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Dwelling in the Stability of Change: Creating Identity Through the Repetition of Site Specificity for the Foster Care System

Emily A. Wiles

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Dwelling in the Stability of Change

creating identity through the repetition of site specificity
for the foster care system

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"why is life so hard? why cant i find some one or a family that loves me for what happened to me and who i am ?" – roserose

The quotes in these boxes are from children ages 14-23. They are either in foster care, or were for some time. They are writing in their own words and ideas. These quotes are included to give insight to the lives of the children this thesis will be designed for.

Introduction

A set of transpositions reveals that the present system of foster care lies between notions of modernity and dwelling. On one hand, we see the inherent parallels between modernity and foster care when modernity is described as, "...the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent," (Heynen 12). The mobility and change present in the lives of foster care children is well reflected in our descriptions of modernity. On the other hand, the major criticisms of the current children's social services system are of its instabilities. Children are too often transplanted, kicked out, and shipped from one home to the next without ever having the chance to attach meaning or consistency to a definitive place. As a result, in New York City alone, people that have graduated from the foster care system account for over 60 percent of the homeless population in municipal shelters (McKenzie 25). The inadequacies of foster care advocate for opportunities to dwell to be integrated into the system.

Prior to the early 20th century, children in need were typically institutionalized in a facility removed from the city and the rest of society. Institutional isolation typically meant strict regulation and control, but at the same time, it also allowed children to form an attachment to a particular place. In the early 20th century the social ideologies regarding children's welfare began to change, and pushed for deinstitutionalized care with a focus on foster parenting. Through this process of reintegration, destitute children became part of society again, but were and still are, continually forced to relocate themselves. Therefore, the sense of belonging, even if it was to a group of outsiders, and the identification with place became lost in the current system.

This thesis contends that an integration of the associations that modernity and dwelling have with foster care will enable place identification in the deinstitutionalized system. When the two work in conjunction with each other, opportunities for dwelling will be created within, between, and around the framework of the modern grid. The grid as a spatial strategy is employed for its ability to change, grow, shift, and respond. This strategy is to be carried out over a series of sites to create a network within the community. Within each particular site, the grid is presented with opportunities to become specific, in response to the surrounding conditions, materials, and program. From this specificity, the interstitial emerges, allowing for the potential of dwelling. Through the repetition of site specification, the location of a child may change, but their ability to identify this facility within that location becomes the constant.

"I know the "I don't belong here" feeling. I had a couple of foster homes that just never became my home. It was the house where I lived and that was it." –iowalady

5

modernity

. an oscillation between the struggle for personal development and the nostalgia for what is irretrievably lost...

transient

..the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent...

The pluralistic structures of modern society have made the lives of more and more individuals
migratory, ever-changing, mobile ... Not only are an increasing number of individuals
in a modern society uprooted from their original social milieu, but, in addition, no succeeding
milieu succeeds in becoming truly "home" either.

a condition of homelessness

present, new, current

...establishes change and crisis as values the result is that modernity
sets the scene for its own downfall...

modernity || foster care

profound insecurity

... an oscillation between the struggle for personal development and the nostalgia for what is irretrievably lost...

transient temporal

shipped from one set of foster parents to another
...the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent... adrift in substitute care

The pluralistic structures of modern society have made the lives of more and more individuals
migratory, ever-changing, mobile ... Not only are an increasing number of individuals
in a modern society uprooted from their original social milieu, but, in addition, no succeeding
milieu succeeds in becoming truly "home" either.

"lost tribe"

"system kids"

a condition of homelessness permanently temporary

present, new, current further, advance, cultivate, forward, look after

...predictably, too many disadvantaged children in the United States will grow up only to
perpetuate the cycles of poverty, abuse, and neglect...

...establishes change and crisis as values the result is that modernity
sets the scene for its own downfall... reform

I foster care

profound insecurity

temporal

shipped from one set of foster parents to another

adrift in substitute care

"lost tribe"

"system kids"

permanently temporary

further, advance, cultivate, forward, look after

...predictably, too many disadvantaged children in the United States will grow up only to perpetuate the cycles of poverty, abuse, and neglect...

reform

For the initial transposition process, modernity and dwelling were described in the words of Hilde Heynen from "Architecture and Modernity" and foster care was described in the words of Richard B. McKenzie from Rethinking Orphanages for the 21st Century.

"once again...i wind up in jail at 2 in the morning...this time i got charged for Assualt and battery...200 hours of community service.........and my girlfriend might be pregnant" –punkdrummer

modernity

... an oscillation between the struggle for personal development and the nostalgia for what is irretrievably lost...

transient

...the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent...

The pluralistic structures of modern society have made the lives of more and more individuals migratory, ever-changing, mobile ... Not only are an increasing number of individuals in a modern society uprooted from their original social milieu, but, in addition, no succeeding milieu succeeds in becoming truly "home" either.

a condition of homelessness

present, new, current

...establishes change and crisis as values the result is that modernity sets the scene for its own downfall...

---

modernity ≠ dwelling

... an oscillation between the struggle for personal development and the nostalgia for what is irretrievably lost...

transient

orientation and identification

preserve

...the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent...

connectedness and meaningfulness

The pluralistic structures of modern society have made the lives of more and more individuals migratory, ever-changing, mobile ... Not only are an increasing number of individuals in a modern society uprooted from their original social milieu, but, in addition, no succeeding milieu succeeds in becoming truly "home" either.

diametrically opposed to modernity

a condition of homelessness

present, new, current

tradition, security, harmony

"building" means to make a place out of undifferentiated space, where the earth appears as earth, the heaven as heaven, the divinities as divine and mortals as mortal

...establishes change and crisis as values the result is that modernity sets the scene for its own downfall...

to allow things to exist in their essence

dwelling

orientation and identification

preserve

connectedness and meaningfulness

diametrically opposed to modernity

tradition, security, harmony

"building" means to make a place out of undifferentiated space, where the earth appears as earth, the heaven as heaven, the divinities as divine and mortals as mortal

to allow things to exist in their essence

"Its never to much to ask for when you want a family of your own...Everyone deserves a family...." -keishabug

9

I foster care

profound insecurity

temporal

shipped from one set of foster parents to another

adrift in substitute care

"lost tribe"

"system kids"

permanently temporary

further, advance, cultivate, forward, look after

...predictably, too many disadvantaged children in the United States will grow up only to perpetuate the cycles of poverty, abuse, and neglect...

reform

---

foster care≠dwelling

profound insecurity

orientation and identification

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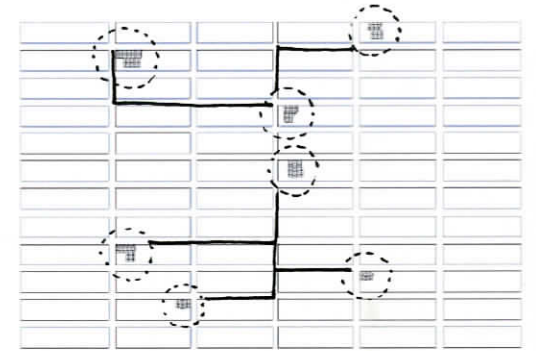
to allow things to exist in their essence

"How can they make these decisions without even asking me what I want?" -sydster

The Institution: Place + Dwelling
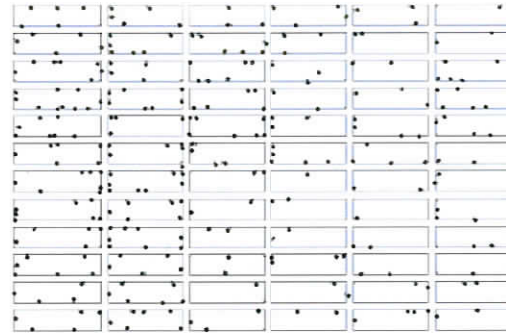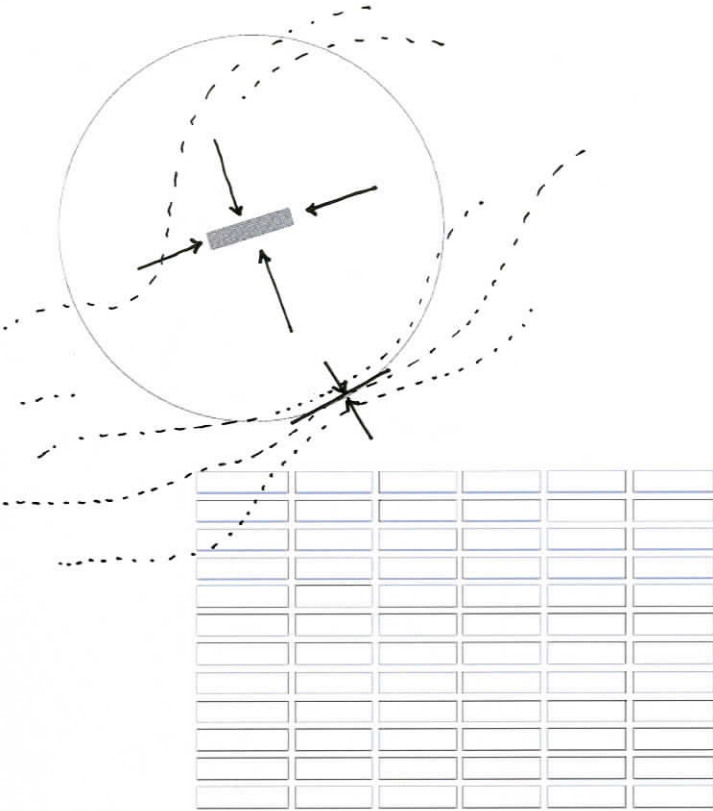
Deinstitutionalization: Foster Care, Placelessness

Presented on the opposite page are diagrams that represent the evolution of institutionalization and its relationship to the city. The diagram labeled "Institution" demonstrates the attitude prior to the 20th century where unwanted children, criminals, the mental ill, and other societal rejects were pushed out of the city and sent into isolation. The change in social ideologies and the push for re-integration is reflected in the diagram labeled, "Deinstitutionalization." The subsequent diagrams illustrate the various ways in which the institutional building has been or could be integrated into the city. These diagrams set up the problem for this thesis by asking the question; how can one recognize the collective in the idea of institution without the singular institutional building? In other words, when children's social services became deinstitutionalized, the institutional building was lost but the need to represent the institution of foster care as a community with a specific identity remains.

"I am just 2 months from turning 18 and have no desire to be out of the system until I move into the dorms at the college I'm attending in the fall. However, things in my current foster home are really bad; most nights I cry when I think about going back there." -rayne
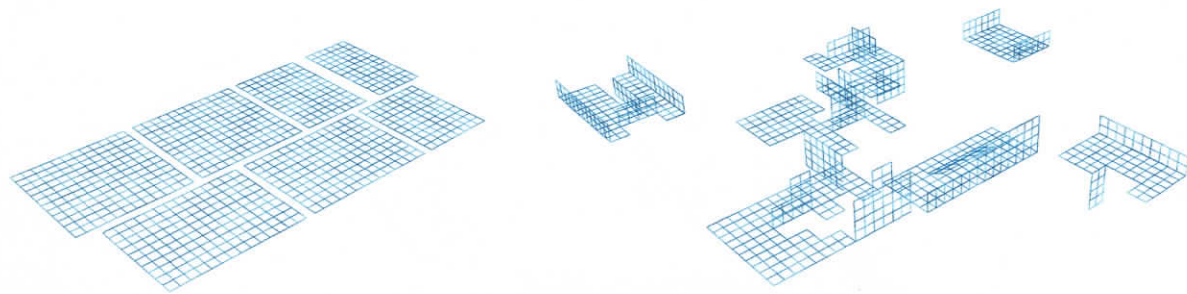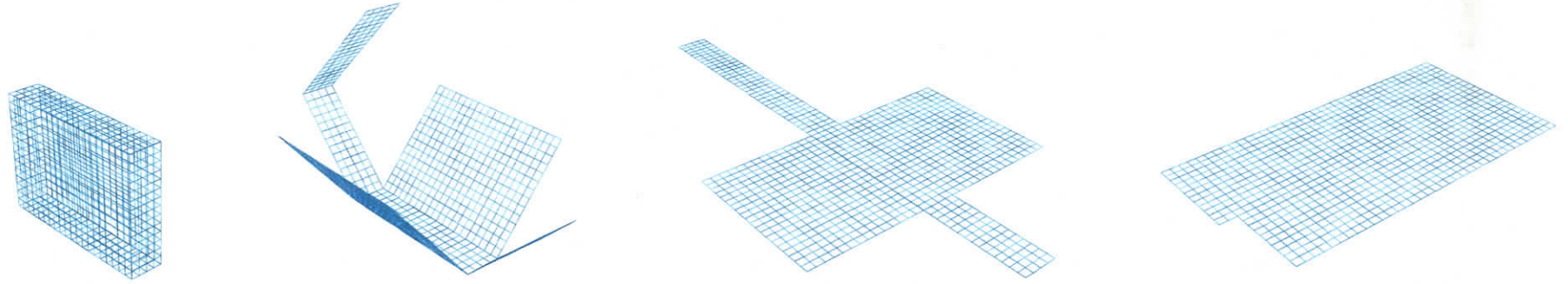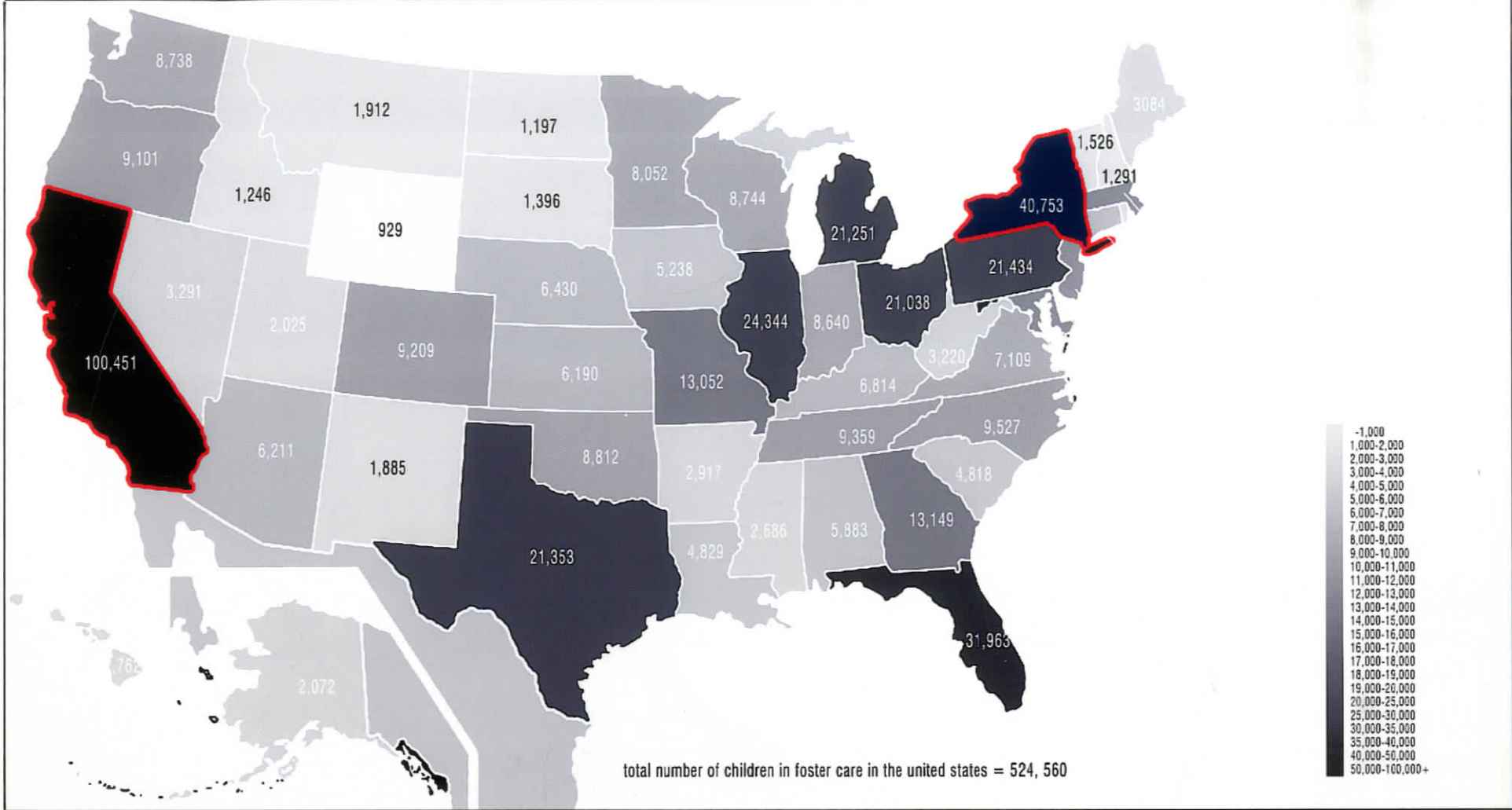
The method in this thesis to allow the identity of the institution to be visible in a deinstitutionalized system is present in the series of diagrams to the left. If the first diagram represents the institution, the following diagrams represent its transformation into the city. The grid is used to represent the institutional control, but also for its relationship with modernity- its ability to change, adapt, and shift. As the institution unfolds, it divides itself and then begins to reconfigure. In the end, each piece has a unique configuration, but still reads as a part of the collective.

