A New Voice for NYCHA: Structural Dysfunction in the New York City Public Housing Resident Participation System

By

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction: Blowing the Whistle on NYCHA	4
Chapter One: The Silent Role of Government and the Power of	
the Authority	
The Federal Policies that Shaped Resident Participation	
New York City Public Housing's Resident Participation System	23
Chapter Two: Theoretical Perspectives on Participation	30
Social Capital	30
The Benefits of Participation	33
Conditions and Causes for Participation	36
Barriers to Participation	44
A [somewhat] Radical Proposition	49
The Process of Participation: Nominal vs. Substantive	54
Chapter Three: Methodology	57
A Run-In with "Dirty" Data	
Data Analysis	
Qualitative Comments and Interviews	
Archival Records	62
Chapter Four: Research Results and Discussion	64
Who Participates?	64
Demographics	
Individual SES Factors Don't Hold Strong	
Motivations for Participation	
The Barriers	
The Relationship between the RAs and CCOP/RAB	92
The Relationship between NYCHA and CCOP/RAB	
A Process of Denial	
Conclusion: Structural Changes and Alternative Forms of Collaboration	108
Appendix A	118
Works Cited	124

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Introduction: Blowing the Whistle on NYCHA

On August 13, 2008 a group of about forty New York City public housing residents--in collaboration with the non-profit organization Community Voices Heard (CVH)--calmly sat in the back of the historic Manhattan Center, waiting for the moment that they would soon stage a revolt. The situation: a few weeks prior, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) released the Annual Plan, a crucial document that regulates all aspects of the residents' homes, their community centers and services, and their wallets for the upcoming year. The setting: the public hearing of the Annual Plan, the one time a year when public housing residents can shuffle up in single-file to a microphone and express their concerns about this document. Under federal law, NYCHA board members are required to hold this hearing, listen to the residents, and then potentially make amendments to the Annual Plan based upon what the residents say. In fact, it is simply a farce. Each year the board members twiddle their thumbs, react with blank stares, and later take taxis back to their luxury apartments. This year would be different.

At the blow of a whistle by one public housing resident, the forty residents and CVH organizers marched through this grandiose room that glittered with golden columns and chanted one simple demand: let the residents have a *voice* in the policy decisions that regulate their lives. As a participant in this march, I quickly witnessed some police aggression, as they tried to throw down a peaceful community organizer, and heard the board members shout on their microphones that this was a completely inappropriate way to communicate to them. If this was not the way that residents

were supposed to voice their concerns, then what is? How can public housing residents take a part in the issues that directly influence their lives?

I attempt to answer these questions by exploring a historically complex, confusing, and under-researched aspect of public housing: the resident participation system. To be clear, I am not debating whether or not public housing should exist. I take it as a given that public housing is beyond just shelter. To start off, it is a crucial form of financial security. Through rent regulation, residents are able to live in apartments that they could not afford otherwise. But beyond that, and more importantly, public housing is filled with friends, families, and functions as its own community. The residents' apartments are their *homes*; imbued with meaning and memories. Admittedly, this is not true for all residents, but for many residents. I believe that public housing should exist and, at the current moment in our history, it needs to exist. But that is not the issue of my research. This is the story of the New York City public housing community's struggle to play an active role in a system that is supposed to empower them.

I first became aware of the resident participation system through my internship as a public housing organizer with CVH. Several members of the organization expressed that NYCHA management is out of touch with the residents and are clueless about what the residents want and need. They felt out of the loop, confused, jaded, and angry. Moreover, they complained that the turn-out at their developments' Resident Associations (RAs) is low, and the meetings are ineffective for accomplishing anything. There was no communication between these resident

¹ CVH is "a membership organization of low-income people in NYC that have come together to influence policies" that impact their lives (About CVH 2008).

groups and NYCHA. To add to the problems, they thought that the two upper-level resident groups (that form the tri-tiered resident participation system) were not adequately representing the Resident Associations as they should. This spurred the organization's independent survey project, which (among many other things) sought to investigate the primary issues concerning resident participation.

As an interviewer on the survey project I was constantly in public housing throughout the five boroughs of New York City. This was a kinesthetic experience. I saw giant towers with open courtyards on the outside, and often graffiti and dirt-covered floors on the inside. I smelled urine in the stairwells, and felt time pass me by as it would take over ten minutes for an elevator to open. I heard some stories of people being scared or wanting to get out, but I heard much more about trying to get activities for the kids and seniors, helping out neighbors when they could, and looking for ways to generally improve the community. I was also told by a lot of residents that NYCHA does not care about them. There was a longing in the tone of their voices: a longing for more respect.

Several questions ran through my mind: Do the residents know that there are supposed to be Resident Associations where they can supposedly organize to address these problems? If they do know, why don't they participate? How do they perceive the system? And how effective is it really? I seek to answer these questions through my research as well.

I argue that there are real and tangible benefits to participation when it is *effective*. Residents have the ability to improve the quality of the conditions of their developments (Saegert and Winkel 1998), are generally more satisfied when they are

involved (Van Ryzin 1996), and feel empowered (Leavitt and Saegert 1990). Hence, residents in NYCHA have the *potential* to obtain material, social, and emotional gains from participating, but something is preventing them from doing so.

While NYCHA's resident participation system operates within the confines of New York City, it is guided by federal law. In Chapter One I delineate the laws that have lead up to the creation of this system. During the past several decades resident involvement has had many faces, ranging from virtually no power, to full resident managerial control, to what is now a perplexing partnership between residents and management. Throughout the different forms of resident participation the residents were often met with indifferent or hostile attitudes by the Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and management personnel (Arnstein 1969, Hartman and Carr 1969, MDRC 1981). Part of this stemmed from the silent role of the federal government; the laws have increasingly devolved authority from the federal level to the local level. Even now no two resident participation systems--or PHAs, for that matter--are alike in this country. In Chapter One I explain the exact structure of NYCHA's resident participation system, which has three levels of resident groups with different responsibilities. I briefly address some of the key problems that have occurred with both the structure itself and the process of residents getting involved.

There is a sparse body of literature written on resident participation in public housing associations, and most of that refers to the period during which resident participation was in conjunction with managerial control. Nonetheless, in Chapter Two I illustrate that most social theorists intimately link participation in community organizations with *social capital*, which concerns access to social resources and

social ties. Putnam revitalized the term by relating it to civic engagement, and adds both *social trust* and trust in government as key components (2000). Social capital is utilized as a resource by residents in order to participate and is built up as a result of residents getting involved. Thus, it has a cyclical relationship with participation that adds value to the residents' lives.

Through my research I try to understand what conditions would be needed for residents to get involved, or what drives them to join a voluntary Resident Association. Social Disorganization theory, first proposed by Shaw and Mckay (1942), argues that neighborhoods with higher socio-economic status (SES) and resources encourage residents to participate in community-based activities. Wuthnow (2002) and Rankin and Quane (2002) alternatively point to the SES and resources of the individuals themselves, and not the neighborhood. In contrast to both these theories is the perspective that relational and experiential causes are more influential for participation. An attachment to place and social ties are two factors that are particularly effective for getting residents involved (Leatvitt and Saegert 1990, Small 2002, Feldman and Stall 2004). Indeed, in Chapter Two I argue that relational and experiential causes are more salient than SES for influencing resident participation in public housing voluntary associations, whether on the level of the neighborhood or of the individual. Given these factor that motivate residents to participate, I still seek to understand the barriers to participation, which are more important for my analysis if resident participation is supposed to be the avenue for residents to get involved in their communities and communicate to NYCHA.

To get a clearer picture of resident participation in NYCHA public housing, I performed extensive quantitative analysis of the survey data collected from CVH's project, held informal interviews with public housing residents, and used archival records that document meetings between the resident participants and NYCHA. By using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches, I seek to illustrate the pulse of the public housing community and, more importantly, highlight the voices of the residents involved in the resident participation system, whose opinions are rarely taken into consideration in much of the previous literature.

