of Geertz's "thick description" to synthesize my understanding. Through thick description, Geertz argues that symbols and cultures can be interpreted through detailed analyses of characters, symbols and spaces. Through these analyses, a "web of meaning" (Abolafia, et. al. "Clifford Geertz and the interpretation of organizations," 2014) is created. Dudley's web of meaning is strong and deeply entangled within the history and people who make up the community. As the community continues to evolve and adapt to growing pressures and changes from the political, social, and ecological climate, these advisors serve as the "nervous system"

within the overall body politic. Communicating, engaging, and responding to neighborhood needs within this greater web.

## CHAPTER FIVE: The Folklore of Dudley

*My hands, red and sticky, felt their way through the brambles and thorns in search of more raspberries to fill my last quart. Picking the fruit, ripened and warm from the sun, was one of my favorite tasks given to me right before lunch and the farmers market. The early summer sun of June bore down on me and the large Cottonwood tree provided me fleeting shade in between rows of unruly berry bushes. Off in the distance I hear yells and light conversation from staff and the youth crew employed by TFP during the summer months. One group of five approached, reciting a story that I have heard many times since my arrival in March (Excerpt from fieldnotes 06/17/23).*

Between the jokes and the impatient pauses beckoned from quick interruptions, the youth who work with TFP (TFP) practiced the script standard tour and practiced the script that staff gives to groups who come to visit the land. The tour encompassed three main locations, including the greenhouse, as well as the two farms which are about three blocks away This chapter considers more completely the issues of the degradation and political neglect of the Dudley neighborhood during the mid and late 1900's which were introduced in the background chapter. This story is told from the ground up, and from the perspective of the people, as it gives explicit attention to the intimate organization of community members and the repossession of land that was seemingly lost to the slums. The repurposing and reclaiming of the community's land was mainly achieved through the Community Land Trust (CLT), in which the Dudley Village Campus was created. This CLT, which continues to be maintained by DSNI/DNI through a Community Based

Organization, allows the community members and its leaders to help practice self-determination and governance within their landscape.

I argue in this chapter that this story of community organizing and the development of the CLT, which is a tale that seems to be known by everyone in the neighborhood, helps to create a shared narrative that reinforces ideals and values surrounding land and community stewardship. This narrative is deeply tied to the issues of environmental justice, concepts of political ecology, and biocultural rights. In the literature, the definition of land stewardship is largely centered within the ecological understanding of preserving and encouraging the regeneration of local flora and fauna (Carr, 2002; Huddart-Kennedy et al., 2009; Larson et al., 2014). In my research, I adopt a somewhat different definition of land and community stewardship. When I refer to stewardship, I come from a more holistic understanding regarding the care of the local environment which includes not only the landscape, but also the people and infrastructure included within that physical setting.

Political Ecology (PE) examines how the physical landscape, through human habitation and action, is altered to create a new environment. Through this understanding, the social, economic, and political systems all interact to create a living environment for communities. One major example stemming from PE, which is a fairly new field, is the study of the effects which the Transatlantic Slave Trade and plantation infrastructure had upon the soils and landscape of the Caribbean region (Critical Ecology Lab, 2016). PE understands the landscape and historical human occupation to be in relationship with one another, responding and reacting to issues which stem from larger societal structures .

Although an extreme example, I employ PE within my research to better understand how the history of the land within the Dudley Community has contributed to the narrative of the CLT and the rebuilding of the community.

Thus, the land and the community are intrinsically connected, and I tie these two entities together in my definition of stewardship, which is the protection and encouragement to grow and regenerate through explicit group care. Referring back to my first analysis chapter, chapter three, and the concepts of the body politic, I argue that the land and the people are this living, moving, adapting system. To continue with this understanding, I further my argument in this chapter that through CE, not only are the people and the land so deeply connected that they serve as the body itself, but through storytelling, especially the story of the community, their roles and inherent connections are reconfirmed and continue to evolve.

### *A Folklore: Trauma of the People and the Land*

*"I think sharing the story of the land but as a community that we come from, like the long history of like trauma of not only like the people, but it's also the land. And I feel like it's really nice to move into a--I'm trying to find the right term for it, but trying to move into like a newly quote unquote, newly established neighborhood. And people moving in and making grand assumptions or not knowing how the community was made. And I feel like it all could just be circumvented, if you just really learn about the history of the land. And just really stay in like, constant understanding with all the work that like DSNI and TFP does."*

Eris and I had a long conversation about the history of the Dudley Village and how, growing up, he saw the community evolve. His interview was entangled with the issues of gun and gang violence, that then flowed into treasured moments of being invited to play with a family at a playground down the street when he was younger. The contrast

of kindness and danger within the community was something I found to be particularly notable, as I saw it in different forms throughout nearly all my interviews. The Dudley Community is not a utopia, nor does anyone claim it to be. However, what I argue is that, through the stories of organization and unity, a community narrative is woven into the web of the neighborhood, and it creates an almost immortalized folklore.

When I use the term folklore, I do not mean to discredit or add additional doubts around the story of the political organization and community activism within Dudley. The community was one of the first nationally (Mahan, Lipman, 1996) to be granted rights to eminent domain, and their resident-led board of representatives continues to uphold the values and beliefs of the village campus (see Background Chapter). The term folklore in this context is meant to address the utility of the stories, more than their actual content. When I employ the term folklore, I call upon it' usage, I invoke the concept as it was highlighted by folklorist William R. Bascom, who identified four main functions of folklore within a society. These four main functions are e; Therapeutic, Cultural Maintenance, Socializing, and Individual Psychological (Ellis Davidson, H. R. 1976). These functions, Bascom argues, serve as tools of preservation for the populations and individuals who continue to tell these tales.

1. The therapeutic function of folklore allows communities to express and address social or political issues through storytelling and often includes humor. Through this avenue, communities may be more willing to critique or confront larger issues in an indirect form. Although humor is not

always linked to folklore, humorous moments may be included to help alleviate tensions within the larger narratives. One example of this within the folklore of the development of Dudley Village, was when bumper stickers were placed on abandoned cars within the area that expressed re-election slogans for the then current mayor, Ray Flynn. This was done in a bid to put pressure on the local government to remove the vehicles but it was also spoken of in fond remembrance by those interviewed in the book, *Streets of Hope*: *The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood* (1999).

2. The cultural maintenance function of folklore provides a transmission of knowledge and history through storytelling. These narratives highlight critical moments within the society that serve as a source of pride, or a context for values and cultural beliefs within the larger group. The cultural maintenance function identifies certain folklore as a repository of knowledge that can be referenced back to that it establishes and re-affirms a groups identity.
3. The socializing function of folklore is a form of spreading what Bourdieu would argue is habitus, or the spreading of social and cultural norms, traditions, and values from one group or generation to the next. The socializing function helps to create and preserve the social cohesion and identity of the community. The socializing function serve sas an avenue for the dissemination of knowledge from generation to generation and transmits a shared sense of belonging or identity. The socializing function

is different from that of cultural maintenance, as it is more fluid than the more static cultural maintenance. An identity of the cultural maintenance function within the Dudley Village Campus is that of written record and ritual,( i.e. the DSNI board meetings that highlight the community board elections or TFP script). This is opposed to the more fluid socializing function which happens more intimately, from person to person, or group to group. An example of the socializing function is the manual passing out of flyers for TFP Farmer's Market to residents in the neighborhood that once sparked conversation from a curious community member around what the farm was and how we came to be there (referenced from fieldnotes 11/08/22).

4. The individual psychological function allows for self-exploration and understanding found through specific moments which are pulled from the lore, myths and legends of the community. Bascom argues that individual anxieties, stresses and personal conflicts may be ameliorated through an exploration of communal narratives. These folklores, when drawn upon, have the potential to inspire and ground the individual in the context of local myth and identification of struggle and perseverance.

As I have heard the story of the community be told in different formats and mediums, in different contexts and spaces, I see it as a fluid narrative that is embedded into the community fabric.