The models to the right are initial experiments in grid manipulation and the forms that result. Each model started from the same piece of paper scored with a rectangular, continuous grid. The models show that the grid can be employed orthogonally to define set volumes, or fluidly, where it acts more as a faceted surface that slowly changes with each module.
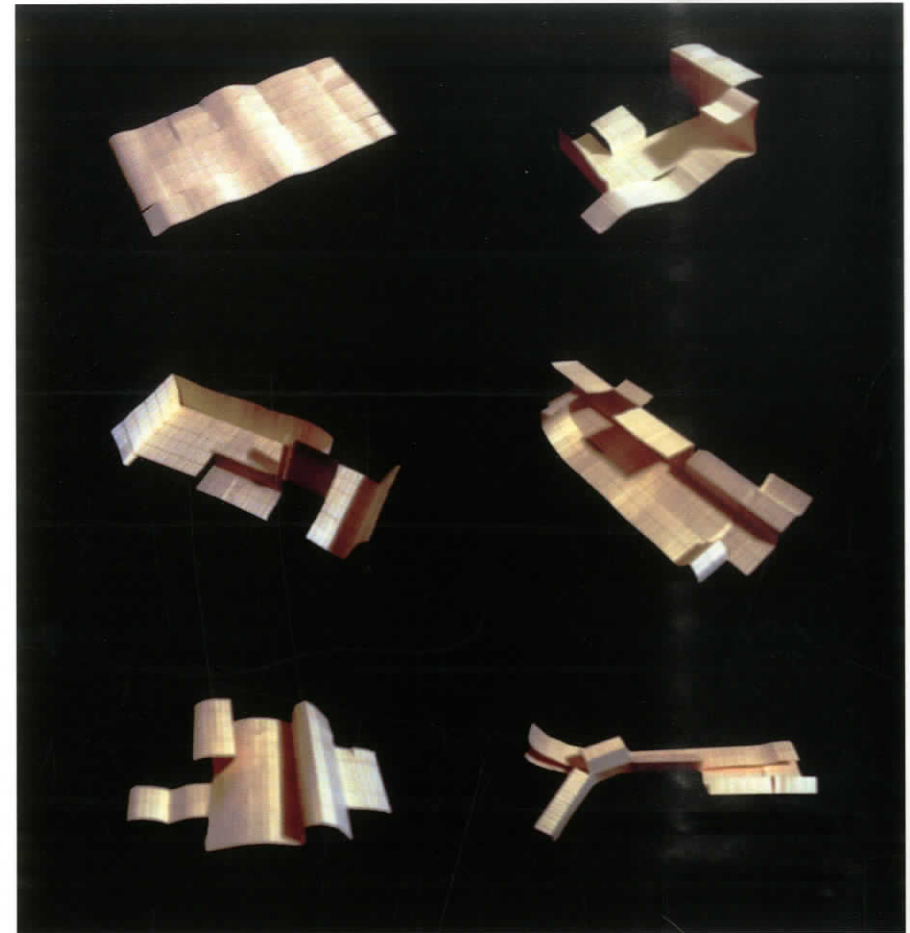
"I think my foster care experince would've been better if 1) I didn't move so much---in 5 yrs i moved to 30+ placements and 12 high schools.........and 2) If i had ONE social worker who was caring and the SW's didn't change with every move.......just a thought"
– lacey

Map of the United States showing number of children in foster care by state:

- 8,738
- 1,912
- 1,197
- 3084
- 9,101
- 1,246
- 8,052
- 1,526
- 1,291
- 1,396
- 8,744
- 929
- 5,238
- 21,251
- 40,753
- 6,430
- 21,434
- 3,291
- 24,344
- 21,038
- 2,025
- 9,209
- 8,640
- 3,220
- 7,109
- 100,451
- 6,190
- 13,052
- 6,814
- 6,211
- 8,812
- 2,917
- 9,359
- 9,527
- 1,885
- 4,818
- 2,686
- 5,883
- 13,149
- 21,353
- 4,829
- 762
- 2,072
- 31,963

total number of children in foster care in the united states = 524, 560

Legend:
- -1,000
- 1,000-2,000
- 2,000-3,000
- 3,000-4,000
- 4,000-5,000
- 5,000-6,000
- 6,000-7,000
- 7,000-8,000
- 8,000-9,000
- 9,000-10,000
- 10,000-11,000
- 11,000-12,000
- 12,000-13,000
- 13,000-14,000
- 14,000-15,000
- 15,000-16,000
- 16,000-17,000
- 17,000-18,000
- 18,000-19,000
- 19,000-20,000
- 20,000-25,000
- 25,000-30,000
- 30,000-35,000
- 35,000-40,000
- 40,000-50,000
- 50,000-100,000+

Foster Care Background

The life of a foster care child is hard. In the United States alone, there are over half a million children traveling through the system. This is equivalent to about 8 in every 1,000 children in the U.S. Two states stand out with alarmingly high levels of children in care, California, and New York. The foster care population of California makes up about one fifth of the entire country's population with a record number of 100, 451 children in care in 2002 as reported by the National Data Analysis System for the Child Welfare League of America. New York State was reported to have 40,753 children in care, or nearly 1/12th of the country's population, and 20,000 more than the next highest state. Children entering care, "...have emotional, behavioral, developmental, and health problems that reflect the difficult family and environmental circumstances that caused them to be removed from their homes in the first place," (Wertheimer 1). Children enter care because they are neglected, abused, and/or abandoned at home, or have parents that are incapable of taking care of them due to drug problems, incarceration, mental illness and/or severe poverty. These conditions in the child's life make them very vulnerable and unstable.

"Social workers should listen to what the foster youth have to say about situations that are happening with foster parents instead of hearing one side of the story." -keishabug

location
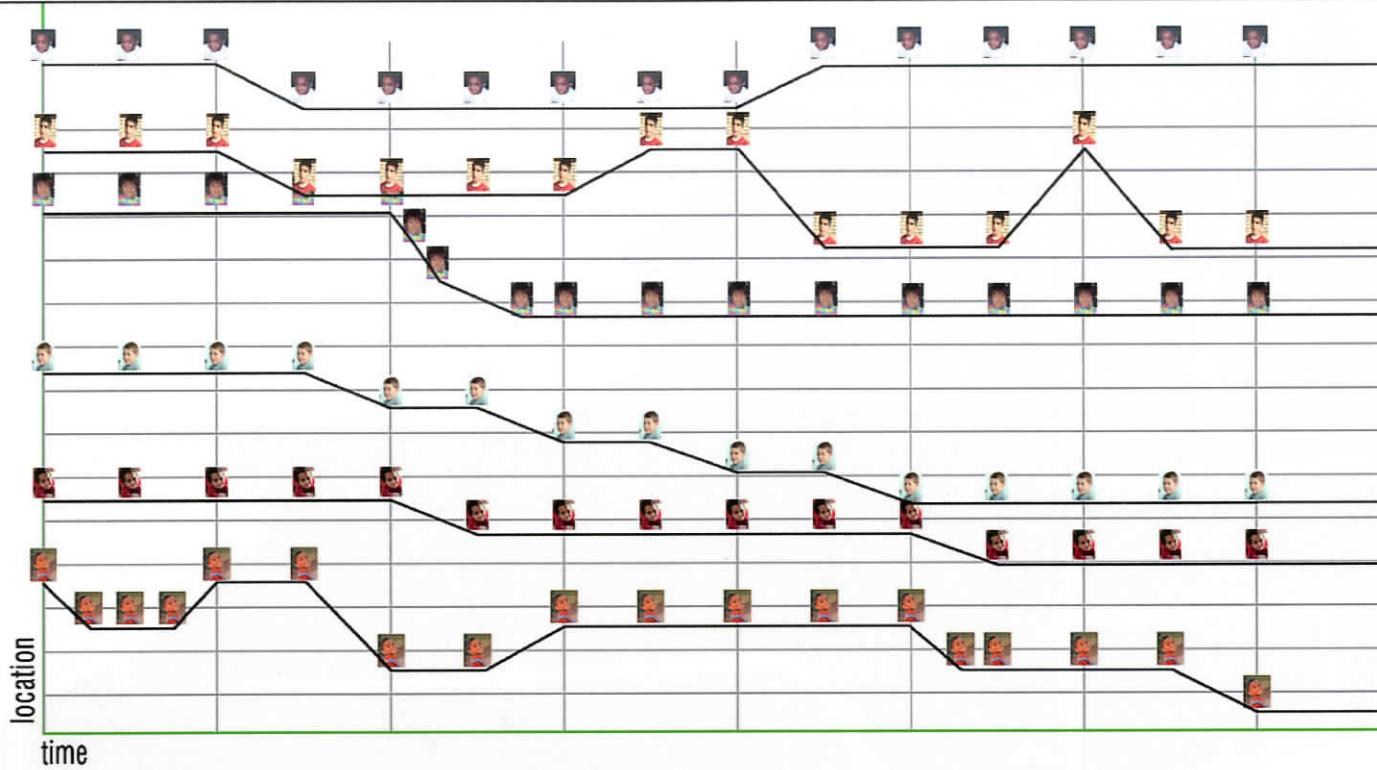
time

new york city foster care demographics

11,002 male
10,667 female
14,090 did not move in the last year. 4,789 moved 1 time in the last year. 1,794 moved 2 times in the last year. 873 moved 3-5 times in the last year.
123 moved 6 or more times in the last year.
7,706 have spent under 2 years in care. 8,757 have spent between 2 and 5 years in care. 3,258 have spent between 6 and 9 years in care.
1,140 have spent between 10 and 13 years in care. 692 have spent between 14 and 17 years in care. 16 have spent over 17 years in care.

21,669 kids

Once in foster care, children are not only fighting to reconcile the reasons for which they were placed in it, they are continually searching for something in their life that they can rely upon and find stability in. This is an unfulfilled search in many lives of the children because they are too often moved from home to home as many as five or more times, or bounced between case and social workers. Failures in the system are resulting in more children entering foster care than those leaving. Of those that leave, nearly one third of them are "aging out". That is, they are becoming legally independent because of their age. Due to the instability in their lives, these children have little or no means to support or house themselves, and are filling up the homeless shelters and prisons across the country.

When a child enters the foster care system there are three options for placement, in the home of a relative, in the home of a stranger, or in a group home. With an emphasis on deinstitutionalization, the majority of children are placed within single family homes. While the first choice is to place the child with kin, the majority of children have no other option but to be placed with foster parents outside of their extended family.

Because New York State has the second highest foster care population per state in the United States, its trends and statistics will be examined more closely from here on out. New York State's foster care levels are so high due to the concentration of needy children in New York City. The City's foster care population is more than half of the State's, averaging slightly more than 26,000 children in the system at any given point this year. While the majority of children in the New York City foster care system stay in care somewhere between two and five years, some children have been in the system nearly their entire lives, spending as many as 17 or more years without a permanent family. The graph to the left lists the demographics of the foster care system for New York City and represents possible movement patterns throughout the system for children based on those statistics.

In one year, New York City discharges approximately 4,000 foster care graduates out of the system when they reach the age of majority.

a study of youth who had left (the system) 2.5-4 years earlier found that:

46% had not completed high school

38% had not held a job for more than 1 year
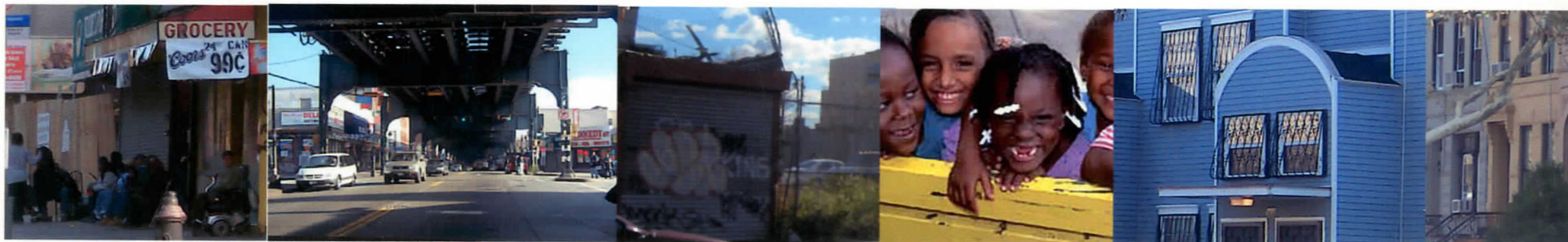
25% had been homeless for at least one night

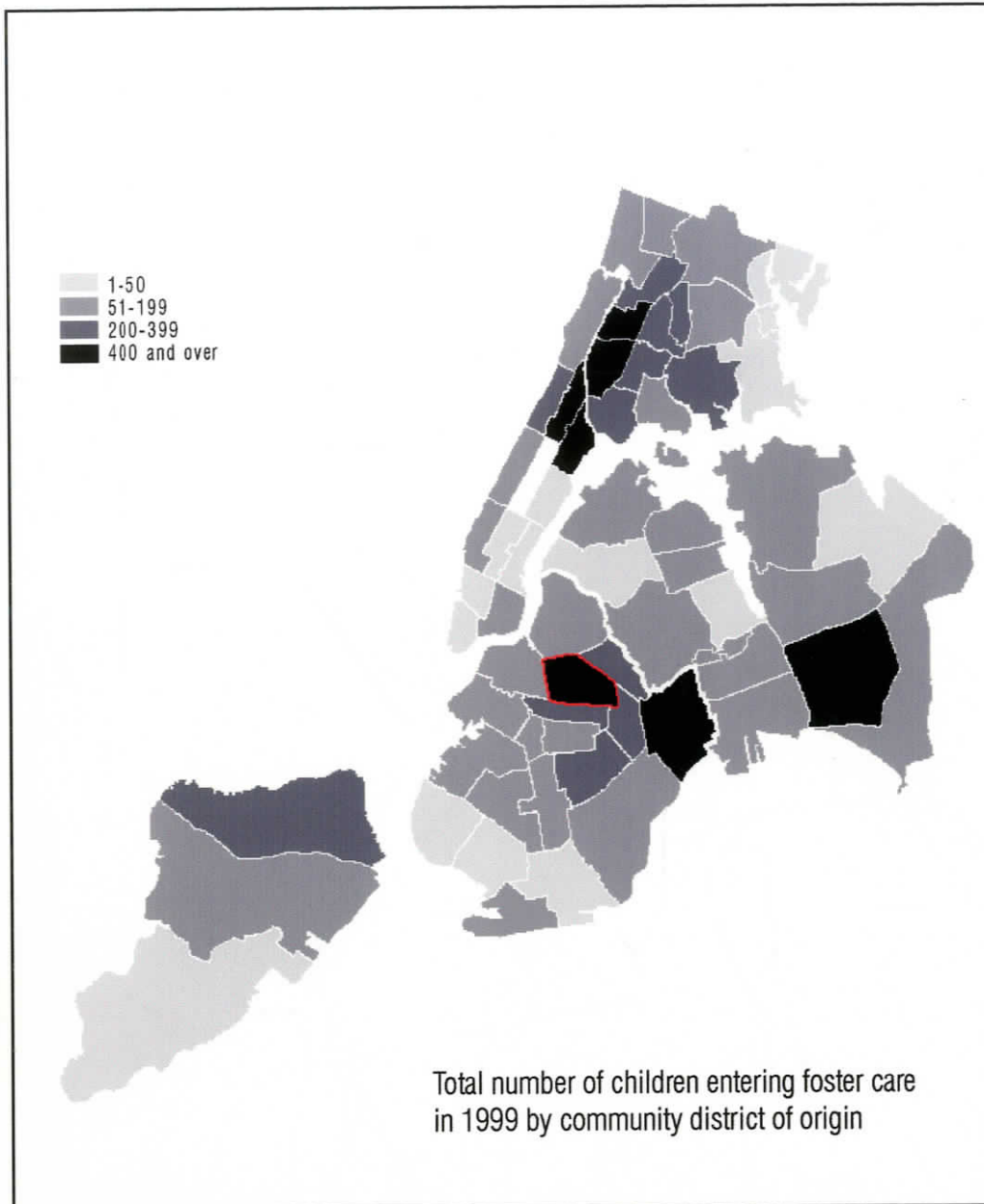60% of young women had given birth to a child

40% had been on public assistance, incarcerated, or a cost to the community in some other way...

In New York City alone, more than 60% of the homeless population in municipal shelters are former foster children...

"one thing that would improve my life would be if i could know what was going with my case and have people tell me what is going on and take my opinion on stuff and not get a new social worker what seems like every year " -shesnoangel

Borough	Total Children	Age			Gender		Race/Ethnicity				Religion			Level of Care		
		0-5	6-11	≥12	Fem	Male	Af A	Hisp	White	Unk	Prot	Cath	Other	Kin	FBH	Cong
Bronx	3,373	44.4	31.2	24.4	49.4	50.6	35.2	23.5	0.3	41.0	1.1	1.4	97.5	13.0	63.8	22.4
Brooklyn	3,261	42.3	30.3	27.4	48.7	51.3	47.2	13.4	2.4	37.0	11.4	7.8	80.8	13.2	63.0	23.2
Manhattan	2,176	44.2	33.3	22.4	49.4	50.6	19.7	14.4	0.1	65.8	5.2	4.8	90.0	13.5	66.9	18.8
Queens	1,809	36.4	32.2	31.3	44.9	55.1	39.0	19.5	7.1	34.4	4.5	11.0	84.5	21.1	50.3	27.4
Staten Island	362	35.4	30.9	33.7	52.8	47.2	44.2	20.2	25.7	9.9	23.5	56.4	20.2	14.4	51.4	33.7
Other NYC	129	59.4	14.1	26.6	48.1	51.9	33.3	8.5	3.9	54.3	7.0	0.0	93.0	10.9	70.5	18.6
Non-NYC	87	50.6	14.9	34.5	47.1	52.9	39.1	11.5	4.6	44.8	5.7	5.7	88.5	14.9	63.2	19.5
Unspecified	18	66.7	16.7	16.7	44.4	55.6	50.0	11.1	0.0	38.9	5.6	11.1	83.3	16.7	72.2	5.6
Total	11,215	42.4	31.2	26.4	48.5	51.5	36.6	17.8	2.9	42.8	6.3	7.3	86.5	14.5	61.7	23.0

Total number of children entering foster care
in 1999 by community district of origin

A deeper analysis of New York City's foster care system reveals heavy concentrations of foster children in both the Bronx and Brooklyn, each with over three thousand children recorded. In 1999 Brooklyn reported having 3,261 foster children (ACS 11). Manhattan has the third largest concentrations of foster children, followed by Queens and then Staten Island with the least number of children in foster care at a total of 362. Unique to Brooklyn is the overwhelmingly high percentage of African American children in care. Nearly one out of every two children in foster care in Brooklyn is of African American descent. Like in the other boroughs, the most common form of care is the non-relative foster home. The charts on the far left can be referred to for a more thorough display of these and similar demographics.