In Chapter Four I discuss my findings. Ultimately, as I propose, the structural weakness and ineffectiveness, or *structural dysfunction*, of the resident participation system sets up barriers that prevent or dissuade residents from participating. This challenges Social Disorganization theory, theories on individual access to resources, and Putnam's theory of civic engagement. The structural dysfunction is largely a result of a lack of information and technical training provided by NYCHA management, issues pertaining to language barriers, social distrust, and an unwillingness of NYCHA management and personnel to actually consider the desires of the participants. As a result, the residents are rendered virtually voiceless and disempowered.

I conclude by considering how residents can effectively communicate with NYCHA, and I provide suggestions for how the participation system can be improved. This research is not oriented toward attacking the public housing authority, but supporting the efforts of residents who are often reduced to the level of second-class citizens by virtue of their socio-economic status and where they live. Public

housing is widely represented by the media and some social literature as being a terrifying "no-man's land" situated within the urban landscape, and the residents are problematically stigmatized as an apathetic mass. By tracing the problems of participation, I work to dismantle these images and locate how residents can be involved in the policies that regulate their own communities.

Chapter 1: The Silent Role of Government and the Power of the Authority

The Federal Policies that Shaped Resident Participation

In the 1930's millions of Americans were out of work, on federal assistance, and desperate for affordable housing. In response, the United States federal government instituted public housing as a federal program oriented toward helping the "deserving poor." Government-owned affordable housing was not a novel concept: America started the program much later than its international counterparts. However, it was highly contested by the United States real estate industry, developers, and bankers, who viewed this form of tenure as a complete threat to both the private sector industry and American values of dignity and self-sufficiency (Wright 1981). Perhaps as a means of reassuring the private market, the federal government declared public housing as a temporary solution to a housing problem.

Under the 1937 Housing Authority Act, the federal government created "quasi-autonomous local bodies" responsible for running all aspects of public housing. These Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) were founded upon the "good government" notions of the 1920's and 1930's, which emphasized that a citizen-led agency would be more attuned to the residents' needs, less corrupt, and more efficient in managing housing than the government itself. Mayors appointed members to the PHA boards, who managed public housing without any financial compensation. In keeping with the "good government" philosophy, the housing authority

² "Resident" and "tenant" will be used interchangeably throughout this paper, as they are under federal and local legislation. In this context, they both refer to an individual who lives in public housing.

commissioners were men with economic savvy and high social esteem, and were believed to create local housing authority policies out of genuine concern for the residents' welfare (Hartman and Carr 1969). This set the tone for the federal government's emphasis on local control over public housing, and gave power to select members of the upper social class to control the lives of the low-income families living in the developments.

But as time went on, there was growing concern over the PHAs' mismanagement of funds and inability to adequately handle tenant-related matters (Bratt 1986). By the 1960's, many federal officials recognized the ineffectiveness of the PHAs and of the daily management personnel. As Hartman and Carr concluded in a nationwide study of public housing, "housing authority personnel are out of touch with, if not hostile to, the needs and desires of their tenants, and that one of the principal causes of dissatisfaction among public housing tenants is their inability to have a meaningful voice in the basic decisions that affect their daily lives" (1969: 17). Both race and class issues escalated the tensions between housing management and residents as well (Bratt 1986).

The increasing financial strain on public housing served as another cause for conflict between the PHAs and residents. Operation costs, which were largely paid for by rents, rose higher and higher through the 1960's, and conditions in the developments drastically deteriorated. President Johnson created the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1965 in order to address the problems of "urban decay." However, with the Brooke Amendment of 1969, which officially tied rent levels to income, the resident selection process grew less

strict and public housing soon became the last resort for the most economically burdened.³ This was followed by a whirlwind in PHA cutbacks on maintenance and operations, since rents could not fully finance the costs. In the 1970's the federal government cut back on subsidies, thereby increasing the financial burdens on public housing (MDRC 1981). In response to the deterioration of the developments, HUD helped facilitate public-private partnerships in attempts to better manage public housing. This alternative integrated the private market with the PHAs by shifting some of the management responsibilities away from the commissioners to private enterprises, even though most developments continued to be governed by the PHAs. The federal government anticipated that these moves would alleviate the cost burdens and dilapidation.

Yet the mismanagement of public housing failed to cease and resident dissatisfaction grew stronger with the continuing deterioration of the developments. The federal government started to consider resident participation in management as an alternative approach. In 1972, HUD implemented the Housing Management Improvement Program (HMIP) in thirteen PHAs across the country, which funded opportunities for residents to get involved in policy decisions via an elected council of tenants. They were to be trained in community organization, leadership, and management, and were to have influence over several areas, such as tenant selection, rent regulations, and social services (Knox et al. 1974). In the trend of federal devolution of power, the PHAs had the responsibility to set the actual guidelines of their relationship with tenants and oversee the programs, which resulted in very

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³ The Brooke Amendment set the rent cap at 25% of the household's income in 1969. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1981 changed it to a cap at 30%.

different models for participation. Unfortunately, (for reasons that are not entirely clear), federal funding was quickly cut and the program lasted for only three years.

Despite this cutback, resident involvement in management was not out of the picture. Indeed, shortly thereafter the federal government implemented Resident Management Corporations (RMCs), which were "initially seen as the primary way to address the deteriorated physical condition and financial stress of many public housing authorities, and perhaps, secondarily, the related problems of crime, drug abuse, and vandalism" (Chandler 1991:137). Conservative federal officials thought that if residents participated in their own housing, they would have more of a stake in where they lived and would be more willing to follow the policies (since they would have influence over them). As the logic followed, resident engagement would lead to potential improvements in building conditions and residents would be in better positions to pull themselves out of poverty.

While the first RMCs were meant to decentralize housing authority and create more stability among residents, they were by no means a way in which public housing residents could gain independence from their PHAs (Chandler 1991, Monti 1989). And similar to the test programs formed by PHAs under HMIP, RMCs were not required to have any stated goals in their inception, which resulted in differing degrees of resident participation throughout the country.

The first RMC started at Bromley-Health in 1971 in Boston Massachusetts (right before the institutionalization of HMIP), followed by one in St. Louis, Missouri after resident rent strikes in 1973. In 1975, HUD and the Ford Foundation set up test developments at seven public housing sites in six cities throughout the country in

order to assess if RMCs could be the new route for management (MDRC 1981). The test RMCs ranged from having small advisory roles to the PHAs, to full resident control over all management aspects. Their outcomes varied and their success largely depended upon pre-existing conditions of the public housing developments: surprisingly, those that had more tension between the residents and the PHAs were actually stronger and more active (1981). Yet ultimately, without sufficient technical training for residents and resistance by PHAs to cede power, the majority of these seven RMCs were not successful (MDRC 1981, Monti 1989, Peterman 1989, 1993).

It was not until the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 that resident management became a "major alternative to conventional management of public housing developments. The act gives resident management statutory standing and financial support and provides for the conversion of public housing units to low-income ownership through management organizations" (Chandler 1991: 136). Essentially, this act added another layer to the already complex status of resident participation through RMCS, by enabling residents to gain full *ownership* of their public housing developments, as opposed to just having some form of managerial control.

Several housing advocates and theorists support that RMCs (both involving homeownership and not) have the potential to enhance the quality of life of public housing residents, increase their satisfaction, provide supportive services, and produce resident empowerment. But, to a large extent, their success is attributed to the empowering process of residents organizing their own community, not the act of resident management (Monti 1989, Chandler 1991, Peterman 1989, 1993, Van Ryzin

1996). Moreover, Peterman determined that technical training of residents is necessary for the survival of RMCs (1993). If the residents do not have a history of involvement and empowerment through this process, and the right financial and technical support is not provided, RMCs can reflect a no-government, hands-off approach that put the responsibility of self-management on the backs of the poor (Chandler 1991, Monti 1989, Peterman 1989, 1993, Koebel and Cavell 1995). By conflating the goals of the residents with the responsibilities of management, "housing authorities and policymakers are using resident management as a means of diverting attention from the serious state of public housing and from their responsibilities to provide decent housing for the poor" (Peterman 1993: 170).

as resident organizations arise within public housing, resident management should be a strategy available to them. For the most part, however, management will remain the responsibilities of housing authorities, and thus it is important that public policy not deal exclusively with resident management but instead look to multiple strategies for maintaining and revitalizing public housing...

such as increased resident participation with management (1993: 171). Even though RMCs still exist today, federal policy has shifted away from resident management to a different form of partnership between the residents and their PHAs, without managerial control.

