THESIS

"PEOPLE ALREADY LIVE HERE" AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF EMPLOYED RESIDENTS OF NEW YORK CITY'S GRAHAM PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT

Submitted by

Katherine Koczynski Demong

Sociology Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2011

Master's Committee:

Advisor: Peter Leigh Taylor

Lori Peek
Lynn Kwiatkowski

ABSTRACT

"PEOPLE ALREADY LIVE HERE": AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF EMPLOYED RESIDENTS OF NEW YORK CITY'S GRAHAM HOUSING PROJECT

This thesis explores the attitudes and sentiments of employed residents of the Graham Public Housing Development or, "Project" in New York City. In order to understand life in public housing, past and current public housing policies are examined for both the United States and the City of New York. Additionally, the history of how public housing is portrayed in the media and in academia is discussed. Data for this thesis was collected using a variety of qualitative techniques including participant and non-participant observation and in-depth interviews. A total of twenty-five (N=25) interviews were conducted. Fifteen (N=15) interviews were conducted with employed mothers of African descent of the Graham Development. The remaining ten interviews were conducted with informed experts (N=5) and community leaders (N=5). It was hypothesized, bolstered by current academic work concerning the benefits of residing in public housing, that employed respondents would desire to remain residents of their development because of social ties. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that this decision would be tempered by the housing scarcity in New York City and the overall safety of the neighborhood in which the Graham Development is located. This hypothesis was largely not

supported as all respondents expressed a desire to eventually leave their homes. Factors identified as prompting respondents to want to leave include the stigma associated with residing in public housing, social isolation, safety, maintenance, and desire for home ownership. However, despite the fact that all respondents reported that they eventually wanted to leave public housing, respondents reported that they would like for society to understand that “real” people reside in public housing. Additionally, although respondents claim to be socially isolated from others in their development, they also state that they feel as though there are social benefits to living in a mixed community.

The research presented in this work makes a contribution to the growing body of literature concerning public housing in the United States as it focuses on only employed residents of public housing while most other studies treat all public housing residents as a homogenous group. Additionally, information gathered from the employed respondents can be utilized to offer a critique of the public housing policies associated with the City of New York.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who I would like to thank for their help and support in making this thesis possible. First, I would like to thank the Graham Public Housing Development in the City of New York and the residents, informed experts and community leaders who participated in this study. Thank you for letting me into your homes and lives and for teaching me about public housing in the City of New York.

I want to thank my advisor Pete Taylor who helped me tremendously with this work. Without Pete's many hours of dedication, this study would not have been possible. I learned a great deal about how to conduct research and there is no doubt I will use the skills Pete has taught me in all my future projects. Thank you to my other committee members, Lori Peek and Lynn Kwiatkowski. Thank you Lori for your input and for your help getting this project off the ground. Lynn, thank you for coming on board and helping me complete this work.

Additionally, I would like to thank my friend Nakole Washington for her insight and guidance with this thesis. Without Nakole's unique perspective and life experiences, this work would not be as dynamic. Also, thanks to my husband Bill for supporting me through this process and my parents Judy and Ted for giving me a place to stay while this research was completed.

Finally, I want to thank all of my friends and colleagues in the Sociology Department at Colorado State University. Especially Nathan Dollar and Meghan Mordy for all their help and support during my time in Colorado. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to study Sociology and be a part of this University.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One Introduction……1

Chapter Two Literature Review……6

History of Public Housing……7

Public Housing in New York City: a unique case study……10

New York City Public Housing Today……15

Literature and Media on Public Housing……17

The Current Study……22

Chapter Three Research Design……27

Study Site……27

Target Group……28

Gaining Entrée……30

Non-participant Observations……31

Interviews……32

Data Analysis of Interviews and Field Notes……34

Difficulties With This Research……35

Chapter Four: Findings……39

Life in the Projects……40

Respondents Desire to Leave Graham……48

Why Employed Residents Stay at Graham……49

Financial Benefits……49

Social Benefits……51

The Disadvantages of life at the Graham Houses……61

Maintenance and Safety……61

Social Isolation……63

Desire for Home Ownership……66

Stigma……70

The Stigma of Public Housing……………………………………………………………71
Effects of Stigma………………………………………………………………………….72
Stigma and Public Housing: A Fair Portrayal?………………………………73
Raising Children and Stigma…………………………………………………………75
Coping with the Disadvantages of Graham………………………………………………78
Habitus and Aspirations ……………………………………………………………81
Graham Respondents and Capital …………………………………………………80
Chapter Five: Conclusion ……………………………………………………………………84
Bibliography ………………………………………………………………………………………94
APPENDIX A ……………………………………………………………………………………98
APPENDIX B ……………………………………………………………………………………103

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the attitudes and sentiments of employed residents of the Graham Public Housing Development or "Project" in New York City.[1] My interest in this topic and my desire to learn more about public housing residents first began almost ten years ago. As a sociology undergraduate student in New York City, my work mainly focused on urban studies and issues of inequality. I lived across the street from a large public housing development and although I had never been inside, I had, as a result of my academic studies and watching the nightly news, many preconceived ideas about who must live there and why.

After graduating from college I worked as a Child Protective Specialist investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect for the City of New York. While I expected that many of my clients would live in public housing, I was surprised when I learned that many of my co-workers also lived in federally funded buildings. As a white woman from a nearby suburb, I remember feeling extremely nervous the first time I had to enter a high-rise public housing building to visit a client. Soon however, public housing developments became commonplace for me as I went almost daily to visit clients and to celebrate birthdays and other holidays at the

---

[1] In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, the public housing development, and the participants have all been assigned pseudonyms.

homes of my co-workers. As a result of these experiences, I realized that I had previously known very little about public housing and the people who lived there. Also, I knew that most other individuals who had little direct contact with public housing developments and residents probably did not have access to this knowledge either.

The title of this thesis was conceived out of an interaction myself and a co-worker had with a woman who was conducting a training session on how to identify signs of domestic violence, a work requirement for Child Protective Specialists. Over lunch, the woman informed us she was living in a posh Connecticut suburb and was contemplating a move to New York City and asked us where we lived. We replied we both lived in West Harlem to which the woman stated, "I hear a lot of people are starting to move up there." The woman continued to say, that because of the housing shortage, she read where *people* are *even starting* to move into the projects. My co-worker, having lived in West Harlem and in public housing her whole life gently replied, "*People* already live here." The realization that some individuals outside public housing may not consider the men, women and children who reside there as *people* prompted me to want to explore public housing in this thesis.

In the next chapter I discuss the history of public housing in the United States and, more specifically, in the City of New York. An understanding of public housing is crucial to this work as it elaborates on the political and economical history of low income housing in the City of New York and in the United States. Comparisons are

made between public housing policies in the United States and in the City of New York. As a result, I argue that policies specific to the City of New York have functioned to keep public housing in New York from becoming a total failure and dismantled like in other large cities. Additionally, chapter two attempts to explain how public housing is generally portrayed in both the media and in academic literature. Current academic literature is examined which suggests that public housing residents have social ties to their homes and are ambivalent about leaving public housing. As a result of the unique history of public housing in New York City and current studies which suggest that many residents do not necessarily wish to leave their homes, I hypothesize that employed residents of New York City's Graham public housing development will express a desire to remain residents of their current homes.

In order to explore this hypothesis, I conducted field research from March of 2010 until July of 2010. The methodology utilized in this research is presented in chapter three. The issue this thesis considers, understanding if employed residents wish to remain in public housing when they may theoretically have the means to live elsewhere, is illuminated by in-depth interviews with employed residents of the Graham public housing development as well through interviews with community leaders and informed experts who are defined as individuals who both live and work in public housing. Additionally, observations of both the community and development are described and I have drawn from my own experiences having lived in the community of Harlem and across the street from the Graham development as

well as through my past work experiences as a child protective specialist in New York.

In chapter four I employ qualitative data from observations and interviews to illustrate how employed residents of public housing feel about where they live, why they remain there, and if they would one day like to leave. Lessons for place attachment are considered, especially with respect to the concept of stigma. This research makes a contribution to the existing body of literature focused on public housing as it examines in-depth the attitudes and sentiments of employed residents. Past work generally treats public housing residents as a homogenous group and therefore is unable to capture the unique perspective that employed residents may have.

Although bolstered by current academic literature on public housing which suggests that public housing residents are socially attached to their homes and are ambivalent about leaving, the hypothesis that employed residents of the Graham public housing development will not want to leave their homes as they appreciate the social and financial benefits to living in public housing was largely not supported.

Interviews with employed residents of the Graham public housing development revealed push factors including stigma, social isolation, safety, maintenance, and desire for home ownership that prompt employed residents to want to eventually leave their homes. While some benefits or pull factors were noted among residents, such as financial benefits and some social benefits, these

benefits only inspired employed respondents to be temporary residents of public housing. Employed respondents report they see their tenure in public housing as being time limited and goal oriented and only a stepping-stone to eventual home ownership.

In order to better understand these findings, chapter three continues with a presentation of the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's work is considered, especially with respect to his concepts of habitus and capital. From an examination of Bourdieu's theories, one can better understand the social and economical predicament of the employed Graham respondents in response to the stigma they feel by residing in public housing and consequently gain a better understanding of why these individuals express the desire to eventually leave their homes.

The ultimate goals of this work are to show how place, policy, history and individuals intersect and provide the material from which one can understand why employed respondents remain in the Graham development, how long they plan to stay, how they feel about living in public housing as well as considering what employed respondents may be able to contribute to the policies associated with public housing.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will first explore the history of public housing in the United States. Special attention will be paid to the significant federal laws that affected policies associated with public housing. Repercussions of these laws are examined and the outcomes of policies associated with serving the most needy individuals are considered. The history of public housing in the City of New York is presented along with how the City of New York dealt with federal mandates that conflicted with their own beliefs on public housing policies. Next, why public housing in the City of New York persevered while it failed in other large cities and the current state of public housing in the City of New York is examined. Following this examination, chapter two continues by analyzing how public housing is portrayed in the media and in academic literature. The purpose of this examination is to shed light on how certain stereotypes associated with public housing are created and disseminated to the general public. Additionally, this chapter explores current academic literature on public housing residents, which counters some of the earlier negative findings and as a result, suggests that many residents are ambivalent about the idea of leaving public housing because of the strong social ties that can be found there. This

chapter continues by stating the hypothesis of this thesis and then presents the academic work that will be used in chapter four to explain why the hypothesis was largely not supported by the findings of this study.

History of Public Housing

During the 1930's, supported by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the federal government created the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration (PWA). In existence until 1937, the PWA managed to build 51 public housing projects containing 21,800 dwelling units (von Hoffman 1996). Looking for a more long-term agency to handle the issue of low-income housing, reformers lobbied successfully for the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937, which established the United States Housing Authority that was responsible for building more than 100,000 units in over 140 cities by 1942 (von Hoffman 1996). After World War II, public housing in the United States was recharged with the passage of the Housing Act of 1949 and as a result, tens of thousands of new units were built during both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. The mindset of early public housing developments was to create decent homes for veterans, working poor and the needy while emphasizing that the federally funded program was designed to offer only temporary assistance and that tenants were expected to eventually leave the system for the private housing sector. Support for this statement can be found in the work of Bauman (1994) who writes,

> Washington closely monitored the whole development process, trimming a 'frill here' (closet doors) and a 'frill there' (floor molding and ceiling cornices) to assure that the poor would not be tempted to consider public housing any

> more than what they were meant to be: way stations leading to middle-class respectability (Bauman 1994: 350).

While public housing in American began as a program to temporarily house the working poor and veterans returning from war, conservatives in Congress in the late 1940's succeeded in pushing through a federal policy that would evict families whose income exceeded poverty-level ceilings. As a result, many working and upwardly mobile potential tenants were then excluded from public housing (von Hoffman 1996). In the 1950's, due to the resistance of local officials in suburbs and areas surrounding large American cities, public housing developments were relegated to the inner cities and often times, concentrated in areas known as slums. What resulted was a, "confused public housing strategy cobbled together to appease the media, advocates, and elected officials" (Spence 1993: 356).

In the 1960's, public housing became increasingly synonymous with an image of disaster. Suffering from rising costs and falling rents which severely limited budgets associated with maintenance and security, crime rates began to rise and conditions in the developments began to decline. The Anti-New Deal and Anti-Communist assault against public housing made public housing policy into a welfare policy, which caused public housing developments to devolve into warehouses for the social underclass (Bauman 1994).

In 1968, the Brooke Amendment further complicated matters by placing a ceiling on rents at 25% of the tenants income which worked to further cut funds available for operating costs (von Hoffman 1996). Focusing on serving the most needy did little to enhance either population (working class and the severely poor)

living in public housing. A sentiment echoed by Bauman (1994) who found, "privatizing the system of public housing – the system that has prevailed since 1965—has deepened the crisis for those families most in need, while lessening the supply of decent, affordable housing for all" (Bauman 1994: 358). Conditions, hampered by policies, worsened and in 1973, President Nixon placed a moratorium on federal funding for all housing programs.

Hope had seemed to be infused into the national public housing program with the passage of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, which aimed at serving a broad income mix in assisted housing projects. However that hope was short lived when in 1981 Congress passed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, or OBRA, which returned the focus of public housing policy towards serving the extremely poor and needy (Spence 1993).

A concentration on serving the neediest ensued and conditions deteriorated through the decade. In 1992, The National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing issued its final report, which stated that during the 1980's, in response to the focus on serving households with incomes below 10 percent of the median, extremely poor public housing households nationwide were now responsible for 20 percent of the public housing population. Furthermore, female headed households now constituted 85 percent of the families with dependent children in public housing and that number rose to 95 percent in some cities (National Commission 1992).

Finding itself in a state of turmoil, public housing advocates, learning from the past, began to feel as though they can, "address the problems of the poor by placing them in economically and ethnically heterogeneous residential areas" (von Hoffman 1996). As a result, mixed income tenancy, along with alternative public housing programs such as Section 8 Housing, are now seen as ways to maintain a system of public housing in this country. Despite the rocky history of public housing in America, Bauman (1994) reminds us that, "although expensive to produce and operate, and historically beset by management inefficiencies, conventional public housing has, over time, performed an important task with relatively few major scandals" (Bauman 1994: 359).

Public Housing in New York City: a unique case study

Unique from the start, Public Housing in the City of New York began before a national program for public housing was even created. Since 1937, The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has constructed or otherwise acquired with funding from the federal government over 172,000 units of public housing (Schill & Scafidi 1999). The founders of the New York City Housing Authority also believed that the, "working class was as often ill housed as the dependent poor in the City of New York" (Bloom 2008: 77). This belief, coupled with the sentiment that public housing was a renting proposition and not a complete gift, worked to set the ground work for NYCHA as a provider of low income housing and not a welfare program. Furthermore, the founders of NYCHA were also clearly aware that not maintaining a

population of working residents would not allow them to properly fund and maintain the developments.

NYCHA and public housing in New York became known for its high standards. First, NYCHA was very selective with potential tenants and NYCHA itself was tightly managed (Bloom 2008). New York City, like the rest of the country, had policies in the 1930's and 1940's that focused on housing working families. By the 1960's in New York City, as a result of policy initiatives, most public housing recipients were extremely poor families. Whereas in other major cities, the shift towards serving the very poor occurred in the 1940's, NYCHA was able to delay this process until the 1960's which allowed NYCHA developments to benefit longer from a more mixed tenancy (Bloom 2008). Additionally, the City of New York, out of fear that policies handed down by Washington would threaten public housing in the city by imposing income limits, began to build its own public housing developments so that they would not have to abide by federal guidelines.