Within Brooklyn there are concentrations of foster care children in a number of areas. The diagram closest on the left depicts the densities of these children based on their community district and borough of origin. Attention is immediately drawn to Brooklyn, and more specifically its Community District Three, or Bedford-Stuyvesant. Bedford-Stuyvesant has the largest recorded number of children in foster care for any of the community districts in Brooklyn, and one of the largest for all of New York City, as shown in the diagram. Because of this reason, this area will be the focus for implementation of this thesis.

"It [foster care] can make you depressed and sad and I think kids want to see there family I hope I go home soon" -lizzy

21
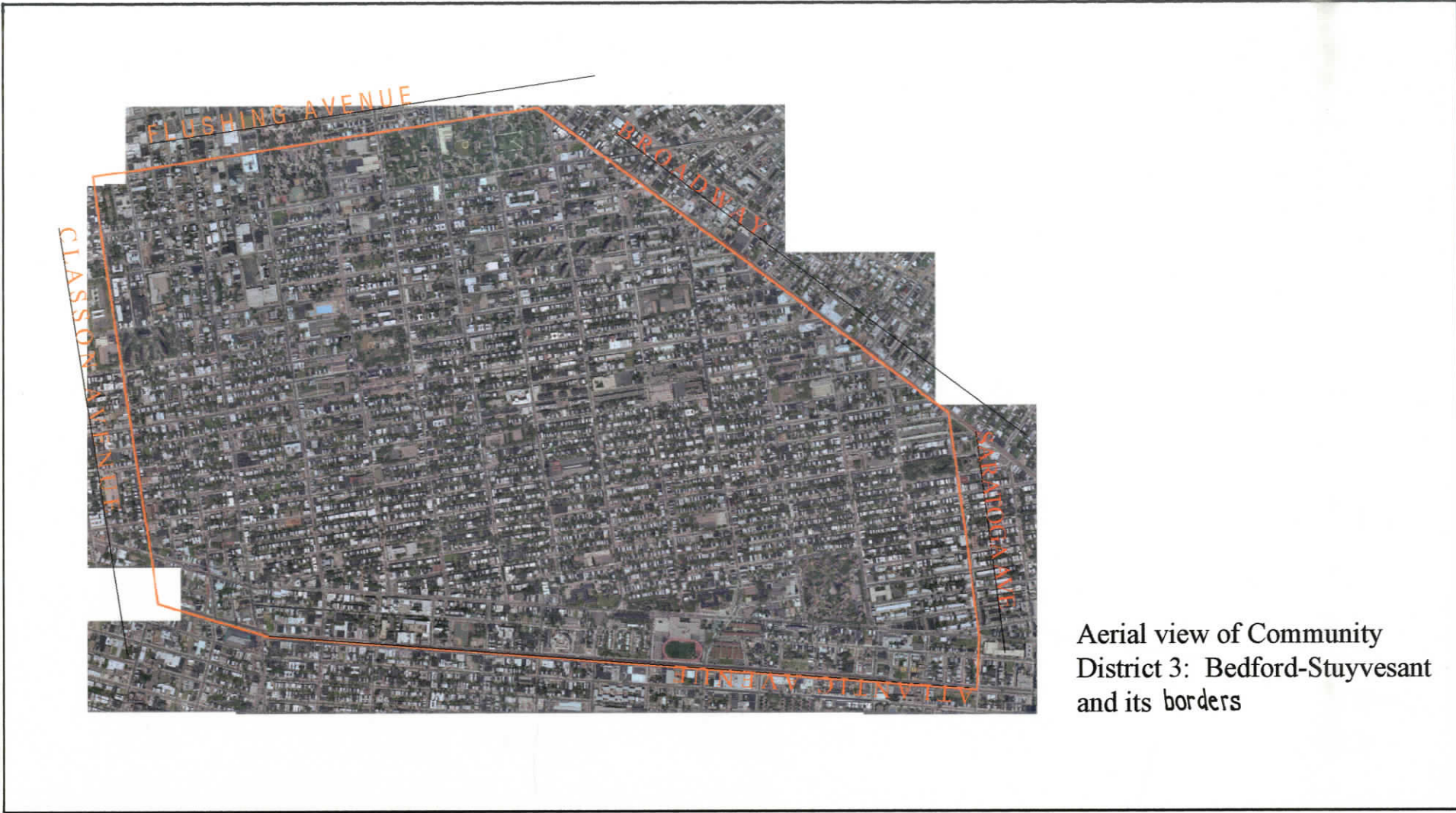
Aerial view of Community District 3: Bedford-Stuyvesant and its borders
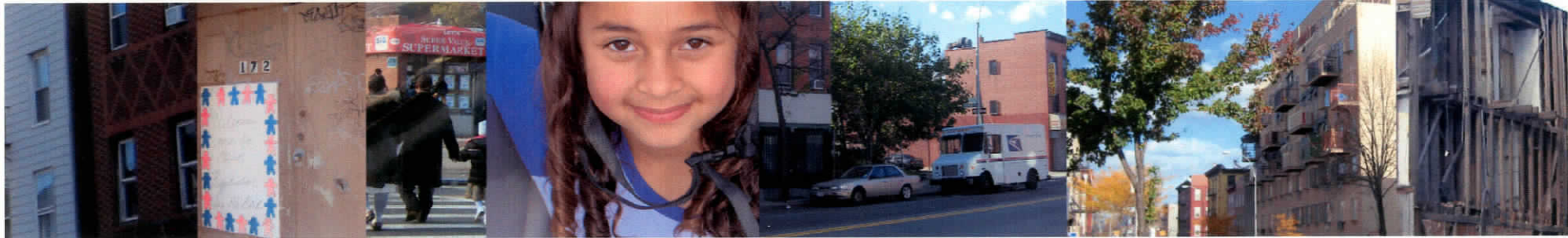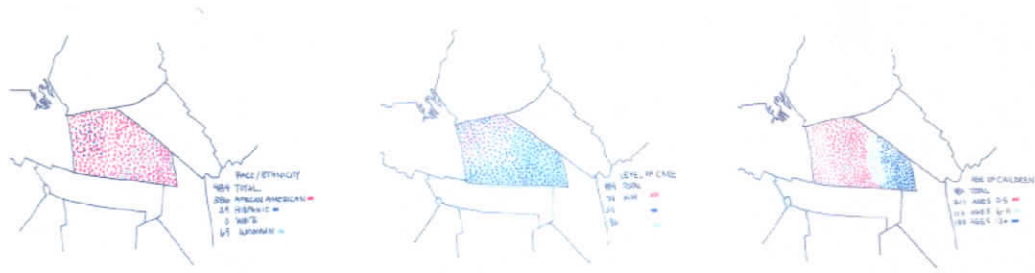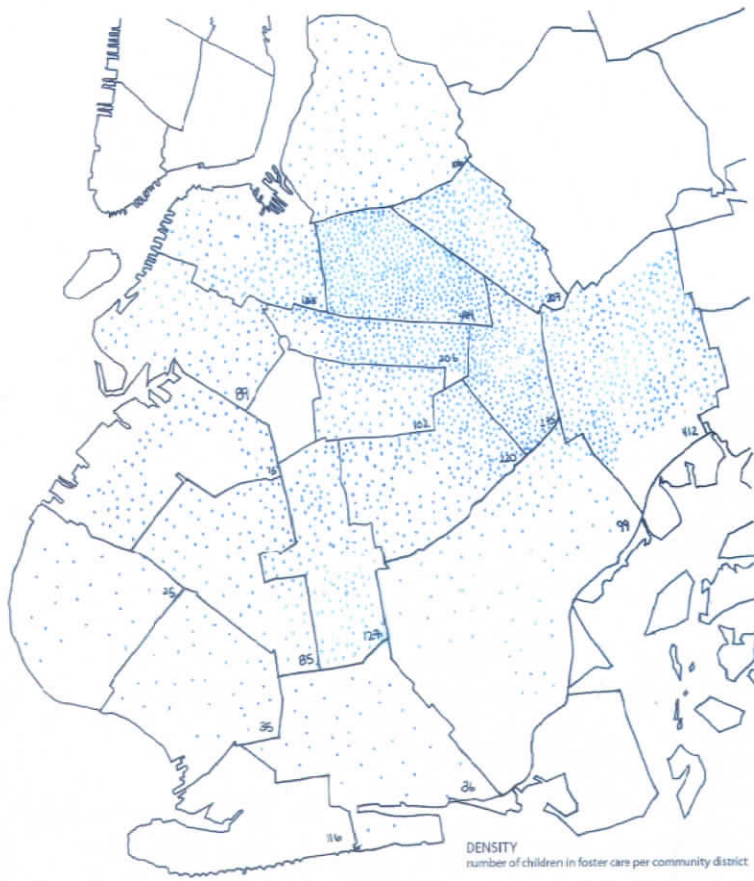
Site Selection and Analysis

Bedford-Stuyvesant, or Bed-Stuy as it is commonly referred to, is a community district in Brooklyn, New York that is only 3 square miles, or 1894.4 acres (NYC Dept. of Planning). It is loosely defined to the North and West by Classon and Flushing Avenues. The Southern border is identified by the city as Atlantic Ave., but is defined by the pedestrian living in Bed-Stuy as Fulton Ave. Fulton is a commercial street two streets North of Atlantic that is flooded with shops, people, and cars. To the East, Bed-Stuy is bound by Broadway, a commercial street of a significantly different character from the rest of Bed-Stuy due to the fact that it is covered by the elevated subway line. It is a dark commercial street, lit with neon discount signs and busy with consumers and loiterers. These commercial boundaries enclose a very residential community, where almost 70 percent of it is composed of single and multi-family residences (NYC Dept. of Planning). Of the remaining land, nine percent of it is vacant, usually serving no other purpose but as mini junk yards for abandoned cars.

Today, Bed-Stuy is fighting hard to pull itself out of a long history of poverty and slum conditions. Its "do or die" motto still lingers in the crime and substance abuse rates and the income levels of its residents. Of the 143,867 people living in Bed-Stuy in 2000, nearly half were on some form of public assistance. This intense poverty was a major contributor to Bed-Stuy's reputation as once the largest ghetto in the United States (Echanove 1). In certain census districts within Bed-Stuy, the median household income is no more than ten or twelve thousand dollars a year. This means that families are being "supported" by little more, or less than one minimum wage job, if any job at all. Almost half of the residents of Bed-Stuy have incomes lower than $25,000 a year. The poverty is also partly responsible for the extremely high population of foster care children in Bed-Stuy. In 1999, a reported 484 children were enrolled in the system in Bed-Stuy alone.

As a result of its history of immigration, Bed-Stuy maintains an ethnic identity of almost 80% African American. Bed-Stuy was first established as Bedford in 1663 by the Dutch West Indian Company. In the 1830's and 40's it drew wealthy Dutch and German New Yorkers and served as a suburb to Manhattan. Within a short time however, the market demand grew for the area and its urbanization began. The elevated subway only accelerated the process because it allowed for fast access to Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn. Money was pumped into the community at a fast pace. At the same time, two African-American settlements were being created just South of Bedford in Weeksville and Carrsville. Bedford came nearly as fast as it went though, and by the time the Great Depression happened, the wealthy neighborhood no longer existed. Residents had sold their houses to working immigrants of multiple descents, who in tern had to sell again because they could not afford the up keep and taxes. Property values plummeted. "The devaluation of Bedford corresponded to the massive migratory flux of black Southerners and West Indians to New York that began in the 1910's and 20's... Bedford became first choice destination for black immigrants," (Echanove 1). This was due in part because of the existing Weeksville and Carrsville communities and because of the opportunities available for African-Americans to purchase land in this part of Brooklyn. Property value continued to drop and the neighborhood began a cycle of red-lining, blockbusting, segregation, and "slumification" (Echanove 1). A number of publicly subsidized housing projects were eventually constructed, and from then on, the neighborhood has been fighting to get out of its past.

"I am a former foster youth I have aged out of care January of 2004 I reall wish I could of have stayed a little longer cause when you out on your own with know family and rising two kids is very hard" -Lilnicci

DENSITY
number of children in foster care per community district

| Borough/ Community District	Total Children	Age			Gender		Race/Ethnicity				Religion			# Siblings in Care*				Level of Care		
Brooklyn		0-5	6-11	≥12	Fem	Male	AfA	Hisp	White	Unk	Prot	Cath	Unk	0	1	2	≥3	Kin	FBH	Cong
BK01 Greenpoint/Williamsburg	106	36.8	31.1	32.1	43.4	56.6	16.0	37.7	3.8	42.5	3.8	30.2	66.0	34.0	23.6	7.5	34.9	29.2	44.3	26.4
BK02 Fort Greene/Brooklyn Hts	133	45.1	24.1	30.8	52.6	47.4	31.6	12.0	2.3	54.1	19.5	12.0	68.4	40.6	18.0	17.3	24.1	6.0	69.2	24.8
BK03 Bedford Stuyvesant	484	44.8	24.2	31.0	51.9	48.1	79.8	6.0		14.3	8.7	1.2	90.1	33.1	23.8	17.4	25.8	15.3	64.3	19.8
BK04 Bushwick	207	44.4	24.2	31.4	47.3	52.7	33.3	24.2	1.4	41.1	3.9	17.4	78.7	31.4	16.9	28.0	23.7	11.6	61.4	27.1
BK05 East New York/Starrett City	412	43.7	26.5	29.9	46.8	53.2	46.8	22.8	1.2	29.1	16.3	6.3	77.4	28.4	18.4	16.7	36.4	8.3	69.2	21.1
BK06 Park Slope/Carroll Gardens	89	39.3	27.0	33.7	48.3	51.7	48.3	20.2	2.2	29.2	23.6	14.6	61.8	29.2	27.0	18.0	25.8	13.5	60.7	23.6
BK07 Sunset Park	75	38.7	25.3	36.0	44.0	56.0	18.7	44.0	1.3	36.0	18.7	28.0	53.3	36.0	21.3	17.3	25.3	21.3	53.3	25.3
BK08 Crown Heights	206	41.7	23.3	35.0	44.2	55.8	55.8	2.4		41.7	18.9	1.9	79.1	35.4	20.4	18.0	26.2	12.1	63.1	24.8
BK09 S Crown Heights/Prospect	102	37.3	26.5	36.3	42.2	57.8	46.1	2.9	1.0	50.0	7.8	12.7	79.4	33.3	26.5	10.8	29.4	24.5	50.0	24.5
BK10 Bay Ridge/Dyker Heights	25	48.0	20.0	32.0	40.0	60.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	76.0		12.0	88.0	48.0	52.0			24.0	56.0	16.0
BK11 Bensonhurst	35	37.1	31.4	31.4	51.4	48.6	8.6	8.6	17.1	65.7		11.4	88.6	34.3	48.6	17.1		28.6	48.6	22.9
BK12 Borough Park	85	31.8	35.3	32.9	55.3	44.7	3.5	23.5	22.4	50.6	1.2	10.6	88.2	20.0	20.0	15.3	44.7	8.2	71.8	20.0
BK13 Coney Island	116	43.1	19.8	37.1	57.8	42.2	35.3	8.6	1.7	54.3	11.2	10.3	78.4	31.9	27.6	20.7	19.8	14.7	61.2	24.1
BK14 Flatbush/Midwood	127	38.6	30.7	30.7	50.4	49.6	38.6	11.0	2.4	48.0	15.0	4.7	80.3	40.9	27.6	12.6	18.9	4.7	69.3	26.0
BK15 Sheepshead Bay	36	33.3	27.8	38.9	36.1	63.9	25.0	19.4	22.2	33.3	16.7	16.7	66.7	41.7	22.2	8.3	27.8	8.3	58.3	33.3
BK16 Brownsville	275	42.5	28.0	29.5	45.1	54.9	58.5	8.7	0.7	32.0	10.2	2.5	87.3	26.9	20.0	21.8	31.3	14.2	62.5	22.5
BK17 East Flatbush	220	44.1	25.0	30.9	51.4	48.6	46.4	2.3		51.4	6.8	1.4	91.8	38.6	22.7	17.7	20.9	9.5	68.2	21.4
BK18 Flatlands/Canarsie	99	28.3	22.2	49.5	62.6	37.4	54.5	12.1	1.0	32.3	11.1	2.0	86.9	57.6	15.2	12.1	15.2	11.1	46.5	42.4
Unknown CD	429	46.4	24.2	29.4	46.9	53.1	44.1	11.9	3.7	40.3	11.7	8.2	80.2	30.5	21.0	23.3	25.2	14.2	64.3	20.5
TOTAL	3,261	42.3	25.6	32.1	48.7	51.3	47.2	13.4	2.4	37.0	11.4	7.8	80.8	33.1	22.1	18.3	26.6	13.2	63.0	23.2

Today, the residents are also fighting to keep their cultural identity because a process of re-gentrification is taking place in Bed-Stuy, just as it has in Harlem. The historic architecture and tree lined streets are becoming more and more desirable to wealthy New Yorkers. Property values are looking to rise and capitalize on this new demand. However, because so many of the Bed-Stuy residents own their homes, the process is happening at a very slow rate. The life-long residents are holding fast to the culture of their neighborhood and fear that they will lose this identity if too many new people move in. As a result, Bed-Stuy has a strong sense of community. They desire to improve their situation through reinvestment from within and on many scales. People that grew up in Bed-Stuy and moved away are returning to raise the next generation of their families there and open up new businesses. On a larger scale, many famous rap artists such as Biggy, Jay-Z, Mos Def and Lil'Kim grew up in Bed-Stuy and are now sharing their stories with the country as well as promoting new programs and donating money to strengthen the neighborhood. They are also very influential and serve as role models for the children of the neighborhood.

The unemployment levels, drug problems, and dependency on public assistance are all key factors responsible for making the foster care population so overwhelmingly large in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The diagram to the far left depicts this density in comparison to the rest of Brooklyn. As shown, Bed-Stuy has the most children in care in all of Brooklyn, but at the same time is one of the geographically smaller community districts. From one side to the next, Bed-Stuy is barely farther than two miles but has nearly 500 children in the foster care system. Furthermore, almost half of these children are under the age of 6, meaning that they were nearly born into the system. The second largest group based on age is those aged 12 and up. These high levels can be accounted for by the system's inabilities to find parents to permanently adopt older children. They are the children typically "stuck" in the system longest. Because of this, the facility designed in this thesis will be geared towards these children, children at the middle school level. The other diagrams to the

left graphically depict some of the demographics listed in the table below. Some of the statistics are very similar to those of the rest of Brooklyn; however the African American population in foster care in Bed-Stuy more closely reflects their population in the rest of Bedford-Stuyvesant and therefore very dominant.