Resident Participation in Partnership with Management

The most important federal policies that set current guidelines for resident participation in public housing are the 24 CFR 964 regulations, which were added to the 1937 Housing Authority Act in 1986. These regulations are the basic building

blocks for the resident participation system that is used by all PHAs, and explicitly outline HUD's

strong support for the establishment of effective tenant-PHA relationships that contribute to efficient and economical project operations and satisfy tenant needs. The proposed rule set forth guidelines, policies, and requirements designed to encourage tenant participation through PHA recognition of tenant organizations, the development of an ongoing process of consultation between tenants and the PHA, and, where mutually desired, PHA contracts with tenant management corporations to provide tenant services or to perform project management functions (Dorsey 1986: 2)

In particular, the 964 regulations heavily emphasize that residents can improve the quality of life of public housing and facilitate "economic uplift" through strong partnerships with PHAs, in the form of Resident Associations (RAs), and Resident Councils (RCs). ARAs are comprised of residents who create programs and events for the public housing residents, and communicate the desires and needs of their developments to the PHAs, mainly through RCs. While any public housing resident can join the RAs, members of the RCs must be elected by fellow residents, as RCs are a higher level of resident participation. These participants are supposed to "advise the Board of Commissioners and executive director in all areas of housing operations, including but not limited to occupancy, general management, maintenance, security, resident training, resident employment, social services and modernization priorities" (Hoicka 2004: 119). Members of RCs are to be trained in developing and implementing federal programs that involve modernization and quality of life measures, such as resident screening and drug elimination, as well as receive technical training on public housing policies and their rights and

 4 The 964 regulations also outline more explicit roles for RMCs, but this paper will focus on those assigned to RAs and RCs

responsibilities. In addition to their extensive relationship with the PHA, RCs act as intermediaries between RAs and the PHA by holding meetings with residents to inform them what is going on and to allow residents the opportunity to give input (2004).

It is clear that the HUD 964 regulations depict resident involvement in public housing in virtually all aspects of their lives. What is less clear, however, is the actual *meaning and nature* of this resident participation. Much of the discretion is left to the PHAs, which effectively transfers accountability from the federal government to the quasi-governmental authority. It appears that RCs have the direct power to help develop and implement important programs for the quality of life of the housing developments. But at the same time, most of their powers are relegated to the role of advisory status. As HUD outlines in its 1986 report on the 964 regulations, "there is nothing in the rule that indicates that tenant recommendations are to be anything but advisory" (Dorsey 1986: 3). In the same report, HUD explicitly addresses the lack of transparent procedural guidelines for PHAs to consider resident's input, stating that, "this is also a matter of PHA discretion. The rule encourages PHAs to establish a mechanism for tenant participation. The precise form and nature of tenant participation is a matter to be worked out by the PHA and the tenants" (1986: 8).

Thus, the federal government takes the stance of supporting residents' participation in public housing, but assumes no real responsibility for how this will be ensured or in determining what the residents' powers are vis-à-vis the PHA boards.

The partnership between the residents and the PHA is set on the PHAs' terms, which

⁵ This is reflective of the varying political climate of government over the past several decades and the lack of federal agreement on how (and the extent to which) residents should get involved in public housing (Gulati 1982).

leaves room for the silencing and neglect of residents without proper checks or balances. The vague language is a fundamental weakness of the regulations (Koebel and Cavell 1995).

The transfer of authority from the federal government to the PHAs reached its height at the end of the 1990's with the 1998 Quality Housing & Work Responsibility Act (1998 QHWRA), also known as the Public Housing Reform Act, which "gave local housing authorities unprecedented power to set their own policies--on rents, admissions, development plans, sales, conversions, demolitions, and the like--under looser federal strings" (Bach, Wright, and Branca 2002: 1). The act instituted several new guidelines for resident participation and further outlines the residents' partnership with the PHAs. It also requires that the PHA board of directors include at least one public housing resident, except for PHAs that have less than 300 units or "require that their members be salaried, full-time board of directors" (HUD Notice 2001: 3). This move reflects the diminishing governmental support for residents, since it restricts higher-level power to residents by either presupposing that residents in small PHAs do not need to rule on decisions that guide their lives, or that residents cannot participate if money is involved.

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⁶ The act sets up guidelines for RMCs as well, but I will focus only on the RAs and RCs.

⁷ In addition to ruling on resident participation, the 1998 QHWRA established mandatory community service of eight hours a month for every adult member of families receiving public assistance, or else they can face eviction. There are some residents who can be excluded from this rule, but it raises important questions about how participation should function, and on whose terms. This is the first time that the federal government has forced residents to be active in a community, although the "volunteer" services do not necessarily benefit their own development, since several of the options that the residents must choose from are located outside of public housing, in the greater New York City area. By linking work to public housing, this act continued the shift in welfare policies during the 1990's, which was based upon a value system that stresses housing is something that is earned.

⁸ This also denies residents the opportunity to gain the material benefits of a livable salary from working on the board.

In addition to ceding most of federal responsibility in public housing to the PHAs, the 1998 QHWRA "required authorities to prepare annual plans in collaboration with a Resident Advisory Board (RAB), with public hearings prior to HUD submission" (Bach, Wright, and Branca 2002: 1). The creation of RAB instituted a third way by which residents could participate, and in 2000 it became mandatory that all PHAs have one. RAB members are not elected by residents, but appointed by the PHAs, which arguably hinders their capacity to represent the needs of the residents. Still, the PHAs are mandated to provide resources to ensure their effective functioning and must give RAB

sufficient time to fully participate in the process so that they can carry out their proper role and provide representation that is meaningful and relevant to the development of the Plan...To facilitate productive meetings, PHAs may do preliminary work prior to involving the RABs, such as gathering and compiling data and materials to help residents participate in the process. [In addition,] a PHA must consider the recommendations of the RABs... but is not required to agree to them (Lucas 2000: 4-5).

The roles and responsibilities of RAB are clearer than those of RAs and RCs, and their relationship with the PHAs is also more defined. This level of participation exists solely to represent the residents during the creation of the Annual Plan. ⁹ The PHAs must make an active effort to fully inform RAB members about all areas pertaining to public housing operations and management, so that these residents can provide reasonable input on the important document. Yet "whether these measures and new resources promote constructive dialogue between authorities and residents depends largely on the capacity of existing participation structure" (Bach, Wright,

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⁹ The Annual Plan affects all aspects of the residents' lives. It outlines how the PHAs' budgets will be allocated, the cost of rent, how maintenance is run, operation of community centers, and many other areas.

and Branca 2002: 1). The PHAs retain ultimate power, since they do not have to agree to anything the residents suggest.

Despite the consistent trend of federal divestment from public housing, and their ambiguous--if not indifferent--stance on the extent to which residents have power in their developments, in 2001 HUD did "recognize the need for stronger resident involvement as authorities become more autonomous, by allocating a first-time set-aside from operating funds -- \$25 per unit to each authority -- to support resident participation," called Tenant Participation Allocation (TPA) funds (Bach, Wright, and Branca 2002: 1). Decisions on the distribution of the TPA funds *must* be made by the PHAs and RCs (or with RAB, where RCs do not exist). It is also clearly written that

The scope of resident participation shall include such activities as those to inform, acquaint, advise, promote and update residents of public housing concerning the issues and/or operation that affect resident households and their living environment, resident surveys and other forms of resident input, as well as, annual membership events or site-based community promotions/publicity that enhance resident participation (Lucas 2001: 52).