*The People and the Land Remember*

The day I interviewed Ray, as we sought out a quiet place in the shade to begin the interview, the air was alive with celebration and was reflected in her animated movements. A drum circle in the distance would pick up as a wave of cheers erupted with the heavy beats. Kids would race by, their faces painted as different animals, or with a garden scene. We smiled lightly at them in between lulls in conversation before sitting on the swings. As we began, Ray's energy shifted, her body showed irritation sparked by the questions regarding policy within the Roxbury area and the lack of funding for public programs. Her hands would tighten around the rusted chains that creaked as we swung and rogue needles littered the ground below us.

> "*They disenfranchised this neighborhood. How underfunded and how disinvested it* [the Dudley Community] *was and still is egregious. And I think, through studying history and things like that, I used to work at DNI and also Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. And, you know, like, knowing historically that the only way that change has been made is like people coming together to forge that change was super influential for me as a younger person. And so, like, where there are, there's not many hubs of like life and vitality."*

The day I interviewed Ray, we were at a Multicultural festival hosted by DSNI. This festival, which is almost thirty years old, celebrates the neighborhood's diversity, bringing cultures and organizations together in a shared space to dance, eat, and celebrate accomplishments from the past year. Ray was a staff member at TFP before moving on to work with DSNI, an organization within Dorchester and Roxbury that focuses on community engagement and creating shared public spaces. Hailing from the area surrounding Dudley and having worked within the community for a number of years, Ray spoke passionately about the creation of the neighborhood and of all the work that has yet

to be accomplished. Ray identified that she finds strength through the narratives shared in the larger lore of the neighborhood. She highlighted how the community organizing that led to the acquisition of the CLT inspired her as a youth and continues to do so as a spear-header within her organization. Although impassioned, her words were laced with frustrations from her understanding of the lack of government funding for programs and public spaces. These frustrations also extended into Ray's understanding of historical injustices and how they've created the disenfranchised spaces and people of today.

When a lens of PE is applied, it is easy to trace the lineage of abuse and neglect that continue to cause the e environmental justice issues of today. A quote from Boston's *Heat Resilience Plan* (2022) highlights this cause and effect.

> *"Histories of racism and inequitable investment across neighborhoods in Boston have played a role in shaping the experiences of communities who experience disproportionate impacts of climate risk today. This includes environmental justice communities such as communities of color, lower-income communities, and immigrant communities, all of whom may also face compounding social, economic, and public health stressors. As a result, high summer temperatures can be more dangerous for environmental justice communities who live and work in temperature hot spots. In preparing residents and communities for extreme heat, Boston must do so in a way that addresses systemic inequities in exposure to heat, access to cooling, and sensitivity to heat risk."*

To reference a pivotal point within the background chapter, I would restate that Roxbury is one of the nine neighborhoods from the Vulnerability Assessment (2022) stemming from the Climate Ready Boston Report (2016) which was identified to be at an increased risk for CC and CC issues. What sets Roxbury (and Dudley) apart from the other nine neighborhoods is their location and perceived risks. While the other eight neighborhoods highlighted their susceptibility to rising sea levels and flooding, Roxbury

was included in the Vulnerability Assessment due to the historical neglect that has left its infrastructure and people at an increased risk to CC issues. To understand the neglect and heightened risk of the area is to more fully appreciate the Dudley community from a critical ecological perspective, where the landscape and the people are deeply connected to one another. A quote from a report in connection to *Climate Ready Boston* (2016) called, *Heat Resilience Solution Report* (2022) report details how the built infrastructure perpetuates the risks to individuals who are some of the poorest in the Greater Boston area.

> *Roxbury is one of the neighborhoods that experience some of the hottest temperatures in the city during summer months. Lack of tree canopy, a high percentage of impervious surface, and lack of coastal breezes contribute to the heat island effect in the neighborhood. Within the heat island areas live many concentrations of populations that are vulnerable to heat including older residents and children.* (pg. 166).

The built environment and its neglect were years in the making, and the shared folklore encompasses both the fall and rise of the neighborhood. Marks on the landscape remain, and the people continue to be vulnerable. A brownfield near Roxbury Community College lays barren and overgrown and is directly across from the Dudley Commons where TFP hosts its summer farmer's markets. There is still the presence of gun violence and substance abuse. People cannot plant directly into the ground where they live due to lead contamination that is monitored yearly by Sunny. The landscape helps to tell the story that the people carry with them, and through this folklore of the past, a larger understanding of the community and its roots is born.

Drawing upon Gramsci's theory of hegemony (refer to the Background Chapter), I aim to emphasize how Dudley's folklore is utilized. To recap, hegemony is employed to

delineate a sense of deservingness and class stratification. Consequently, a ruling class is established by society, disseminating its power through political, intellectual, and moral dominance of discourse across society (Fontana, 2008). These interactions reinforce the ideals and concepts of the ruling power, fostering a shared perception of societal norms and delineating who is deserving and who is not. My argument is that Dudley's folklore functions as a counter-hegemonic discourse.

As discussed in the Background Chapter, Dudley and its residents, due to their socioeconomic status, were marginalized and subjected to discrimination in both policy and society. They were often regarded as undesirable people residing on inferior land. While this perspective prevailed during that era, as evidenced by urban renewal initiatives that actively undermined the well-being of communities like Dudley, the folklore resists these societal norms of the time. What I posit is that the folklore and its dissemination form a counterargument against the notion of "bad people, bad land." The narrative underscores how community members organized and advocated for an improved environment, asserting their entitlement to it. Contrary to the dominant hegemonic belief, the folklore asserts that Dudley is a *good* neighborhood, characterized by unity, strength, and deserving of assistance and support.

### *A Narrative within Context*

This built environment of affordable housing and commercial spaces facilitated through the CLT was years in the making and lives on within the folklore of Dudley. Through these stories, residents give context to their situations, empower community

members to continue to organize, and ground the neighborhood into the land that they fought so hard to live upon. With the story telling, aspects from the creation of DNI, such as neighborhood meetings, campaigning, and lobbying, highlight the capacities and strengths of the people. An interview with a DNI staff member demonstrated how, through the CLT, having agency over the land and development of the properties helps to create a shared sense of stewardship and care within the community. As a reminder, the Dudley Village Campus, within the CLT, is protected land. DNI is a nonprofit connected to DSNI that explicitly oversees the CLT and coordinates with community members to understand their needs and wants. These factors then inform DNI and the appointed board members of DSNI (all of whom are residents themselves) towards what certain spaces and buildings should become to best suit the community and its needs. Through these conversations, residents find a form of self-governance and agency in decision making.

The same interview with the DNI staff member alluded to the growing infrastructure and development within the communities surrounding the DVC. This change, they anticipated, might usher in a wave of gentrification in the surrounding areas and blanket the area in a higher cost of living. One such site is the Dorchester Bay City Accordia development which is currently in the planning stages. This project, which is only a few miles from the Dudley Village, is slated to cover over 30-acres of the coastline and inland and many residents of the area within Dorchester fear that the development of this land will displace the communities that are already established there. These concerns are largely since the plans for this development include many private and commercial investors and include storefronts, restaurants, green spaces, and almost 2,000 apartments

that incorporate the minimum required 20% for affordable housing. Those who oppose these plans worry that the city and the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) are not concerned with achieving equity of affordable housing and they anticipate a large displacement of the largely BIPOC community due a rise in the cost of living and this lack of affordable housing (Carlock, 2023). Although these plans seem benevolent, the undertaking of the development of this multi-acre site would completely alter the local environment and would attract a new wave of residents that might threaten the livelihood and living conditions of those already living on the land.

*"Development without displacement"*

The story of the Dorchester Bay City has parallels to Dudley before the establishment of its CLT. As covered in the background chapter and within the community folklore section, the community has a history of having been torn apart by private developers, white flight, and redlining. As explored in the background chapter, illegal dumping of waste on abandoned lots created a situation where the soil became toxic with lead. In addition, the lack of development and neglect of properties caused housing coated in toxic paints to be left unaddressed, further poisoning the people and the land (Allison, 2014; "Lead Exposure; High Risk Exposure Areas in Boston", 2018).