Under the current children's social services national legislation, children in foster care do not have to be placed in an area near or easily accessible to their birth place or home community. In New York City however, the Administration for Children's Services has begun to implement a new policy that will make every attempt to place a child in a foster home within their own community district. When this is not possible, the scope of the goal is then broadened to a placement within the child's borough of origin. The ACS' Placement Principle number Four states that, "Children deserve to be placed with a foster family within their community," (13). It is startling to realize that this type of placement was not always a priority for the system. Placing a child in this way however, reinforces many of the intentions of this thesis. If children from Bed-Stuy or from another area in Brooklyn are only forced to move within their community district or borough, and a network of the foster care facilities that this thesis proposes exists within that area, the children relocate knowing that a familiar facility will be accessible regardless of where their new home actually is. Children will know and understand that these facilities are part of a greater system and its connectedness can help to make up for the lack there of in their placements.
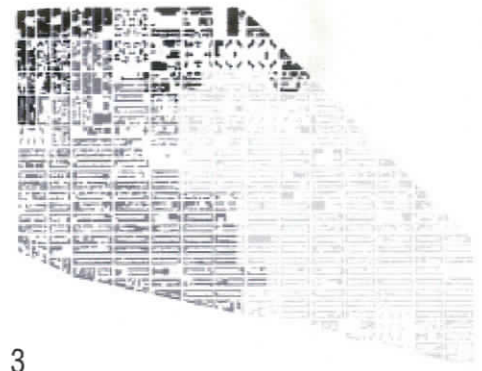
"My opinion to the one's who is still in care just be strong and walk with your head up high, and hang in there until you are 21yrs old it will get better if you make it better"
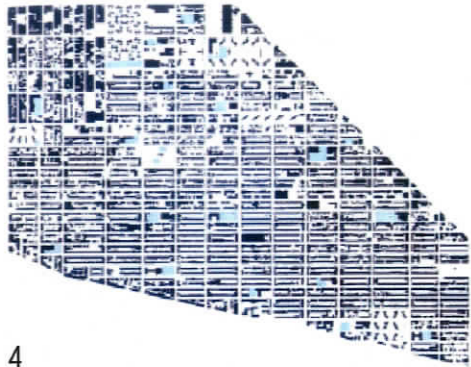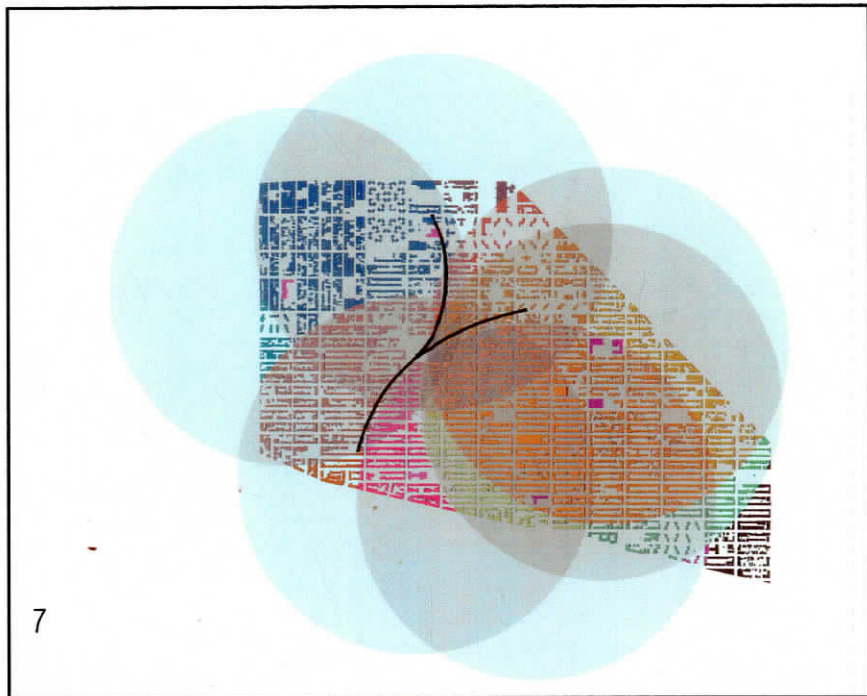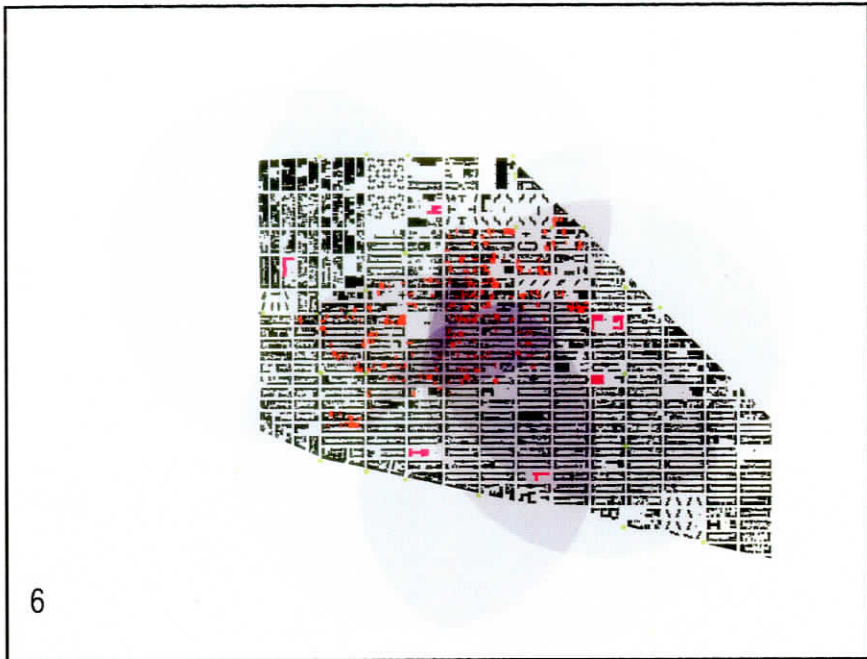-lilnicci
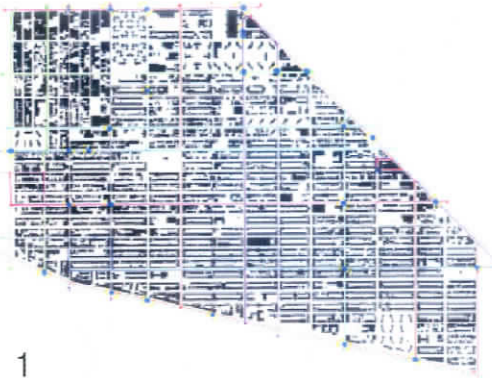
1
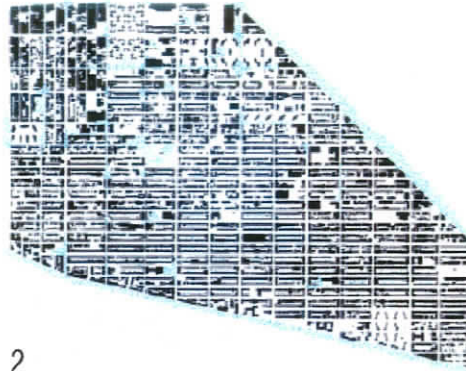
2

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5

1. public transportation
2. street life
3. school districts
4. playgrounds
5. vacant sites
6. school zones and vacant sites
7. overlap

6

7

Seven small sites within Bedford-Stuyvesant have been chosen to implement this thesis project. The diagrams on the opposite page illustrate the steps taken in choosing these particular sites. These diagrams map the vacant sites that make up 9% of all the lots within Bed-Stuy, the playgrounds, the subway and bus routes, the locations of the middle schools and the school district lines, and the densities of people based on speculative observation.

While walking around Bed-Stuy, one quickly notices that there is a type of "street culture" that exists here. People are always spending time out on the street or street corner. You can almost always find men gathering together outside their local bodega, children playing hopscotch, and young boys loitering around the street corners. The streets are dynamic in Bed-Stuy. After mapping the bus routes, I found that the streets that have a bus line on them tended to be more heavily populated. This is interesting however, because the buses only stop every so often within the limits of Bed-Stuy but stop very frequently around its perimeter. This is also true for the subway lines. Two subways run along the edges of Bed-Stuy practically defining its boundaries, but never making the interior accessible. Only once does a subway line enter into the community district and its intrusion is only by a few streets in the upper North-West corner. While Bed-Stuy has easy access to the rest of Brooklyn and Manhattan via the subway and bus systems, it is really only from the periphery that this happens, leaving the inside with a much more sedentary feeling. Because people are walking everywhere they go they are not going very far from home, and therefore even a two mile district can be divided into many smaller localized zones.

"I have attended meetings about my case... it was really hard, i mean you have to face people that hurt you, and sometimes it can be really scary...but you get through, and there's always people that are there to let you know that it's okay" -mika

One such localized zoning is created by each of the seven middle schools. Because the foster care facility to be designed is going to be geared toward children ages 10-15, the locations of the middle schools within Bed-Stuy were plotted out. From each middle school a sphere was created that signifies how far a child can walk from the school in any direction in ten minutes or less. Each sphere represents the local zone for that school. The zones are not autonomous however, because each one overlaps at least one other school's. Exactly where these zones overlap has proven to be vital in the selection of the sites. Instead of placing a facility in the zone of each school, the sites were chosen to fall within the areas that have the most overlap, so that the facilities can serve to bring multiple zones together.

As it turns out, and as seen by the diagram, the area in which this overlapping occurs is across the middle of the community, the same area that is disjoined from the public transportation system. Rather than continuing the pattern of creating systems that emphasize and define the perimeter of Bed-Stuy, the sites across the middle of the community will create an organized system within the interior of the district that will serve to hold together the many local niches. These sites also bridge the invisible divide in the community created by the school district boundaries. Within such a small community, three different school districts exist. Therefore, even if a foster child is placed within their community district of origin, Bedford-Stuyvesant, there is only a 33% chance they will be able to stay at the same school. By bridging these boundaries, the child can change schools but still have access to the same facility or one just like it, because they are all within the set distance from the schools.

"ever since i've been in foster care it has been a lot better.because i got a family that cares and ather stuff.now i get to see my grandpa and i had a restaning order and now i get to spend a lot of time with hime." -nikki

<--composite diagram - all systems and zones together
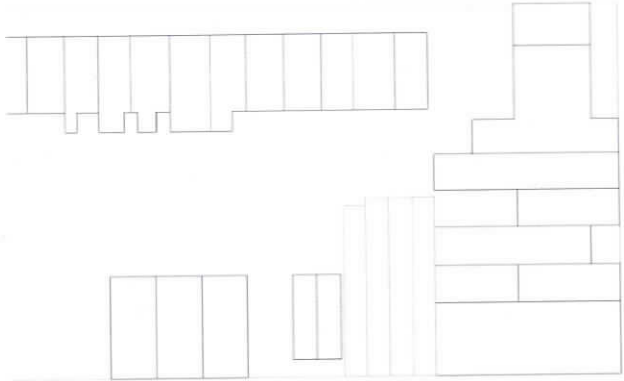
<---------------------Site 1

173 Jefferson Avenue
Block 1827 Lots 63-66
R6 Residential
FAR: 2.43

12.5' x 91.5' = 1197 s.f.
12.5' x 96'   = 1200 s.f.
12.5' x 96'   = 1200 s.f.
12.5 x 96.5' = 1206.5 s.f.

total   = 4803.5 s.f.
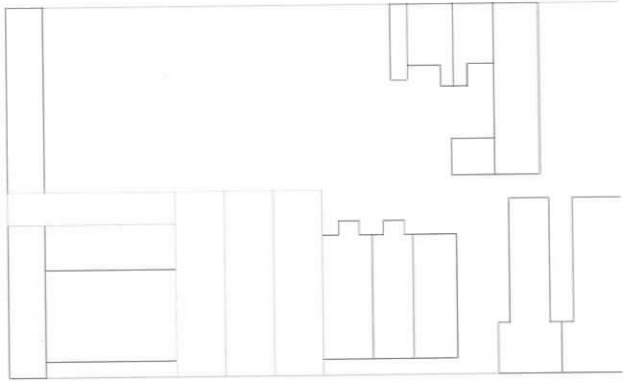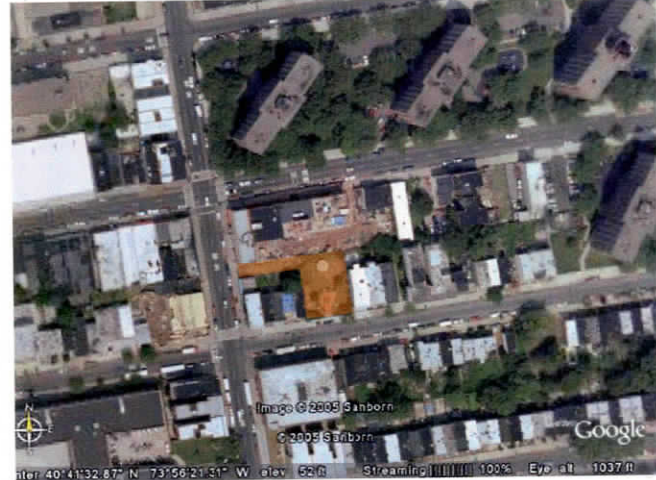
<---------------------Site 2

175 Marcus Garvey Blvd.
Block 1601 Lots 1
R6 Residential
FAR: 2.43
18' x 100'   = 1800 s.f.
385 Kosciusko Street
Block 1601 Lots 61-63
26.67' x 100' = 2667 s.f.
26.67' x 100' = 2667 s.f.
26.67' x 100' = 2667 s.f.

total   = 9801 s.f.
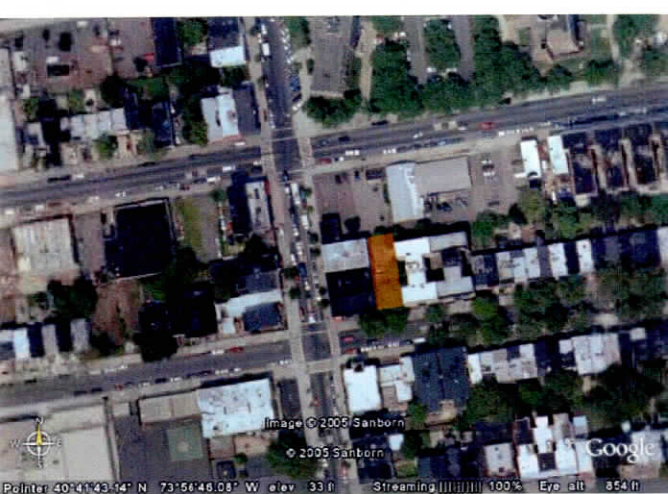
155 Vernon Avenue
Block 1756 Lot 75
R6 Residential
FAR: 2.43

20' x 100'   = 2000 s.f.

total   = 2000 s.f.
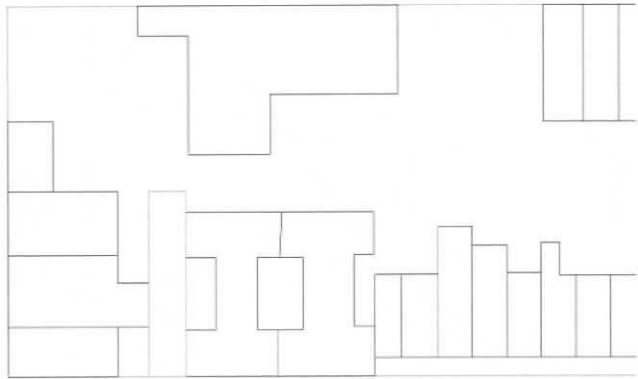
On this and the following page, each site is shown in an aerial photograph as well as in plan. These seven sites were chosen because each site possesses a unique set of criteria that will test the manipulation of the grid as a spatial strategy in a different way. Each allows for new opportunities to create very specific moves in the grid because of its surrounding context. Many of the sites also front, or have multiple fronts that are located on mixed program streets. While the majority of the community is zoned for residential use, these sites typically have commercial or institutional activity in addition to housing happening around them. The limits of the manipulation of the grid will be tested further due to the fact that the sites also vary in size and density from one another. A more detailed description of the regulations of all of the sites can be found next to each site's photograph or plan.