Slowly however, the City of New York was unable to shield itself from all of the federal guidelines. In response to this change, many working families moved out of public housing. With time, the physical conditions of housing projects in New York, like in other parts of the country, deteriorated and as a result the stigma of living in public housing projects grew (Vale 2002). From the 1970's until 1995, public housing in New York primarily focused on housing those most in need. This change in attitude was most apparent in the 1980's where NYCHA seemingly had a narrow focus on serving the most needy families (Bloom 2008). As result of this

focus, housing projects, often stigmatized high rise buildings, came to be stereotyped as dumping grounds for the poorest often minority and most difficult to house which worked to frame housing projects as isolated and disadvantaged communities (Curley 2005).

During the 1950's public housing became an important source of housing for the minority groups residing in New York City. Because of discrimination in the private housing market, public housing became an important option for minority families with lower incomes (Bloom 2008). Up until the mid 1950's, federal housing projects were seventy-five percent white; however by 1954, that percentage fell to fifty-nine percent white. Between 1954 and 1955, although whites and blacks moved into NYCHA apartments at the same rate, more than twice as many white families moved out when compared with black families thus shifting the tenant percentages (Bloom 2008). Robert Moses, controversial builder and city planner, became another barrier for maintaining racial integration in NYCHA's housing developments. Moses' slum clearance sites for instance, saw their number one source of new tenants were site occupants with the largest number being Puerto Ricans (Bloom 2008). The work of Moses lead informed critics such as urbanist Charles Abrams to accuse NYCHA of developing racially segregated ghettos on sites formally declared as slums. Abrams revealed in 1956 when he was in charge of the State Commission Against Discrimination that NYCHA had built fourteen public housing projects that were over eighty-five percent inhabited by minorities and accused NYCHA of building racial ghettos in Harlem (Bloom 2008). While a few

projects were genuinely integrated, projects on a whole were becoming more and more segregated.

Despite policies and individuals such as Moses, there were attempts by NYCHA to maintain racial integration. Although well intentioned, the policies in the 1940's and 1950's seemingly failed to promote integration and during this time, many White families were forced to leave involuntarily because of federal laws regarding excess income, which further compounded the issue. From 1958 to the early 1960's it seemed as though some progress would be made when Mayor Wagner reorganized NYCHA in 1958 and the Intergroup Relations division was created to actively promote integration (Bloom 2008). Although there were a few success stories in various boroughs and developments, policies created by the Intergroup Relations division came under scrutiny and the numbers of Whites living in public housing continued to fall. In 1970, the Whites who remained in public housing were mostly concentrated in higher income projects in the outer boroughs while Blacks and Puerto Ricans primarily inhabited rebuilt slums (Bloom 2008). After the 1970's the numbers of Whites living in public housing fell drastically to just 8% in 1995. As Bloom (2008) notes, "NYCHA had become and remains the racially segregated system its founders feared. Yet the NYCHA system survives" (Bloom 2008: 175). In 1992, the New York Times revealed that New York City admitted bias in public housing by steering black and Hispanic applicants away from some public housing projects. In a lawsuit filed in 1990, black and Hispanic families argued that,

> New York City perpetuated segregation in its public housing by giving preference to applicants who lived in neighborhoods surrounding a project with vacancies to be filled. The effect, they said, was to give preferential treatment to white families applying for apartments in public housing in predominantly white neighborhoods (Pear 1992).

NYCHA claims that this policy, although not necessarily legally sound, was altruistic in concept as it was faced with the task of convincing high-income white neighborhoods to accept public housing developments in their area. NYCHA claimed that white neighborhoods were more willing to accept public housing when they were assured that substantial numbers of apartments would go to white families (Pear 1992). Therefore, while policies to try and keep public housing integrated ultimately failed, it is unfair to state that NYCHA set out to create a segregated housing system as the demographic and social pressures of the times played a role as well.

Despite issues associated with racial segregation, while there were widely publicized public housing *failures* in other big cities, The City of New York managed to be a bit different. The population of tenants in New York was too large and NYCHA was one of the city's largest employers so simply doing away with the system of public housing in New York was not an option like it was in other cities. As Bloom (2008) notes,

> New York City Housing Authority did not fit comfortably into this more skeptical milieu. Unlike housing authorities across the country it had weathered two decades of higher welfare concentration and disorder. Maintenance had become strained, and the future seemed bleak, but public housing in New York was too large and successful to be dismantled as it was in cities such as Chicago and Baltimore. Savvy tenants and their advocates quickly scotched any hint of demolition or privatization of apartments (Bloom 2008: 245).

However, swift reform was needed in order for the public housing system in New York City to remain afloat. In 1995, in an attempt to restore and maintain the balance between working and non-working families in public housing, New York City adopted a “Preference for Working Families” in which fifty percent of all new admissions into public housing developments would be reserved for working families. This policy was adopted by the NYCHA in response to discouraging statistics about NYCHA public housing residents. For example, in the early 1990’s, the percentage of families on welfare on the waiting list for public housing had risen from 35% to 50%. In 1995, 77% of new admissions were people in the lowest income category and only 8% of new families were working families (Bloom 2008). In spite of a challenge from the Family Legal Aid Society, the Working Family Preference became a reality on January 5, 1998 (NYCHA 2009). As a result of this new policy adopted by NYCHA, the numbers of working families in public housing in New York rose steadily.

New York City Public Housing Today

Despite past policy initiatives targeting the most disadvantaged, in 1999, working families comprised 35% of the tenant population and in 2004 and 2005; working families filled approximately half of all new vacancies (Bloom 2008). An increase in the number of working families in public housing means more funds for NYCHA to maintain and improve on the buildings. Currently, New York City has 46.3% of its families classified as working families in public housing (NYCHA, 2009). Additionally, the New York City Housing Authority has relaxed income limit

restrictions on tenants as a family of four can gross over sixty thousand dollars a year and still qualify for public housing (NYCHA 2009). While in 1970 tenants were only required to pay 25% of their monthly income towards rent, today residents are required to pay 30%, which is still, even for those at the high end of the income restrictions, significantly less than the average New Yorker who spends fifty percent of their monthly income towards rent (NYCHA 2009). According to New York City Habitat for Humanity, of those who pay more than half their income for rent and utilities, 90 percent are low-income and 62 percent fall below the poverty line. Additionally, with a city-wide vacancy rate of just 2.91%, well under the 5% threshold for conditions to be considered a "housing emergency"(NYC.gov 2009), public housing projects may represent not only affordability, but also stability in an uncertain housing market. As a result, residents of New York City Housing Authority are a group of people with a wide range of incomes, access to capital, and rationale for staying in federally subsidized buildings.

Through examining the history of public housing in New York City and the greater United States, what emerges is a struggle between providing decent affordable housing and dealing with poverty. While public housing began everywhere as a temporary housing situation for the working poor, the political climate of various decades shifted that goal towards a program aimed at serving the very needy. As a result, funding plummeted; conditions deteriorated, public housing became stigmatized, working families fled, poverty became concentrated and public housing transitioned from a temporary solution for working families to a permanent home for severely impoverished families for generations.

The City of New York was able to effectively prevent public housing from becoming a total disaster as it was deemed in other large cities by fighting hard to maintain a balance between working and unemployed tenants. Furthermore, public housing in New York did not have some of the inherent problems that public housing in other large cities had. First, public housing in New York City is dispersed throughout the five boroughs and not concentrated in one area. Secondly, while public housing high-rise buildings in other cities stood out among the landscape, New York City has a plethora of high-rise buildings, some of which are federally owned while many others are privately owned. Therefore, there is arguably less stigma attached to living in a high-rise housing project.

Literature and Media on Public Housing

For most of society, information about public housing and those who reside there come from information dispensing sources such as the media, which generally portrays public housing developments in specific ways. Media attention to "projects" generally focuses on crime statistics, drugs, welfare recipients and dilapidated buildings, thus suggesting that public housing projects are not desirable places to live. This negative portrayal tends to inundate the newspapers and newscasts of those who do not live in public housing, thus creating stereotypes and stigmas about who lives in public housing and why.

Within the academic realm, although significant literature exists concerning welfare dependent residents of inner city housing projects, or public housing residents as a homogenous group, little attention has been paid to working

residents. Failure to address the issues of working residents further extends stereotypes into the academic space.

Furthermore, past scholarly work on public housing projects in the United States has generally focused on negative outcomes for tenants such as Massey and Kanaiaupuni (1993), for examples, who concluded that public housing substantially increased the concentration of poverty of residents. Additionally, the work of Massey and Kanaiaupuni found that neighborhoods with dense concentrations of public housing show significantly higher rates of crime, school dropouts and teenage pregnancy. Similar to the work of Massey and Kanaiaupuni, Wilson (1987), found that public housing in Chicago concentrated poor Black individuals with little opportunity for work, which led to idleness while Sampson (1994) found that public housing projects are generally communities with high rates of crime, high rates of family instability and weak social institutions. Academic work involving public housing in New York City also reports predominantly negative statistics. Schill (1999) reported that in 1993, New York City Housing Authority residents were 20 percent more likely to be murdered and 38 percent more likely to be raped than other New Yorkers.

Although negative portrayals of housing projects tend to predominate, especially work published in the late 1980's and early 1990's, other studies have countered these findings and report little correlation between housing projects and negative outcomes for residents. The political climate of the country at given points

in history contributed greatly to literature surrounding public housing. Bauman (1994) found that,

> It can be said that between 1930 and 1990, the literature has reflected the particular economic and political milieu in which it was written, from the exuberant optimism about he promise of 'modern housing' in the writings of Wood (1931) and Bauer (1934), to Freedman's (1969) cavil of the early 1970's portraying public housing as a sinkhole enveloping the 'culture of poverty,' or Welfeld's (1988) Reaganesque plea to allow free market forces to solve the low income housing problem (Bauman 1994: 348).

Concerning positive portrayals of public housing, Reingold (1997) found that public housing does not inhibit work behavior while Currie and Yelowitz (2000) noted that when controlling for characteristics of project participants, projects actually have positive effects on both housing quality and children's academic achievement. Furthermore, Atlas and Dreier (1993) contend that while public housing seems to many Americans as a metaphor for the failures of an activist government, they may be the best-kept secret as they provide decent affordable housing to many people.

Today, public housing in cities all over the United States are undergoing serious transformations as a result of the negative outcomes associated with public housing projects during the 1980's and the current academic work being produced reflects these transformations.

Programs bolstered by Section 8 housing subsidies such as, Moving to Opportunities, and Hope VI are intended to address the issue of housing projects and more specifically the concentration of, "troubled low income households in

public housing by moving away from project-based assistance and promoting instead the construction of mixed-income housing and greater reliance on housing subsidies" (Popkin et al 2004: 385). While these programs had little solid evidence that they would bring forth the positive changes they intend to, studies concerning these programs have offered outsiders a glance into the complex social worlds of public housing projects.

Results of interviews conducted with families who have moved away from housing projects support the claim that tenants are attached to their home, no matter how unpleasant their surroundings may be to outsiders. Susan Clampet-Lundquist (2004) spoke with relocated residents of one housing project in Philadelphia that was torn down who were given the choice of either moving to another public housing unit or, a Section 8 housing subsidy to move to an apartment. The study found that while residents who moved with a Section 8 subsidy gained more than residents who simply relocated to another housing project in terms of opportunities for their children, both groups lost friendships and social ties and the Section 8 group reported even fewer new social ties. Both relocated groups found it difficult to make new friendships with their new neighbors while those who relocated with Section 8 subsidies also faced discrimination from both landlords and new neighbors.

Another interesting component of the Clampert-Lundquist study was the exploration into the tenants reasoning for either choosing a Section 8 voucher or an apartment in another public housing complex. Clampert-Lundquist reports that

tenants who choose public housing cited housing stability, lower costs and fears that private landlords would not make the necessary repairs. Among residents who chose Section 8 subsidies, more opportunities for themselves and their children were cited. Considering these residents were not given the *choice* to move as their homes were being torn down, some choose the Section 8 subsidy even if they did not want to leave their homes. Among these tenants, people reported that they did not want to move into another public housing unit because,

> Their long residence at their former home (an average of 18 years) combined with a close network of social relationships there, reduced the uncertainty in their physical and social environment. The prospect of living in a new development without these protective ties frightened many of them, because they feared they would not be able to counteract the negative influences that they knew, from personal experience, could be concentrated in public housing developments more than in other neighborhoods (Clampert-Lundquist 2004: 427).

What the findings of this study suggest is that individuals, even those who reside in high-rise crime ridden housing projects, have a sense of community and belong to social networks that should not be overlooked. Additionally, the work of Clampert-Lundquist (2004) and Saegert & Winkel (1998) shows that relocation can break up strong social ties, which may lead to negative outcomes for families and communities.

These findings guide the current hypothesis as they suggest that individuals *lose* something when they move away from public housing projects thus implying that individuals may very well want to remain in public housing. Furthermore, the unique history of public housing in the City of New York, which posits that New York

City has been able to avoid many of the serious failures that have plagued public housing in other large cities, also lends support for the notion that residents of public housing developments in New York City may not necessarily be looking to relocate.

The Current Study

Despite partial support for the hypothesis, the findings in this study largely rejected the hypothesis. Interviewed employed respondents of the Graham Houses all expressed an eventual desire to leave their homes. Social isolation, the stigma associated with public housing, issues with safety and maintenance and the desire to one day own their own homes all emerged as push factors which prompted respondents to see themselves as only temporary residents of the Graham Public Housing development. Although financial benefits and certain social benefits were reported, it was not enough to entice employed respondents to make long term plans to remain at Graham. It was discovered, however that while all respondents expressed a desire to ultimately leave, they did not express the desire to leave immediately. Therefore, life at Graham, while not perfect, was right for them at the current time.

Additionally, it was uncovered that the employed Graham respondents placed value on living in a mixed community and revealed that they felt both employed and unemployed residents had their own part to play in that community. As a result, I found that decisions to remain or leave public housing for employed Graham respondents were more complex than merely wanting to leave immediately

because of lack of safety or wishing to remain indefinitely because of strong social ties to place. Decisions of respondents were tempered by the desire to remain at Graham to save money for a limited amount of time so that they would ultimately be able to attain what they described as a better life for themselves and their children.

Significantly, from a policy standpoint, that respondents all expressed a desire to ultimately leave did not indicate a failure on the part of the New York City Housing Authority. Rather, it indicates success, as it suggests that some developments in New York City may have found a working balance between providing decent affordable housing while also providing enough incentive that residents do not wish to stay indefinitely.

In order to better understand why respondents wish to leave their homes, the concept of stigma is analyzed and the work of Bourdieu is considered with an emphasis on his concepts of habitus and capital. For Bourdieu the concept of habitus is defined as, “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions” (Bourdieu 1977: 83). Concerning habitus, Bourdieu notes, “the habitus is this generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices of persons, goods and practices” (Bourdieu, 2002: 271-272). In other words, habitus is a set of structures that work to draw both individuals and groups toward certain beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, values and taste. What is important about the concept of habitus is that it involves not just perceptions or

attitudes, but also the embodiment of these ideas which may be expressed, according to Bourdieu as, "standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu, 1990: 70). As a result, habitus has the ability to delineate for us what is good and what is bad, what is desirable or undesirable and who people are and who they are not (Bourdieu 2002). What I examine in this study is that the habitus employed respondents maintain is in conflict with the stigmas perpetuated by the media and in some academic work.