By way of CE and CMA, structural violence and vulnerabilities can be traced back historically to explicit and implicit governmental policies. These policies created a landscape that did not encourage or facilitate well-being. Thus, I argue that during this time, a form of necropolitics was taking place. As introduced and discussed in the background chapter, necropolitics was first introduced by Achille Mbembe, Cameroonian

political theorist, who defined necropolitics as a "new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead" (Mbembe, 2019). The living dead, in this case, was a population whom the governmental officials had turned their back upon and which allowed for aggressive disinvestment and policy creation that explicitly targeted vulnerable communities based on their race. Active political negligence of the people and the land created displacement and disinvestment that was mostly felt by Dudley's BIPOC community. These acts of direct disregard created a lived environment that was literally and figuratively toxic. Although the implications of the past remain, storytelling draws strength from the strife.

DNI staff members, as well as Lily and Sunny, all remarked upon the external changes of the Boston area with some concern. Shifts in public policies and new infrastructure within Boston and the larger environment will inevitably "trickle down." Consequently, these changes will permeate all communities to some extent, since no neighborhood exists within a vacuum. Although anxious regarding the future, all three subjects unprompted identified the neighborhood itself as a major strength. All three referred to the folklore of Dudley when explaining how the community grows and fosters resilience.

"*The thing with Dudley is that we organize you know? Like we aren't nearly perfect and you know we are still struggling to get the basic needs to people sometimes but we come together. That's the point of us* [The CLT] *is that we can develop without displacing because we are like run by the people who are like, you know, living through this and they are making the decisions and advising us at we like, as we go"*

Although not explicitly referencing the folklore, the ability to, as Lily stated it to , "organize" and "develop without displacing," were main themes of what has become a folklore within the community fabric. The CLT and all that has followed suit that was formed from the activism of residents in the late 80's and 90's continues to give residents a sense of self governance and stewardship over their space.

I will extend the metaphor of the body politic within this chapter to reference how the community narrative gives power to the body politic, allowing for a shared narrative that empowers the community members to confront continuous issues. As stated earlier in this chapter regarding Ellis Davidson's functions of folklore, the shared story of neighborhood development lives on through the dispersion of storytelling. This narrative inspires and creates a social bond within the body politic that instills a deeper understanding of the land and the power that this collective holds.

*Placemaking through storytelling*

Dudley is not isolated from a changing neighborhood landscape. Although the population of the area is still predominantly of Hispanic, African, and Cape Verdean descent, community members age and move out as new members arrive. Sunny highlighted this process when she spoke about how, when she first began working within the village campus for TFP over two decades ago, the neighborhood was vastly different.

"*So I'd go down to Davey's when I first started and the people there would immediately know that I was working with TFP just because I'm this random white lady. I remember when I first started it was really different in terms of demographics of the people here and how much it's changed. I mean you've got these white kids that are working at TFP and you look at their address and just, it takes me a second because like they live right on Blue Hill* [location in Dudley] *which is just crazy to me because it was*

*certainly not that way just a decade ago. Then you've got people either passing who were important figures within the community or moving and it just, you know its a thing that is ever evolving like most things I guess."*

This concept of changing demographics and the migration of original community members poses both challenges and opportunities to the dispersion and function of the Dudley folklore. This changing of demographics is more felt and seen by my participants than reflected in any census data that I have found. As DSNI focuses on "development without displacement" this shift in demographics seems to be more of natural form of community evolution than a pricing out or gentrification of the neighborhood. Rather, the CLT serves as a protective layer to its existing residents, assuring that housing remains affordable and obtainable for its existing community members. Those new community members coming in or the increased presence of white people in Dudley may be noticed more due to the stark contrast of the environment only two decades prior though I have no reason to assume that this population shift threatens the CLT or existing community structures.

Rather, as Davidson argues, folklore is meant to emphasize a certain set of values and meaning. In this case, the folklore and its dissemination amongst the new [White] populations serve as a form of placemaking within Dudley. The concept of placemaking focuses on the creation and reimagination of public spaces as a collective with a direct emphasis on urban vitality (Poeti Nazura Gulfira Akbar et. al, 2021). This idea caters to the principle that urban places are ingrained within the constructed surroundings and arise from repetitive social activities that create and recreate meaning on a day-to-day basis (Creswell 2004). From this concept, I highlight the relationship between people and

place, arguing that people make spaces for themselves within their built environment through interactions. I build from Marxist philosopher Henry Lefebvre's theory of the production of space (1991). Lefebvre mainly focused on the creation of everyday life and spaces by individuals within a capitalist world. In his later life, Lefebvre focused on the concept of space making, arguing that social spaces result from shared values and meaning making by societies. These spaces are constructs of a group identity, an identity which, I argue, is regenerated through the telling/re-telling of the Dudley folklore.

*"So, I feel that with the telling of the origins of the community land trust and how the farm came to be where it is, we really should be really clear that like the organizing that happened in this neighborhood was done by black and brown people. Black and brown, poor people who were stretched in time and resources and at their wits end and figured all this stuff out and made all this work happen. It's just feels really important to continue to tell these stories as the community changes and the story begins to you know, like age out."*

The CLT and DSNI was created by community members and leaders in 1984 and many battles were fought and organization accomplished that the folklore briefly conveys. The magnitude of effort that went into creating what is now the Dudley Village Campus is something that is passed down through storytelling from the people who participated in the movement. At the annual DSNI meeting, many of the board candidates told stories of their times as a youth participating in local campaigns with their guardians and how it instilled a sense of passion that they continue to carry with them. Within the older generation, settling into their final years and the evolution of the community, the concepts of placemaking and the importance of the continuation of folklore is more important now than ever before. As the community evolves, so does the landscape, fresh

ideas arrive with new people. Sunny emphasizes something that I have also argued within this chapter, that the dispersion of the Dudley folklore is an integral part of the community fabric and the continuation of the story means the continuation of the roots of the Dudley community and its shared values that were highlighted upon the conception of the CLT

## CHAPTER SIX: Contextualizing Climate Change

*"Honestly Stella, we hear about climate change and the policies going around to help alleviate community stress but we are still focusing on the immediate day to day needs. We don't really have the time for that* [CC issues] *when homes and food are still needed resources in our community."*

The basic needs which Lily describes in the above excerpt fall within the "basic needs" approach established in 1976 by the International Labour Organization's World Employment Conference. These basic needs approach was intended to create a measurement of "absolute poverty" and to then also help to determine the minimum number of resources a community needs in order to achieve a mandated level of well-being. This level of well-being generally corresponds to the numbers and types of opportunities for the members of the community to consume and support themselves. From this analysis, based on the UN's definition of "absolute poverty", a "poverty line" is created. This threshold represents the amount of income an individual or household within the community would require meeting their basic needs. While these needs have always included food, water, shelter, and clothing (Denton, John A. 1990), updated lists have begun to include such factors as transportation, sanitation, education, and healthcare as well (Reinert, Kenneth A 2021).

What I argue in this final chapter is that the vulnerabilities created by necropolitical actions through urban planning, real estate, and political neglect result in a situation where the basic needs of members of these vulnerable communities are unmet, thereby causing communities, and their members to be more susceptible to CC in their local and broader environment. I then go on to argue that these communal basic needs (i.e. the fulfillment of adequate food, water, housing, and transportation), must first be addressed, either prior to, or within the policies directed at CC. Furthermore, any CC initiatives that ignore the historical disenfranchisement of these communities, which renders the people and the landscape liable to a more severe experience of CC, is an act of erasure and violence onto the people it is intending to help.

In this chapter I will go over the local landscape of the Dudley community and how the community and NGO members view their neighborhood, with the hope that this will help to instill a sense of existing within the neighborhood in this chapter. In turn, this is intended to help the reader develop a sense of what it's like to walk the streets of the area, as well as what it may be like to live within the neighborhood. This section will examine how the community members see themselves, versus how public policy portrays them and what their involvement in local government looks like. Lastly, I will compare these experiences to how policies for both the local and the Greater Boston area speaks about the landscape (primarily focusing on Dorchester and Roxbury). A discussion of the vocabulary used within this policy versus how my participants understanding of  them will take place to show a divide in both the intent of the communication, as well as it's intended goals.