"At least I knew what to expect from my parents, but I never expected to be abused by the people who were supposed to be saving me." - Sharde

31
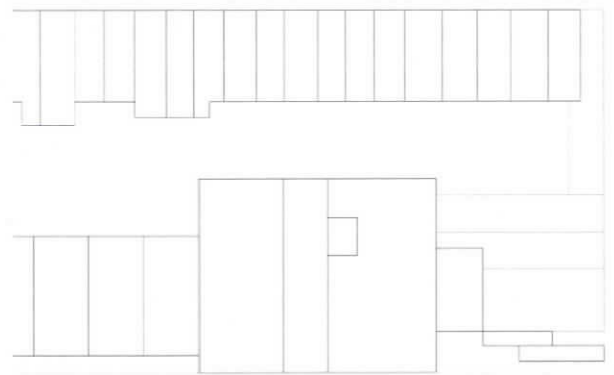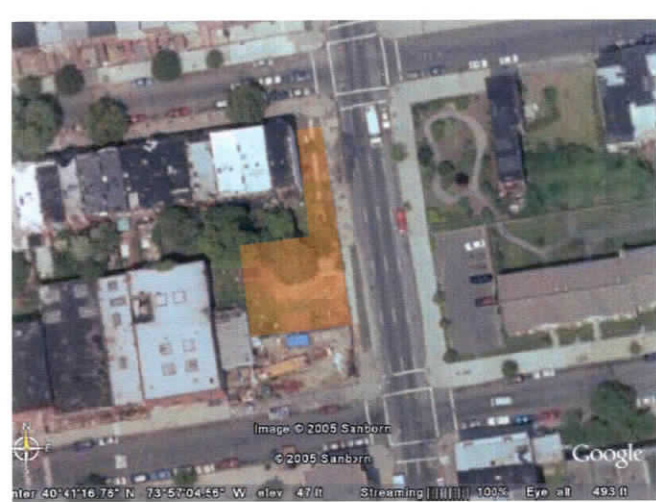
<------------------------Site 4

490 Greene Avenue
Block 1797 Lots 57,59,60
R6 Residential
FAR: 2.43

20' x 100'	=	2000 s.f.
20' x 100'	=	2000 s.f.
20' x 100'	=	2000 s.f.

total   = 6000 s.f.**
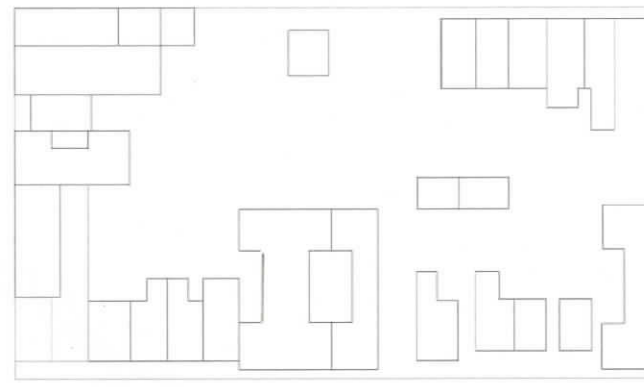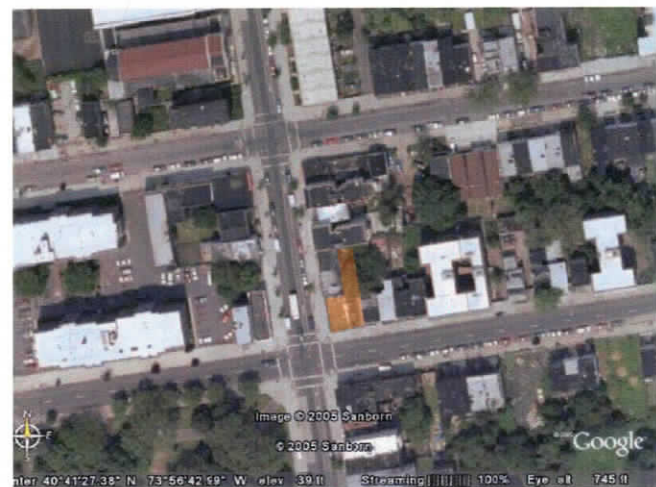
<------------------------Site 5

699 Lafayette Avenue
Block 1786 Lot 72
R6 Residential
FAR: 2.43

20.5' x 100' = 2050 s.f.

total   = 2050 s.f.
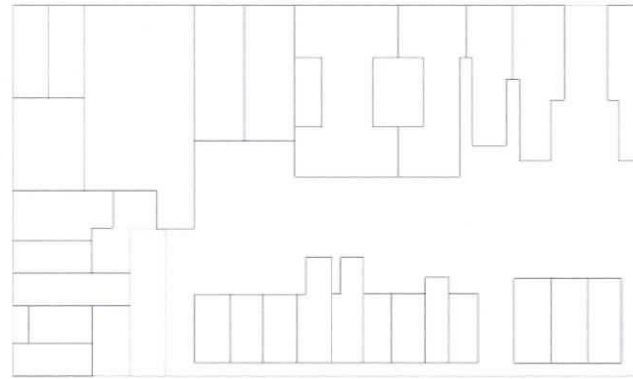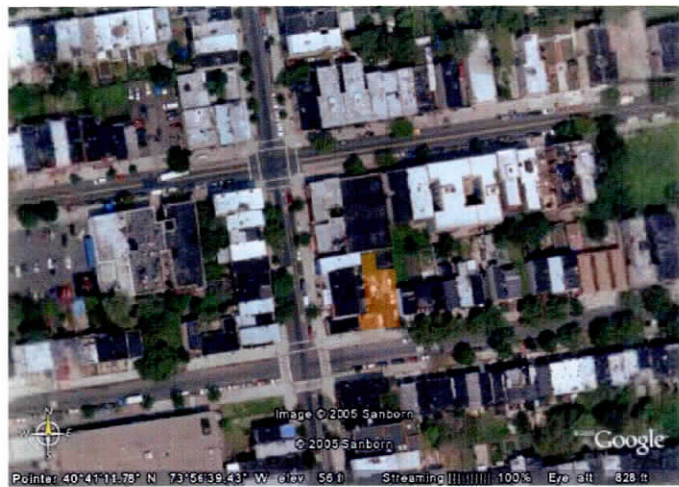
<------------------------Site 6
343 Monroe Street
Block 1815 Lots 79
R6 Residential
FAR: 2.43

19' x 79.5' = 1511 s.f.

total   = 1511 s.f.**
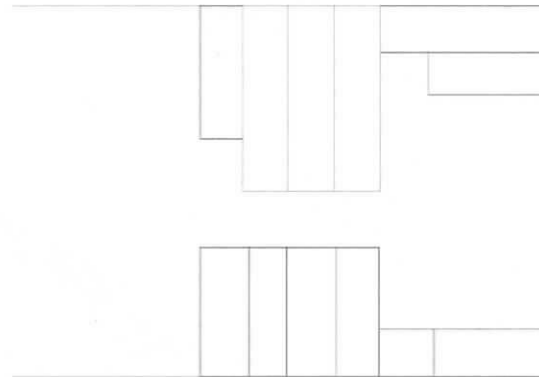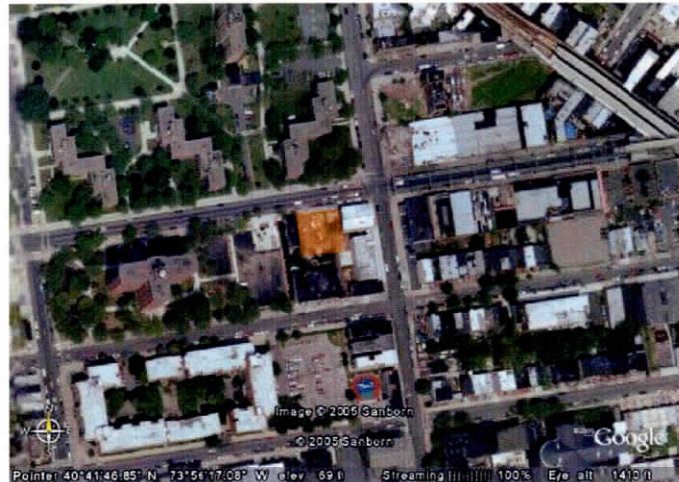
<------------------------Site 7
1066 Myrtle Avenue
Block 1585 Lots 31,32,33
R6 Residential
FAR: 2.43

25' x 100' = 2500 s.f.
25' x 100' = 2500 s.f.
25' x 100' = 2500 s.f.

total   = 2500 s.f.

"My life has changed so much because I have moved all over and so I never could make friends and then stay in contact with them when I moved. I don't get the freedom that I thought I would get and I also don't get to see my family as often because I live so far away from them." - Starling

DENSITY
number of children in foster care per community district
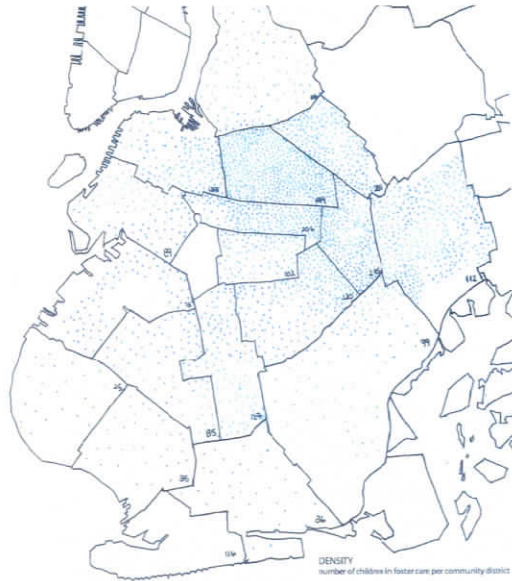
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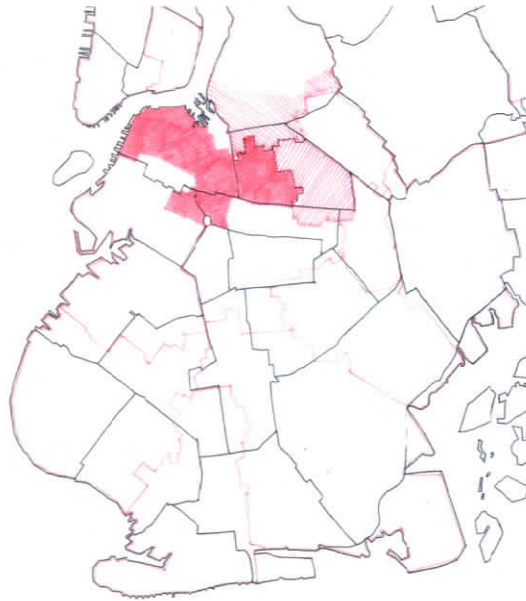
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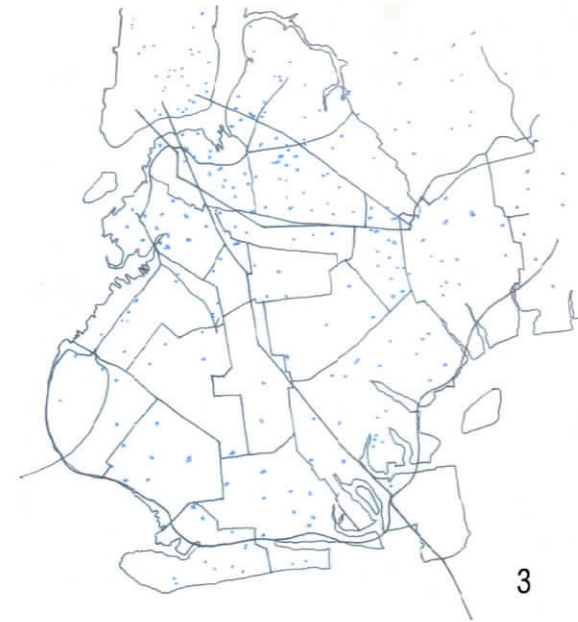
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4

5

1. density of foster care population
2. school districts
3. playgrounds
4. community districts
5. police districts
6. parks and community gardens
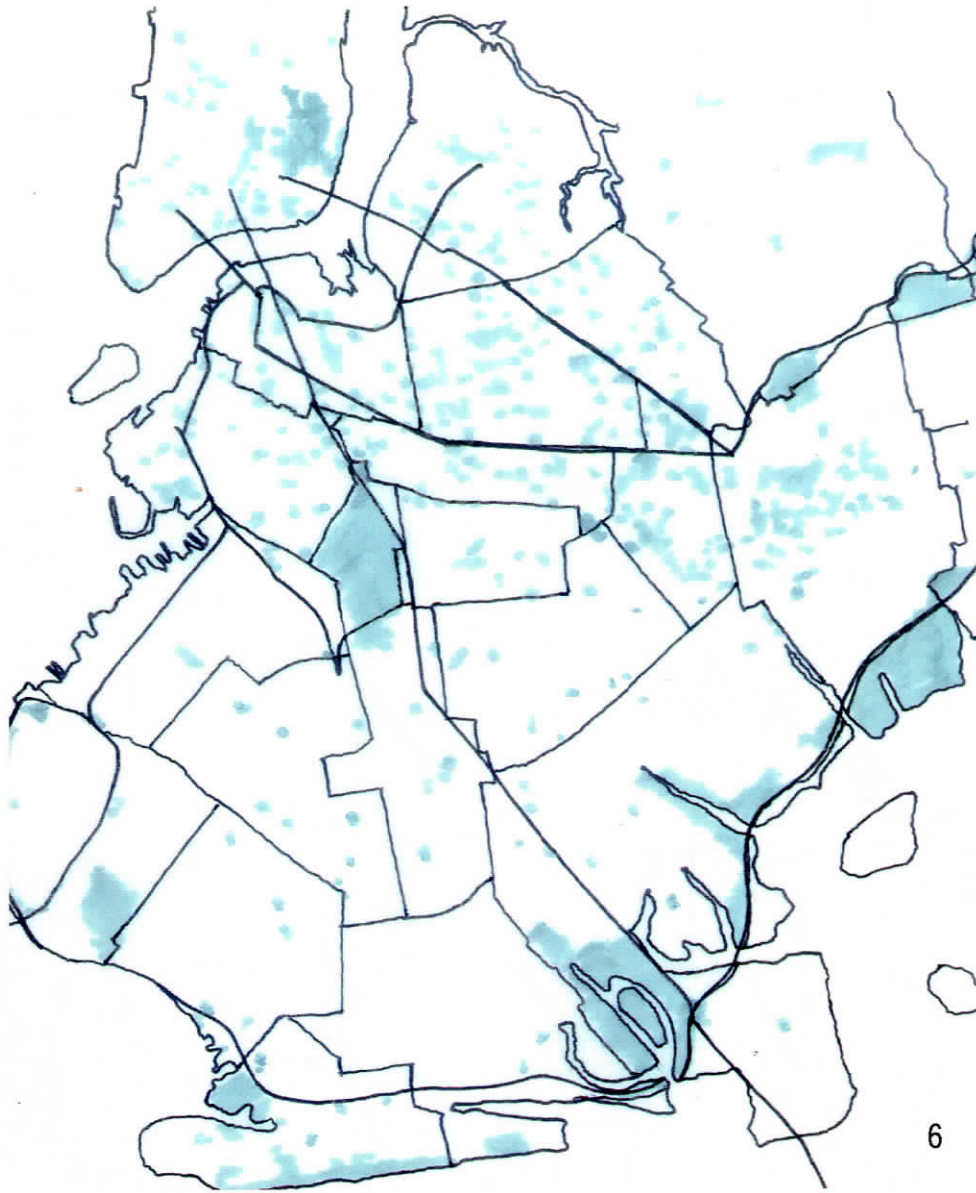
The foster care system to be designed will be executed for this thesis project within Bedford-Stuyvesant. However, in principle and ideally, the system could be employed on a much larger scale and exist throughout all of Brooklyn and possibly New York City. The location and number of facilities in any given area would be determined in a similar fashion as the ones in Bed-Stuy were. Foster care density and the number of facilities required are in direct relationship to each other. Additionally, the facilities do not have to be limited to the confinements of the individual community districts and can serve as a bridge between these as well. Each facility would still be executed with the same spatial strategy defined by the ones designed for Bedford-Stuyvesant, but would respond uniquely to their given site conditions and the character of the district or borough they are placed within. This way, as a child moves throughout the borough from placement to placement, they always know how to find one of these facilities and can anticipate what services it offers for them. They are able to rely on the stability of the repetition of change.

The opposite page illustrates the various systems that currently exist throughout Brooklyn that are pertinent to the implementation of the one proposed by this thesis. All of these systems were mapped on a local scale within Bedford-Stuyvesant but now can be understood in their relationship to the larger context. It is interesting to note that the areas with high densities of foster care children are also those areas with a high percentage of vacant land and community gardens, but not specifically designated park land or playgrounds. These inconsistencies speak to verify the need for a new network of facilities within these areas to cater to the needs of its community.

"I now have a real family with children that look up to me. I am no longer being abused in any way, shape or form. I have a family that loves me unconditionally now."
-twisted tink

6
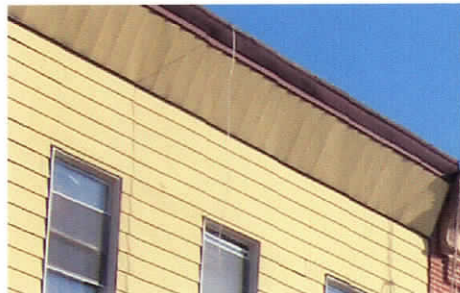
Material Palette

While each facility designed, and more specifically, each of the seven sites in Bed-Stuy will be understood as emerging from the same spatial strategy of the grid proposed, each grid will become specific and respond to the various site conditions. Additionally, each unique site will respond to the material palette given within its context. Therefore, the grid not only becomes specific through spatial manipulation, its material properties create another layer of specificity. By doing this, the facilities designed will become knit into the context that surrounds them; giving a modular, changeable, and adaptable grid a sense of stability and most importantly, belonging. Running along the bottom of each left page in this book is a series of photos that explore the various materials that make up the eclectic palette of Bedford-Stuyvesant. These materials will be explored in depth to determine how they exist at various levels in and around each site, and how they can be employed in design to promote identity. The material and style juxtapositions that occur all over Bed-Stuy make for very dynamic contrasts and contradictions that can either be mediated or highlighted by the ways in which they are responded to in the sites. One such contradiction is expressed in the photo comparison on the opposite page. These streets are one block away from each other, follow the same lot size module and repetition, but have distinctively different characteristics due to their material properties.

"My first day in foster care (a shelter) was a mix of emotions for me, but primarily I was scared. I was scared that my Dad would find me and hurt me. I was scared that my friends wouldn't like me anymore. I was scared that I might never see my brothers and sisters again. I cried all day and staff had to stay back with me while all the other kids and staff went to the YMCA for the day. I'll never forget that day." - little debbie

Program

Core Program Found in Every Facility

Social Worker's Offices (2 @ 150 s.f. each)	300 s. f.
Caseworker's Office	100 s. f.
Legal Representation Office	100 s. f
Therapist Office	100 s. f.
Additional Office	100 s. f.
Doctor's Office	200 s. f.
Safe room	100 s. f.
Kitchenette and Faculty Room	300 s. f.
Classroom(s) (2 @ 400 s.f. each)	800 s. f.
Public Mentoring/Meeting/Teaching Areas	4,00 s. f.
Computer Clusters/Reading Room	4,00 s. f.
Bathrooms (2 @ 100 s.f. each)	200 s. f.
Storage	200 s. f.
Recreation area (indoor and out)	min. 2,000 s. f. *
	total = 4,900 s. f.
Circulation and Support @ 10% of Entire Program	min. 490 s. f. *

MINIMUM TOTAL = 5,380 s. f.