Along with his concept of habitus, Bourdieu's concepts of capital are also relevant when trying to understand how employed respondents deal with the stigmas associated with living in public housing. In his work, Bourdieu indentifies four different types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. Economic capital involves the possession of tangible economic resources such as money. Cultural capital may be seen in three different forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Embodied cultural capital involves deep-rooted tendencies of the mind and body and is generally known as culture or cultivation (Bourdieu 2001). Objectified cultural capital is recognized in material objects such as paintings, while the third form, institutionalized cultural capital is found in academic diplomas or credentials (Bourdieu 2001). Social capital involves the aggregate of social resources a person has. The amount of social capital a person has depends on both the size of his network and the amount of capital those in his network possess (Bourdieu 2001). Finally, symbolic capital is generally not recognized as capital but rather as legitimate competence or authority (Bourdieu 2001). Symbolic capital is significant as it can legitimate one way of doing things or

one school of thought over another. For the current study, the notion that the employed respondents of Graham possess different levels of capital that work to counter the negative stigmas associated with living in public housing are considered.

Additionally, other published literature is utilized such as Wilson (1991) Crane (1991) and Schill (1993) who found that poverty has social implications, Powell (1993) who found stereotypes in public housing, Bauman (1994) and Bratt (1986) who found that the media coverage of public housing was often biased, Vale (1997) who found that issues with maintenance and safety can be factors that encourage public housing residents to want to leave, Rainwater (1970) who explains the desire to be socially isolated in public housing settings, and Rohe and Stegman (1994) who found that home ownership had a significant effect on life satisfaction. The ultimate goal of my drawing on this diverse combination of literature is to better explain why respondents in this current study express the desire to leave their homes.

This chapter has focused on the history of public housing in the United States and more specifically, in the City of New York. Additionally, this chapter has discussed how public housing has been presented in both a negative and positive light in academic journals while also discussing the role the media and academic literature have on how public housing is perceived. The current hypothesis is discussed and the work of Bourdieu is presented as an explanation for why the

findings did not largely support the hypothesis. In the next chapter, the research design of the current work is presented.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

Study Site

New York City was chosen as the site of this study as the New York City Housing Authority is the largest public housing authority in North America. Furthermore, The New York City Housing Authority represents 8.4% of the City's rental apartments and is home to 4.9% of the City's population and residents stay on average twenty years in public housing (NYCHA 2009). Additionally, in the City of New York, working families account for just over 46% of all New York City Housing Authority families, thus I had a large group to draw my respondents from.

I chose to conduct my research in the City of New York not only because it is home to the largest housing authority in North America, but also because it was my home for many years. I attended college in New York City and I also lived in the Harlem section of Manhattan for several years. Furthermore, while living in New York, I worked as a Child Protective Specialist for the Administration for Children's Services. Before employees were allowed in the field, we had to complete a rigorous three month training program in which we learned how to interview clients with respect to sensitive family issues such as mental illness, substance abuse and domestic violence, how to foster relationships that are characterized by mutual

respect, as well as how to ensure our own personal safety while navigating neighborhoods with high crime rates.

My unit at the Administration for Children's Services covered the community districts of West and Central Harlem and as a result, I am very comfortable going to housing projects in a variety of neighborhoods in order to interview people. I have experience conducting interviews where individuals have disclosed extremely personal information about their families, feelings and emotions.

Interestingly, the idea for this project first came about while I was working and living in Harlem. Several of my co-workers lived in public housing and how they spoke about their homes and communities worked to alter my own perception of life in public housing. My former co-workers are the ones who have expressed support for this research as they have voiced to me that too much attention is paid to the negative aspects or the down and out tenants of public housing while working residents are largely ignored by both the media and academia.

Target Group

In order to define my target group of respondents, I used the work of Clampert-Lundquist (2004) and Popkin et al. (2004), which suggests that decisions to either stay or leave public housing projects may be influenced by a tenant's desire to secure opportunities for them or their children. With this in mind, according to the 2009 Resident Characteristics Tabulation for the New York City Housing Authority, the largest population by age group is 21-49 year olds and 30% of housing project residents are children under the age of 18. Therefore, I chose to

interview working parents who have at least one child under the age of 18. This group was targeted, as they will likely have to balance both stability and opportunities for their children. Additionally, this group was most likely to be employed and have the ability or energy to move, as older residents may not have the physical or economic capabilities to leave their homes. Considering the racial makeup of the Graham Housing projects, I chose to only interview individuals of African descent. According to the 2000 Census Tract, of the approximately 4,500 residents of the section of Community District 9 that represents the Graham Housing development, nearly 3,000 are of African descent (www.nyc.gov). Through focusing on this group of individuals, why residents wish to stay and what they perceive to be the negative and positive components of where they live will likely provide valuable insight into the dynamics of living in public housing.

I drew respondents from one housing development in West Harlem. By doing this, I was able to look for trends in attitudes and sentiments that are present for residents in one geographic area. This approach allowed me to compare and contrast the attitudes of residents and allowed me to understand the influence place has on a person's decision to remain in their home. The Graham Houses was chosen as the location for my study because it is a large development with nine buildings and almost two thousand apartments. Additionally, this development was of interest as it is situated in a community that is undergoing gentrification. The West Harlem/Morningside Heights community has seen steady increases in rent and declines in crime rates over the past fifteen years. I felt that these changes would make for a more candid expression of place attachment.

I utilized a variety of qualitative research techniques to complete this research including semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations. Additionally, I conducted research on past and current policies on federally subsidized housing projects in order to cultivate an understanding of the issues surrounding public housing and specifically, public housing in the City of New York.

Gaining Entrée

I began my study of the Graham Houses by spending time in and around the development. I frequented stores primarily visited by Graham residents and ate meals and drank coffee at nearby restaurants. My first interview was with Tenant Association President Nicole Brown.[2] In addition to gathering a tremendous amount of information about the history of the Graham Houses, Ms. Brown was also able to inform me about some of the community groups at the Graham Houses. At her suggestion, I attended the Graham Houses Community Day, visited the Graham Day Care Center, After School Program and Senior Citizen Club. After time, I felt comfortable approaching residents and telling them about my study with the hopes that they would be interested in participating.

Non-participant observations

Non-participant observations afforded me the opportunity to describe the apartments, buildings and community in which the participants reside. In total, I made over thirty-five trips to the Graham Houses over a five-month period. For each trip, I spent a minimum of two hours and a maximum of 8 hours in and around

[2] Nicole Brown is a pseudonym

the Graham Houses. Description of the area in which the participants reside allows for a better understanding of why they may feel attached to their community. Characteristics that were observed include upkeep of the building and the area surrounding the building, the cleanliness of the building, lighting of both the building and the area surrounding the building, accessibility to public transportation, proximity to stores and other businesses (i.e. is the building isolated), recreational spaces such as playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, or community centers, whether or not there is a health clinic on the premises of the housing project and whether or not there appear to be a large number of people loitering outside the building. Additionally, I observed how easy it is to access the apartments in the building through noting whether or not the main doors of the building are locked and looking for the presence of building monitors in the lobby. Furthermore, I observed interactions between residents in order to ascertain if neighbors know one another and if they interact regularly in hallways and elevators. These observations aided me in understanding the sense of community present in the Graham Housing projects. As I walked through the cluster of buildings that comprised the Graham Houses, I took mental notes of what I observed and then sat down on benches in the common areas to record the notes in a notebook.

Interviews

I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with working residents of public housing projects. Fifteen interviews were completed with employed mothers of the Graham Housing development with the goals of learning how the

respondents feel about where they live, why they live there, how long they have lived there and if they feel as though their homes have been stigmatized by the media or otherwise.

In order to recruit interviewees, I started with my former coworkers who encouraged me to complete this study. I asked these gatekeepers to pass along my information to anyone they thought would be interested in participating in the study. Additionally, I met with Graham tenant association president Nicole Brown and attended the Graham Houses community day and recruited potential respondents. I looked to approach women who appeared to be old enough to have children and asked them if they lived in the Graham Houses. I then explained my study to them and inquired about their employment status and asked if they had children. If the potential respondent met the selection criteria, I requested permission to interview them for about 60 to 90 minutes about where they live and why. Once respondents agreed to be interviewed, appointments were made to meet face to face and in-depth interviews were conducted. Some interviews took place in the respondent's apartments while others took place in the common areas of the Graham Houses or the nearby McDonald's.

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents

Respondent	Age	Marital Status	Employment	Number of Children	# of Years in Graham	Route into Graham	College Educated
1	25	Single	Daycare Provider	1	2	Waitlist	Y
2	27	Single	Government	2	1	Waitlist	Y
3	27	Single	After School Director	1	27	Family	Y
4	38	Married	Government	3	30	Family	Y
5	32	Domestic Partner	Teacher	1	1	Shelter System	Y
6	45	Single	Transit	4	5	Waitlist	Y
7	40	Married	Social Services	2	10	Waitlist	Y
8	34	Single	Social Worker	5	1	Family	Y
9	30	Married	Transit	1	8	Waitlist	Y
10	26	Single	Childcare Provider	2	24	Waitlist	Y
11	31	Domestic Partner	Social Worker	1	7	Waitlist	Y
12	32	Married	Social Worker	3	7	Waitlist	Y
13	30	Married	Social Worker	2	5	Waitlist	Y
14	29	Married	Teacher	1	3	Waitlist	Y
15	25	Single	Social Services	1	1	Shelter System	Y

I also formally interviewed five community leaders to gain additional insight into life at Graham including Tenant President Nicole Brown, the Senior Citizen Program Director, youth basketball coach, the Day Care Center Director and two staff members of the Graham Afterschool Program. While looking to recruit

potential respondents, I came in contact with individuals who did not fit my criteria to be a respondent, but who had valuable insight into life at the Graham Houses. These 8 individuals were informally interviewed and their knowledge was collected in my field notes.

Five additional formal interviews were conducted with informed experts. These informed experts are college-educated women who currently live and primarily work in federally subsidized housing projects. The purpose of interviewing these women was to gain additional insights as to why employed residents may wish to remain in public housing while also illuminating notions of community and place attachment that may exist in housing projects.

Data Analysis of Interviews and Field Notes

Three (N=3) respondents agreed to be tape-recorded while the majority (N=12) preferred that I just take notes while they were interviewed. After completing the interviews I transcribed those that were recorded and organized my notes on the others. In order to analyze the notes I had collected, I read each day's observations and interviews while I rode the bus from Manhattan to the nearby suburb where I was staying. I coded the data from my observations and interviews in two phases. First, I looked for general themes and patterns that emerged from the observations and interviews in a process that is often referred to as open coding (Lofland et al. 2006). At the conclusion of my time at the Graham Houses, I catalogued all observations and sections of interviews that were highlighted in the open coding process. Afterwards, I focused my attention to the most common or

recurrent themes in the data using a technique often referred to as focused coding. Utilizing the method of focused coding allowed me to, "begin to assume the status of overarching ideas and propositions that will occupy a prominent place in the analysis "(Lofland et al. 2006:201). Through studying that data, certain themes emerged that allowed me to analyze and organize the sentiments of employed residents of housing projects.

Difficulties With This Research

In terms of difficulties with this research, I should begin with the obvious. I am a white female who was conducting research in a public housing development overwhelmingly populated with people of African and Hispanic descent. Although the residents of Graham are used to seeing Caucasians walk around their buildings and use the bus stops in front of their buildings, few white people are seen walking on the pathways that connect the buildings of the development. Due to my background as a child protective specialist, I felt very comfortable on the grounds of Graham and going into the various buildings. My presence there during this study did draw some looks from various residents. Aside from some glances and one person asking me if I was lost, I was able to move through the development with ease. The most difficult aspect of being of a different race was when I had to approach people on the grounds of Graham and ask them if they lived there. I felt uncomfortable because I had to assume that these individuals lived in public housing, a place that carries a distinct stigma and I, being white, was asking from a position of dominance. I was also hesitant because I was approaching individuals

who were different than I was on their home ground and I felt as though I was invading their territory. What I quickly learned was that potential respondents were much more comfortable with me than I was with them. Individuals whom I approached about living in Graham who turned out to not be residents, but rather just visiting or working there did not reproach me for my asking them if they lived there.

Another barrier was having to ask people if they were employed as I felt as though it was a presumptuous question. Once again, my fears were unjustified and I did not encounter any potential respondents who were visibly put off by me asking them about their employment status.

One of the biggest hurdles I had to overcome was finding respondents. This was difficult as the employed residents were not the people who lingered by doorways and sat on the benches of the playgrounds. The employed residents moved in and out of the development at great speed. Often, I literally had to run after people in order to get their attention to ask them if they would like to take part in my study. I tried recruiting respondents at nearby Laundromats, thinking I would be able to find a captive audience on a weekend. I soon realized that the employed residents I needed to speak with mostly owned their own washers and dryers in their apartments, a luxury for many city residents both in public and private housing. Additionally, after visiting with some of the community groups at Graham, I came to realize that employed Graham parents had little time between work and raising their children to volunteer with community groups at Graham.

This difficulty in recruiting forced me to abandon one of my original data collection techniques, a paper survey. After only a few trips to the grounds of the Graham public housing development, I realized that tracking down employed residents who were interested in taking part in my study was going to be quite the workout. Because there was no place where employed residents gathered and "hung out", finding enough respondents for both a paper survey and an in-depth interview was going to be nearly impossible. Paper surveys would have worked well had my population sample been limited to the elderly, or unemployed residents as these individuals were much more visible and stationary.

My recruiting difficulties were further compounded when it became apparent that fliers posted in the hallways and by the elevators in the various buildings went unnoticed. Not one person contacted me to be interviewed as a result of seeing a flier in their building. Additionally, I only had three respondents who were able to provide me with additional respondents as part of the snowball technique. The rest of my respondents claimed to have no ties to other potential respondents or other people in the development. This lack of a network to break into also reduced the number of potential respondents I was expecting to be able to easily recruit. I therefore had to work extremely hard to recruit individuals one by one. For me, this was quite a divergence from my social work background where I had the authority to go into people's homes uninvited and gather the information I needed for the City of New York. On a positive note, working extremely hard to recruit individuals made me aware of how valuable their input on this subject is. During the course of my research, I made 35 trips to the Graham Development and

spent anywhere from two hours to eight hours in the development and the surrounding area. During the interviews, respondents were very open to talking with me about living in the Graham Houses. Two interviews lasted nearly two hours because the respondents were so excited about sharing information with me. Several participants remarked that they had given the topic lots of thought after scheduling an interview with me and were eager to divulge everything they had been pondering in the days leading up to the actual interview. This made conducting interviews extremely effortless and allowed me to learn an incredible amount about life for an employed resident in the Graham Houses.

This chapter has focused on the research design utilized in this study. In the next chapter, I will describe the setting of the study and discuss the findings from this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter will first describe the area of West Harlem and the Graham Houses where the research for this thesis was completed. Interviews with community leaders, informed experts and employed respondents are then presented and analyzed. First, the benefits to living in the Graham Houses, according to the respondents are explained. This thesis will explores financial benefits such as low rent and housing stability and social benefits such as the opportunity to live in a mixed community and being able to reside in a safe neighborhood.

After the benefits to living at the Graham Houses are discussed, this study explores what the employed respondents feel are the disadvantages to residing at the Graham Houses or reasons why they would eventually like to leave including subpar building safety and maintenance, social isolation, stigma, challenges associated with raising children and the desire for home ownership. I draw on various works including Vale (1997) and Clampert-Lundquist (2004 & 2010) to explain why respondents in this study expressed these advantages and disadvantages and to illustrate how this current work differs from past research on public housing residents.