However, there has been little regulation of the actual allocation of the funds on the local level. The money has been of great use to some PHAs, but that is not the case for all of them, particularly in New York City. In accordance with federal law, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) outlines in their TPA program guidebook that the money is to be spent on "outreach and promotional activities for resident participation," "training in public housing policies, programs, rights, and responsibilities," leadership development, and a variety of other activities that support and encourage resident input (New York City Housing Authority 2008: 1). Yet none of the \$17 million in allocated funds from 2001-2004 were given to the residents

during those years, since NYCHA spent the money elsewhere (Feldman 2005).¹⁰ This, Bach and Goldiner charge, was due to NYCHA's deliberate mismanagement of the funds (2007), which has historically been a problem throughout the country and in New York City.

In August 2008, HUD proposed eliminating parts of the 24 CFR 964 regulations, changes that would "drastically undermine the ability of RABs to function, severely dilute the PHA Plan's statement of housing needs, and seriously weaken public housing resident grievance procedures" (NLIHC Action Alert 2008). These changes would eliminate the requirement that CCOP members must sit on RAB and that a PHA must provide sufficient resources to facilitate the functioning of RAB (2008). If enacted, the proposal would continue the trend of federal disinvestment from public housing, and further diminish the small voice that public housing residents have in affecting change in local public housing policy.

By tracking the federal rules and regulations guiding public housing resident's participation, one can see a transition from absolute resident exclusion, to attempts at full resident managerial control, to vague partnerships with the housing authorities. It was not until the 1960's, thirty years after the inception of public housing in the United States, that the federal government started to come up with alternative forms of public housing management by outsourcing management to public-private partnerships. From the 1970's to 1980's the federal government instituted RMCs as a way in which residents could participate with varying degrees of power over their own management processes, but these produced mixed results. Following the creation of the 1998 QHWRA, RMCs ceased to become the preferred method for resident

¹⁰ In 2005 the residents were able to receive the backdated funds from 2004.

participation. Indeed, the current trend of resident participation is through RAs and RCs, where residents have a partnership with the PHAs, but not full managerial control. The powers given to the residents are almost exclusively left to the discretion of each local PHA, and thus remain both vague and limited. This gives ex-ante power to the dominant stakeholder in the "partnership." The federal government divests most of its authority, and ergo accountability, to the PHAs, which leaves the residents out of the loop. With the most recent proposals in 2008, HUD has demonstrated diminishing concern for resident participation.

New York City Public Housing's Resident Participation System

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) was created in 1934 and is the largest public housing authority in North America. As of July 2008, 173,808 families and 403,535 documented residents live in public housing, and the total public housing stock amounts to 178,137 units within 343 developments throughout New York City. Based upon the 2000 census, NYCHA public housing residents and Section 8 voucher holders occupy 12.6% of the city's rental apartments and represent 7.8% of New York City's population. Public housing residents are not only a statistically significant portion of the city's population, but they also comprise a major portion of public housing residents in the state and country: constituting 88.3% of New York State public housing units and 15.3% of the nations' public housing units (Fact Sheet 2008). Therefore, it is crucial to analyze NYCHA not just as it

Despite the fact that the waiting list for public housing is as large as the amount of families who reside there, the housing stock has steadily decreased over the past several decades. In the early 1990's, 600,000 residents lived in 350 developments, constituting nearly 20% of the public housing

relates to residents in New York City, but also keeping in mind its sheer dominance in public housing. Since NYCHA has been historically and even currently heralded as one of the most efficient public housing authorities in the country (Hartman and Carr 1969, Monti 1989, Bloom 2008), further analysis of its management system and resident participation structure will be instructive as to the current physical and social conditions that affect public housing. In this respect, the issues of NYCHA are not just local.

NYCHA, like all of the other PHAs in the United States, cannot afford to maintain operating costs. It currently ha a \$195 million deficit, which is largely a result of the dramatic cuts in federal subsidies under the conservative congress of the 1990's and George W. Bush's administration. These cuts hit the authority hard, since nearly half of the operating costs were funded by HUD. In addition, New York City stopped providing assistance to public housing under the Guilliani administration. Although the Bloomberg administration restarted providing funds for public housing as of 2006, these funds are not guaranteed from year to year, and the amounts (most recently, \$18 million for the 2009 fiscal year) are insufficient. 12 NYCHA was able to draw on some surplus reserves in the early 2000's, but now it scrambles for help (Bloom 2008). In response to the deficit, NYCHA raised rents for many residents in the 2009 fiscal year, and closed nineteen community centers. This financial crisis has added more stress and troubles to the residents' already complicated lives. As Saegert

stock in the country (Williams and Kornblum 1994). Furthermore, from 2002 to 2007 there was a loss of 357 units (NYCHANIS 2008).

¹² Funding for affordable housing and homeless shelters was also cut dramatically throughout these years, as the housing stock continued to be lost due to vacancies, rehabilitation, and renovation to more expensive apartments (Moody 2007). Indeed, under the Bloomberg administration, public provisions shrank "within a sea of mega-projects pushed by the city's elite and endorsed by the vast majority of politicians" (Moody 2007:185). Yes, New York City has been the only city to allocate funds to public housing in well over a decade, but this does not say much for public housing.

and Winkel argue, "less government intervention places the burden of improving the lives of the poor on poor families themselves. Devolution gives localities the primary responsibility for making the most out of the fewer governmental resources that remain" (1998: 18).

However, NYCHA is instructed by New York City to pay nearly \$130 million dollars per year to New York City departments and agencies (\$73 million alone to the New York Police Department); an issue that has served as a sore point for many residents and activists, who firmly believe that they do not receive any extra benefits from the departments, and that the money could instead be used towards improving the developments. The payments stem from PILOT money (paid in lieu of taxes) and mostly outdated agreements that the authority made with the city during the early 1990's, when the authority received a more steady cash flow from federal subsidies. But with the federal cuts, residents and housing advocates are confused as to why NYCHA must continue to pay such enormous fees. Even though the money would not make up for the total deficit, it would surely alleviate several of the physical problems in the developments and prevent the elimination of even more community centers. NYCHA faces several obstacles in terms of operation, maintenance, security, and promoting well-being. Yet with all of these plaguing issues, residents--the number one stakeholders--are largely left out of the picture for voicing their opinions and working towards improvements.

The resident participation system in New York City is a tri-tiered structure that accrues increasing roles and responsibilities to the residents as the levels go up.

This system was not created all at once, but in response to the federal legislation that

allowed for such structures to exist. As stated in the 24 CFR 964 regulations, each development managed by a public housing authority has the right to set up a Resident Association (although currently only two-thirds of the developments have RAs). ¹³ With the tenants' powers left to the discretion of the PHA, NYCHA's resident handbook outlines that RAs are

democratically operated organizations that are intended to promote the welfare of their development and, in some instances, the surrounding neighborhood. The Resident Association is the core of resident representation...Participation in your Resident Association is an important way to ensure that the association is active and responsive to resident needs in your development. Joining your Resident Association is one of the easiest and most effective ways to feel like a part of your community (New York City Housing Authority 2005: 43).

In theory, this "democratic" association acts as a structure of power to both represent and communicate the issues of the residents. The NYCHA RAs can also form three types of committees, where residents "assist" and "consul" management or outside partners about activities and services within the developments. ¹⁴

The next level of resident participation is the Citywide Council of Presidents (CCOP), which was created in 1991 and most closely resembles the RC as outlined under the 24 CFR 964 regulations. Each of the Resident Associations are assigned to one of nine District Councils (DCs), with three in Brooklyn, two in the Bronx, two in Manhattan, one in Queens, and one in Staten Island. The councils (which are comprised of the RA presidents) then elect one chairperson per district to

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¹³ The only requirement for participation in Resident Associations is that the members are residents of public housing residents and that they are 18 years of age or older.