*"The Block is Hot"*

*By 3 p.m. the sun was blazing in the sky. The market had been one of the hottest since and the only shade in the town center was offered from the three pop up tents brought by TFP for the produce. Covered in dirt and sweat, all the youth sat in near silence, the heat stifled any conversations we could have had. Latin music from the body shop across the road and revving motorcycles that lapped the block filled in the silent tents. A tomato that must have fallen from the table and stepped on during the chaos of the opening market. Its trampled form was seemingly being cooked under the open pavement, its bright skin and fruit staining the ground below. The lone two benches that occupy the town center are given partial shade by some juvenile trees and three to four women, with their portable shopping carts overflowing with corn husks and swiss chard, sit fanning themselves and waiting for the bus. Three bus lines can be accessed here, all of which connect Roxbury and Dorchester. I pass the women as I leave to catch my own bus that leads into Boston and Cambridge, across the Charles River. Normally I walk, though with the heat and the discomfort of dirt covered sunburn, I decided the ten minute walk to the bus stop would suffice.*

*I left the town common, waving goodbye to the youths and the women on the bench and cross the busy intersection. There always seems to be road work on one side of the street which cuts off a lane of traffic so I've gotten used to using the closed lane to help me cross. The sun seems to almost be angry and to be outside today feels hostile. My clothes stick to me with every step and my overalls hang off my shoulders, the heavy denim which I'm normally happy for feels like a prison for my legs. After leaving the town commons, the scenery changes rather quickly. Industrial work sites now replace the triple decker town houses painted in bright colors. The pavement from a transportation center parking lot seems to be warped in the heat, the same seven buses I see every time I pass occupy the large lot. On the same block is the same type of scene, with three food trucks with "For Sale" signs sit. After five minutes, I've hit the highway, Melena Cass Blvd. that I have to cross before I get to my bus stop. The four lanes of traffic seem to always be racing and the passing cars waft clouds of heat and exhaust towards me. The metal link fence behind me that frames a nondescript lot housing at least a dozen public buses that aren't in use gently rattles in the man-made wind.*

*Getting to my stop, I try to stand in the shadow of the bus stop sign for an ounce of coverage from the afternoon rays. My phone has succumbed to the heat and died during lunch in the garden so I wait. I curse myself for not filling up my water bottle before I left but I tell myself I can wait. The sun is bearing down and the overalls get heavier on my sun burnt shoulders and I am close to undoing them to relieve the discomfort a bit but I tell myself that I can wait. Fifteen minutes later, a small crowd has gathered for the bus, anxious heads pop out of the line to peer down the road in hopes of catching sight of the bus and quick curses born from the sun and the delays break the silence. We wait. After thirty minutes, I decide that I cannot stand in the same spot and*

*justify that I would have been half way home by now if I had walked. Turning my back and start to make my way back home, tears well up in my eyes from the frustration of my fate and the heat, but I couldn't wait anymore.* (Fieldnotes from 07/23/23)

According to Boston's Heat Resilience Solution Report (HRSR) (2022), Greater Boston has seen a 3.5 degree average increase of temperatures over the past decade. These increasing temperatures, particularly during the summer months, will create extended heat waves during which the temperature will remain at, or above 90 degrees for multiple days. These periods of extreme heat exacerbate certain health issues such as heart attacks, strokes, and breathing complications, may even then cause an increased rate of cause death within these heat vulnerable communities. As defined by the HRSR, heat vulnerability is, "*the disproportionate susceptibility of some social groups to the impacts of heat hazards, including death, injury, or disruption of livelihood*." In the same report, the following quotation explicates the correlation between such heat waves and related illnesses/incidents from the Summer of 2021.

*"From 2012 to 2021 show there was an overall rise in incidents during the summer months (June to August) compared to the rest of the year. 10 In 2021, June saw the second highest number of incidents (92 incidents), indicating that the two heat waves in June, one of which was a heat emergency, played a role in the spike of heat-related illnesses. During a five-day heat wave in June 2021 where temperatures exceeded 90°F, the total of heat-related EMS incidents was 48, with a peak of 14 incidents on a single day when temperatures hit 95°F."*

The Vulnerability Assessment report identified both Roxbury and Dorchester as communities which were at an increased risk for heat vulnerability and its antecedent health and social concerns. Within these communities, specific sub-populations, such as; older adults, children, people of color, people with low English proficiency, people with disabilities, and low-income households (pg. 30) are at an even more increased level of

risk. This condition of greater vulnerability is largely due to two primary factors. Firstly, the Vulnerability Assessment report which was released following the roll out of Climate Ready Boston (2016), identified both the Dorchester and Roxbury communities as exhibiting many of the most salient demographics of "socially vulnerable" populations. In the chart of 16 Boston communities contained in the report, Roxbury and Dorchester, along with another historically disenfranchised neighborhood, Mattapan, contained some of the highest percentages of children, people of color, people with disabilities, and low-income households (pg. 32).

The second reason that urban heat island effect (UHI) interacts with and compounds onto these social vulnerabilities, is that it serves as an extension and manifestation of how these city policies help to create a hostile, less livable physical landscape; it's an extension and physical manifestation of how policy creates hostile landscapes. UHI, discussed primarily in the background chapter, occurs when city planners take such actions as minimizing natural coverage and replace this with dense concentrations of concrete, pavements, buildings, and infrastructure.

This concrete urban landscape traps heat during the hot summer days, rising temperatures and the consequential cost of cooling in these areas (United States Environmental Protection Agency). A report released by the EPA, entitled *Heat Islands and Equity* (ND), contained an exploration of the demographics of communities where this UHI effect was demonstrated to be the most severe. This report found that the most extreme heat-islands, called intra-urban heat islands, were predominantly found in communities of color and of lower overall average income level. This finding is

supported by other articles that cite the disproportionate effects of heat burdens upon marginalized communities (Davies et al., 2018; Ura and Garnam, 2021; Diaz and Vance, 2021). Cities naturally experience higher temperatures as compared to the surrounding suburbs due to the concentration of built infrastructures, energy use, and people. These intra-urban heat islands are noted to be the most severe within metropolitan areas, aggravated by increased concrete and pavement coverage such as large highways, parking lots, bus terminals, and factories within the area. Both the EPA report and the HRSR identified historic uses of redlining as major contributions to this intra-urban heat island phenomenon.

I draw upon the practice of political ecology to demonstrate the parallels of how historic land use and societal structures interact to serve as agents within the local environment, both shaping it and helping to create a lived environment. This "lived environment" continues to have influences over the people who live in it now, as well as in the future. From the VA, Roxbury was specifically isolated to demonstrate how inequitable city planning and allotment of hazardous infrastructure (i.e. factories that emit pollutants, waste disposal sites, bus terminals) create a lived environment that has negative health consequences on the population.

*"Air pollution in Roxbury directly relates to residents' heat experience. In 1997, half of the diesel-operated public transit vehicle fleet was stored within 1.5 miles of Dudley Square. This contributed to an asthma hospitalization rate more than five times the overall state average. Since having asthma increases an individual's sensitivity to heat, Roxbury residents are disproportionately affected by extreme heat."* (Vulnerability Assessment pg. 15)

With the lens of PE I add another layer of definition originating from the fields of urban planning and ecology, which is called socio-spatial. The term socio-spatial

references concepts introduced through PE and expands upon these the understanding of built environments and their interaction with the people who reside within them. Through a socio-spatial perspective (SSP), a framework is developed that attempts to understand urban spaces and the social connections which occur within them through a sociopolitical lens. This is achieved by understanding how specific regions are shaped by local policies, global capitalism, and the actions of individuals, such as developers and investors. From this framework, a community's vulnerability, resilience, and sustainability is understood as involving the interaction between the built landscape and the social lives occurring within that landscape (Christmann, Gabriela B 2012). Birkmann et al. (2011, 25) defines the vulnerability of urban communities as the susceptibility of those systems to encounter and cope with certain hazards. Birkmann also links the resilience of a system to its vulnerabilities. Resilience, Birkmann explains, is the system's ability to respond to and adapt to cope with internal or external stressors, be they economic, environmental, or social. Naturally, a community's abilities to adaptively respond are limited, based on its social vulnerabilities that extend from such factors as structural violence and historic marginalization (Bohle, et al., 1994).