After both the advantages and the challenges to living at Graham are presented, the work of Bourdieu is analyzed to offer an explanation as how the respondent's contend with the stigmas associated with living in public housing.

Life in the Projects

Harlem, the section of Manhattan north of Central Park, is arguably one of the most captivating enclaves in all of New York City. A woman who has worked as a Legal Aid Attorney in New York City for over twenty years describes it as being "Sui Generis," a place that cannot be broken down into parts she argues, but rather a place that is much more intense, more charismatic, more compelling as a whole. West Harlem, a small sub section of Harlem, is an intriguing mix of old and new, wealth and poverty and white and black. It is home to Columbia University, the Apollo Theater, the Grant Memorial and the Cotton Club. Newly arrived African immigrants stroll along 125th street along side Ivy League professors, Dominicans and longtime African American residents. The smell of Middle Eastern food cart stands like Halal and Falafel fills the air with the most wonderful aromas. Scents so amazing that anyone, even a vegetarian, would be hard pressed to not immediately abandon all reservations they may have with eating "street meat".

West Harlem is an area that has undergone a significant transformation in the last 15 years. Once an area considered by many to be "unsafe", it is now a thriving community where stores are open all hours of the night and up and coming New Yorkers are flocking in order to procure some of the last large, affordable apartments in Manhattan. Columbia University students now feel comfortable

riding the train to the 125th street stop on the Red Number 1 subway line to their rental apartments and some even have apartments near the stops at 137th and 145th streets, streets once considered unsafe and avoided by University staff and students and tourists.

Despite this seemingly diverse and socially hip façade, West Harlem is still in New York City, a city that despite its contemporary reputation, is one of the most racially divided cities in the country. The public schools in the area are predominately attended by brown and black students while the publicly funded gifted programs, private schools and charter schools enroll a greater percentage of white students. White residents tend to shop at the Fairway Market on 125th street while black and Hispanic residents tend to take their business to the C-Mart.

Nestled in this vibrant community are a few federally subsidized housing developments more commonly described as "projects" and a majority of the tenants who reside there are of African and Hispanic descent. The federally funded development, known as the Graham Houses is one such public housing project in West Harlem. The development was constructed in 1957 and is home to over four thousand residents. All nine of the buildings that comprise the development are federally subsidized (NYCHA 2009). The Graham Houses are a lot like most high-rise public housing units in the City of New York. Buildings have twenty-one floors and are constructed with brick. The areas surrounding the buildings are fenced and signs reading, "Property of the New York City Housing Authority" are littered throughout the development. Inside the main doors of each building are lobbies

bustling with people waiting for the elevators to shuttle them up to their floors. The lobbies and the hallways are characterized by tile floors and walls and are of an almost indescribable faded shade of yellow. One resident describes the common area décor as,

> *Kind of like something you would expect to find in a mental hospital. Like a big state mental hospital or maybe even a prison. It's like the city wants to be able to hose down the walls when they get kind of dirty and not clean the walls like people would in a regular building.*

Living behind these 1,940 apartment doors are over four thousand individuals. These individuals and families gain their livelihood from a variety of sources including employment, social security, welfare and unemployment. The amount in rent they pay each month to the City of New York is determined by their income and constitutes 30% of their monthly income. Because of this, some families may pay eighty dollars a month for a three-bedroom apartment while other families may pay eight hundred dollars a month for the identical space. From my experiences as a caseworker for the City of New York, however, income generally has no bearing on what you may find behind each front door. A two parent working family at the top of the income echelon may live in squalor while a single mother dependent on welfare may have floors one can safely eat off of. The life stories of the residents are as varied as their interior decorating styles. Families with long histories of residing in public housing are neighbors with newly arrived residents. Some families wait nearly ten years for an apartment while others endure only a

short wait because they are coming from the shelter system, have child protective cases or are survivors of domestic violence.

Back outside the development, residents move through the courtyard at different speeds. Men, young and old, chit chat near the main entrances and sit on the benches in the playground area at all hours of the day and night. Elderly men and women can be seen slowly pushing shopping baskets on the development sidewalks that connect the various buildings. They often stop and greet one another and then continue on their way. Mothers chase young children through the courtyards and occasionally bring their children to the playgrounds although one is more likely to find adults loitering in that space rather than children playing.

The relaxed pace of these individuals is in stark contrast to the hurried movements of another group of residents. These residents dress a bit differently as some wear uniforms and others wear business attire. They are rarely spotted hanging out on the playground or stopping for any length of time to speak with other residents. They move at Olympic speed from the doorways of the buildings to the sidewalk that separates the federally funded housing complex from the rest of the world. Once on the sidewalk their pace slows a bit as they are observed getting into cars and driving away, heading for the bus stop on 125th street or the subway stops on either Broadway or St. Nicholas Avenues.

Had I not been able to witness these residents leave their buildings, I may not have assumed that they resided in public housing. They aren't elderly like the residents pushing the shopping baskets or unemployed like the men loitering on the

playground. They work in hospitals, schools, for the transit authority, social services and for the police department. In any other city, these individuals would probably own their own homes or rent in the private sector. However, this is New York City where home ownership is basically out of the question unless one's income nears the 7 digit mark and where small apartments, barely suitable for two people never mind a family of five, rent for well over two thousand dollars a month. Therefore, with sky high rents and an extremely low vacancy rate, these employed individuals find themselves residing in public housing.

Nicole Brown, tenant association president and Graham resident for over fifty years, explains that when the Graham Houses first opened, being employed was the norm, not the exception. She explains,

> *When public housing began in New York City, it was very hard to be accepted as a tenant. You had to be married if you had children, you had to have a source of income, no criminal background and even keep your living space a certain way.*

At nearly 70 years old, Brown is a stylish woman who is often seen patrolling the grounds of the Graham houses in jogging suits. With her grey hair smoothed back into a ponytail, she moves swiftly, as if she were a dancer or a track star in her earlier days. Brown goes on to explain how public housing was perceived in the early days,

> *Living in public housing wasn't like how it is today. We used to have Graduate Students living here and then they would finish, graduate and move on. Young families would come and save money and then move on. It was nice, clean and quiet. There was no difference between the Graham Houses and Sunnyside Gardens (a group of co-op buildings) across the street.*

According to Brown, how people treated the buildings as well as each other has declined over the years,

> *I feel as though people used to take care of themselves and of the grounds. Safety wasn't an issue, as the City of New York would kick anyone out if they started causing problems. It was a nice place to live. I raised five children here: two doctors, a teacher, a social worker, and a policeman. They all have their own homes now. None of my children live in public housing. They want me to leave, but this is my home. I'm old now, I'm not going anywhere.*

When asked if there was a specific time when things at Graham began to decline, Brown as adamant,

> *Absolutely. It was the Brooke Amendment. Maybe it was when Mayor Koch was in office? I'm not sure exactly. After the Brooke Amendment the City cleared out all of the Welfare Motels and where do you think they put those people? The City put them in public housing. That is when the crime started to get bad and the grounds started getting dirty. Like I said before, you used to have to pass a strict interview to get an apartment from the city. Now, any welfare recipient could get one.*

Today, one can tell the difference between the Graham Houses and Sunnyside Gardens across the street. The lawns of the Graham Houses are littered with pieces of trash while the grounds of Sunnyside Gardens are decorated with flowers. There are security guards who patrol the common areas of Sunnyside Gardens whereas people travel freely throughout the Graham development. Although the two groups of buildings are almost the same height and made of seemingly the same brick and occupy almost the same space, to many, Sunnyside Gardens may as well be a world away.

The employed residents of the Graham Houses are the focus of this study. While there is a significant amount of literature discussing both the positive and negative aspects of residing in public housing, the research generally polls the residents of public housing as a homogeneous group rather than teasing out some of the different groups of individuals who reside there. As a result, there is a need for research that focuses specifically on the attitudes and sentiments of employed public housing residents. This research attempts to uncover if employed respondents wish to remain residents of public housing. Additionally, it aims to ascertain what employed respondents feel are the advantages and disadvantages of life in public housing. Considering the plethora of negative stereotypes associated with residents of public housing, the mere existence of an employed pool of respondents arguably causes their attitudes and sentiments to be of interest. This thesis will seek to understand if employed respondents are socially and financially bound to the Graham Houses and therefore do not see themselves living anywhere else or, are the negative aspects of living in public housing as reported by much of the media and certain camps of academia so influential that they cause employed residents of the Graham Houses to want to flee.

As previously noted, employed residents appear different to outside observers. They appear to dress differently and move at a different speed than their unemployed counterparts. These individuals are seemingly moving between two worlds on a daily basis: one world in which people are dependent on federally funded programs while in their other world, they are seemingly self sufficient and gainfully employed.

All respondents interviewed for this thesis were employed, college educated mothers between the ages of 25-45 years old. Some were relatively new residents to Graham and to public housing while others had never lived anywhere else. Some respondents reported having to wait for their apartments on a city wide waiting list for years while others inherited from a parent or grandparent and two respondents were fast tracked into public housing because they were previously homeless and in the shelter system. The mere presence of these two respondents, college educated yet previously homeless, eludes to the tenuous struggle many New Yorkers face, not just those who have a history of dependence on the government for financial assistance. As noted previously, a typical New Yorker pays approximately fifty percent of their income towards rent, a daunting statistic considering today's economy.

A few respondents lived in their federally subsidized apartments with a parent or grandmother while other respondents had family members who lived in different public housing developments. Still others declared they were the only members of their extended family to reside in public housing. These characteristics of the respondents are significant as they suggest that for the majority of respondents, living in public housing is not something that is common or expected by them or their extended family. Additionally, these characteristics suggest that the public housing social network of these respondents may be smaller as a result of having few family ties to public housing developments.

In order to gain an understanding of the position of an employed resident of the Graham public housing development, respondents in this study were asked if they have ever considered leaving Graham Houses, where they would move if they had to, where they see themselves living in ten years, whether or not they feel there is a stigma attached to residing in public housing, how they feel public housing is portrayed in the media, how it is to raise children in public housing, their social ties in their building as well as why they remain in public housing.

Respondents Desire to Leave Graham

Close to subway and bus stops, shops, schools and a major university, the Graham Houses occupy prime real estate in upper Manhattan. Despite this ideal location and published research suggesting that many public housing residents do not wish to leave their homes and that they have strong social ties that make them want to stay, all 15 respondents except for one in this current study, indicated that they have considered leaving the Graham Houses. Additionally, all 15 respondents stated that they did not see themselves living in Graham in ten years and every single respondent indicated that they did not want their children to remain in the building when they were older or live in public housing as adults. When asked specifically why they wanted to leave, respondents offered seemingly tangible answers including desire for improved maintenance and increased personal safety. The overwhelming majority, however, tended to focus their answers on more abstract principles such as dealing with social isolation, contending with the fact that they felt there was a stigma attached to living in public housing, the desire to

have their children experience living in a different environment, and that, despite the current economy or their current economic situation, they believed in the "American Dream" and aspired to one day own their own home. Acknowledging these responses, the hypothesis that employed residents of Graham will express a desire to remain in their public housing development was largely unsupported.

Why the Employed Stay at Graham

Financial Benefits

Despite the fact that all respondents reported the desire to ultimately leave their homes, there were some expressed benefits to living at Graham or else the employed residents interviewed in this study would seemingly have no reason to stay. When asked about the advantages of living in public housing, all respondents stated that there are financial benefits to living where they do. One woman explained,

You get a lot of space for the money. I would not be able to afford a three-bedroom apartment in the open market. Also, a lot of your utilities are included like gas, water and electric. That is a big plus.

Other respondents stated that being able to save money was also an advantage. A City employee had this to say,

> *Right now, I'm able to save, save, save. I could live in a private building, but my rent would be like quadruple what it is here. I could do it, but I would have no money to do stuff with my kids and I would not be able to save any money.*

Financial reasons were cited as the main reason why respondents remain residents of the Graham Houses. One mother of three reported,

I stay here because I have a bigger plan in mind. I could probably move out if I wanted to right now, but then I would not have enough saved in order to buy my own home and I really want to do that. Also, I could live in a private apartment, but then I would have a lot less to spend on my children and I want them to go to dance class and art class. So for right now, I stay to save.

Concerning financial benefits, an informed expert and longtime resident of public housing explains,

My husband and I lived in public housing for years, maybe for a little bit longer than we needed to. We were saving money so we could buy our house in Pennsylvania. Now I have an aunt though who has a nice pension and still stays in public housing. She says the price is right for her. I've got to tell you, she lives quite lovely in housing. She goes to Atlantic City all the time and takes trips. For her, the financial benefits are enough to keep her there. My family and I decided to eventually move so that we could own our home and our kids could experience different things. So, the financial draw is important. Very important.

These findings are in direct contrast to the findings of Vale (1997) who found that of the two hundred and sixty-seven residents of five public housing developments in Boston interviewed in his study, only twenty-seven chose to, "mention anything to do with affordability" (Vale, 1997: 165). Furthermore, Vale's work found that only 3 percent of residents mentioned low rent as an aspect they would miss most if they had to move. The respondents in Vale's work represent a large and diverse sample of adult residents, not a specific sub section of residents as in the current study. What can be taken from this finding is that affordability may be seen as a benefit for employed, college educated residents of public housing developments, however price may not be quite the draw for other residents.

Social Benefits

Vale's (1997) findings of strong social ties in public housing developments prompted me to specifically ask respondents if they felt there were *any* social benefits to living in public housing. A few respondents laughed immediately and almost all respondents reported there were no social benefits while others took a few seconds to think before they responded.

Some respondents were able to acknowledge what they perceive as *some* social benefits to living in public housing. One social worker noted location and stated that,

> *The area surrounding the building is nice and the schools are good. If I lived in East Harlem for instance, I don't think my kids would be able to go to the caliber of schools that they go to here. There is diversity here that I probably would not be able to afford if I did not live in public housing.*

Respondents also noted that they appreciated that the Graham Houses was close to major bus and subway stops and that stores in the neighborhood tended to stay open late. One mother commented,

> *I walk out the door and BAM! I'm on the bus. That is nice! I can get to five major subway lines just like that! I can get downtown for work in like 20 minutes. I also like that the bodegas across the street stay open 24 hours a day. If I lived in East Harlem, things would be closed up tight at like 9 pm.*

In terms of location, this finding is mirrored in Vale's (1997) work in Boston public housing developments where it was discovered that location was expressed as what residents liked best about living in their development above all other factors.

The design of public housing in the City of New York is also attributable for resident's satisfaction with the location of their development. Unlike other large cities such as Atlanta and Chicago, public housing developments are not concentrated into one subsection of New York City, but rather they are dispersed throughout the five boroughs which comprise the City. Although certain sections of the City, for instance East Harlem and the South Bronx, may have more public housing developments than others, there is not the dense concentration of public housing developments as there is in other cities. I met a police detective whose child attends the Day Care Center on the grounds of Graham and whose wife once lived at the Graham Houses. We started talking about public housing in New York and he explained why he thought this de-concentration model of New York City worked so well,

> *I have a master's degree in urban studies and I actually studied different housing projects in different states. Chicago and Atlanta were a mess. The projects were way too big and spread out. The lives of the people were totally encompassed by the project. Here, people are connected to the outside. Their kids go to school with different types of kids. Granted, if they go to public school they may be all poor kids or brown kids, but they aren't all project kids. People at Graham hop a bus right outside their door and join the real world just like that. It would be hard to just stay within the confines of Graham and I think that is a good thing.*

A mother of three who held a government job and attended a prestigious private university in Chicago cited further support for the de-concentrated model of public housing New York City has adopted. She claimed,

> *I was at college and I needed to go to the dentist. I had no money so people told me about the free dental clinic in Chicago. They warned me that the free clinic was in the projects. I told them I wasn't scared because I had grown up in the*

projects in New York. Well, let me tell you; those projects in Chicago are no joke. I hoped off the bus and found myself in a city of itself. People started chasing me. I ran back to the bus stop and got out of there. Those people ran their own city. It was like something out of Lord of the Flies (laughs). I don't think I would ever live in the projects if it were like that in New York.