¹⁴ These are the Community Center Advisory Committee, the Maintenance/ Modernization Committee, and the Alternative High School Committee. An example of a "private developer" is the New York City Department of Education.

¹⁵ The amount of representatives is determined proportionally to NYCHA residents residing under these councils.

make up the nine members of CCOP, ¹⁶ whose written mission is "to represent its residents citywide in dealings with NYCHA, to see that RAs are effective, and that RA presidents are informed and consulted about issues and pending decisions" (Bach, Wright, and Branca 2002: 2). The resident handbook also states that "the Citywide Council voices its position vigorously regarding the many issues affecting life in NYCHA developments, including issues at the local, state and federal government levels" (New York City Housing Authority 2005: 43). This language is vague, just as it is with RAs. Even though the chairpersons are to voice their "positions vigorously," it is cloudy as to how they can effectively represent other residents and produce meaningful change for their communities.

A similar evaluation can be made for the third level for resident participation, the Resident Advisory Board (RAB). NYCHA created RAB following the 1998 QHWRA. Its primary function is to advise NYCHA on construction of the Annual Plan, which must then be submitted for approval by HUD. Originally RAB was going to consist of the same nine members of CCOP. However, a group of tenants under The New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance protested this move, due to rising tensions that resulted from CCOP's relative silence with NYCHA during the federal Congress' proposal of anti-tenant legislation in 1996 (Bach, Wright, and Branca 2002, Feldman 2005). The New York City Public Housing Resident Alliance successfully championed for a 54-member RAB board, consisting of CCOP, twenty-seven other RA presidents, and five Section 8 voucher residents. Despite RAB's theoretical power to advise NYCHA board members on the yearly Annual Plan, they are typically ignored during this process.

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¹⁶ CCOP members are supposed to be elected at least every three years by the respective DCs.

Recent findings point to CCOP as the main source of weakness in representing the tenants' needs to NYCHA board members (Bach, Wright, and Branca 2002, Feldman 2005, Bach and Goldiner 2007). According to Bach and Goldiner's testimony, CCOP meetings go on behind closed doors with no record of minutes, which has bothered some public housing residents (2007). They state that there is virtually no communication between CCOP and RA presidents, and that this severely limits the ability of residents to give input on the decisions that control their lives. In other words, the residents have "no opportunity to be a meaningful alternative voice to their landlord, the New York City Housing Authority" (2007: 3).

At the same time, the relationship between CCOP and the NYCHA board has been overlooked when examining CCOP's strengths and weaknesses. In the same testimony, Bach and Goldiner expressed that CCOP has no budget and limited resources. CCOP is consistently left out of important decisions by NYCHA and silenced in their demands. It is easy to slip into a pattern of blame that falls upon these residents, rather than the structural system *itself*.

I argue that the weak relationship between the RAs and CCOP results not from the individual characteristics of the nine chairpersons, but from the way in which NYCHA has created and managed the resident participation system, as well as the unwillingness of the NYCHA board members to listen to the residents. Again, the authority does not have to agree with any of the council members' decisions, but if the residents' opinions are consistently discounted, the participation system is more of a charade. Although HUD can mandate that PHAs disclose how they will facilitate resident participation, it exempts PHAs--like NYCHA--that score relatively high as a

management system. Thus, NYCHA does not have to disclose any of its plans (Vargas-Ramos 2003). This means virtually no oversight by HUD or accountability on the part of NYCHA.

Referring back to the NYCHA resident handbook, it is dubious if "joining your Resident Association is one of the easiest and most effective ways to feel like a part of your community" (2005: 43). Sadly, it appears that joining an RA is not easy, the powers of the residents are vague, and the process of participation is ineffective. If there is anything to be gained from the resident participation system, it is rarely realized.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives on Participation

Unfortunately, there is a scarce amount of literature on resident participation in public housing. Until now, there has been no proper analysis of how effective resident participation systems (currently preferred by most PHAs) are for producing positive change, and to what extent the public housing residents' voices are heard. Most of the research on public housing resident participation has been on RMCs or the residents' transition to home ownership (MDRC 1981, Monti 1989, Peterman 1989, Leavitt and Saegert 1990, Chandler 1991, Hays 1993, Van Ryzin 1996, Saegert and Winkel 1998, Feldman and Stall 2004). Even studies that mention the NYCHA resident participation system (Williams and Kornblum 1994, Farmer 1995, Bloom 2008) gloss over it in reference to other aspects of public housing. As a result, I cannot map a historical trajectory of the effectiveness and power of the resident participation system under NYCHA. Still, through my research I seek to provide a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between the three levels of resident participation with each other and with the housing authority, in order to evaluate how this system impacts the residents' everyday lives in terms of social capital formation, material benefits, and feelings of empowerment.

Social Capital

Since the early twentieth century, social theorists have sought to understand the importance of associations as a form of *social capital*. The term social capital was first coined by L. Judson Hanifan in 1916, referring to the aspects of social life that

renew community involvement, invest in democracy, and collectively satisfy social needs. Many theorists across disciplines have amended and reconceptualized this term, but to some extent, all look to the value of social resources and social ties. In the 1950's, John Seely found that social capital acquired through associations is an avenue for upward mobility. A few years later, Jane Jacobs used the term to emphasize how informal neighborhood ties in urban settings bring security and wellbeing to the community (Putnam and Goss 2002). In 1986 Pierre Bourdieu defined social capital in terms of access to aggregate resources within strong or weak networks. His framing of social capital stems from a Marxist perspective, whereby he views it as a distinct resource that must be examined in terms of class struggle. This differs from the more communitarian perspective (Wulf 2003), which was revitalized by Robert Putnam in his 1995 essay, "Bowling Alone." He added civic engagement as a key component of social capital, and asserted that it is crucial for community development and economic uplift. Shortly thereafter, Putnam also analyzed the ways in which government encourages or discourages social capital (2002). By bridging political life with public life, Putnam articulates how a group of people can utilize their social resources in order to effectively gain a wider influence in society. This is crucial for understanding the resident participation system in public housing, since the public lives of the residents are guided by federal, state, and local policies.

Since Putnam's 1995 essay, social scientists have continued to explore the link between social capital, social trust, and civic engagement. In particular, Lang and Hornburg wrote that, "Social capital commonly refers to the stocks of social trust, norms, and networks that people can draw upon in order to solve common problems.

Social scientists emphasize two main dimensions of social capital: social glue and social bridges... *Social glue* refers to the degree to which people take part in group life... [and] *Social bridges* are the links between groups" (1998: 4). Social trust is related to one's comfort level with others and it has a "recursive relationship" with participation, since it can influence an individual to participate and it can be fortified through the participation process. Networks extend people's relations with others, broaden their social ties, and expose them to a greater part of society (1998). Lang and Hornburg add that *Civic Infrastructure* is a network between civic groups (such as PHAs) and civic organizations (such as the RAs), which, when effective, provides assistance that "builds and sustains bridges between civic organizations" (1998: 5).

Lang and Hornburg's definition of social capital is very instructive for my analysis of the resident participation system under NYCHA. It emphasizes the importance of social trust and social ties for participation in groups, and describes how groups build social capital by interacting with each other. But their explanation of civic engagement problematically stems from a top-down perspective, by which affected communities can only build social capital with the assistance of powerholders. Robert Wuthnow offers a better framing of civic engagement by defining social capital "as a particular kind of relationship within communities that could be used by the people in those communities to strengthen their communities, to mobilize resources needed to solve social problems, and to make their voices heard in larger political arenas" (2002: 63). He argues that civic participation is a form of social capital that serves as a mediating structure by linking individuals in voluntary bonds to their communities. This definition is particularly useful in understanding

how social capital is created and gained by marginalized groups to enhance their lives and mobilize their cohorts. These elements--in combination with Lang and Hornburg's definition of social capital--provide a holistic analysis of the role of social capital in the NYCHA resident participation system.