I relate this framework e of understanding environmental hazards back onto a marginalized community. More specifically, the Dudley Village and the historic uses of the land use created a built urban environment that renders the community more vulnerable to environmental hazards and less able to respond effectively within its adaptive capacities. I stress the disconnect between CC policy and immediate needs, urging for a greater incorporation of the SSP and CE frameworks within both local and

larger political fields, so that CC initiatives can begin to be implemented. From this, policy makers and community leaders/advocates can identify more acute needs that stem from the foundation and sociopolitical scaffolding of the neighborhood.

Naturally, the implications of CC are global and tackling these symptoms, along with addressing the basic needs of a community can be overwhelming. I will consider the way CC and its implications are spoken about within these larger initiatives, as well as how there is a "disconnect" between communicated risks and needs of people in these communities. I will then bring our attention back to Ray, with whom I spoke during the 34th multi-cultural festival held by DSNI at a local park. Although young, Ray has dedicated extensive time to community organizations and NGOs that focus on bringing people together and offering social support. Having worked with both TFP and DSNI in the past, Ray now works for a NGO that has the goal of making physical spaces for the community (i.e. public parks, recreation centers). Ray also volunteers her time with a socialist organization that meets on a weekly schedule with community members, and where people can brainstorm what they'd ideally like to see accomplished within their neighborhood within the themes of shared resources, support, and a local government that follows socialist ideals.

From these experiences, Ray is impassioned with general social betterment and addressing the needs of her community. Even upon our first introduction, our conversation was impassioned. Ray was tabling for the local NGO at a multicultural event, holding open conversations regarding what members of the neighborhood would like to see from a park scheduled to open in September 2024. On a large notepad held up

by a stand, ideas were written down by those who passed the table. Many variations of basic concepts were repeated, such as “cooking and exercise classes,” “movie nights,” and “youth programs.” Others were more “needs” focused, such as, “food bank,” “financial literacy courses,” and “needle disposal boxes.” When I asked her about the park, Ray launched into an impassioned explanation of the benefits of public green spaces serving as multipurpose areas for the community. Her braids jumped and the beads on the ends clicked in a rhythm as she gestured with her hands. Ray spoke with her whole body which conveyed the potency of her words. Later, as we were sitting on swings at a nearby playground and I told her I was conducting research concerning CC within the community, Ray gave me an eye-roll. Looking around, she explained to me that, in her weekly socialist meetings and conversations with community members through her NGO employment, CC and the stressors that it brings onto the community are viewed as minimal and distant concerns compared with these day-to-day needs.. This framework of relative concerns in expressed in the passage:

*“I feel like, CC is a big, scary issue. And it's vague, too. Like, it's, like, in a lot of ways, it's a gradual thing that's happening. And so, honestly, it's not something that I think a lot of people who are most impacted by it* [CC]*, don't talk about because there's more pressing day to day struggles that we need to like, deal with and figure out. It's like, yeah, it's getting hotter, like, damn, it's raining. Like, we're having frickin… we can't go outside because we're having air quality emergencies. Literally, I still need to pay rent. We're not supposed to go outside because it's dangerous, but we still need to go commute to work, you know, like, there's not really anything being done to accommodate people when these actual climate crisis that are happening is happening. And so I feel like it's not something that people are like, "lets talk about CC," you know, it's like, fuck yeah! Lets! But first, I need to figure out what school my kids gonna go to or like watch out for the with the gun violence that goes up during the summer time with the heat, like you know, the block is hot*

Ray identifies the grand scope of CC and the difficulties in trying to express exactly it is to the general public Ray also points out the perceived lack of support and aid for accommodations around CC within the local landscape. When the stress of supporting yourself and your household takes up most of a person's energy and attention, CC and its risks fall secondary to these primary needs.

Even within local NGOs as expressed by Lily, CC, although a "recognized" issue, is not something that takes precedence Although they may appreciate how CC disproportionately affects their communities, these individuals' adaptive capacities are limited due to the immediate needs of the people they serve. These adaptive capacities, often measured within the scope of a community's resilience and capability to respond and accommodate, are further exacerbated by CC and its implications as are a person's ability to fulfill their day-to-day needs (Reckien, D et. al, 2018, The World Bank, 2010). So, although not explicitly linked, CC and its effects extend subliminally across all facets of life.

*Dudley in policy*

Climate Ready Boston was a report released in 2016 that rolled out an executive summary of the city's experiences with CC and how the city intended to address these challenges. Primarily, this report focused on Boston's 47 coastal miles that are threatened by flooding and rising sea levels and the rising temperatures exacerbated by UHI. To help monitor and manage CC, Boston created a board of officials and experts called the Boston Research Advisory Group (BRAG). Both BRAG and the Climate Ready Boston report won the "Resilience Award" from American Planning Association (APA). This

award “recognizes efforts that better equip a community to recover from and adapt to shocks and stresses like natural disasters, human-caused disasters, and CC so that communities become better prepared than ever before” (APA Resilience Award). The report, which is almost 90 pages in length, fully assesses the current state of the Greater Boston area and anticipated losses and changes, financial and otherwise due to climate related factors. From Climate Ready Boston, several follow-up assessments and initiatives were rolled out to consider what actions the greater Boston area could undertake to help address these major threats. I have already considered how the Vulnerability Assessment (VA), as well as the Boston’s Heat Resilience Solutions Report (HRSR) that was subsequently published by Climate Ready Boston (2016) extensively involved the communities which are the focus of this thesis. I would now like to focus on the language contained in these reports and the possible “disconnect” which might have occurred between policy and people.

To review, Boston’s VA assessment explored how eight focus communities within the greater Boston area experience current and potential future risks of CC. The report resulting from this study specifically incorporated both Roxbury and Dorchester, calling them “environmental justice communities' ' during the overview of these specific neighborhood’s infrastructure and history. According to Mass.gov, an “environmental justice population” must fulfill certain criteria.

1. The annual median household income is 65 percent or less of the statewide annual median household income
2. Minorities make up 40 percent or more of the population

3. 25 percent or more of households identify as speaking English less than "very well"
4. Minorities make up 25 percent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 percent of the statewide annual median household income.

In short, this is a different way of identifying and labeling an overburdened population that experiences more risks and susceptibility to environmental hazards and harms. Moreover, due to this exposure, these populations are more likely to also experience a reduced quality of life (NRE 392, University of Michigan 1997). I focus on the use of this term the term, quality of life, to better help understand how these communities are spoken about in citywide reports versus how communities understand themselves.

Environmental justice is defined by the EPA as, “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” Therefore, environmental justice communities are populations who have seen extreme malpractice of this “justice.” Overall, while this classification of their communities lacks basic definitions, when I asked my participants to describe how they would define environmental justice, their responses were rather similar with regard to both themes of community and environmental well-being. All respondents spoke about fair access to resources and the opportunity to obtain a certain quality of life that reflected the Alma Ata declaration. As explored in Sunny’s definition, as well as that of a project manager for Boston’s climate

resilience, whom I interviewed in the dying days of a late August afternoon. EJ, is more of a state of being, as opposed to the EPA definition that speaks on the equal involvement of people politically. This sentiment is conveyed in the following quotations from Sunny.

*"Environmental justice to me means human health and basic rights to resources and food access or just access to things that let you live a decent and healthy life. Then like the environmental part is like, not just like gardens and green in your community but like clean air, and soil, and like uh, you know like access to clean water and walkable and safe streets. Like I guess when I personally think of environmental justice, for me it's like just wellbeing and a chance to live a quality of life that isn't a struggle from your outside. Like I guess, your external environment. Like people are gonna struggle and that's how it is and will be but like, everyone should be given an opportunity and a place to live that at least allows them the stuff they need to live a good life and be healthy."* (Quote from interview with Sunny)

*"We* [Climate Resilience Team] *don't really have an official definition but to me, EJ is a confluence of history and present experience and not just climate risk but all of the factors and stressors that an individual interacts with daily. So thinking of the confluence of what that means in respect to my work and the city and how my work meets the needs of these people. If we can build supports for the most vulnerable then everyone can be supported. If the person with the most risk doesn't have any risk, then we will all be in a much better place. So environmental justice is the achievement of this."*

What neither of these quotations spoke of was the incorporation of community voice and advocacy within policy as part of the EPA's definition. Although this isn't a major discrepancy, the fact that EJ and CC's continue to be such "fluid" terms makes speaking about them and interpreting broader goals even more difficult. This was conveyed when I asked community residents concerning how they felt about Dudley being classified as an environmental justice community. My participants expressed confusion with the use of the term. Both Ray and Eris found the term to be patronizing,

and Eris in particular had difficulty understanding how the term fit in with them and their community.