In addition to location, stability and safety were also cited as benefits to life at Graham. In terms of stability, one longtime resident explained,

Public housing is like a safety net. In other housing, if you lose your job nobody cares and your rent stays the same. In public housing, since you only pay a percentage of your income, you don't worry about losing your home. If you lose your job, your rent gets adjusted. That is a nice safety net.

The stability afforded by public housing developments is noted in the work of Currie and Yelowitz (2000) who found that for many families living in the projects, "the alternative may be moving from place to place as they seek accommodations they can afford, interspersed with spells of homelessness" (Currie & Yelowitz 2000: 102). One mother who lived in a homeless shelter before she came to Graham was adamant that despite the pitfalls of Graham and despite the fact that she did not see herself living at Graham for very long, public housing afforded her a chance to,

Get settled and start saving for the future. My son has been able to go to the same school for three years in a row. That is something you don't get to do when you move around from place to place because they are raising the rents on you. It gave me some peace of mind too. I have a place to call home now. I don't see myself here forever and I work to shield my son from the bad aspects of Graham, but being able to be in one place for a good amount of time has been nice.

In terms of safety, one respondent, initially insistent that there were absolutely no social benefits to living in what she described as "the hood" recanted her opinion later on in the interview and had this to share,

You know, there are some social benefits I guess. Like, this one night, a few years before I had my daughter, I came home really late from the club. It was like four in the morning. I seen this man I didn't know by the entrance to my building and he just looked weird. It really made me uneasy like he would do something to me if I tried to walk in the door so I thought quick and went around the corner and found this guy I grew up with named, "Fifty". Now, I need to tell you that Fifty is a damn drug addict but I gave Fifty a dollar and he walked me to my apartment. So I think the fact that there are always people outside at all hours of the night can be a social benefit because it can make you feel safe at times.

Concerning safety, while many of the reasons respondents claimed they felt safe because of the overall safety of the surrounding neighborhood, thus supporting the de-concentration policy of building dispersion in the City of New York, the anecdote offered by the late night clubber can be supported through the work of Susan Clampert-Lundquist (2010) who found that residents of the DuBois public housing development in Philadelphia created social ties in order to reduce their perceived risk. Clampert-Lundquist found that knowing others who lived at the public housing development allows her respondents to feel some sense of control over their social environment. Coincidentally, Clampert-Lundquist's study specifically noted how the omnipresent drug dealers at the DuBois development enhanced the security for other residents as she describes an informal warning system where drug dealers and people "in the know" would alert people to bring their children inside when there was about to be a shooting. Another respondent in Clampert-Lundquist's work is quoted as stating she actually felt safe coming home late at night because someone was there and knew who you were.

Additionally, the work of Currie and Yelowitz (2000) noted that despite the bad reputations that "projects" generally have,

It is not at all clear a priori that participation in the average project entails sacrificing either housing or neighborhood quality. It is possible that most projects are significantly better than some of the low-rent housing that is available on the private market (Currie & Yelowitz, 2000: 102).

Currie and Yelowitz go on to cite a 1996 New York Times article that stated that in New York City alone, 60,000 people live in private housing so unsafe, that it is judged to endanger lives.

In addition to safety and stability, diversity was another benefit respondents reported. One social worker stated that she felt it was a benefit to have middle class families living side by side with families who were struggling with issues of poverty. A mother who works for the NY City Transit Authority had this to say,

I think it's a good thing to have all sorts of people living together. I don't like it when all poor people live in one place and all rich people live in another. Everyone should be living together. It's just better that way. I see some Chinese people moving into Graham and I'm excited about it.

The benefits of diversity are not just noted by residents at Graham, but of policy makers and researchers alike. Through his research into public housing in New York City, Nicholas Dagen Bloom recognizes that public housing developments solely inhabited by the underclass in other cities typically faced more problems than the developments in New York. Bloom notes,

Lacking an ideology of housing as a legitimate public service, or a tradition of multi-family management transferable to projects, many city officials outside New York allowed public housing to become a welfare program, a racial program, a slum clearance program, a dumping ground for urban renewal, and only secondarily a long-term housing program. They rarely got it right (Bloom 2008: 266).

What Bloom found is that cities where public housing became solely a "dumping ground" for the most needy and slum like conditions predominated

causing poor, usually minority residents to reside solely among other poor minority residents. This economic isolation was then compounded with spatial isolation thus resulting in an underclass cut off from the rest of the world both literally and figuratively. Respondents of the current work note diversity and location as factors leading to residential satisfaction thus complimenting both the physical structure and public policy specific to public housing in the City of New York. The appreciation for diversity that many Graham residents had is echoed by the work of Alexander von Hoffman (1996) who noted that mixed income tenancy is now seen as a way of uplifting the poor. Von Hoffman builds this argument on the work of Wilson (1987) who found that the departure of stable working and middle class households from areas where low income people live has deprived the poor of role models and of organizations which promote the order and values necessary for a healthy community.

The respect respondents have for living in a mixed community is illuminated when they were asked about how different groups of people living in the Graham Houses co-exist by asking respondents who they felt made the best and worst tenants. Considering that approximately forty-six percent of New York City's public housing residents are employed, not all of the tenants at the Graham Houses are college educated and employed like the respondents focused on in this study.

While two respondents unequivocally indicated that unemployed residents made the worst tenants and employed residents made the best tenants,

interestingly, the majority of respondents found themselves initially unable to answer the question. One mother of three sons commented that,

> *You can't put a label on everyone. Not all of the working people are 'good.' I see some of them throwing garbage out the window and I see some unemployed people walking around picking it up.*

This same mother continued,

You know, sometimes I look at that wino on the corner and shake my head, but you never know. That wino may be making sure my six year old crosses the street safely. You cannot discount people.

Another mother, a social worker with one infant daughter stated,

> *You can't really say one group is good or another group is bad. Everyone has they own story. I mean, you may see a man and he is unemployed, but maybe he is unemployed because he worked himself so hard for so long, he is disabled now. You see people with mental illness or some other underlying condition or contributing factor and you just realize, 'hey they are just trying to make it as best they can'.*

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated there was little divide between working and non working residents and that everyone living in Graham seemed to occupy their social role without much conflict. One respondent, initially adamant that there as no divide between working and non working residents did later admit that sometimes she was a bit resentful that,

> *I live in the same place as some of these people and I go to work everyday and they don't. I pay $700 a month to live here and they pay like $70 a month. Sometimes I feel like the joke is on me, but its not really like that. I work, I'm going places, and they aren't. This is all they have.*

Answers to this question implied that employed residents were keenly aware of the pitfalls of stereotyping their unemployed neighbors. As one mother of two explained,

> *It is not like all people without jobs are doing bad things and all employed people are doing good for the buildings. I see employed people throwing garbage out of their windows and I see some unemployed people volunteering their time and helping out with the garden or the recycling program. There are people though who are in gangs and doing drugs and that isn't good for the community. However, there are no clear-cut lines here. We are human beings first and foremost you know?*

Respondents were resistant to passing judgment on others and note that having people pass judgment on them causes them to often resist doing so. An informed expert who has lived in public housing her whole life explains,

> *It would be nice perhaps if the City had public housing buildings just for employed people, but it wouldn't be fair. Everyone has their own story and reasons for why their life is like it is and I think by living in public housing, you learn that. You can't just assume someone is lazy because they are on public assistance. In my line of work, (social work) we say you must understand a person's underlying conditions and contributing factors. I think employed residents in public housing understand this because so many people on the outside just want to lump all of us together as no good and lazy. The truth is, everyone needs a place to live and I'm not about to sit here and say I deserve housing but this other person doesn't.*

Respect for mixed community was also reiterated when the respondents in this current study were asked what they would want people who have no knowledge about public housing to know about where they live. The overwhelming majority of respondents wanted outsiders to understand that "real people" live in public housing and that it was important to not judge all people in public housing. A mother who aspires to one day own her own funeral home stated,

> *I would want people to know it is not all bad. It is not the worst place you can be. It is a good place to start building your future. When you are here, mind your business and stay focused and don't get caught up in the project mentality, save your money and then move on to bigger and better things.*

Considering the value most respondents placed on living in a mixed community, it was not very surprising that when they stated that "real" people resided in public housing, they included the individuals who are reliant on public assistance or who are disabled. One mother of two reports,

> *I would want everyone out there to know that there are lots of different types of people here. This is the real world. People here work, people here don't work, people here need some extra help, people do for others, people here do bad things, people here do good things. There are old people, young people. There are just all sorts of people. We have everything here and it's not like how you may think it would be. It's just like any other community in so many ways.*

This level of understanding is striking when one considers how easy it would be for the employed residents to be at least somewhat resentful of their unemployed neighbors. Willis (1982) notes our tendency to delineate between groups when he writes,

> One of the time honored principles of cultural and social organization in this country as it is enacted and understood at the subjective level is that of 'them' and 'us.' That the term 'them' survives in 'us' is usually overlooked…. Even the most 'us' group has a little of 'them' inside (Willis 1982:122).

For the employed residents of Graham, their sympathetic views towards their less fortunate neighbors imply that they have not overlooked the notions that poverty, unemployment and dependency on federally funded programs can happen to anyone and so no one should be quick to judge those who are less fortunate.

Another possible reason for this finding is that urbanites are simply more tolerant than other groups of people. The work on urbanites and tolerance has a long history in Sociology. In 1955 Stouffer found, "that the city dweller does rub shoulders with more people who have different ideas from his own, and he learns to

live and let live" (Stouffer 1955: 222). Influenced by the work of Stouffer, Wilson (1985) notes in his work on tolerance,

> We have found that urbanism, operationalized as respondent's community size, is associated with greater tolerance, measured in terms of respondent's willingness to extend civil liberties to those who hold unpopular if not deviant ideas and interests (Wilson 1985: 121).

While this body of literature suggests that the employed residents of Graham may be tolerant of their neighbor's differences because living in a big city like New York simply promotes tolerance, when one considers the dynamics of public housing, it is unlikely that the concept of urban tolerance by itself can account for the intensity of the employed respondents compassion towards others. Appreciation for a mixed community, a policy strongly maintained over the years by the NYCHA, and recognized by the employed respondents in this study must be partially to thank for the compassion employed respondents have for their less fortunate neighbors.

Neighborhood safety, financial benefits, safety net, and diversity all make living at the Graham Houses bearable for respondents in the current study. While all respondents in the current study expressed a desire to leave Graham, uncovering the benefits to residing at the Graham Houses in the eyes of employed residents is important as it works to counter some of the negative portrayals of public housing developments that tend to predominate the media and some of academia. By having employed residents who ultimately wish to leave public housing describe both the negative and the positives of public housing, some middle ground is reached that

will hopefully lead to a better understanding of what public housing is doing right, and what can be improved upon.

The Disadvantages of life at the Graham Houses

Maintenance and Safety

When respondents described what they feel are the disadvantages to living at the Graham Houses, reasons included complaints about the safety of the development and the quality and timeliness of the maintenance. These concerns are arguably not relegated to only individuals who live in public housing, as safety and maintenance are issues those in private housing also face. Concerning Graham respondents, the overwhelming majority reported that the problems they have in their apartments and in the common areas of the buildings do not get fixed in a timely manner. One mother of a disabled son explains,

> *I have had this huge hole in my wall since I moved in two years ago and I hardly ever have hot water. You call and they are so backlogged it takes months or years to get someone out to fix it. It is a reminder to me that you get what you pay for I guess.*

In terms of safety issues, many longtime residents reported feeling safe or relatively safe while newer residents were more vocal about their concerns. The same mother who has been waiting for the City to fix the hole in her wall explains,

> *I maybe would feel safe, but there is an arsonist in my particular building and every couple of months they have to come put out some fire in the stairwell, so because of that, no, I don't really feel safe.*

Maintenance and safety issues were a bone of contention for many in the current study, although one can argue that these concerns would be similar for

tenants of any housing development, public or private. In Vale's (1997) work, public housing residents who were less satisfied with the management and maintenance were more likely to report that they did not wish to remain residents of that housing development "longer than necessary". Burby and Rohe (1989) also found that satisfaction with maintenance had a strong influence on residential satisfaction.

Additionally, a major reason why respondents in Vale's (1997) study wanted to leave their public housing development was due to concerns about personal and family security. Vale found that those who stated that they wished to leave as soon as possible were twice as likely to report that they did not feel safe in their development during the daytime. Fear of crime in the Graham Houses proved to be a cited pitfall of living in public housing. Margarita Lopez, director of the Senior Center located in the Graham Houses, explains,

> *My seniors do not like being out at night. If we come back from a field trip after dark, I see them hurry towards their building doors. Of course people may just say it is because they are older and older people get a little paranoid with age, but I know plenty of middle age people who are more vigilant at night here at Graham too. I'm not sure if something has ever happened to them, maybe it's just the fear of it. Like, you know you live in the projects so you should automatically be on alert.*

Another respondent, a mother of two, reported,

> *Even though nothing has ever happened to me here, that doesn't mean that it wont or that I don't worry about it. I live in the hood. Something could happen at any moment. I know I would feel safer if I lived in private housing. People think they are tough here because it is the hood. There isn't that sort of pressure to be bad in private housing.*

The fear of crime in places like Graham may however be more powerful than the actual threat of crime. New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly

announced in January 2010 that crime in public housing developments in New York City was down 14 percent. Additionally, Kelly noted that crime in the Graham Houses was down 26 percent compared with the year before. Yet Rohe and Burby (1988) found that fear of crime had negative impacts on quality of life and that measures of actual crime rates in the project and the neighborhood are not strong predictors of fear thus suggesting that crime level may have an indirect effect on fear though its influence on perceived incivilities.

An informed expert who often works with residents of the Graham Houses and is a resident in one of the most notoriously dangerous public housing developments in Brooklyn explains,

> *It is a combination of real crime and the not-so-real crime. Both can get to you. Like my girl Toni Morrison once wrote, 'it doesn't matter if what you are scared of is real or not.' Graham is pretty safe as far as housing projects go. I could think of a lot of worse places. Believe me. I mostly feel safe in my home in Brooklyn, but the police are there a lot so stuff is probably going on that I don't know about. It is a mindset too. Like, if you listened to everything you heard on tv, you probably would never want to live in public housing, but its not that bad.*

Social Isolation

In addition to reasons such as poor maintenance and safety, respondents also mentioned more abstract reasons for wanting to move away from the Graham Houses such as feelings of social isolation. Often when one speaks about being attached to a particular place, social ties are what anchor them to that place. When respondents in the current study were questioned about their social ties in the Graham Houses, surprisingly only three respondents reported having any close

friends in their development and only two respondents stated that they had any family ties to the development. This was especially puzzling because most respondents had expressed that they appreciated living in a mixed income community. Over and over again, respondents reported that they tended to "keep to themselves" and "did not want to get to know the people around them." When probed further, one mother of three offered,

> *You have to understand, there are a lot of people dealing with poverty in this building. There are people dealing with drug problems, mental illness. It is not that I do not want to help them, its just that first they want to borrow an egg, next they want to use your phone, next you are watching their kids and soon enough, you are too involved. I just can't let that happen.*

Other respondents noted, "nosy neighbors" and "people who are up to no good wanting to know your business" as reasons for their self inflicted social isolation. One employed mother of one daughter summed up what she explained to be the social "code" of the "projects" when she shared,

> *When you first move into public housing, you are not interested in talking with anyone. You are only concerned with finding out who exactly you SHOUDLDN'T be associating with. I think this is different than regular housing where when you move to a new place, you get out and meet people and try to find who you should be with.*

When specifically asked about how interactions with neighbors take place one woman responded, *"I keep it short. I say, 'Hi neighbor' and that is it. I call her neighbor. I do not know her name."* Other respondents reported similar limited interaction with neighbors; however two respondents reported that they had significant interactions with their immediate neighbors and indicated that the neighbors' advanced age facilitated the interactions. One woman who lives on the fourteenth floor explains,

I speak to my neighbor because she is a little old lady and is sweet as can be. I have her over on the holidays because she lives alone. If she weren't sweet and old though, I probably wouldn't have much to do with my neighbor.