The Benefits of Participation

Social capital has a unique cyclical relationship with participation in community-based associations: it is both a resource that residents draw upon for getting involved, as well as a byproduct of participation. Putnam asserts that social trust and participation in organizations build social capital, which "can help to mitigate the insidious effects of socioeconomic disadvantage" (2000: 319). In a multiple case study analysis of revitalizing distressed private housing in New York City, Saegert and Winkel determined that residents who are more active in their buildings' tenant associations increased social capital for their development, and buildings "with more social capital have better building conditions, and those that have little social capital have poorer conditions" (1998: 47). When resident associations are active, they have been positively linked to residents gaining greater services (both in quantity and quality) for the community (Gualti 1982), reducing crime, and generally enhancing the quality of life of residents (Sampson and Groves 1989, Saegert and Winkel 1998). As Koebel and Cavell argue, "the general consensus among PHAs is that resident organizations are good for all sides. Living conditions improve for residents of public housing and PHAs find their job easier when wellfunctioning resident groups exist. The community at large is also benefited through

better relationships with public housing residents" (1995: 13). Essentially, a great deal of literature has found that resident participation *does* have the power to combat some of the effects of physical deterioration and insecurity in public housing, just as politicians have hoped.

Some studies conclude that resident involvement also raises levels of resident satisfaction with their developments (Taube and Levin 1971, MDRC 1981, Leavitt and Saegert 1990, Van Ryzin 1996). Taube and Levin determined that residents who participate in public housing resident associations are significantly more satisfied with their neighbors than non-participants (1971). And in an in-depth quantitative study of RMCs, Van Ryzin concluded that resident involvement has a more direct effect on satisfaction with building conditions than the strict process of resident management (1996). In other words, Van Ryzin's findings support that the *act of participation* increases residents' satisfaction with their developments, which is illuminating in the context of RAs, where direct management is not an issue. This seems simple enough, but it should not be overlooked that residents are happier with their living situation when they get involved.

Participation can also produce feelings of empowerment in residents.

Empowerment is a process by which residents gain control or mastery over their lives (Rappaport 1984, Somerville 1998). When residents are able to hold powerholders accountable for their decisions, or have a say in the decisions that are made, they gain control over their community and have a greater sense of agency. Somerville has

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¹⁷ While Van Ryzin's analysis indicates that involvement has a minor role in determining overall housing satisfaction, it is still statistically significant. Moreover, he writes that "there may be other benefits to resident involvement, such as community organizing and political empowerment, not reflected in the outcome of overall housing satisfaction reflected here [in his study]" (1996: 499).

extensively researched the process of empowerment in resident participation in public housing and argues that "increasing participation alone cannot achieve the lasting empowerment of the participants. What is needed in addition are institutional arrangements for informing, training and educating those participants, and for securing a permanent shift in the balance of power from landlord [management] to tenants" (1998: 235). The path to empowerment largely depends upon to the degree to which residents understand the issues that control their lives, and are trained to deal with technical matters. Moreover, residents do not have to be fully independent from their PHAs in order to feel that they have control. If the residents and management come to share a dependence upon each other, they can "widen their overall sphere of action and influence" (1998: 238). Similarly, in the case of RMCs, many theorists have determined that residents obtain individual empowerment from the act of organizing within their community and developing skills as leaders, and not from having managerial control (Monti 1989, Peterman 1989, 1993, O'Brien 1995). In this vein, residents must feel that they have the choice to get involved when they want to; not have all of the responsibilities thrust upon them. As Somerville argues, "empowerment results not so much from the actual exercise of the option as from being given the power so to do it" (1998: 237). When this is in place, resident participation becomes a mechanism that is valuable as an instrumental tool for creating improvements and for its own sake, by enhancing positive feelings of agency.

Conditions and Causes for Participation

Even though the research supports the notion that there are multiple benefits to resident participation, this does not mean that everyone can or will get involved. It does not happen instantaneously and requires a lot of effort to sustain. There must be a set of conditions that allow for residents to participate, as well as driving factors that encourage them to join and remain active. Leung locates four factors that facilitate resident involvement in public housing: resources, impetus, politics, and values, which all have external and internal conditions that make them effective (2005). Resources are more a matter of structural conditions, whereas the other three are individual and rooted in experience. Her theory works as a good jumping off point, but it is neither comprehensive nor provides an explanation that is widely accepted by other social theorists. Nonetheless, I find that it is necessary to discuss "resources" for understanding what enables and motivates residents to participate.

Resources

Resources are broken down into two areas: the Socio-economic status (SES) of residents, and the financial and technical resources provided by the PHAs in order to facilitate participation. The former fits under Social Disorganization theory, which was most famously explored by Chicago School sociologists Shaw and McKay (1942). They argue that SES, resident mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity of neighborhoods all influence whether a community has social stability and is protected against crime. The theory was expanded upon by several theorists in terms of

¹⁸ Sometimes the theory is known as the Social Organization theory. They are essentially the same theory told from two different perspectives, but I will use the term Social Disorganization theory for my paper.

participation in community-based associations, whereby social theorists contend that there is a direct link between the SES of the neighborhood and the capacity of residents to organize or participate. Residents who lack these structural components are incapable of drawing upon resources to act in their own self-interest and, as a result, their communities will "suffer from a weaker organizational base" (or network of relationships), which will produce greater social isolation and inhibit the residents to protect the youth from delinquency (Sampson and Groves 1989: 780). It is not that residents are apathetic about their living situations, but that they face high levels of poverty and disorganization, which prevent them from having the leisure to participate (O'Brien 1974, Oliver 1984).

While Social Disorganization theory emphasizes that structural and resource-based conditions are necessary at the neighborhood level for participation, the same argument is made at the level of the individual by other theorists (Bourdieu 1986, Sampson and Groves 1989, Rankin and Quane 2000, Putnam 2000, 2002, Wunthnow 2002). Bourdieu argues that people with higher SES are more likely to participate in activities that give them a sense of agency or control due to their greater access of social, cultural, and material resources (1986). Similarly, Wuthnow argues that there is a growing divide in participation of voluntary associations by people of differing SES, where those who are marginalized participate significantly less than their counterparts. He cites that greater economic inequity, social isolation, and a resulting pessimistic attitude all account for this divide (2002). At the same time, some resources—such as full employment—act as time constraints, which hinder people's ability to get involved (Rankin and Quane 2000, Conway and Hachen 2005). This

somewhat distinguishes the individual resource-based theories from Social Disorganization theory, since the latter argues that neighborhoods with high levels of full-time employment create a supportive environment that encourages people to participate in their community-based organizations, but the former argues that full-time employment will limit their participation.

Other resources, such as the presence of children, have produced mixed findings. On the one hand, the youth represent the future, and their families want to create a better life for them. Children positively affect individual participation in community organizations that provide resources (Rankin and Quane 2000), and more generally, serve as an impetus for participation by means of an extended "community kinship" (Feldman and Stall 2004: 100). At the same time, children impose great time and resource constraints that can limit the activity of participation in public housing associations (Oliver 1984, Conway and Hachen 2005). Some studies have found that children affect participation only indirectly, since they increase the number of social ties that heir families have, and these social ties have a positive association with resident participation in public housing. Those residents who have children but no social ties are less likely to participate (Reingold 1995, Conway and Hachen 2005). Thus, the presence of children has no conclusive association with resident involvement in community-based groups.