*"Its like calling a community underfunded. Like we aren't underfunded dude, we just plainly aren't funded at all. Like I feel like calling us that* [environmental justice community] *diminishes us and like what we go through and what we went through. I fell like they like want to paint us in this picture where we like are being picked up by the bootstraps and led into this better world but like that's just like not the case at all. Nothing has changed on a big political level for us, we make those changes if anything. So I guess they can call us whatever they want if they want as long as it makes them feel better [scoffs]."*

Although Eris agreed with the history of disinvestment and the status of the Dudley community, he struggled with the terminology used. I got the sense that there were growing tensions between community members and public policy makers. Whether this was learned due to the "passed-on" folklore of Dudley that may have fostered a preference towards grassroots movement, or due to deliberate encounters, I couldn't tell. But there seemed to be shared frustrations with larger political bodies and their involvement (or lack thereof) within the local landscape.

Sunny in her interview expressed her exasperation with a certain branch of government that seemed to want to support urban farms and the coupon/food funding but seemed to be too inundated with other tasks and unorganized to fulfill their promised duties.

*"The city has just not been very interested in engaging in like, figuring out the whole compost and soil testing which has been really disappointing to me all this to say like I keep being like, you guys want urban farms like this, you should care about like what this compost is that we're making in the city with the lead levels here. That's so to me, like so*

*clearly related. And it's just they just feels like they've been dragging their feet, which has been disappointing."*

Ray also vocalized her confusion with what is stated in policy versus what she sees. Her sentiments were about the investment of newer developments around Sea Port and the aforementioned Dorchester Bay City. This disconnect between stated policy and the narrative they create, versus the daily actions that the community and NGO members see within their communities is, I argue, damaging and promotes further divide. This experience of disconnect is conveyed by Ray in the following passage from her interview:

"*But like, there were so many streets and around here that were completely flooded. Because the city's infrastructure is not prepared in any way to handle CC. Like we know, CC is here. It's not something that is just like a far off whatever, like we're experiencing the repercussions already. And we don't have the infrastructure, like we need better housing. We need more green spaces, we need more things that are like trees. Yeah, that build resilience, like for the community. And instead, they're just like, putting millions of dollars into the seaport which we know, it's gonna sink, like, you know, it's like a landfill. It's just like, the priorities are very unfortunate."*

My interview with Zinnia, the project manager for the Climate Resilience team, also helped me to better understand how Boston has divided its tasks in trying to address CC. Her team was focused exclusively on addressing the effects of rising temperatures and urban heat island effect. One project she was most excited about was building the urban tree canopy through a program called Boston Tree Alliance (2023). This plan works with public and private partners to grow Boston's urban forest and tree cover as one nature-based component of an overall method to help address the effects of CC in the urban context. The HRSR also incorporated community voices and advocates in

their implementation. The aspect of community voice was an element Zinnia was adamant on.

*"The way that we understand heat resilience broadly is that heat exposure is a rather personal risk as its felt directly on the individual. So understanding the human experience of specific populations is the most critical thing to understanding what the people need. Of course there is always a conversation concerning the competing priorities and there is a dialogue there but when we talk about where we need to drive solutions, we are informed largely by community members."*

The HRSR held meetings with community members to determine what they needed to help mitigate heat exposure and, as is conveyed below, the findings for Roxbury were for shorter term solutions.

*"Respondents shared a desire for additional public water features that serve people of all ages. In addition to outdoor places, respondents shared that air conditioned places, like movie theaters and malls, are critical community spaces on a hot day. Public indoor spaces, including cooling centers, community centers, and libraries, are also places residents use on a hot day. Respondents shared that improvements to registration, opening hours, and programming could increase their use. Respondents also shared that cool indoor public places should create a welcoming and safe environment for all, especially people of color and youth."* (Heat Resilience Solutions Report 2022, pg 167)

Within this report, another initiative called, "Healthy Places Initiative" was referenced. In this initiative, which was implemented in partnership with Boston Housing Agency (BHA), hundreds of box fans and air conditioning units were distributed. However, in the same interview, Zinnia let me know that some community members would not accept the equipment due to concerns that they would be unable to afford the electricity bill. From *Climate Ready Boston* (2016) it is estimated that Boston in the next decade will face growing costs due to CC stressors such as flooding, heat, and

storms. All of which can be anticipated to cause additional strains to public and private infrastructure. Households are also expected to see rises in electricity bills and more general costs of living due to these stressors (Climate Ready Boston, 2016; Bille, L. Turner et. al 2003; U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2023).

My primary hypothesis is that the frustrations expressed by the participants in this study regarding CC and public policy is reflected in the Healthy Places Initiative and Ray's quote as the mismatch of need versus government response. Although Ray identifies that she hears the conversation about CC, she has yet to see anything immediate being done in her community. Although the Healthy Places Initiative distributed hundreds of cooling devices to community members, they missed an opportunity to further help those who felt that they were unable to afford it, arguably the most vulnerable. Although the HRSR included a community forum and used responses to help create their solutions, CC and its effects are not simply during a heat wave in the summer, but is a year round issue. There are programs that do serve and aid households with utility costs, such as the Rental Relief Fund, Mass.Save or Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). However, neither representatives, nor information regarding these programs was immediately available to the community members at this relevant time. I take the stance that these programs must work together with Boston and their climate initiative teams if they wish to make community members feel seen and supported by larger bodies of government and within policy. Not only do they need to

participate in the creation of policy that impacts them, they need to also see the results and that their words are being put into motion.

### *Policy: a promise or aspiration?*

Across the board, within every report, words conveying the concepts of equity, justice, equality, fairness and sustainability have consistently been used to describe desired results and aspirations. Within the executive summary of the Climate Ready Boston report (2016) the words justice, equitable, equal, fair/fairness, and sustainable showed up over five times with equity showing up 16 times. Within the literature of CC, the vocabulary listed above is often used interchangeably (Momsen, Jennifer L., et al. 2012, Bromhead, Helen 2022,McNamara, Karen Elizabeth, 2013). However, even the term CC has a "loaded" political meaning. Early 2000s American political and communications consultant, Frank Luntz advised the Republican party to start using the term CC instead of global warming, as it carried a lessened sense of urgency in the title (Burkeman, *The Guardian* 2003).

The development and use of these terms creates a constructed image and generally conveys certain common feelings and reactions. Within the *Heat Resilience Solution* (2022), a strong emphasis was placed on incorporating community voice and leading with equity. In a section of Chapter Two of the report, "Leading with Environmental Justice and Equity" (pg.24) an introduction to this approach outlined the

various trainings staff members on the *Heat Plan* board underwent to understand how "systemic inequities and racism have left lasting impacts in Boston's hottest neighborhoods" (pg. 26). From this, those on the *Heat Plan* board decided to implement a "people-centered and equity-focused approach to heat resilience advances" (pg. 24). Although this type of vocabulary and knowledge of structural inequities is a promising start, I argue that the lack of definition of environmental justice, along with the lack of specifics on how equity will be practiced leaves this report and associated plans coming up short in addressing community needs.

Often profound moments or public events are communicated in a way that evokes some type of shared emotion, such as the "War on Terror", or how we are "fighting the COVID-19 pandemic" (Bryan, Amanda. C et. al, 2016). Although the policies stemming from Boston's response to CC reflect the deliberate risks and impacts of changing weather patterns. *Climate Ready Boston* (2016) gives an expansive overview of three main threats to the Greater Boston area and delivers reports of how the entire city will suffer if no actions are taken Within both the VA and the HRSR reports, the community of Roxbury is identified as containing particularly high percentages of vulnerable populations which will suffer due to rising temperatures. These risks are explicitly highlighted within these reports and are correlated back to CC. The lack of adequate infrastructure and resultant heat stressors are tied back to CC and UHI. While this is communicated within policy as direct results and direct causations, I argue that this is where the disconnect lies. When my participants speak of housing and utility cost,

stress, street flooding, and the difficulties of fulfilling their day-to-day needs, they do not immediately relate these issues back to worsening environmental conditions.