Additional Program based on Site

Recreation Spaces will be determined by the size and configuration of each site.
These may include:
Playground
Stage (in or outdoor)
Dance Studio
Game Room
Music Rooms
Splash Pools

KID REQUESTED PROGRAM:

Question:

What if there was a place designed just for you? Sort of like an after school center where you could meet your friends also in foster care, meet with a mentor, meet with your case worker if you needed to, and really just hang out in a space that was designed just for kids in foster care in your area. What kind of recreation facilities (gyms, dance studios, play grounds--ANYTHING) would you want to have there?

Responses:

"if i had a place like that i would go to it and i would want a play ground to run around on and get out all the energy i bilud up siting in school hope it helps" – anonymous

"...i would think a game room would be good, with video games, pool tables, foosball, air hockey, board games, etc. would be really nice too" – iowalady

"I've always been a person for reading ever since before I was in foster care and I always loved the library. I would have enjoyed a facility that had some type of book area especially with law related books and books about black history and books by black authors. I just love to read period so that would have helped a lot" – keishabug

"I think it is a great idea to have a community type center for children in foster care. I would enjoy a basketball court, playground for younger kids, and a game room where there could be electronic games and board games set up. Maybe even a pool table, ping pong table, and a foose ball table. If you could find caring adults to work at the center it would be great for foster parents who have a job and need somewhere for their foster children to go until they get off of work. Also this could also be a place where independent living classes are taught and seminars and training sessions for foster parents could take place there" – bigsister

Program Analysis

The program for this thesis works in two parts. The first part is the core program that will exist in all seven sites and ideally in any other facility designed as part of this system. No matter which facility a child is closest to, they will know that they will be able to fulfill certain basic needs there. A great deal of freedom exists in the program because many of the spaces can be overlapping, communal, and flexible, however, there are a few spaces that need special requirements. The offices should be acoustically isolated from each other and the rest of the building for confidentiality reasons. Additionally, the safe room, for children with reactive attachment disorders and anger issues, must be designed in such a way that suicidal children can have privacy, without any potential for them to harm themselves while in the room. This essentially empty space has the potential to be very elemental and soothing if ideas of light and material are thoroughly explored. The public mentor/meeting rooms and reading/computer areas should be a mix between spaces that are easily accessible to the street and those that are more private and intimate. In the publicly assessable areas, children in foster care will have the opportunity to interact with the community on a different level than they typically do. This part of the program offers the children an opportunity to volunteer their own services. Activities that may occur here can include: teaching other children to read, teaching the elderly how to use a computer and the internet and the like. In doing this, reciprocity is created between the facility and the community. It begins to take the street life of Bedford-Stuyvesant and bring it in.

The second part of the program is the recreation component. Two thousand square feet of recreation space is required for each facility. Depending on the size of the site though, more space can be allocated to recreation. Also depending on the size and configuration of the site is what type of recreation facilities will be offered. Since there are seven sites within a small area, each facility does not need to have all of the same elements of recreation as the others do, but will be open to any child in the foster care system. One site may have an outdoor stage and music room so that aspiring rap stars can put on concerts for the local community in a place more suited for children than a local bar or club. Another site may have splash pools and water spouts designed into their playground for the summer months. In designing these facilities, there is a set requirement for a recreation space, but the idea is that the entire building can be conceived as recreation. Rather than having hallways solely for circulation, the connections between spaces will be designed for children to play and inhabit just as much as they would on the typical playground.

The entire program is calculated and shown on the opposite page. Next to these requirements are ideas for the recreation component that come from actual children in foster care. For this research, I posted the question written on the top of the page on a website designed just for foster kids. Below it are the responses I received.

> "i have 12 sibs and i have no clue where they are now. If the state seperates us they should have to pay to find them! I hate the fact that they just ripped us apart. we were all that each of us had after losing our family. haven't we been through enough already?!"
> - bubbles
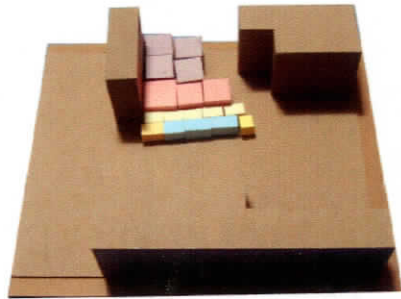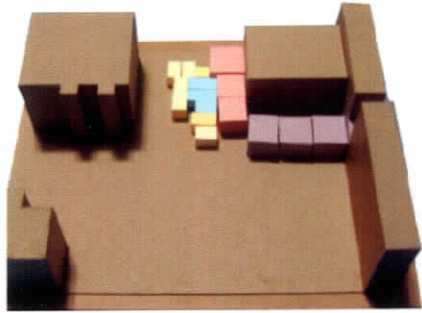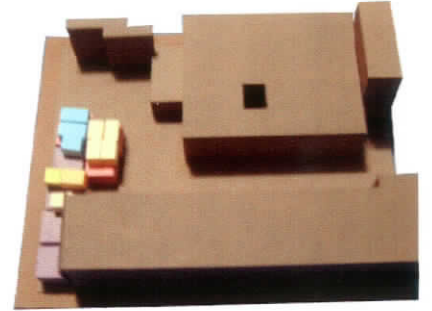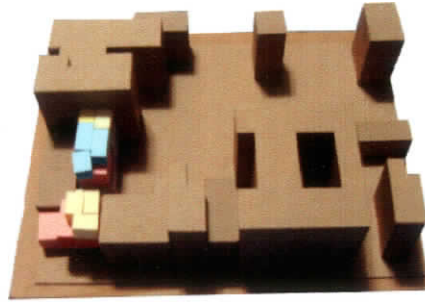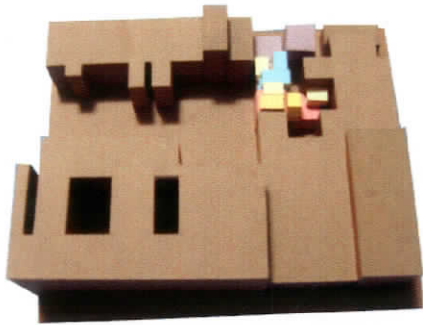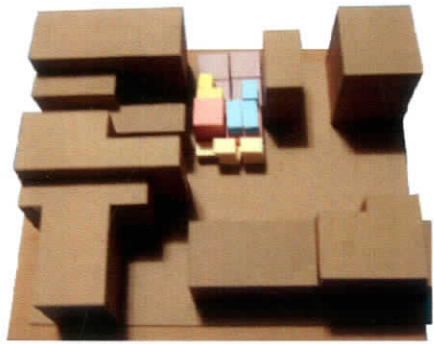
The models on the opposite page show how the minimum required program fits within each site. This amount of program fits appropriately for the narrow, infill sites, but is too small for the more open sites because it gets lost in the model. This is why additional recreation space is to be added to these sites so that the facility can command more of its surroundings.

Further investigation into the program is required to determine how it will interact with the grid. The grid can either be a system that wraps and defines each program piece, or one that intersects the program as if it were a conceptual solid. Depending The relationship the grid has with the program will also determine if that configuration remains consistent throughout all of the facilities for the common program, or if the grid's configuration in relation to the program will exists independently in each site. Another question to be answered is if the material selection for the common program is the same throughout the system, or dependent on other factors.
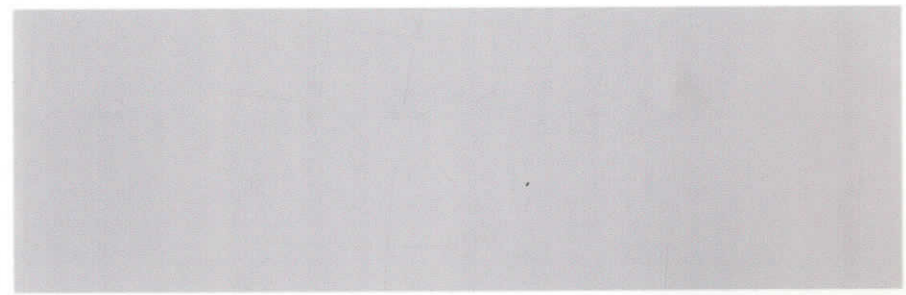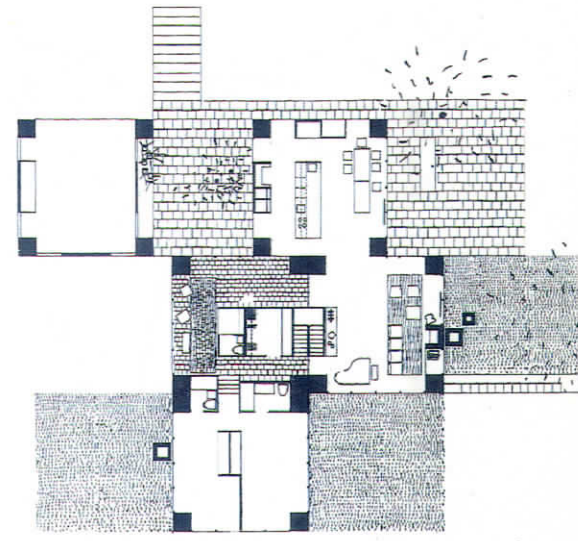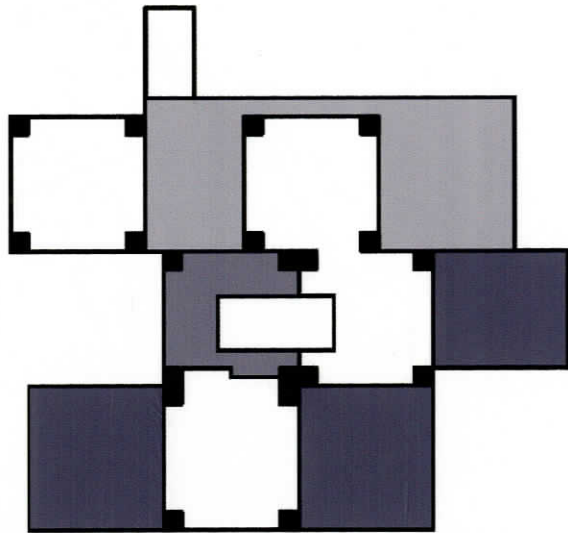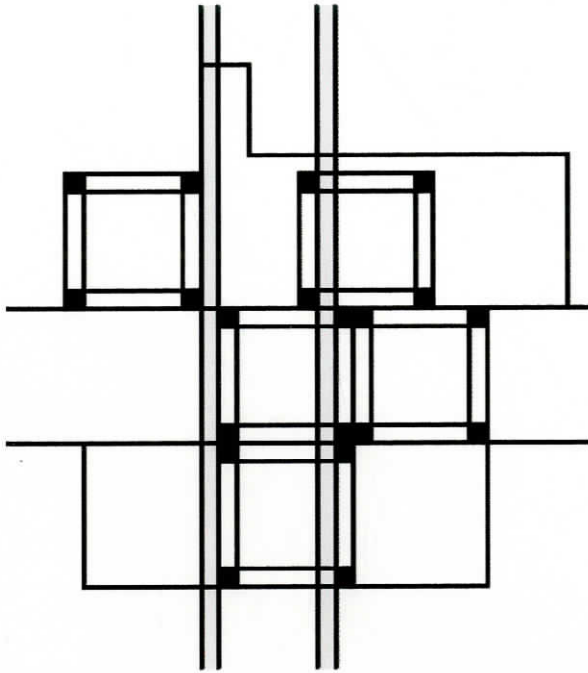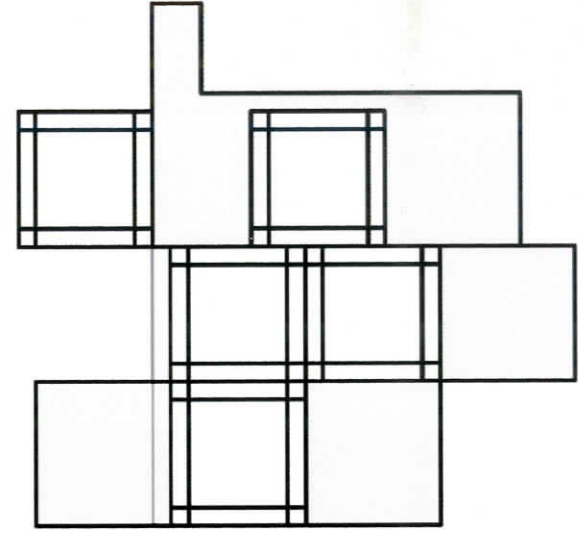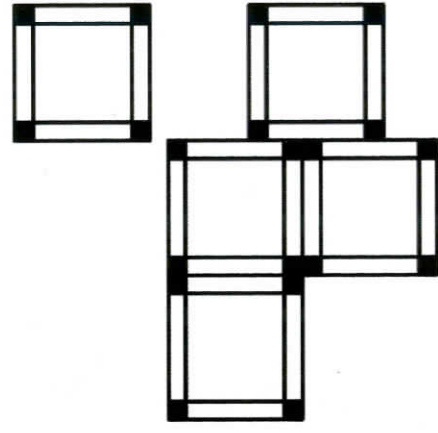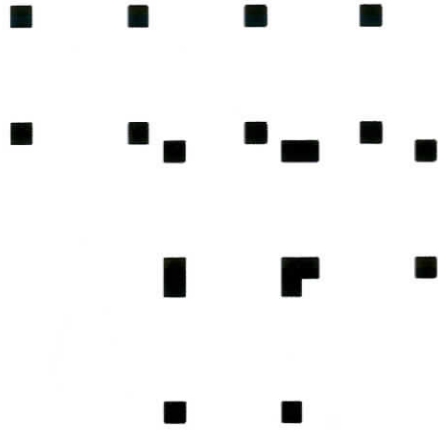
Precedent Analysis

The Adler House is a project about the interaction between the abstract concept of the grid and the very tangible notions of materiality. The grid is not seen as a universally repeated and unending module, but rather, it is made specific by the places in which the grid shifts. This differs from the use of the grid in Kahn's design of the Trenton Bath House. In both projects, the grid is defined by the structural system composed of seemingly massive piers. In the Adler House however, an interstitial space is created when the grid shifts itself. Thus, the abstract notion of the grid as an organizing principle becomes revealed and inhabitable. It is now a project of structure and void, where the void is created both by the structure that defines the module's corners and by the areas created after the modules have shifted. The regulation and control of the universal grid gives way to the potential for various acts of life to occur around and within these spaces.

The material selection and placement exploit the use of the grid and reveal its shifting on the ground. A project once just about structure and void is now very specifically about the line between these two as set up and reinforced by the juxtaposition of specific materials.
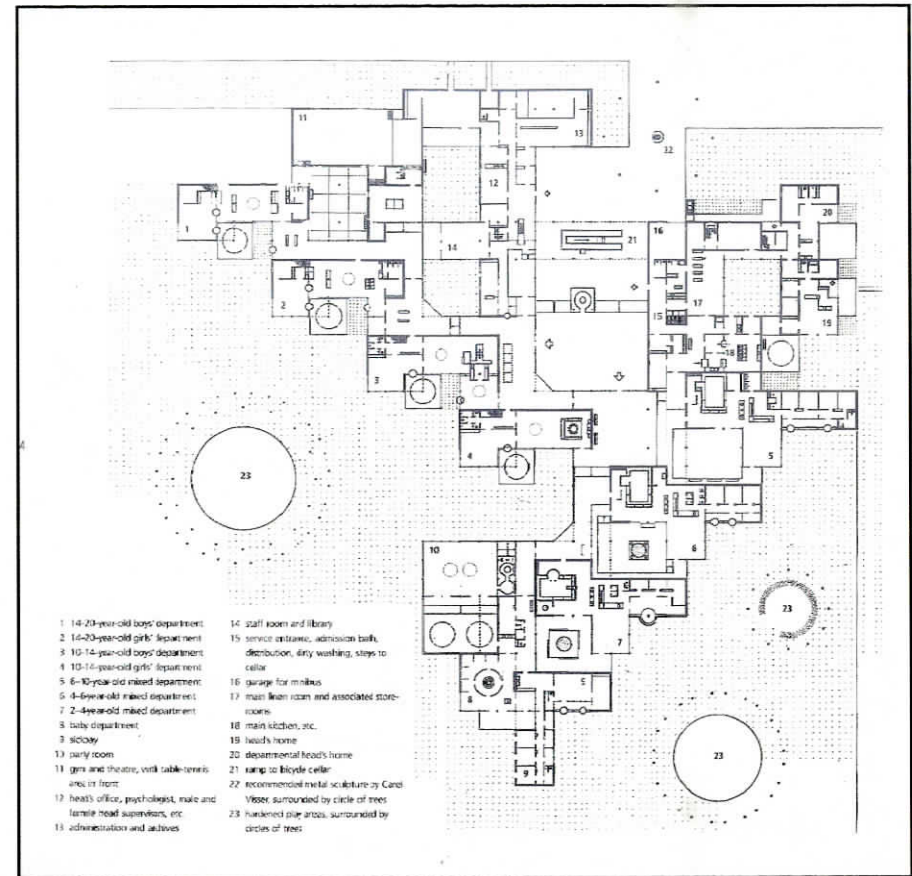
In this thesis, one possible way of making the grid specific is to allow it to shift to respond to its site condition, as in the Adler House. Or, a physical and identifiable shift may not be necessary, but the result of it should be considered. That is, the interstitial space created when the grid shifts creates opportunities for dwelling, or human happenstance. This would be one way to facilitate place attachment in the facility without relying on the very regulating, controlled environment of the institution to do so.