These findings are in stark contrast to the work of Clampert-Lundquist (2010) Vale (1997) and Venkatesh (2000) who found strong social ties and solidarity among tenants of public housing developments in Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia. More specifically, Clampert-Lundquist, who interviewed residents of public housing developments in Philadelphia, found,

> Most of the teens and adults described an active social life at Dubois Towers. Over two-thirds of the adults described strong local ties with kin and nonkin at Dubois which comprised most of their social interaction, and over 80 percent of the teens had at least one member of their extended family living at Dubois (Clampert-Lundquist 2010: 144).

Additionally, Vale (1997) found, "our interviews in Boston suggest a public housing project is frequently the social center of residents' lives the locus and focus of family and friendships, at least for adults" (Vale, 1997: 166). Furthermore, the work of Venkatesh (2000) found a dense network of social support and social control among his respondents in Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes pubic housing development.

Unlike these residents, the residents interviewed in the current study at the Graham Houses reported having few if any social ties to their building development. While the aforementioned studies did not distinguish between employed and unemployed residents, the current study does. This difference may account for the different findings and suggests that employed residents, when polled specifically, may have views and experiences that are different from the general population of public housing residents.

Desire for Home Ownership

The desire to one day own their own home was another reason why many respondents expressed the desire to leave the Graham Houses. Home ownership, for many respondents, signified a life accomplishment and many stated they were currently saving money so that they would one day not only be able to move out of public housing, but also move out of the renters market. One mother of five stated,

> *I could probably leave right now and just get a rental in Washington Heights or Central Harlem. But I would still be just renting and the place would be smaller. I would be paying rent to some private firm and not the City. Maybe it would be nicer and I definitely wouldn't have to deal with living 'in the hood' but it still wouldn't be mine, so I decided I will stay here and save until I can afford my own place.*

The desire to own one's home was also mentioned as a way to remedy some of the downfalls about living in public housing among individuals who don't seem to respect the development because the City of New York owns the buildings and not the tenants. One mother stated,

> *I have always had this interest in the old Soviet Union. I studied it in school and I've read a lot of books on the subject. Although I have never been there, I have to imagine that the projects are like the housing they had in the old Soviet Union. People don't treat them well because they don't own them. Like, I read this one article that said how the hallways in some old Soviet buildings were totally trashy, but the apartments were nice. It was like people only treated the stuff they owned nicely. I feel like people in Graham are like that a lot of the time. They will throw trash out the window but they have like a nice bedroom set and living room set. The stuff they own, they take care of. I want to own my own home and be around others who own and then everyone will take pride in keeping everything nice and clean. I want my kids to see that and always keep everything nice and clean and take pride in themselves and their homes.*

When probed about where respondents would move to if they had to leave their apartments, answers varied. Some respondents claim they would try to move

“Down South” (states in the southern region of the United States) while others stated they desired to move to a co-op situation in a neighboring borough. Three respondents stated they would move ‘upstate’ (an area considered by many in New York City to include everything in New York State north of the Bronx). Two claimed they would move to New Jersey and one stated she wished she could live near her sister in Pennsylvania. Interestingly, no respondents reported that they wished to remain in Manhattan. High costs and scarcity of apartments were the main reasons why respondents stated they did not even consider remaining in Manhattan.

Not wanting to remain in Manhattan is a sentiment shared by many New Yorkers, not just residents of the Graham public housing development. Bloom (2008) cites a 1999 employer study which found that 86 percent of respondents cited housing costs as a serious deterrent to doing business in New York and 45 percent of New Yorkers seriously considered moving out of the city because of high housing costs. According to Habitat for Humanity, the rate of home ownership in New York City is 32 percent, less than half the national average.

The desire the Graham respondents had for owning their homes is not unique and has been investigated within the realm of academia. Rohe and Stegman (2010) found that, “homeownership does have a significant effect on the life satisfaction of low-income people. Home buyers were found to have higher levels of life satisfaction, compared to renters” (Rohe & Stegman 1994: 180).

Additionally, Saunders (1978) found that homeownership gave people the feeling that they had more control over their lives when compared with renters.

Homeowners felt as though they had more control over who was able to enter their space, what changes could take place on the grounds surrounding their living space and greater control over the circumstances that might force them to move.

These findings indicate that the respondents in this study still believe in the "American Dream." They are individuals who despite their current living situation and the current economy, firmly believe that they can make the leap from living in federally owned public housing developments to being home owners. These findings are in contrast to the large study conducted by Vale (1997) in Boston where he found that,

> For many respondents, the attitude toward their public housing environments seems rooted in the extremely low expectations they have for finding better alternatives. For many respondents, especially those who have lived for many decades in public housing, the frame of reference seems to be other public housing developments, rather than the broader range of residential neighborhood settings (Vale 1997: 170).

In the current study, respondents were also asked if they felt as though they had a choice to live where they wanted. Almost half of the respondents reported that they do have a choice and did not feel limited or discriminated against in the housing market, while the other half of respondents also did not report feeling excluded in the open housing market. They did indicate, however that they did not feel as though they made enough money *at this time* to live how they would want to live in the private sector. This finding is significant as it suggests that the respondents in this study are not dissatisfied with their current housing merely because they feel as though they are powerless to do something about their current situation. For example, Michelson (1977) found that pessimistic views of the future

and feelings that housing opportunities are constrained by socio-economic factors could lead to housing dissatisfaction. Respondents in the current study do not report feeling constrained so therefore their dissatisfaction with housing must stem from other avenues. Additionally, this finding is significant as I explicitly asked respondents whether or not they felt their race has limited them in the housing market. No respondent indicated that they felt they had been discriminated against or felt limited in the housing market because of the color of their skin.

Vale's (1997) findings are perhaps different from the current study, as Vale did not differentiate between the employed and unemployed residents of his Boston public housing developments when drawing respondents. While his sample size is quite a bit larger than that of the current study, his sample is broad and may not capture the sentiments of employed residents like the current study attempts to do. What can be taken away from comparing the findings of these two studies is the suggestion that controlling for employment status may have an effect on whether or not public housing residents feel hopeful about the future and feel as though they have the opportunities to one day live in the private sector.

Stigma

Perhaps the most noted deterrent to remaining in the Graham Houses had to do with dealing with the stigma associated with public housing. When respondents spoke about "stigma" they appeared to be utilizing a definition of stigma that fit with Erving Goffman's work. Goffman (1963) uses the term stigma to describe a process of devaluation in which certain individuals, for example people who have substance

abuse issues, physical abnormalities or mental defects, are disqualified from full social acceptance because of their attributes or characteristics or even their moral character or lifestyle choices. Also pertinent to understanding what respondents reported as stigma would be the work of Jones et al. (1984) who states that stigma can be seen as a relationship between an attribute and a stereotype and that the definition of stigma is generated as the "mark" or attribute that links a person to undesirable characteristics or stereotypes. In terms of the current study, the attribute in question would be living in public housing and this "mark" then links residents to undesirable characteristics or stereotypes such as being a drug dealer, gang member or welfare recipient. In order to illustrate this point, a mother of three reports,

> *I grew up here and when I was a teenager I went to a private school downtown. My friends were never allowed to come over. Even now I face that. I have a friend who always makes me go over to her place. She is open about it too. She says to me, 'I don't do projects.' I'm lucky that we stay in touch.*

Another respondent who has spent her whole life in public housing offers,

> *There are certainly stigmas and stereotypes. People think everyone is black or Puerto Rican, everyone does drugs, no one works, no one goes to school never mind college. It is really an endless list.*

One employed single mother of two said,

> *The police came by because they were investigating a crime in the building and wanted to know if I had seen or heard anything. They first thing they said when they opened the door was, 'Wow, you have carpeting? You must be new to the projects.' It made me a bit angry because why would they think I do not know how to live just because I live in public housing.*

Another mother simply indicated, *"Listen, the projects ARE a stigma. They are just one big stereotype. Point Blank. Period!"*

The Stigma of Public Housing

In the United States, it is generally expected that individuals will not rely on the federal government for housing, but rather be able to take care of one's housing needs without assistance. When individuals are unable to obtain housing for themselves and their families without assistance and need to move into homeless shelters or public housing, they are systematically disqualified from full social acceptance. These dependent individuals can no longer make all choices for themselves, but rather now must adhere to certain restrictions such as bans on harboring individuals convicted of felonies in their homes, policies on having pets and curfews. Furthermore, these individuals are disqualified from full social acceptance because they are then linked with a host of stereotypes that accompany the vision of a person who cannot secure housing on the private market. In the United States, these stereotypes involve individuals who are unable to work steadily, addicted to drugs or sell drugs, depend on welfare, in a gang, are parents who cannot control their children and are from a single parent home. Interestingly, these negative connotations do not appear to be limited to the United States as a study involving public housing in Australia found that common stereotypes associated with tenants included the perception that the area was a place full of feral and wild young people and inadequate parents who have little interest in educating and disciplining their children (Powell 1993).

Effects of Stigma

Research also contends that there are ramifications of having to deal with a stigmatized existence. In terms of dealing with housing stigma, Palmer et al. (2004) found among public housing residents in Australia,

> Taken on its own, the stigma may not seem like a massive burden on health and wellbeing but as a part of a broader pattern of disadvantage and difference, it emerges as significant in terms of being a way in which social exclusion is enforced (Palmer et al. 2004: 415).

Residents of Graham note the consequences of dealing with housing stigma and the social exclusion mentioned in Palmer et al. (2004) as a mother of four who works for a city agency reported,

> *People look down on people who live in the projects. There are just so many bad images that get conjured up. For example, I knew a woman who basically had already gotten hired on a job and when she had to give her address to the Human Resource lady, all of a sudden the position had already been filled. You don't think that her address had something to do with it? I do. People hold certain beliefs about people who live in the projects.*

Concerning the effects of living in a stigmatized place, a social worker and Graham Houses mother of five explains,

> *You see all this bad stuff about where you live and it starts to take its toll. How can you feel good about your home when everyone out there is constantly telling you that you live in a crime ridden hell hole. The media over does it. They would have you believe you are likely to catch a bullet just coming for a visit. It's not like that. It's not perfect, no way, but it's not like that.*

When asked how these stigmas and stereotypes are perpetuated, most respondents were adamant that the media played an important role in fueling the fire. All respondents reported that the media only reports the negative aspects of life in public housing. While four respondents stated that these solely negative

portrayals were appropriate, the majority of respondents report that they feel as though the media tends to overemphasize the negatives and ignore anything positive that goes on in public housing. One social worker and mother of one contends,

> *Gangs, drugs, violence are all you see when you turn on the news or open the paper. No wonder people hate the projects. No wonder people who don't live there are scared of it. No wonder people think money is being wasted on the projects. I think I would probably too if all I knew was what I saw on television on in newspapers. You never hear about anything good. My neighbor is eight years old and in the fifth grade. He is a little genius and you don't hear about it. If he was eight and shooting someone you would definitely hear about some project mini gangbanger though. It is definitely annoying I can tell you that.*

Stigma and Public Housing: A Fair Portrayal?

The media and other information dispensing channels are seen as avenues where stigmas associated with public housing are bred and fed. Often times, the writing and reporting border on sensational and appear to use isolated issues in particular cities to create wide spread fear among the American people. Concerning the media, Bauman (1994) explains, "the well-worn critiques of public housing: that it was poorly sited; that it concentrated, ghettoized, and stigmatized the poor; and that it was poorly managed and maintained" (Bauman 1994: 348).

Repeatedly, the media and studies appearing in academic journals portray the high-rise structure of many public housing developments as a cause of and a sign of the social ills of public housing. Spurred by these sentiments, in 1968 Congress forbid further construction of "high-rise" public housing buildings

(Bauman 1994). Blaming architecture proved to be pointless, which was pointed out in the work of Fuerst and Petty (1991). They found little evidence that high-rise architecture had anything to do with the ills associated with public housing. In the city of Chicago, Jacob (2004) concluded that children who had to move because their high-rise public housing building were being demolished did not better or no worse than their peers on a wide variety of achievement measures.

Further evidence that public housing in America has been unfairly stigmatized can be found in the work of Bratt (1986) who insists that many of the ills of public housing can be attributed to those who oppose public housing or to what she describes as false mythology surrounding public housing. Bratt contends that when viewed from a global perspective, the fact that only a small percentage of high rise pubic housing developments are considered to be "troubled" or "distressed" is significant and should counter the widespread sentiment that public housing in the United States is a failure. Additionally, Vale (1993) describes what he believes is the "problem project paradigm" and points out that,

> For decades, the press has characterized U.S. public housing by its most extreme failures even though most of the 4 million public housing residents may still be adequately served. Journalists and academics have devoted years to describing and explaining the most notorious public housing environments. Meanwhile, proponents have had to expend enormous amounts of energy to counteract the public's willingness to over generalize from such accounts and thereby to unfairly condemn the whole public housing program (Vale 1993: 147).

As a result of the media and academia, public housing in the United States has come to be synonymous with being troubled and distressed and not a place where a person would like to live or raise a family. Consequently, the residents of

public housing find themselves contending with the fact that they are "marked" by residing in a stigmatized place and as a result, they are linked with many undesirable stereotypes. While much of the current academic work on public housing is uncovering that perhaps the negative attention allotted to public housing is unwarranted, the negative image of public housing in the United States has yet to be widely rejected. As a result, the stigma and the stereotypes are alive and well to the respondents in this current study and consequently, the employed residents of the Graham Houses interviewed in this work indicate that the stigma and stereotypes prompt them to want to one-day leave the Graham Houses.

Raising Children and Stigma

Stigma as a deterrent to remaining at Graham seemed to re-emerge when respondents were asked about raising children in public housing. While two respondents noted that they felt there were benefits to raising their kids in public housing citing the fact that a elderly neighbor helped them with occasional childcare, the only other positive aspect that respondents were able to come up with concerning their children focused on the fact that they were able to live in a relatively well-to-do neighborhood that they would not otherwise be able to afford. When questioned if there were negative aspects to raising their children in public housing, all respondents were able to quickly come up with several challenges. One mother responded,

> *You need to constantly be telling your kids that there is more out there. You have them looking at unemployed men hanging out and selling drugs and you need to take them to other places so they can see what else is out there.*

Besides, I always feel like I'm working to protect them from outside influences and outside attitudes. Some of the storeowners around here have ideas about kids who live in the projects and treat the kids differently. I got my daughter into the middle school run by the University and I feel like some of the guidance counselors maybe have certain impressions of kids from Graham. The principal is a Latino and I feel like he is interested in teaching all kids from the community, but some of the guidance counselors, I'm not sure about.