The lack of CC discourse within my interviews and fieldnotes is not due to the lack of CC impacts within the community, nor is it due to a lack of experienced consequences. Rather, I propose that this disconnect lies within the language which is used and how stressors are communicated and interpreted

I argue that this sense of interpreting and speaking about strife on a personal or community level can be best understood through the concept “idioms of distress”. Idioms of distress is a deeper examination of what sociocultural anthropologist, Mark Nichter, identifies as “cultural concepts of distress (Nichter, et al. 1985). The biomedical field in the mid twentieth century, following the introduction of emerging interdisciplinary fields (Robinson, Diana M., et al. 2021), began recognizing how culture was not a passive agent in an individual's experience of illness . Rather, culture was an explicit determinant for the patient’s experience of suffering based upon their world view. Clinicians, along with social scientists, began to build upon this concept. Within Nichter’s research in South Asia, he built upon the concept of “folk illness” and “culture bound symptoms” (Simons RC, & Hughes 1985) to better understand how the individual experiences suffering in social, spiritual, spatial, and cultural contexts (Nichter, 2010). Within medical anthropology, idioms of distress have been implemented into other working theories, such as Kleinman’s “illness narrative” (Kleinman 1988), as well as in health seeking behavior maps (Ward H, et al. 1997). This framing of experience and understanding of

expression in social science and biomedical fields has traditionally been used in relation to mental or physical illness (Bhatia MS, & Malik SC (1991), Guarnaccia PJ et. al 2003). I extend this understanding of experience to my participants to better interpret how they communicate their experiences. I reference Nichter's explanation of the function of idioms of distress to build my argument.

> *"Idioms of distress are socially and culturally resonant means of experiencing and expressing distress in local worlds. They are evocative and index past traumatic memories as well as present stressors, such as anger, powerlessness, social marginalization and insecurity, and possible future sources of anxiety, loss and angst. Idioms of distress communicate experiential states that lie on a trajectory from the mildly stressful to depths of suffering that render individuals and groups incapable of functioning as productive members of society."* (Nichter, 2010)

In application of Nichter's theory, I argue that the language used to express environmental justice and CC does not communicate succinctly so that the risks are interpreted in a lens that is applicable to those who are the most at risk. To achieve this, their vulnerability and the "fall out" from CC must be translated in a way that allows for an interpretation of how this affects them on the micro," day-to-day" level. It is not that my participants are not experiencing the impacts of CC, either in their professional lives at the NGOs or on a more personal level. Rather, their means of communicating and understanding the struggles they face are more closely correlated with the consistent demand and stress of resources and aid created through historical disenfranchisement and marginalization. This is to say that the dominant discourse concerning the understanding of the community's needs and struggles is deeply rooted in the history of the neighborhood. CC is interpreted as this outside force that is separate from the struggles

within the community. This differentiation can be seen in Lily's interview quote from the beginning of this chapter where she states,

"*We hear about CC and the policies going around to help alleviate community stress but we are still focusing on the immediate day to day needs. We don't really have the time for that* [CC issues] *when homes and food are still needed resources in our community."*

An excerpt from Ray's interview with me from earlier in this chapter also illustrates how the separation of CC stress and day to day struggles are viewed as distinct from one another.

*"I feel like, CC is a big, scary issue. And it's vague, too. Like, it's, like, in a lot of ways, it's a gradual thing that's happening. And so, honestly, it's not something that I think a lot of people who are most impacted by it* [CC]*, don't talk about because there's more pressing day to day struggles that we need to like, deal with and figure out.*

This is not to undermine the understood severity of CC that the participant's in this study showed. All my participants, when asked about CC, expressed concern for it's more general effects and its presence within their communities. Instead, I want to highlight how immediate needs are emphasized and that CC is seen as a secondary concern as compared to the threat of not having adequate resources. CC has an omnipresent impact on day to day lives that is not explicitly expressed within my interviews and field notes but prevails nonetheless, intensifying more pressing issues.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

As the winter months take hold and the seeds for the next season rest in the ground, it is my hope that I have aptly conveyed the nature of the Dudley community and all those who played a part in my research. The previous chapters built an argument that while historical impacts of policy and real estate created a vulnerable landscape within a community that continues to leave them more susceptible to CC stressors, storytelling and interpersonal connections instill protective factors within the community fabric.

By highlighting the relevant historical background of Roxbury and Dorchester at the times of the most severe neglect, I built an image of an environment and people poisoned by political discrimination and marginalization. Through my fieldnotes, I wove in phenomenological elements that alluded to a sense of what it's like to walk the streets of Dudley. In Chapter Three, I highlighted how the community land trust (CLT) and overseeing NGO, DNI/DSNI and TFP work together in conversation to support and play the role of what I called “community liaisons.” This role and their dynamics demonstrate the deep trust and ties that members of Dudley have between themselves and individuals like Sunny and Lily. Through interviews and field note excerpts, I showed this trust between liaisons and community members. Furthermore, I argued that this status of liaison and NGO member puts Sunny and Lily in a more advantageous position to receive and respond to innate community needs expressed to them. I argue that due to NGOs like TFP and DSNI/DNI that reside on and steward the CLT, the community liaisons are in an especially unique position to amplify the voices of community members and highlight specific, implicit needs that may otherwise be missed in a larger scale operation.

Next, I expanded on how narrative and storytelling create a web for the community fabric. I'm hopeful that I was able to adequately articulate the uniqueness of the CLT and Dudley's history by framing the story of community organization that went into gaining eminent domain as a form of folklore (Bascom, 1954). From the ground we worked on to the people and buildings that surrounded me during my research, all of it had something to do with the CLT and the folklore of the Dudley Village. I articulated that this narrative instilled a sense of belonging and shared values within the community, creating a practice of space-making (Low, 2009). I argue that this storytelling and folklore of the community serves as a source of strength for members of Dudley, providing a grounding history of resilience and self-determination that continue to be larger themes within the greater CC discourse.

I also argue that this story-telling serves as a counter-hegemonic discourse. Folklore and storytelling do so by directly creating a narrative that goes against dominant power ideals and assumptions. These assumptions are based in the dominant dialogue that casts certain groups as undeserving of resources and aid. Dudley, during the 1900's was seen as a population that was undeserving. What the folklore of the community does is actively opposes the concept that the land and the people within the neighborhood do not deserve resources and aid. Instead, the narrative created disperses ideas of personal power, agency, *and* deservingness through detailing the community organization and revitalization that took place.

Finally, I examined the main reports and initiatives released by Greater Boston in relation to CC and CC stressors. These reports stemmed from a larger, citywide initiative,

*Imagine Boston 2030* (2017), that focused on five sectors of intended growth within Greater Boston. From this policy analysis, I demonstrated a disconnect between the policy of CC and what residents and staff that serve Dudley are experiencing. With a lens of Critical Medical Anthropology and political ecology, I painted a picture that highlighted how the community was influenced by the past and how these past infractions created a landscape that perpetuated vulnerabilities. Historic misuse and abuse has left the people, infrastructure, and land vulnerable to CC permeates and exacerbate the day to day stressors the community already faces.

Through interviews with Sunny, Ray, and Eris, I demonstrated the frustrations NGO and community members expressed towards policy and government programs. These frustrations tie back to the seeming lack of discourse around CC amongst my participants. With the understanding of Nichter's application of idioms of distress (1981) excerpts from Ray and Lily, I examined how suffering is communicated and understood in relation to CC. As a final remark, I posit that the lack of conversation concerning CC is not due to a lack of awareness. Rather, CC is understood to be a separate entity from the day to day needs that community and NGO members are attempting to fulfill within Dudley.