Project: The Adler House
Architect: Louis I. Kahn
Date: 1954-1955 (unbuilt)
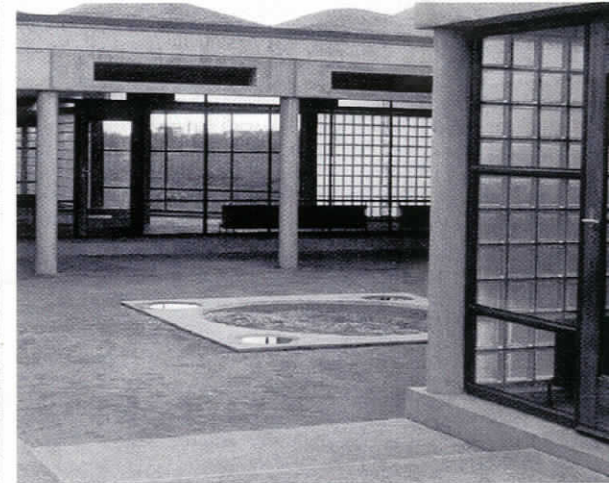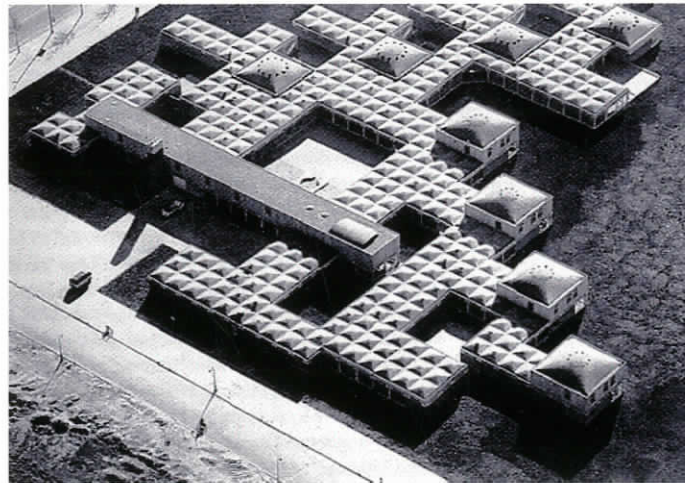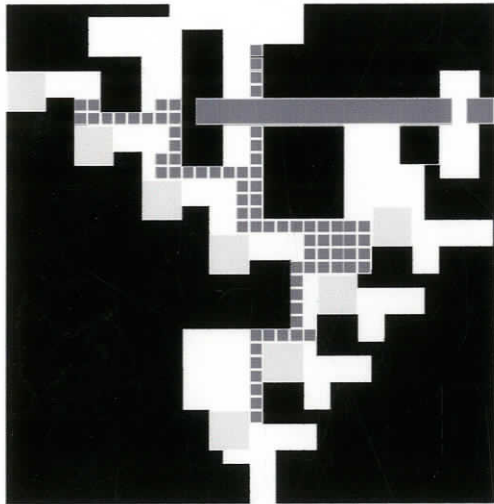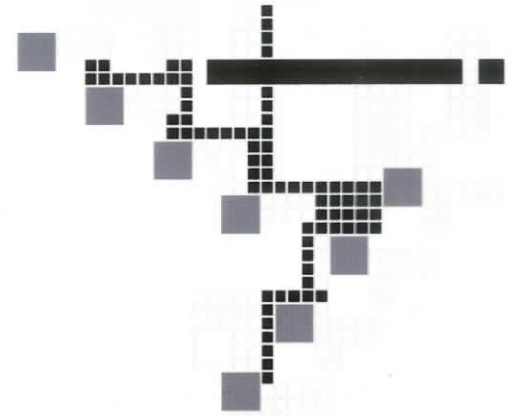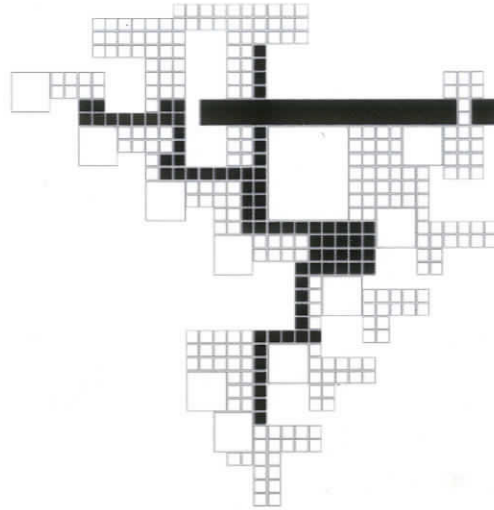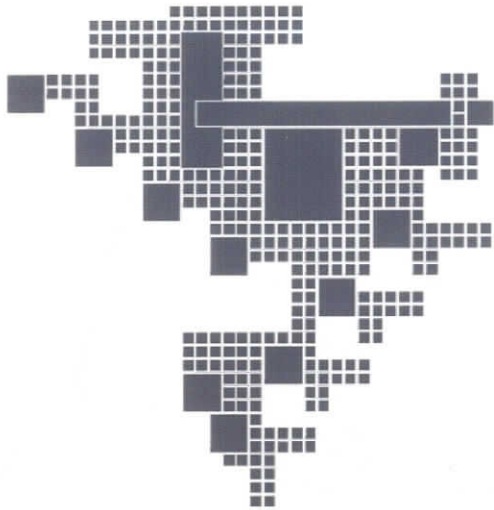
The Amsterdam Orphanage is a study in polarities. It works to reconcile the notions of part to whole, individual and collective, unity and diversity, and house and city, without giving artificial dominance to one or the other. Rather than studying the abstract phenomena of space and time here, Van Eyck chooses the more tangible concepts of place and occasion. Van Eyck is quoted saying, "Place and occasion constitute each other's realization in human terms," (Ligtelijn 89). This distinction is likely to be made as a result of the program of the building, an orphanage. The children living in this facility, much like foster children, are missing opportunities to dwell in a specific place and as Van Eyck said, "…since place and occasion imply participation in what exists, lack of place- and thus occasion- will cause loss of identity, isolation and frustration," (Ligtelijn 98). This is just the situation discussed earlier as a result of the deinstitutionalization of children's welfare. The Van Eyck Orphanage differs from the "institution" diagram because it is not an attempt to consolidate and isolate, but rather it sits in between segregation and integration. The children still go to school and work outside of the orphanage, but are living in one continuous, connected facility just outside the city limits. For the "institution" diagram the grid represents control and order, but for Van Eyck, the grid and module in this project are employed to create a frame work upon which larger gestures of collection can occur.   These larger communal courtyards are linked by what Van Eyck refers to as "internal streets". The passageways promote the mixing of the ages within the facility and allow the individual to be perceived against the collective. They also serve as clearly defined transitions zone that modulate the juxtaposition of these dualities making them comprehensible. The material qualities of the "streets" also reinforce that metaphor and are specifically materials one would find on the street, like concrete. They are also lit the way the streets are lit at night. This distinction was made to encourage children to be as free as they would in the streets.

The concept of "internal streets" is interesting in this thesis because Bedford-Stuyvesant has such a dynamic street culture. Bringing notions of "street" culture into the buildings to be designed would facilitate the ability for people to "participate in what exists" and therefore define place and occasion for Bed-Stuy.

1 14-20-year-old boys' department
2 14-20-year-old girls' department
3 10-14-year-old boys' department
4 10-14-year-old girls' department
5 6-10-year-old mixed department
6 4-6-year-old mixed department
7 2-4-year-old mixed department
8 baby department
9 sickbay
10 party room
11 gym and theatre, with table-tennis area in front
12 head's office, psychologist, male and female head supervisors, etc
13 administration and archives
14 staff room and library
15 service entrance, admission bath, distribution, dirty washing, steps to cellar
16 garage for minibus
17 main linen room and associated storerooms
18 main kitchen, etc.
19 head's home
20 departmental head's home
21 ramp to bicycle cellar
22 recommended metal sculpture by Carel Visser, surrounded by circle of trees
23 hardened play areas, surrounded by circles of trees

Project: Amsterdam Orphanage
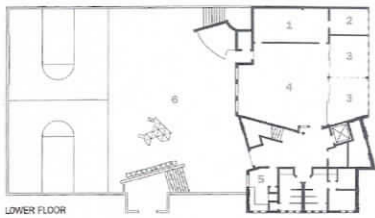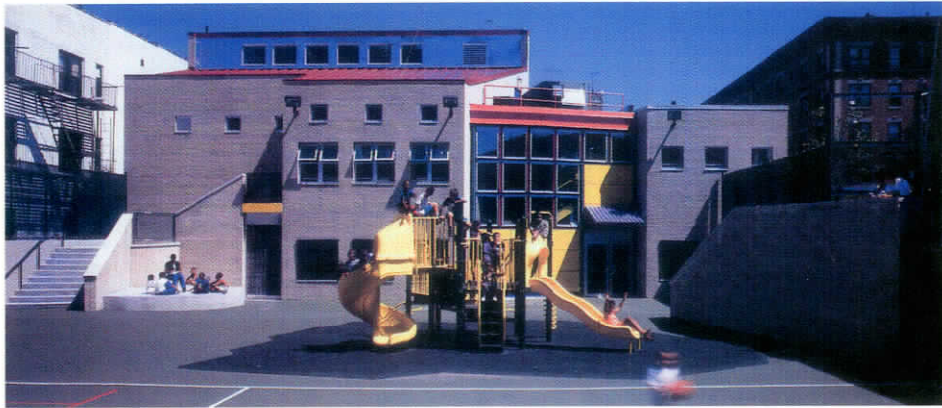Architect: Aldo Van Eyck
Date: 1960-1961

Between 1947 and 1978, Aldo Van Eyck designed and contributed to]0 playgrounds within Amsterdam. The playgrounds were built in rundown fill sites that were serving no public good. In creating 700 of these small ayground scattered throughout the city, Van Eyck developed a new infra- 'ucture system geared toward children. The playgrounds were designed to : understood as part of a greater whole. As Van Eyck describes it, "They [the iildren] are now, at any rate, more visibly located clearly there or on their ay," (Ligtelijn 68). The understanding that each playground exists to fill the :e it is given, but also to be a piece within a larger framework validates Van 'ck's statement and enforces the idea of places within spaces.

The playgrounds influenced the types of sites that have been chosen r this thesis, since Bed-Stuy has such a large number of vacant and depleted ts. Also, Van Eyck's playgrounds demonstrate the idea of using a repetition difference to create a unified system, which carries over into the proposed oject. Specific to this thesis but supported by Van Eyck's quote is the cre- on of local zones around the middle schools of Bed-Stuy. The children are ther at the foster care facility, or within a ten minute walk of one always.
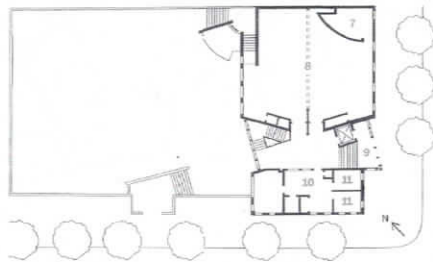

Project: Playgrounds of Amsterdam
Architect: Aldo Van Eyck
Date: 1947-1978

1. Workshop
2. Mechanical
3. Classroom
4. Recreation

5. Staff
6. Playground
7. Storage
8. Multipurpose

9. Entry
10. Administrative
11. Counseling

LOWER FLOOR

UPPER FLOOR

0   20 FT.
     6 M.

The street facade of the center (below) is just one-and-a-half stories high. In the back, the building helps define a playground (bottom).

This project has been included in the set of precedents for its site and program, both of which are similar to the one this thesis will design. The site is in a run down, low income community in the Bronx and the program is an after school youth center. While the architecture may not be visually or intellectually stimulating, the strategies employed to develop a feasible project are worth noting. To make up for a lack of space on the site the playground is designed on a sloping ground, allowing the building to extend a full story below grade in the back. This allows the street side of the building to maintain a consistent height with its neighboring buildings. Understanding that the project's budget came from the office of the Bronx Borough President and was only 2.5 million dollars may play some role in designing this thesis in a potentially feasible manner, however, if anyone asks, this thesis is partially funded by the children's social services and partially by private donations from famous rap artists.

Also interesting is that before the building was constructed, much of the surrounding area was vacant lots, as is the case in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Once the project was complete however, the neighborhood saw new development and the sites began filling up with low-rise housing. The president of the Community Coalition, Astin Jacobo was quoted in Architectural Record as saying, "We get the kids together. We use the kids to bring the whole community together." While one building cannot "save" a community, the potential a system of buildings has to strengthen it in specific ways is valid.

Project: Mary Mitchell Family and Youth Center
Location: Bronx, New York
Architect: Urban Architectural Initiatives
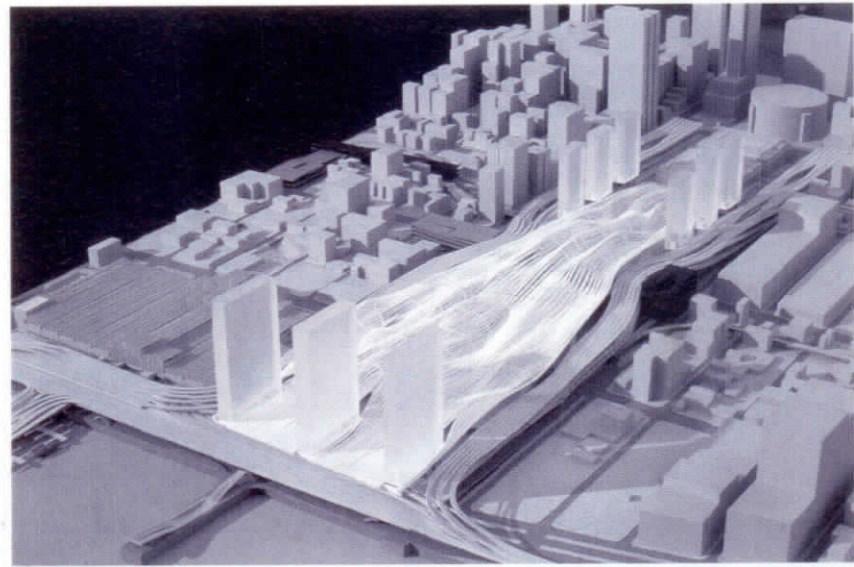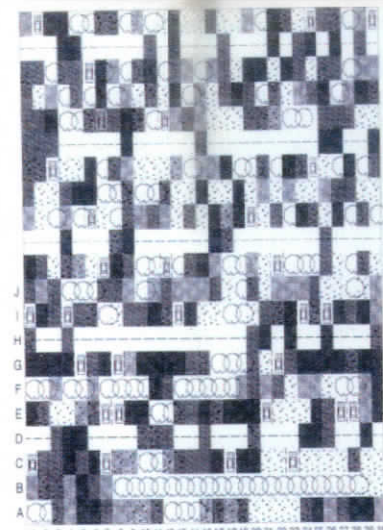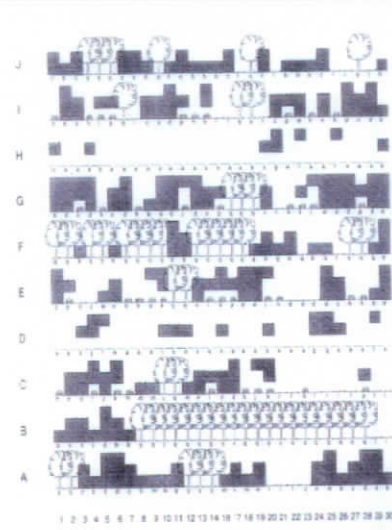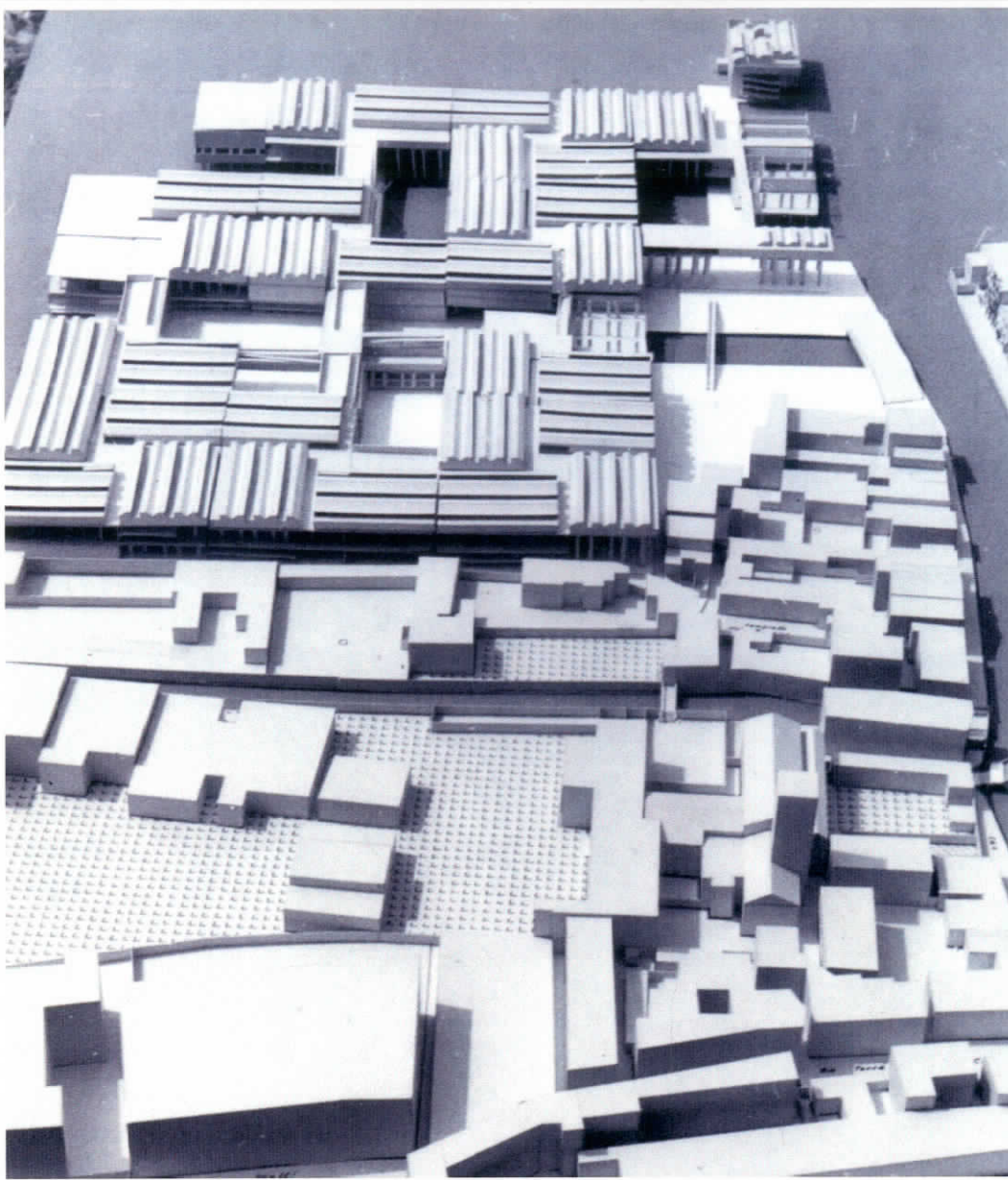
ft: The Venice Hospital, Le Corbusier: 1964-1966. Right Top: Hoornse Kwadraant, MVRDV: 1996. Right Bottom: CCA Deisgn of Cities Competition, Riser + Umemoto, 1999.
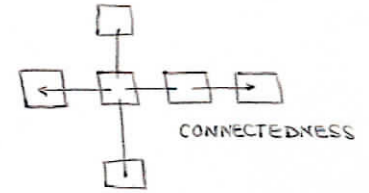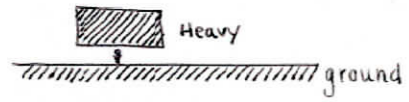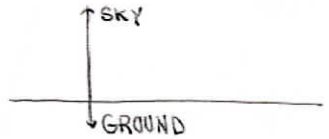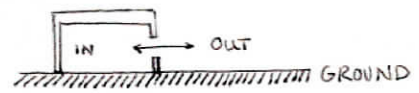
For this precedent, mat buildings are looked at as a collective to understand the criteria that groups them as a type. This typology began emerging in the 1950's and 60's when Team 10 architects were reacting against the uniformity and rationality of the CIAM theories. Le Corbusier himself, acted as a mediator between the two, and his agreements and disagreements with the philosophies were evident in the outcome of the design of his Venice Hospital. Although, many believe his assistant and strong promoter of Team 10, Atelier Jullian, actually finished much of the design after Le Corbusier's death.