A schoolteacher and mother of one son offered,

You do not want your child to develop the "project mentality" as I call it. By this, I mean that there are a lot of people who live in public housing and they define themselves by it. They think they need to act a certain way. They need to be tough and not do well in school. Those things are considered 'cool' in the strange world of the projects. Obviously, I do not want my son to think like that.

Several mothers stated that they do not allow their kids to play in the playground on the grounds of Graham and instead travel to other playgrounds. When asked why, the mothers responded that they wanted to take their kids to nicer, cleaner playgrounds where a variety of kids played, not just project kids. The overwhelming majority of respondents stated that they were extra vigilant about what children their children spoke to and four mothers contended that there were kids in the building or development that they forbade this children to associate with. About three quarters of the respondents had children who attended private or selective public charter schools and reported that they sought out the best schools so that their children would be able to learn with children who do not exclusively live in public housing or below the poverty lines. A mother of two who sends her children to a prestigious charter school known for its commitment to academics and long instructional hours explains,

I made sure I went and applied to the best charter schools for my kids because I am not in a financial position right now to pay twenty or thirty thousand dollars a year so they can go to a prep school. I didn't want my kids going to

the local public school because the only kids there live in the projects or are poor and I want my kids around other kids whose parents care about education enough to get them into the right schools. I'm not saying that all of the public school parents or project parents don't care; some are just too busy working to take an active role or don't speak the language. But we are talking about my kids here and I want the best for them.

Another mother of two noted that she felt her children would get "more respect" from others if they had a different address. When probed further, this mother explained,

Some co-workers and I were working on a project one night and I had to bring my son along. One co-worker was like, 'wow, your son reads so well.' Other times, people will say things to me like, 'you do so much for your kids.' I feel like if I lived across the street in private housing, my son would be expected to read well and I would be expected to do a lot for my kids. So that is the main difference: expectations.

What is significant about these findings is that despite the current academic work by Jacob (2004) and Currie and Yelowitz (2000) who found that public housing had few if any ill effects on raising, children, parents in this current study overwhelmingly agree that public housing is not a favorable place for raising children. The respondents do not seem to believe that the problems of project life can be completely overcome by good diligent parenting and therefore they would all like for their children to experience living somewhere else and no respondent felt as though their children would live in public housing when they became adults. All respondents understand how much it is to live across the street in private housing per say however, they believe that living just thirty feet away in a different high rise building that is made of brick will provide better social and economic opportunities for their children. They see the problems at Graham as being more than structural issues such as the elevators always breaking. They understand how the stigma of

living has affected them and they see it affecting their children and their life chances as well.

Coping with the Disadvantages of Graham

Several of the reasons why respondents wish to ultimately leave the Graham Houses can be understood through the work of Pierre Bourdieu. As stated in chapter two, through an examination of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital, one can better understand why employed residents are so socially isolated, why they feel the burden of stigma, and why they aspire to one day own their own home. The concept of habitus, explained previously as a set of structures that work to draw both individuals and groups toward certain beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, values and taste, can begin to explain why employed respondents did not feel as though the Graham Houses was going to be their permanent home.

In terms of the employed Graham respondents, many respondents spoke of wanting to resist the project mentality that they feel is present in public housing developments. Their habitus, or, set of structuring structures, draws them toward certain beliefs, behaviors, attitudes values and taste that they feel are not a part of this "project mentality." The respondents in this study are employed, have a college degree, express interest in their children's education, and are actively planning for a life that does not involve relying on federally funded programs. Their habitus is able to delineate what is desirable and undesirable and who they are and who they are not. For the respondents in this study, this means rejecting what they feel is a stigmatized project mentality in favor of valuing employment, education and home

ownership.

Considering that the employed residents of the Graham Houses have all expressed the desire to move away from the development and see themselves as temporary residents, it is rational to assume they choose social isolation in order to not have their values, beliefs and knowledge as well as their connections to the rest of the world affected by others living in the Graham Houses. Instead, they choose to only have social relationships with individuals outside the grounds of Graham. One respondent, a city employee and mother of three echoed these sentiments when she stated,

> *I deal with people on the outside, but not on the inside (of Graham Houses). None of my family lives in public housing and they give me crap for staying here. They don't think I should be here and tell me I need to get out. I take my kids to the museum, the movies, to events in Central Park. I don't center our social lives around Graham like some people here do. This is just where we lay down our heads at night.*

Another respondent stated,

> *I'm not going to 'dig in' like some people do here. My time here is limited and besides, I don't want to get to know people here and I don't want my kids getting to know other kids here. I know it may be hard for someone not from the projects to understand, but you keep to yourself to just make your life easier. That way, you can keep the bad stuff out. If I were an old lady, I might get involved with the different elder clubs, but I'm busy at work or with my kids. I don't have time to be social around here.*

Further supporting this notion, the work of Massey and Denton (1993) suggests poor black people living in segregated communities composed of similarly impoverished households may develop alternative status systems in opposition to mainstream culture. In order to solidify this alternate system, other people in the community who share these beliefs function to reinforce these attitudes and

behaviors. The employed residents in this current study do not adhere to an alternate system, which is evident as they express the desire to not buy into the "project" mentality. Therefore, Graham respondents find themselves wanting to leave a space in which the views and beliefs are not compatible with their own. This idea is also supported by the work of Wilson (1991) who contends,

> The issue is not simply that the underclass or ghetto poor have a marginal position in the labor market similar to that of other disadvantaged groups, it is also that their economic position is uniquely reinforced by their social milieu (Wilson 1991: 170).

Additional support for this idea can be found in the work of Crane (1991) who notes in his work on mathematical models of social problems that,

> The basic assumption of my model is that social problems are contagious and are spread through peer influence. The large body of empirical work on delinquency and differential association supports this assumption, at least for several types of adolescent social problems (Crane 1991: 1228).

As a result, as noted in the work of Schill (1993), these concentration effects may become reinforced as the more stable and less impoverished residents flee public housing and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Habitus and Aspirations

The concept of habitus is also pertinent when trying to understand why Graham residents are so optimistic about the future and believe that they can one day be homeowners. In Jay MacLeod's book, "*Ain't No Making It*" the aspirations of two different groups residing in public housing, "The Hallway Hangers" and "The Brothers" were described as being different because of the different habitus' that

the men in the two groups possessed. In order to explain these differences, MacLeod notes,

> Aspirations reflect an individual's view of his or her own chances for getting ahead and are an internalization of objective probabilities. But aspirations are not the product of a rational analysis; rather, they are acquired in the habitus of the individual (MacLeod 1995: 15).

In terms of Graham residents, they believe home ownership is within their grasp while the respondents in other studies, such as Vale's (1997) work in Boston, were content to remain in public housing. This is likely due to the fact that these respondents have different ambitions and aspirations for the future, qualities according to MacLeod that are acquired in the habitus of an individual.

Graham Respondents and Capital

Along with his concept of habitus, Bourdieu's concepts of capital are also relevant when trying to understand how employed residents deal with living in a stigmatized place and why they have expressed the desire to leave. In his work, Bourdieu indentifies four different types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital.

When considering the employed respondents of Graham, they seemingly have dissimilar economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital than the stigmas they are faced with. First off, they possess different economic capital because they are employed and earning a salary. Secondly, the cultural capital of the respondents in the current study differ as Graham respondents all have a college education and claim to enjoy events with their family outside of the public housing grounds such as

museums and concerts. In terms of social capital, the networks of the Graham residents outside of the space of public housing appear to be quite dense. Respondents speak of having ties with co-workers, friends and family who do not live in public housing. As a result of being employed, the Graham respondents have relationships with other employed individuals instead of focusing their social lives around happenings at the public housing development.

Finally, the symbolic capital of the Graham respondents is unique in that many of the characteristics of the respondents in the current study possess traits that are considered by the general population to be acceptable or legitimate. Going to work and ensuring one's children have access to the best schools, for example, have been legitimized by the larger population over, for instance, collecting welfare and allowing one's children to attend any school. In this sense, the Graham respondents possess symbolic capital over the people they are stigmatized to be.

Through examining the work of Bourdieu and others, it is clear to see that the Graham respondents possess different forms of capital and maintain a different habitus when compared with the stigmas that have been associated with them. As a result of these differences, a mismatch has occurred. Respondents recognize this mismatch when they refrain from socializing with neighbors and attempt to shield their children from what they believe is the "project" mentality. The mismatch of capital may arguably be what prompts employed residents to want to eventually leave the Graham Houses even though there is no better deal in the City of New York.

In this chapter I have discussed the principal themes and patterns that emerged from my observations and interviews at the Graham Houses. I depict the setting of the Graham Houses and the surrounding neighborhood. I then highlight the expressed advantages and disadvantages respondents reported to residing at the Graham Houses. I use a variety of published academic work to explain why respondents reported these advantages and disadvantages while also highlighting the differences between the current study and past work on public housing residents. In order to help explain why all respondents in this current study expressed a desire to ultimately leave the Graham Houses, I draw on the work of Bourdieu and his concepts of habitus and capital. In the following chapter I discuss some of the surprising findings in this study as well as what this study offers to the growing body of literature concerning public housing. Additionally, this last chapter discusses the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Public housing projects in New York City over time have become synonymous with crime and poverty. For the most part, scholarly articles focused on public housing largely have dealt with poor educational, health and economic outcomes, which has worked to perpetuate these negative connotations. Although one does not have to search far to find information that would suggest public housing projects are not attractive places to live or raise a family, New York City public housing projects are home to over 640,000 people and over 140,000 applicants are currently waiting for apartments (NYCHA 2009). According to New York City's Habitat for Humanity, families typically wait a minimum of eight years for a federally subsidized apartment.

These statistics suggest that for many New Yorkers, at least, public housing projects are sought-after places to live in. Additionally, statistics from the New York City Housing Authority suggest that the residents in public housing represent an even divide of welfare recipients, working families and the elderly. The mere presence of working families works to counter the commonly held belief that all tenants of public housing projects rely solely on public assistance while this even

divide of tenants is an indicator of the unique history and policies associated with public housing in New York City.

Working families in the City of New York occupy an interesting place in the public housing community. Unlike their unemployed neighbors, they may possess the economic and or social means to live elsewhere. How they feel about living in public housing and why they remain in public housing is thought provoking and has been the principle focus of this thesis. As a result of the unique history of public housing in New York City and current studies which have revealed that there are positive outcomes associated with residing in public housing and that many residents do not necessarily wish to leave their homes, I hypothesized initially that employed residents of New York City's Graham public housing development would want to remain residents of their current homes and sought to discover why.

I interviewed employed residents of the West Harlem's Graham public housing development along with Graham Houses community leaders and informed experts to try and understand how they feel about their homes, what they feel are the advantages and disadvantages to living where they do and if they eventually see themselves living somewhere else. Contrary to much of the current academic work on public housing such as Vale, (1997), Clampert-Lundquist, (2004), and Reginold, (1997), which finds that public housing is a far cry from the crime ridden poverty inducing disaster that it has been presented in the media and previous academic work, this research found that while there were some expressed advantages to living in public housing such as significant financial benefits and some social

benefits, all employed residents of the Graham development interviewed desired to eventually leave their homes.

I found that factors pushed employed respondents away from the Graham Houses including poor building maintenance and safety, stigma associated with living in public housing, social isolation and the desire to one day own their own homes. These push factors trumped the financial benefits and the social benefits associated with residing at Graham. As a result, all interviewees stated they did not see themselves living in the Graham Houses long term and no respondent wanted their children to reside in public housing when they were older. This was one of several surprising findings uncovered in this research. I had expected, considering the price and scarcity of housing in New York City, that these residents would desire to remain in their homes as they knew that even if they lived across the street, their rent in the private sector would be several times the amount they were paying. Additionally, I reasoned that the vibrant community of West Harlem would be an incentive for residents to remain residents of Graham.

Furthermore, it was surprising to uncover how socially isolated respondents reported themselves to be within the Graham development. While studies such as Vale (1997) found the public housing development as the center of the resident's social world, the employed respondents in this study reported having few if any social ties to the Graham Houses. Instead of being the social and civic leaders of the development, employed residents were observed to be in the background, hurrying from the doors of their buildings to the street and rarely seen loitering or visiting on

the grounds. Their children do not play on the Graham playgrounds and mostly attend Charter Schools. For these employed respondents, the Graham Houses appears to be merely where they lay their heads down at night and not the center of their social lives.

In order to understand why my initial hypothesis was not supported, I drew on the work of Bourdieu especially with respect to his concepts of habitus and capital. I argue that the employed respondents in this study have a different set of beliefs and possess different levels of capital in comparison to the stigmas they feel are attributed to them as public housing residents. As a result of this mismatch, the employed respondents feel compelled to eventually leave the Graham Houses and own their own home, a goal that is more aligned with their set of beliefs. Additionally, they prefer to have relationships and social ties with those outside the Graham development in an attempt to shield themselves negative influences on themselves or their children.

Nevertheless, despite all of the criticisms respondents made of the Graham Houses, the respondents also expressed tolerance for their less fortunate neighbors and expressed a desire that the larger public to understand that, as suggested by the title of this work, "real people" reside in public housing. While many of these real people may have obstacles to overcome like poverty and disability, others are essentially living middle class existences and are saving their money so that they can one day own their own home. In either case, according to the employed Graham

residents I interviewed, everyone needs a place to call home and public housing provides that space.

This study was able explore how what is reported in the media and in academia affects individuals. Negative attention in the media and in academia has encouraged negative stigmas associated with those who live in public housing, which were keenly felt among employed public housing respondents. While it can be argued that these negative stigmas functioned to provide employed residents with strong incentives to leave public housing, surely there could be more policy alternatives that could encourage residents who can move on to do so eventually that do not propagate the myths of a culture of poverty with no way out. For such policy alternatives to be possible, more balanced research and reporting will be necessary, within academia and in the media. Finally, this work was able to capture how employed residents feel about living among individuals struggling with issues associated with poverty and how they value the idea of a mixed community.

Considering their employment status and their desire to one day leave public housing, the respondents in this study appear to be a throw back to the old days where Vale (1997) notes that entry into public housing was a privilege and exit was an expectation. As Bloom (2008) notes and as reflected by the attitudes and sentiments of the respondents in the current study,

> Those who are the most welcome in NYCHA housing, as in the old days, are those who need housing yet are likely to impress others with the wisdom of the program: working families who will care for their apartments, create community life, and pay a rent that helps cover the cost of the housing

> enterprise as a whole. These are model tenants for a model of urban transformation (Bloom 2008: 250).

The information respondents in the current study have supplied give valuable insight into not only life in public housing, but also sheds light on why public housing in the City of New York continues to thrive while it has crashed and burned in other major cities. By maintaining a balance between working and unemployed residents, NYCHA, has created an atmosphere where needy residents and working class residents find affordable and dependable housing. The ability of policies in the City of New York to maintain a mixed community may be at the heart of why public housing has survived in New York. Vale (1993) noted how the policies associated with public housing in this country are basically at odds with one another,

> The crux of public housing is a conflict among three laudable goals: increasing the mix of incomes in public housing to attract and retain a larger working population; increasing the opportunity for higher income public housing residents to become homeowners; and increasing the ability of public housing to serve the nation's neediest households, including the homeless, the drug-addicted, and the mentally ill (Vale 1993: 168).