## *Now What?*

Within the roots of Dudley lie strong bonds, coated in the fibers of self-determinism and stewardship crafted through the history of community activism. At DSNI's multicultural festival held in the last days of August, only a few blocks from

TFP's greenhouse, a local politician came over the speaker. She introduced herself as a member of the neighborhood, detailing how her involvement in DSNI/DNI when she was a child fostered a love for her community that she carries with her. Between cheers and the banging of drums, she shouted the phrase, "nothing about us, without us, is for us." I take this phrase and apply it to the spirit of Dudley and the themes explored within this thesis. The connection of community members and the traits that bind them together are incredibly unique in Dudley. As CC continues to advance, hot summer days and flooded streets will become increasingly more common.

CC is year-round and the dialogue surrounding it should recognize how built infrastructure, specifically within marginalized communities creates vulnerabilities (D. & Mitlin, D 2008; Islam, M. 2021). As discourse around CC continues in policy and on a local level, I stress the importance of contextualizing the impacts of CC (Doyle, 2009). This would mean making larger problems relevant to smaller communities. If community members and leaders could understand CC and how it influences their day to day lives, not just that it gets hotter in the summer, they would be more equipped to respond and identify growing stressors. CC, as Ray and Lily stated, is a large and vague concept. It is not easy to understand how it impacts day to day living and discussions around CC should explicitly involve how communities will feel it and how they can address it.

Although it is shown that community members were included on the advisory board of these policies, due to the data collected by my participants, there needs to be more done. What I posit is that although the policies and initiatives include recognitions of historical marginalization and existing structural violence creates increased

vulnerabilities, community members and their land are not being represented adequately. A major example in this within my research is through Ray's frustration with watching her community suffer from environmental events yet see the creation of major developmental projects like Dorchester Bay City that is only miles from her community. As policy begins to unfold, I suggest further studies to look at how CC policy interacts with marginalized communities. One example of a policy to keep an eye on is the redevelopment of Blue Hill Ave. Blue Hill Ave is an active bus and transportation route that is set to undergo a $44 million redevelopment project that city officials hope will aid traffic flow and pedestrian safety (City of Boston, 2024). This plan is still in the development phase and is partnered with other environmental initiatives such as the Urban Tree Canopy program (see Chapter Six). Although there is heavy incorporation of community voice, there seems to be emerging mixed reviews (Community Engagement Report, 2024). There is a history of mistrust of redevelopment, especially within marginalized communities and the structure of these initiatives must continue to actively demonstrate, through transparency and action plans, how they intend to prioritize the people.

Furthermore, equity should be at the forefront of CC discourse and not an afterthought. What equity looks like in CC policy is the historical understanding of how certain populations have suffered injustices that leave them more vulnerable. From this understanding, specific initiatives either within or in correlation to CC policies must prioritize the improvement of resources and allocation of aid within these communities. With an emphasis on community development and wellbeing through these supportive

governmental initiatives, both community members and NGOs will be better equipped to respond and adapt to CC stressors. These communities experienced elevated rates of necropolitical acts which placed deservingness of one population and the lack of deservingness in another. Policy's challenge now, is to make these communities feel that they are being thoroughly incorporated and that history is not being rewritten in a different font. This is especially true within urban areas as stratification of suffering and the needed adaptation will be increasingly diverse (Metz 2000, Sovacool et al., 2015; Shi et al 2020).

### *The Community as a Cure*

I will end this thesis with one final excerpt from my interview with Sunny who recognized the potential in community organization and how it can function as a tool to respond to CC through the origins of the CLT and the power of eminent domain.

*"I wonder if there's like a way that we could like, bolster that* [community organizing] *again, because I feel like the younger population in Dudley is much better positioned for what I think are going to be harder days ahead. The older folks really spearheaded all of this but by then they're going to be too old to do anything about it* [CC]. *But I do think that ultimately, that's what a lot of us are, are trying to do. Trying to just build community and get people talking to each other because that's the only way we are going to know what's going on with our members and how we are strongest."*

Literature supports the idea of grassroots movements and community activism to be used as a foundation to confront CC issues on a larger political scale (Gunningham, 2017; Doyle 2009; Feola 2014). I draw upon Sunny's quote to illustrate the connection of the Dudley Village and the potential to utilize the unique aspects of the neighborhood as a means to confront CC locally. The CLT that makes up the Dudley Village Campus

focuses on affordable housing and development within the community. Unlike the vast majority of CLTs in the United States, the Dudley CLT focuses on and serves only one specific community as opposed to having a broader scope across counties and neighborhoods (Yeşim,Sungu-Eryilmaz,Greenstein, Rosalind 2007).

What the Dudley CLT does have in common with other national CLTs is their model which enhances a shared sense of responsibility and representation between community members and the larger community. Furthermore, CLT members are placed within a "community-based support system" (Yeşim,Sungu-Eryilmaz,Greenstein, Rosalind 2007 pg. 1). Dudley specifically expands upon this support system with an added layer, power of eminent domain. As explored in the background chapter, eminent domain authority was granted to DNI, allowing them to acquire 64-acres of land for community use (public or private). This acquisition of land created the Dudley Triangle and the Dudley Village Campus and DSNI/DNI became the first in the nation to possess this power of eminent domain authority (Elizabeth A. Taylor. 1995).

Eminent domain is typically reserved for governmental authority, Dudley was granted this power and they were able to claim back land that had been lost to redlining, white flight, and sideways scheming. This power over the environment invokes another layer of stewardship over the land for community members. Not only does the CLT protect properties and members from being displaced, but eminent domain also allowed for the Dudley neighborhood to seize back land that had been historically neglected and recycle it into spaces that continue to profit the community. This support system is a part of the body politic metaphor I used in Chapter Three and Four and extends to a shared

sense of space and stewardship found through Dudley's long history of community engagement. This autonomy over the land and the literal infrastructure of the community is unprecedented.

By 2030, Greater Boston aims to achieve a series of goals spanning across five main sectors: increasing housing, reducing the wealth gap, economic growth, improving city infrastructure, and finally, preparing for CC (*Imagine Boston 2030,* 2017). This is a citywide plan that boasts a series of policies within the aforementioned sectors, including the initiatives of *Climate Ready Boston* (2016), the Boston Climate *Vulnerability Assessment (*2016), and the *Heat Resilience Solutions Report* (2022). This larger plan tackles nearly every facet of urban living and includes community input as guides towards perceived gaps of care and resources within Boston that prevent equitable living. This is a massive undertaking for Greater Boston and its officials and there are many projects going on in tandem with one another, it's difficult to identify where exactly concentration is being placed. It seems that despite Boston's political and policy attempts to enact CC solutions, urban communities are left in the margins during these discussions as evidenced by their concerns not being represented within such policies. This can be seen through Sunny's frustration with government officials and their dragging feet concerning soil testing as well as Ray's outrage at the flooding streets and lack of government initiative towards addressing the vulnerable infrastructure.

Besides my main urge of policy to incorporate and be in adequately informed by community, within Dudley, I make the following suggestions as revealed by my participants. 1) As Dudley has a history of locally unwanted land use which resulted in

increased lead levels within local soils, Boston's Urban Agriculture leaders should invest in more structured soil and compost testing to foster greater sustainability within the community. Sunny continues to do advocacy work on a community and governmental-wide level. Upon my editing of this thesis, Sunny relayed to me how TFP partnered with a recent study on heavy metals in compost (Yang et. al, 2024). Sunny was hopeful that this new publication can be used as leverage on a political measure to "put pressure" on governmental officials to take soil testing more seriously. 2) My second suggestion within CC policy is the continuation of governmental aid and supplements as were seen during COVID. This type of aid and resources can look like higher rates of farmer's markets coupons, utility vouchers, and maybe even discounted public transportation. Through food, housing, and transportation, community lives and well-being can be bolstered, alleviating existing and impending stressors due to socioeconomic status and CC symptoms.

As Sunny stated, harder days seem to be ahead, though harder days were faced in the past and they will certainly come once more. There is no solution to CC without first addressing health and structural disparities within populations. Although the Dudley community is a garden of potential that demonstrates how community organization and activism can create impactful change, government leaders must continue to involve disenfranchised communities in CC conversation. Without representation within policy and inclusionary tactics that specifically address equity concerns, true motives of environmental justice will be buried in jargon and unobtainable aspirations.

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