Yet, for the most part, measures of SES are thought to encourage resident involvement, and a large body of literature argues that education (formal schooling) is a crucial cause for participation, both for neighborhood organizations in general and for residents who live in distressed buildings or public housing (Oliver 1984, Olsen et

al. 1989, Putnam 2000, Rankin and Quane 2000, Conway and Hachen 2005). Oliver suggests that higher educational status increases people's skills and ability to access and gain information, which helps them navigate their social surroundings and be involved in their communities (1984). Putnam strongly argues that "when income, social status, and education are used together to predict various forms of civic engagement, education stands out as the primary influence" (2000: 186), and Olsen et al. found that it is vital for neighborhood association participation (1989). At the same time, Putnam has a very broad definition of civic engagement and Olsen et al.'s case study was of middle-class Michigan residents in a college town. These findings might not be applicable to resident participation in RAs. Still, Rankin and Quane discovered that in distressed neighborhoods, an individual's education is an especially important "factor associated with greater involvement and participation in community organizations" (2000: 153). Moreover, in the specific context of public housing, Conway and Hachen determined that education is the only SES-based resource that influences residents' ability to participate in public housing (2005).

For a long time social theorists have debated which has more weight in influencing residents' ability and desire to participate in community-based organizations: the SES and resources of the neighborhood, or of the individuals themselves. I will engage this question more thoroughly as I address the barriers to resident participation. What should be drawn from this discussion for now is that most theorists agree that SES and resources provide the necessary conditions for participation, as well as cause individuals to be motivated to participate.

In contrast to resources are relational and experiential factors. Whereas resources concern structural conditions that are ascribed upon or achieved by individuals or a group of people, relational and experiential factors are driven by the personal events in their lives and how they relate to these experiences. These factors have psychological and social components; those covered most extensively in the literature are grievances, attachment to place, and social ties.

Grievances

Grievances are the day-to-day problems that residents encounter with their living situation. Conway and Hachen explain that grievances occur when a person or group of people perceive their conditions to be at odds with their personal expectations or the values of society, at which point they target these issues toward "a delimited target such as a governmental agency" (2005:8). There are some people, according to Karn et al., who never pass the "recognition barrier" in perceiving these problems, and will therefore not participate because either they are uninformed about what they should be receiving or do not consider that their issues are problematic (1997). But if the residents do recognize these grievances, are they more likely to participate in their RA in order to have an avenue for complaint?

Karn et al. found that of the UK public housing residents that they surveyed, 75% thought that bringing a complaint to a resident association would be an effective way to pursue their problem, but very few people did this in reality. At the same time, they did find that resident associations were useful for getting people to initially complain in 7% of their cases (1997: 63-4). This would suggest that the associations

help some individuals become more aware of the problems, even though grievances do not serve as a cause for participation.

In contrast, Conway and Hachen determined through a logistic regression model that

only overall grievances affect tenant association participation but not directly. Rather it is because grievances are positively associated with social ties and longevity...that grievances are related to tenant association participation...[However], this does not mean that they are unimportant...People residing in public housing who have more grievances are more active and involved in their community (2005: 41)

Hence, it appears that grievances do not serve as direct causes for participation, but they do have some form of association with participation. Overall, this research highlights that one can not completely dismiss the role of grievances in resident participation, even if they do not play a strong role in causing participation.

Attachment to place

A bourgeoning amount of literature espouses the idea that a resident's attachment to place, or *homeplace*, is a vital cause for participation in community-based organizations (Altman and Low 1992, Van Ryzin 1996, Vale 1997, Small 2002, Feldman and Stall 2004, Conway and Hachen 2005). While residents are typically portrayed as stuck and anxious to escape the ghetto, several studies have shown that residents generally do wish to stay in public housing (Van Ryzin 1996, Vale 1997, Feldman and Stall 2004). To some extent, public housing is the only type of housing that the residents can afford, and thus it has tremendous value in terms of fiscal and physical security. But more importantly, public housing can carry deep,

emotional value, becoming what Vale calls an *empathological place* (1997). For many of the long-term residents, public housing is rooted with memories, friends, and the image of the "old days" when conditions were better and services were more frequent and vibrant. This positive *framing* of their development is "sustained by collective historical experiences and residents' perceptions of their life chances" (Small 2002: 7), which influences how they currently think of their home, and increases hope for the future (Small 2002, Feldman and Stall 2004). These positive feelings hinge upon a sense of agency, and "can only occur when people have some control over what goes on there [in their developments]" (Leavitt and Saegert 1990: 187). The less control residents have over their homeplace, the less likely they are to feel a connection to their developments.

Attachment to place is also linked to identity formation (McAdam and Paulsen 1993). Those who identify with their development--either through social ties, past experiences, or length of tenure--are more likely to participate in their RA. Conway and Hachen classify these types of residents as *settlers* or "those who view their current pubic housing dwelling as a near permanent of place of residence," as opposed to *sojourners*, who view it as a temporary step in their lives (2005: 39). Settlers are more likely to socialize and invest in public housing. While a longer length of tenure positively influences attachment to place, the older members' pleasant recollections of the past can also motivate the newer residents to identify with their home and, in turn, participate in their RA in hopes of recapturing that quality of life (Small 2002, Feldman and Stall 2004, Conway and Hachen 2005).

Small argues that the attachment to place in public housing trumps structural conditions that fall under Social Disorganization theory in articulating the reason for participation in resident associations. Although increased hardships will place constraints on the participation rate, they do not centrally affect whether or not residents get involved (2002). Likewise, Leavitt and Saegert have found that an attachment to place enhances the quality of life of the residents, promotes community involvement, and is the "warp and woof of individual community empowerment" (1990: 187).

Social Ties

Social ties have a prominent presence in the literature on low-income and public housing communities. Since the era of President Johnson's War on Poverty, these residents have usually been depicted as being socially isolated and limited in their social ties (Wilson 1987, Rankin and Quane 2000). However, recent studies have countered these notions and emphasize that social ties positively motivate residents to participate.

The term *social ties* is broadly defined. It can refer to extremely close relationships, called *strong ties*, or to loosely-based relationships that entail "a sense of ease, of knowing and trusting people, [and are] combined with overlapping networks" (Leavitt and Saegert 1990: 37). They can be defined by one's "social cohorts," (Small 2002) or what Feldman and Stall call a "community kinship," which forms an ethos of mutual aid (2004). Even though these definitions differ, they all highlight the importance of trust and respect that stem from relationships. And

although there is an intimate relation between social ties and attachment to place, they serve as a cause for participation on their own.

While many modern housing theorists argue that social ties are essential for participation, they differ in opinion on the ways in which ties have an impact.

McAdam and Paulsen determined that the strength of ties is inconsequential, but that multiple social ties are important for participation (1993). Yet Conway and Hachen found that merely the presence of social ties is sufficient (2005). Indeed, residents "with ties are about 140% more likely to attend a tenant association meeting than those with no ties" (ibid: 39).

Similar to Small, I argue that experiential and relational factors have a greater influence on resident participation than resource-based or structural factors. I have sought to explore these issues in my research, and will present my findings in Chapter Four. However, the barriers that residents face for getting involved in their participation system are of greater interest to me, given that resident participation can build social capital, enhance communities, and bring about empowerment.

Barriers to Participation

The Decline of Social Capital

Current sociological literature emphasizes that participation in organizations (and as a result, social capital) has largely declined in the United States over the past several decades. Putnam explored this in depth in Bowling Alone (2000, an expansion upon his 1995 essay), in which he attributed the decline to changing patterns of trust, altruism, and feelings of reciprocity. In the more specific context of grassroots

democracy participation, he adds the issue of a decrease of confidence in government as well. Indeed, he cites that in the 1990's, nearly three-quarters of Americans did not trust government to do what is right most of the time (2000: 41). Putnam illustrates that social connections--with friends and neighbors--are also waning and, moreover, Black people, poor people, and urban dwellers are all more likely to have social distrust than their counterparts, largely based upon past experiences. He concludes that social capital is important for improving the health of the neighborhood, but that it is harder to build in people that live in disadvantaged areas, because of their limited social ties and social distrust.

There are two important components to Putnam's theory. One is that participation (in all types of associations) has greatly declined over the past several decades and, as he argues, this is detrimental to our social and material well-being. He asserts that there are no "usual suspects" that can be traced to the decline, as it affects all types of people (2000: 185). Since participation in public housing has greatly evolved over this time, there is no way that I can address whether or not residents used to participate more.