According to Hashim Sarkis, a mat building is recognizable because it, "...consists of a systematic repetition of a simple elements such as a column, skylight, or modular room. The repetition provides the framework, both conceptual and spatial, for different possibilities of inhabitation," (14). In this thesis, the grid- a repetitive, modular device, is going to set up the framework, and as the grid becomes specific, the possibilities for inhabitation, or dwelling, result.

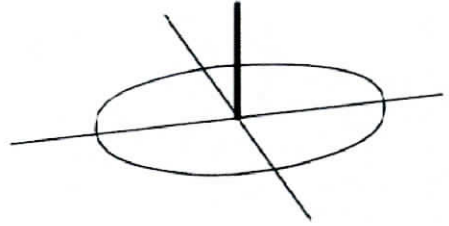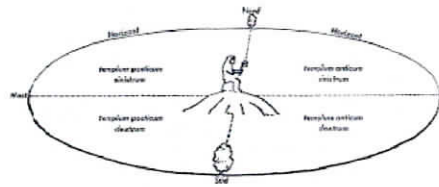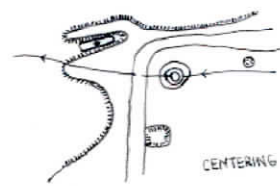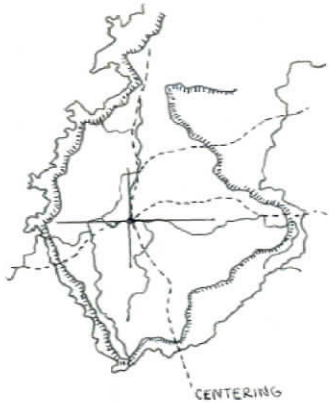Traditionally, the mat building placed much of its emphasis on the horizontal, sprawling outwards, yet in an organized and defined matter. Architects have been employing this typology to deal with expansive programs, large sites, and to offer flexibility in the work. Moreover, according to Sarkis, "...mats are by definition still developing", and as Stan Alan cautions, "contemporary architecture needs to enlarge the scope of the mat to include urbanism and landscape," (14). The challenge in this thesis is to expand the scope of the mat building into the vertical direction. The mat can still be read as a mat when it folds and turns on itself if it does so within the framework of a grid. Due to the nature of the sites chosen for this thesis, a mat building strategy would have to be understood in the vertical as well as horizontal direction. The horizontal sprawling still exists when all seven sites are looked at together and each site is read as a fragment of the entire mat. This idea of fragmentation is shown in the MVRDV project to the left, where both the individual and the collective are read simultaneously. I also included the Riser + Umemoto

project because it demonstrates the fluidity a mat building can take on, even if still designed off a module. In all projects, as in this thesis, the idea of the building becoming the environment is something to be explored. In this case, the foster care facilities can have set areas for recreation, but can also employ the manipulation and fluidity of the grid to allow for the entire building to be an experience in recreation.

Project: "Mat Buildings" as studied in CASE:
       Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital and the Mat
       Building Revival
Editor: Hashim Sarkis

CENTERING

CENTERING

CENTERING

MULTIPLE CENTERS
ORIENTATION & CONNECTEDNESS

MULTIPLE CENTERS
ORIENTATION & CONNECTEDNESS
NODAL RELATIONSHIP

GROUND

DWELL

IN   OUT   GROUND

Heavy   ground

SKY
DWELL   GROUND

GROUND

SKY

GROUND

CONNECTEDNESS

SKY
DWELLING
GROUND
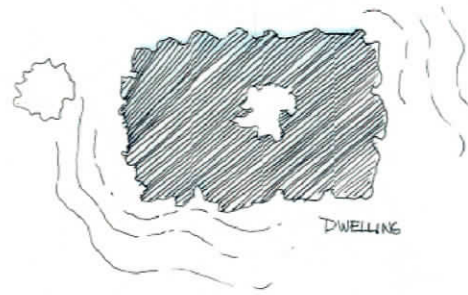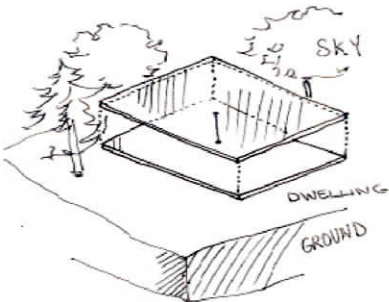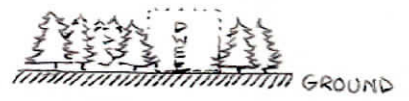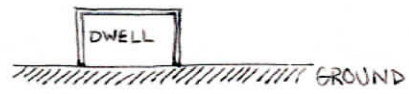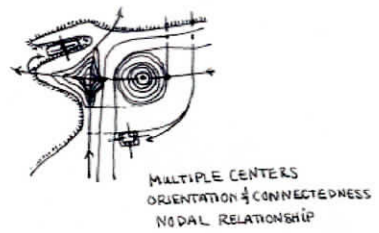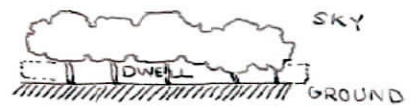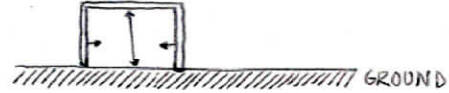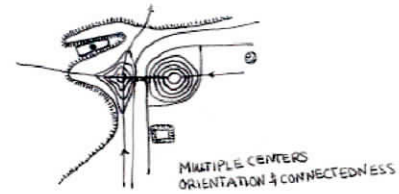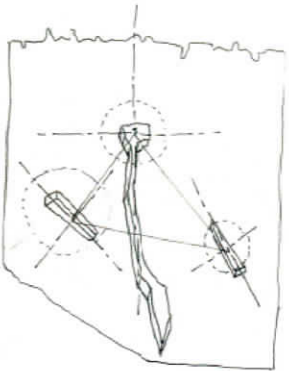
DWELLING

DWELLING

It has been established that foster care sits somewhere between modernity and dwelling, and it is the job of this thesis to define just where. A brief discussion of the concept of dwelling is in order to do so. The word "dwell" refers to its use in the philosophical and theoretical discussion of Martin Heidegger's work, "Building, Dwelling Thinking". For Heidegger, dwelling is the relationship between man and the fourfold of heaven and earth, divinities and mortals.

Heaven stands for the cosmos, the course of the seasons, the cycle of day and night; the earth is there to serve and to support, as life-giver; the divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead; and the people are called mortals because they can die, because they are capable of death as death… In other words, the person who "dwells" is someone who is open to these fundamental dimensions of "being" (Heynen 15).

With that said, there are two opposing thoughts as to why this idea of dwelling cannot exist in modernity. The first is expressed by architectural theorists, Massimo Cacciari and Theodor Adorno. Cacciari argues for the impossibility of this by saying,

As a result of the reduction of the relationship between man and world, as a result of the forgetfulness of being, poetical dwelling has become impossible, and therefore poetic architecture has also become impossible. Real dwelling no longer exists, and authentic building has also disappeared (Heynen 20).

Adorno adds, "…worst of all, however, is the situation of those who do not have any choice- homeless people, [foster care children], foreigners, and refugees. For them, even the illusion of dwelling is impossible to maintain" (Heynen 17). These extremist viewpoints automatically put their credibility into question. However, what they do suggest to us is that dwelling may not be able to exist in a modern city as we once thought of it and as Heidegger describes, but they have not refuted the potential for it to occur under a different understanding. Dwelling may no longer equate to a home, but rather to any specific place that has the ability to convey connectedness, identity, and place, with just enough specificity to belong. A place with enough regularization to be understood and enough interstitial space between the regularization to allow life to happen as it happens.

Another theorist who believes that dwelling cannot exist within modernity is Christian Norberg-Schulz. Instead of arguing for its impossibility and therefore its abandonment, Norberg-Schulz tends toward abandoning modernism instead. As if modernism was only a side-step in our evolution as a society. He has been paraphrased in saying that, "homelessness" is not so much a fundamental condition of contemporary man but rather an incidental loss that can be redressed by a better understanding of the relationship between architecture and dwelling (Heynen 18-19). The fact is though, that modernity by definition, is the now, and the problem of the instability of foster care is current. Foster care is as much a part of modernity as it wants to be a part of dwelling. This thesis will not abandon modernity and create a figural, anti-urban, utopian building for the sake of "true dwelling", but will rather employ it through the manipulation of its grids, which when made specific leave opportunities for interstitial dwelling and place-making.

The diagrams on the opposite page explore Norberg-Schulz's ideas of dwelling and figurative architecture. In his book on dwelling, he defines three requirements for dwelling to occur. They are:

Center: The center represents what is known, in contrast to the unknown and perhaps frightening world around.

Path: The path or axis is a necessary complement to the center, since the latter implies an outside and an inside, or, in other words the action of arrival and departure. Paths…represent the possibility of movement.

Domain: The figural quality of centers and paths implies a less structured "ground" on which they stand forth. If we think of our own country, or the earth as a whole, we primarily think of domains: fields, lakes, deserts, mountains, oceans, which form a continuous mosaic.

Dwelling Discussion and Analysis:
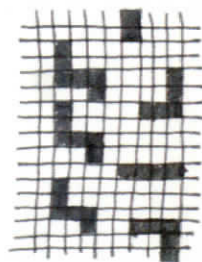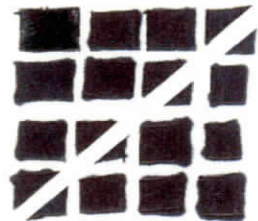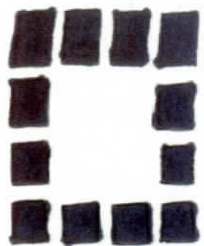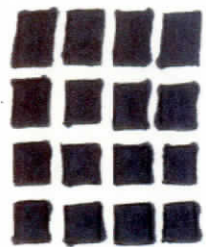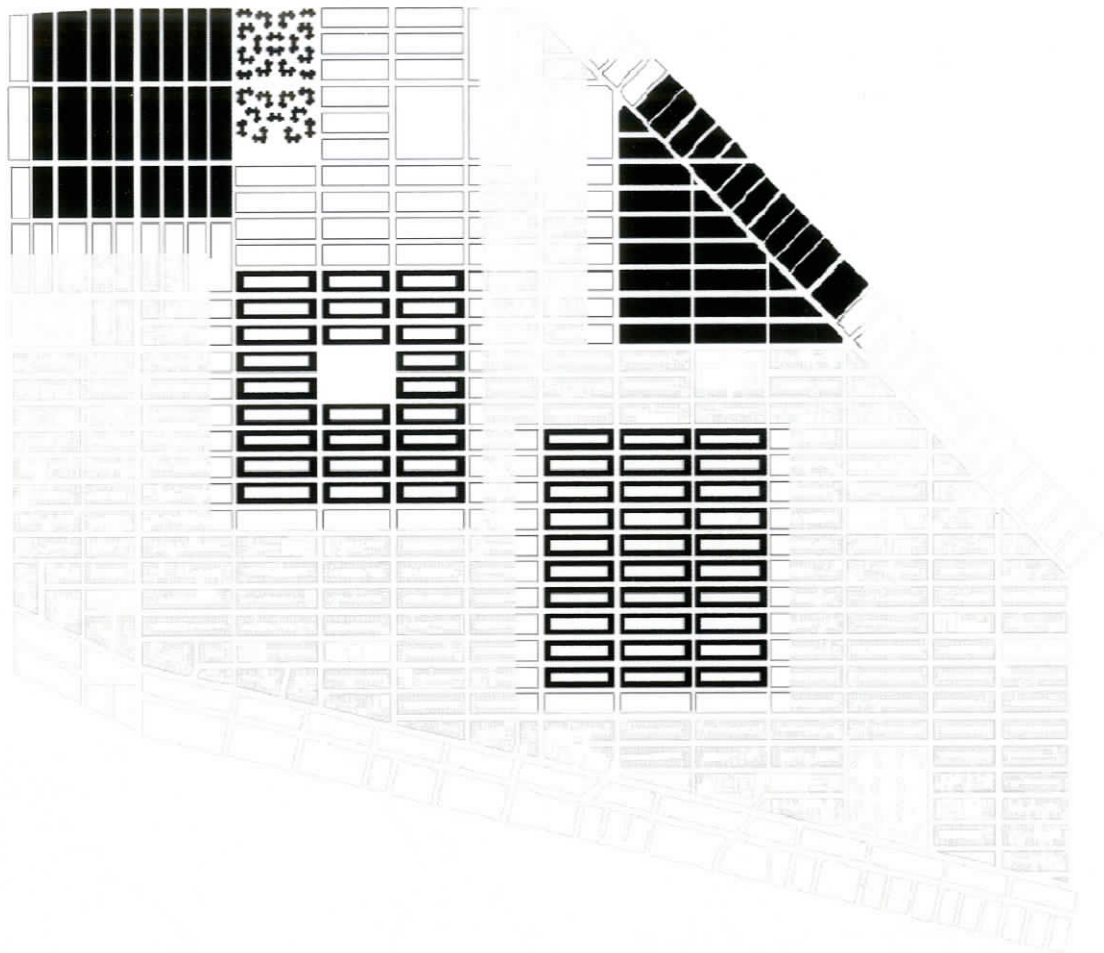
Within the history of the American city, the use of the grid as a planning tool has evolved. Starting in the 17th Century, the grid was employed in Central and South America by the English and French colonists as a means to distribute land and divide up the country in a geometrical and symmetrical way. The chequerboard model as it is called by Leonardo Benevolo in his book, The History of the City, was a system conceived to be "universally applicable, on any scale whatsoever: for the laying out of cities, the subdivision of agricultural land, or even for planning a new state," (603). In 1785 Thomas Jefferson employed a version of this chequerboard model, which is now referred to as the Jeffersonian Grid. From this point onward, the grids that developed were adapted due to abnormalities in the terrain, industrialization and mass transpiration systems, radial overlays, and the modern notion of doubling and tripling grid cells to implement a field and figure architecture. Many of these variants are evident in Bedford-Stuyvesant and are shown in the diagram to the left. The generic adaptations are also drawn in the other diagram shown on the left.

The notion of the universally applicable grid seemed to have faded as a conceptual tool until it re-emerged to define the modern era. Today, the grid is a practically synonymous with modernity where everything else prior to "the grid" is in the past. As a spatial function, it has embraced its ordered, calculated, regularizing properties. Conceptually, the modern grid is a means to remove one's work from the concrete of the actual, and elevate it to higher level, to the universal. The grid was a means to separate the "perceptual screen from that of the 'real' world" (Krauss 6).

In her essay on grids, Rosalind Krauss discusses the grid's ability to be both centrifugal and centripetal. She uses Mondrian as an example of an artist who was able to convey both forces within his collection of work. This is particularly interesting to this thesis because it means that the grid can be employed to both promote a sense of interiority and of fragmentation of a larger body of work, i.e. each individual site has the potential to be designed inwardly and responding to its own set of criteria, but can also appear to be an extension of a larger system. Mondrian's work appears to be a continuation of the others most clearly when he contrasts the shape of his frames with the grids. The frame is then just a cut, rather than a definitive end. It will be beneficial to explore this idea in the design of the thesis.

Grid Analysis

Evaluation Criteria

This thesis should be evaluated on its ability to create a system throughout seven sites that can be read as centrifugal as well as centripetal. Each site should be inwardly specific in its response to its immediate context while at the same time should appear to be only a part or section from a larger whole. The full resolution of the project will be perceivable when looked at in its entirety. Programmatic relationships along with material selection and implementation should serve to support this.

The grid system designed should not read as an all controlling, strictly regulating device, but rather as a system that will allow the interstitial space it creates within and between itself to be perceived as a space for free habitation and dwelling to exist. It should also be able to be flexible and small enough at times to feel fluid, so that the entire building can be programmed for recreation in addition to its required components.

The project needs to demonstrate that the repetition of site specificity can create identity within an individual site and within the uniformity of the system.

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  Images of the Trenton Bath House

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Echanove, Matias.
        Master's Thesis Student at Columbia University. Urban Planning Program.
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