Considering the findings of the current study, perhaps the City of New York to some degree, has managed all three. Through the existence of stigma, perpetuated through the media and other avenues, as well as through social isolation from other residents, issues with maintenance and safety and concerns about raising children in public housing as well as the desire to one day own their own homes, working class populations do not get too comfortable in public housing and strive to eventually leave the federally funded program. Instead of criticizing

the unemployed sector and asking for policies that would prevent them from obtaining public housing, the employed residents in the current study express a, "live and let live attitude" and value their mixed community. As one respondent noted, *"everyone needs a place to live. If we didn't have public housing these welfare recipients wouldn't have a place to go."* What can be taken away from this finding is that the system of public housing in the Graham Houses seems to be functioning to serve two different populations simultaneously. The neediest are given security while the employed are given stability and incentive to move out as soon as they are ready to pursue better opportunities.

It is important to observe that this study has limitations, as it focuses on one public housing development in the vast City of New York. This study's findings cannot necessarily be generalized to the hundreds of thousands of public housing residents that live throughout the five boroughs of New York. West Harlem, while in no way considered among the wealthiest of enclaves in the city, is still significantly safer than some sections of East Harlem, the South Bronx and many parts of Brooklyn. As a result, the place studied may have tempered the attitudes and sentiments of employed respondents. A larger study involving employed public housing residents from all over the City of New York would offer more exhaustive data on the advantages and disadvantages of being an employed resident of a public housing development. Furthermore, this study was completed over a relatively short period and involved a sample of only 25 interviewees. The current study focused exclusively on employed residents of public housing developments. Additional research, with more time and funding, could expand participation of

other groups within public housing, including the unemployed and other groups and generate valuable data from direct comparisons between the two groups of residents.

Additionally, this study is limited in terms of its ability to generalize to public housing in other parts of the United States. New York City, with its high rents and limited space represents a unique landscape for investigating public housing policies. While mixed communities were appreciated by employed respondents and encouraged by the New York City Housing Authority, the ability to have a mixed community in public housing may be a result of sky high rent prices in the private sector, the housing scarcity and New York City's relatively lax income restrictions. Other large cities may have more private sector housing available to its residents and therefore enticing employed individuals to live in public housing may be much more difficult. As a result, why public housing has been successful in New York City may be limited to the five boroughs and not applicable to other places.

Despite these limitations, this study adds to the existing body of literature on public housing residents as it concentrated on the attitudes and sentiments of working residents while most prior studies have polled residents as one homogenous group. This study has found, in contrast with studies such as Vale (1997) and Clampert-Lundquist (2004 & 2010), that the perspectives and aspirations of employed public housing residents are quite different than that of many other groups residing in public housing. It may be beneficial in the future to conduct research that delves more deeply into the internally differentiated

populations that reside in public housing, rather than assuming that all people within public housing projects are poor, deviant, and do not share the broader American populations' values and aspirations.

Additionally, this study makes contributions by suggesting that New York City's public housing policies appear to be functioning in the Graham Houses. By uncovering the push and pull factors keeping employed respondents at Graham for the present time but not indefinitely, one can surmise that policies associated with public housing must be able to navigate a difficult course in order to be successful. These policies must first be able to serve two populations simultaneously: residents who are dependent on welfare and the employed residents who are the focus of this study. Employed residents must have some incentive to stay at least for a short while to maintain stability and to contribute significant rent; however, there also must be incentive for them to eventually want to move out and not be reliant on federally funded programs. When these individuals leave, new employed residents needing a place to stay for a while so they can save money while also harboring larger aspirations of home ownership will be there, at least in New York City, to take their place. Considering the history of public housing in America and the success of public housing in the City of New York, it is important to note that employed residents of the Graham development residents appear to be utilizing public housing in the City of New York for what it was originally intended to be: a place where low income families can reside temporarily while they save their money towards the goal of one day owning their own homes.

This current work has also suggested avenues for further research. First, while employed respondents in this work appreciated the existence of a mixed community, it would be interesting to understand how unemployed residents feel about the idea of a mixed community. Additionally, it would be thought provoking to ascertain the level of tolerance for neighbors among other groups such as the elderly or welfare dependent residents. Do they also maintain a live and let live attitude? Finally, with the economy struggling, the City of New York is seeing increased numbers of families who formerly sought housing in the private sector flood the homeless shelters and appear on the waiting lists for public housing apartments. As one employed respondent in this current study noted,

> *When things are bad, they are bad for everyone. You can see people waiting in line at the food pantries in suits now. These people weren't on those lines before. You can see it in the new tenants. We have some Asians moving in and some whites. You didn't see that before really in Graham.*

It would be interesting to conduct future studies on public housing in New York City that capture the experiences of these new tenants of public housing and the effect they will have on maintaining a mixed community.

Finally, the current study has tried to give voice to the attitudes and sentiments of employed residents, a group that for the most part has been silenced in both academia and the media. Merely bringing attention to the fact that there ARE employed residents of public housing projects can help thwart certain stereotypes and as a result, promote a more balanced view of who lives in public housing and why.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2009, New York City Census Information. Retrieved December, 2009, (www.nyc.gov).

2009, New York City Housing Authority. Retrieved October 2009. (www.nyc.gov/nycha)

Atlas, J. and P. Dreier. 1992. "From Projects to Communities: How to Redeem Public Housing." *American Prospect*:74–85.

Bauman, J. F. 1994. "Public Housing: The Dreadful Saga of a Durable Policy." *Journal of Planning Literature* 8.4: 347-61.

Bloom, N. D. 2008. *Public Housing That Worked: New York in the Twentieth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice:* Cambridge Univ Pr.
---1990. *The Rules of Art* Cambridge: Policy Press
--- 2001. "The forms of capital." *The sociology of economic life*: 96-111.
--- 2002. "Social space and symbolic space." *Contemporary Sociological Theory*: 267.

Burby, R. and Rohe, W. 1989. "Deconcentration of Public Housing: effects on residents' satisfaction with their living environments and their fear of crime." *Urban Affairs Review*: 25 117-140.

Bratt, R. 1986. "Public Housing: the controversy and contribution." *In Critical Perspectives on Housing.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Clampet-Lundquist, S. 2004. "HOPE VI relocation: Moving to new neighborhoods and building new ties." *HOUSING POLICY DEBATE-WASHINGTON-* 15:415-447.
---2010. "Everyone Had Your Back": social ties, perceived safety, and public housing relocation. *City and Community* 9:87-108.

Crane, J. 1991. "The Epidemic Theory of Ghettos and Neighborhood Effects on Dropping Out and Teenage Childbearing." *American Journal of Sociology* 96.5:1226.

Curley, A. 2005. "Theories of urban poverty and implications for public housing policy." *J. Soc. & Soc. Welfare* 32:97.

Currie, J., Yelowitz, A. and National Bureau of Economic Research. 1997. *Are Public Housing Projects Good for Kids?* Cambridge, Mass: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Fuerst, J. and Petty, R. 1991. "High-Rise Housing for Low Income Families." *Public Interest* 103: 118-130.

Goffman, E. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Jacob, B. 2004. "Public Housing, Housing Vouchers, and Student Achievement: evidence from public housing demolitions in Chicago." *American Economic Association* 94: 233-258.

Jones, E. Farina, A. Hastorf, A. Markus, H. Miller, D. and Scott, R. 1984. *Social Stigma: the psychology of marked relationships*. New York: Freeman.

Lofland, J., Snow, D., Anderson, L. and Lynn Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

MacLeod, J. 1995. *Ain't No Making It: leveled aspirations in a low-income community.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Massey, D. S., and Denton, N. A. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Massey, D. S. and S. M. Kanaiaupuni. 1993. "Public housing and the concentration of poverty." *Social Science Quarterly* 74:109-122.

Massey, D.S., Gross, A.B. and Eggers, M.L. 1991. "Segregation, the concentration of poverty, and the life chances of individuals." *Social Science Research*: 20:397-420.

Michelson, W. M. 1977. *Environmental Choice, Human Behavior, and Residential Satisfaction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing. Final Report. 1992. Washington D.C.

Palmer, C., Ziersch, A., Arthurson, K., and Baum, F. 2004. "Challenging the Stigma of Public Housing: preliminary findings from a qualitative study in South Australia." *Urban Policy and Research* 22:411-426.

Pear, R. 1992, July 1. "Bias Admitted by New York City in Public Housing." *The New York Times*

Popkin, S. J., D. K. Levy, L. E. Harris, J. Comey, M. K. Cunningham, and L. F. Buron. 2004. "The HOPE VI Program: What about the Residents?" *HOUSING POLICY DEBATE-WASHINGTON-* 15:385-414.

Powell, D. 1993. *Out West: Perceptions of Sydney's Western Suburbs. S*ydney: Allen.

Rainwater, L. 1970. *Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Families in a Federal Slum*. Chicago, Ill: Aldine.

Reingold, D. A. 1997. "Does inner city public housing exacerbate the employment problems of its tenants?" *Journal of Urban Affairs* 19:469-486.

Rohe, W. and Burby, R. 1988. "Fear of Crime in Public Housing." *Environment and Behavior* 20: 700-720.

Rohe, W. and Stegman, M. 1994. "The Effects of Home Ownership on the Self-Esteem, Perceived Control and Life Satisfaction of Low-Income People." *Journal of Academy Planning Association* 60: 173-184.

Saegert, S. and G. Winkel. 1998. "Social capital and the revitalization of New York City's distressed inner-city housing." *HOUSING POLICY DEBATE-WASHINGTON-* 9:17-60.

Sampson, R. J. and J. H. Laub. 1994. "Urban poverty and the family context of delinquency: A new look at structure and process in a classic study." *Child Development* 65:523-540.

Saunders, P. 1978. "Domestic Property and Social Class." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2: 233-251.

Schill, M. 1993. "Distressed Public Housing: where do we go from here?" *The University of Chicago Law Review* 60: 497-554.
---1999. *Housing and Community Development in New York City: Facing the Future*. Albany: State University of New York.

Schill, M. H. and B. P. Scafidi. 1999. "Housing conditions and problems in New York City." *Housing and community development in New York City: Facing the future*: 11–52.

Spence, L. 1993. "Rethinking the social role of public housing." *Housing Policy Debate* 3:355-368.

Stouffer, S. 1955. *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties*. Garden City: NY Doubleday.

Thompson, P. 1999. "Public Housing in New York City." *Housing and community development in New York City: Facing the future*: 119–142.

Vale, L. J. 1993. "Beyond the Problem Projects Paradigm: defining and revitalizing severely distressed public housing." *Housing Policy Debate* 4: 147-172.

---1997. “Empathological Places: residents’ ambivalence toward remaining in public housing.” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 16: 159-172.
---2002. *Reclaiming public housing: a half century of struggle in three public neighborhoods*: Harvard University Press.

Venkatesh, S. 2000. *American Project*: The rise and fall of a modern ghetto. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Von Hoffman, A. 1996. "High ambitions: The past and future of American low-income housing policy." *HOUSING POLICY DEBATE-WASHINGTON-* 7:423-446.

Willis, P. E. 1982. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wilson, W. J. 1985. “Urban Poverty.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 11:231-258.
--- 1987. *"The Truly Disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy."* Chicago, London.
---1991. “Studying Inner City Dislocations: the challenge of public agenda research.” *American Sociological Review* 56:1-14.

APPENDIX A:

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about how you came to live in this building:
    a. What factors prompted you to move into public housing?
        i. What year did you move in?
        ii. Were you on a waiting list?
        iii. How long did you wait?
    b. Tell me about your experiences with public housing before you moved into this building:
        i. Did you live in public housing before coming to this building?
        ii. Did any other family members live in public housing?
    c. Please tell me if you think there any special challenges associated with being an employed resident of a New York City Housing Project.
        i. Would you say there is a divide in the building between people who are employed and people who are reliant on public assistance?

2. Tell me about your social ties in this building:
    a. Do you have immediate and/or extended family in the building?
        i. How important are your family ties to your experience living here?
        ii. Are these family members employed?

b. Do you have close friends in the building?

    i. How many close friends do you have in the building?

    ii. Are these close friends employed?

    iii. How does the presence of close friends in the building affect you living here?

c. Do you interact with your neighbors often?

    i. How do you interact with your neighbors?

d. Do your children have friends in the building?

    i. Are you friendly with the parents of your children's friends?

e. Are you involved with any community groups?

    i. Talk about some of the community groups in this building.

        1. Who participates?

        2. Who does not participate?

3. Tell about the benefits of living in this building and/or public housing:

    a. Do you perceive there to be financial benefits to living in public housing?

        i. What are the financial benefits?

    b. Do you perceive there to be social benefits?

    c. What do you like most about living here?

    d. If you had to move, what would you miss most about living here?

    e. Why do you continue to live here?

i. Do you feel as though you have the financial freedom to live elsewhere?
ii. Do you feel as though you have a choice in where you live?

f. What do you feel your experiences differ from those who do not live in public housing?

4. Tell me about what you consider to be the disadvantages of living in this building/public housing:
    a. Do you feel safe here?
    b. Do you have neighbors who you do not get along with?
    c. Do you feel there is a stigma attached to living in public housing?
    d. If you could change one thing about where you live, what would it be?
    e. Would you ever consider leaving?
        i. What would be some of the reasons causing you to want to leave?
        ii. Where would you move?
        iii. Have you applied for Section 8?
            1. If yes, why did you apply for Section 8?
    f. How is the maintenance in your building?
        i. Do problems get fixed in a timely manner?
        ii. Do you think the City is more attentive to the needs of the residents than private buildings?

5. Tell me about raising children in this building:
    a. What do you perceive to be the benefits to raising children in this building?
    b. Please talk about any disadvantages you feel there are to raising children in public housing.
    c. What do you think the differences are between raising children in public housing as opposed to private housing?

6. Tell me about how public housing is portrayed in the media:
    a. Do you feel there are stereotypes associated with public housing?
    b. Do you feel that public housing is generally shown in a negative or positive light?
    c. What would you want individuals who have no experience with public housing in New York City to know?

7. Tell me about your feelings toward the area:
    a. How do you feel about the neighborhood?
        i. Have your feelings changed over the past few years?
    b. How do you feel about the schools your children attend?
        i. Are you satisfied with the education they are receiving?
    c. If you did not live in this area, where do you see yourself living?
        i. Why have you chosen that place?

8. Tell me about where you see yourself in ten years:
    a. Where do you see yourself living?
        i. Why do you see yourself living there?
    b. Where do you see yourself working?
        i. Why do you see yourself working there?
    c. What do you see your children doing?
        i. Do you see your children remaining in this building or area?

APPENDIX B:

Interview for Informed Experts:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Are you married?
- Where are you from?

  [If respondent is second generation or later, ask where family is originally from]
- What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?
- How many children do you have?
- Where do you live?
- How long have you lived there?
- Where do you work?
- How long have you worked there?
- Describe your experiences with public housing.
- Do you live in public housing?
    - How long have you lived in public housing?
    - Have you ever thought about living in public housing?
    - What made you decide to leave?
- Do you have family/friends who live in Public Housing?
- Do you work in or around public housing developments?
    - How long have you worked in public housing?

- Describe how you feel about people who live in public housing
- Do you think there is a difference between employed and unemployed residents?
- Whom do you feel make the best tenants?
- Whom do you feel make the worst tenants?
- Why do you feel employed residents continue to live in public housing?

  Do you think it is mainly for economic or social reasons?

  Do you think employed residents actually have a choice?

- What do you see as the most positive aspects of public housing?
- What do you see as the most negative aspects of public housing?
- Do you feel as though the negative aspects could be improved upon?
- Who do you feel could make positive changes?
- In your opinion, do you think there is too much negative press surrounding public housing?
- (if yes) Why do you feel this is so?
- If you were to explain the culture of public housing to someone who is unfamiliar with it, what would you tell them?
- Where do you think tenants would go if they were forced to leave public housing?