The second component is more illuminating for my research: Putnam has determined that poor, urban, uneducated and African-American people are all less likely to be civically involved than their counterparts, largely as a result of their declining social trust, as well as issues of reciprocity and altruism. In other words, these communities are the least likely to have social capital, which negatively influences their ability to participate. He argues that a lack of social capital is a greater determinant of participation than poverty, but that SES has some influence.

Moreover, as I explained earlier, he strongly contends that education is a huge predictor of participation. And it is "precisely because poor people (by definition) have little economic capital and face formidable obstacles in acquiring human capital (that is, education), [that] *social* capital is disproportionately important to their welfare" (2000: 318). Following his line of thinking, NYCHA public housing residents--who represent the poorest of the poor, are predominately Black, and are concentrated in one of the largest cities in the United States--are at the greatest risk for lacking social capital, and the least likely to be active in neighborhood associations.

Social Disorganization Theory

Social Disorganization theory is similar to Putnam's theory insofar as that both contend that people of low SES are the least likely to participate in community-based associations. However, the theories diverge in their explanations of this phenomenon. Social Disorganization theory proposes that residents are not able to organize and participate due to a lack of structural resources in their communities. It is typically thought that those stuck in "the ghetto" face the double disadvantage of individual poverty and neighborhood poverty, as well as limited social ties, which decreases their amount of social capital (Shaw and McKay 1942, Rainwater 1970, Rankin and Quane 2000). Moreover, these areas that are devoid of social capital experience "accelerating social isolation and distress" (Spence 1993: 367), crime, violence, and disorder (Wilson 1987, Saegert and Winkel 1998), all of which are thought to inhibit participation. From this perspective, the problems of participation

are attributed to the problems of the resource-poor neighborhood. Indeed, Boardman and Robert discovered that neighborhood SES (which they quantify by poverty rate, public assistance rate, and unemployment rate) is a strong determinant in limiting individual self-efficacy (people's perception of their ability to organize and follow through with action), and much more so than individual SES (2000). Likewise, Williams and Kornblum "found that no matter how effective tenants [in Harlem] were in organizing themselves, numerous social force – among them drugs, unemployment, ill health, cuts in social services – too often negated their best efforts" (1994: 19).

However, through their study of low-income neighborhoods in Chicago (that ranged from slightly poor to extremely impoverished), Rankin and Quane determined that individual-level SES factors have a much greater influence on whether residents will participate in community organizations than neighborhood factors (2002). Similarly, Wuthnow concluded that it is more difficult for marginalized individuals to participate in their communities than those with privilege, exactly because of the individual effects of marginalization (2002). And again, Putnam clearly contends that education largely determines whether residents will participate and, to a much lesser extent, so does economic and social status. Hence, there is some evidence to support both sides of the heated debate on the impact of neighborhood structural conditions versus an individual's access to resources on participation.

In opposition to both of these theories, a more recent body of literature has completely challenged the notion that residents in poor neighborhoods, or public housing specifically, are less likely to participate than other groups in society. In fact,

Rankin and Quane determined that there is a non-linear relationship in which residents living in poorer neighborhoods are more likely to participate in community organizations than in more affluent neighborhoods (2000). More importantly, some studies have determined that resident participation in public housing is *slightly higher* than non-public housing resident participation in neighborhood and community activities (Cissner 2004, Cissner et al 2008, Reingold 1995, Conway and Hachen 2005). Indeed, Conway and Hachen found that 18% of public housing residents have participated in their resident associations in the past 12 months, compared to Olsen's study in which neighborhood associations have only a 9% rate of participation for general attendance (Olsen et al. 1989). As Conway and Hachen expressed, "being resource-poor does not constrain one's willingness or ability to participate in tenant associations" (2005: 41). This implies that individual factors of SES and access to resources do not serve as barriers to participation. Similarly, Cissner found that 10% of public housing residents frequently participated in RAs, compared to 9% of nonpublic housing residents participating in their tenant associations in the same neighborhood (Cissner 2004). Cissner explains that "although those in NYCHA housing tend to rate the quality of life in their neighborhoods lower... generally, they appear to be more integrated into their communities and more active..." (Cissner 2008: personal communication on December 4).

This is not to say that social capital is necessarily stronger in public housing than elsewhere. I also support Putnam's theory that public housing residents are disproportionately affected when they lack social capital, since they face greater limitations in accessing other resources. However, this does challenge the popular

notion that the structural conditions of poor neighborhoods largely prevent residents from participating in community organizations, as well as opposes the common image that public housing residents are incapable of self-governance. I argue that Putnam's theory on the decline of social capital, Social Disorganization theory, and theories on individual factors of SES and marginalization do not comprehensively account for the barriers that public housing residents face for participating in their resident associations, and I shall demonstrate this more thoroughly in Chapter Four.

A [somewhat] Radical Proposition

At the end of Chapter One I suggested that the problems that exist between the RAs and CCOP result from the way in which NYCHA has created and managed the resident participation system, as well as the unwillingness of the NYCHA board members to listen to the residents. Taking that back a step, I also argue that certain problems--namely, lack of information and technical training, language barriers, and social distrust--serve as key barriers that limit participation, and that these almost entirely stem from the *structure and functioning* of the resident participation system, whereby the powerholders (the housing authority, or what Lang and Hornburg calls a *civic group*) constrain or dissuade resident participation by denying them the necessary resources to mobilize and have a voice in the greater community. In other words, in the case of public housing, the participation system itself is the key barrier to participaton.

Information and Technical Training

Information is a critical resource that is necessary for participation. In a society that functions upon knowledge and communication, a lack of information puts residents at a severe disadvantage. If residents are unaware that their opportunity for participation exists, they clearly cannot participate. They need to be instructed about how their participation system functions and in what ways they can get involved (Leung 2005). As Karn et al. argue, management needs to consistently provide information about housing rules and policies, as to not set up barriers for residents to have a voice (1997). This means that residents need to know about the policies that affect them in order to be able to give educated input in housing matters. And just as it is vital that PHAs do not withhold information, they must conscientiously disseminate information in a way that is easily accessible to residents (Karn et al. 1997).

Technical training is also crucial for effective participation, as it builds leadership skills, the capacity to process new information, and allows residents to start on an equal playing field with management in order to exert power. As I mentioned in Chapter One, in the case of RMCs, "the quality of training and other technical assistance" was critical to their success (Peterman 1993: 165). Participation can be extremely difficult without technical "know-how," and since no one is ever born equipped with expertise in public housing-related matters, residents must be trained. Both information and technical training enable residents to have constructive dialogues with each other and with their PHAs. This makes a difference in whether residents will participate at all, and moreover, whether they can participate effectively

(Kramer 1967, Peterman 1993, Karn et al. 1997, Leung 2005). Without these fundamental resources, residents are lost in a sea of confusion.

To reiterate an earlier point, information and technical training are resources, but they clearly differ from the SES and achieved resources of individuals (or their neighborhoods). They concern what a PHA provides to residents, not something that residents were either born into or have control over. These resources are necessary to *support* the participation process. While some theorists argue that there has to be a huge precipitating event to motivate residents to participate (MDRC 1981, Small 2002, Leung 2005), Kramer notes that, "the [less pressing] issues are there along with a high potential for tenant interest. The major need is to develop structures and mechanisms that can capitalize on tenant potentialities and that yield enduring vehicles for community expression and growth" (1967: 213).

It is not entirely the case that there has to be pressing issue for residents to get involved, but there needs to be a *supportive participation structure* that encourages and facilitates participation. Often during the times when there are pressing issues, the residents are backed by housing advocates, non-profit community organizations, or other residents who have a strong history of activism (Leavitt and Saegert 1990, Small 2002, Feldman and Stall 2004). These groups or activists can encourage and support reactionary participation, but they usually do not work within the traditional avenues for participation, and may not be as accessible during quieter times. There has to be a greater dissemination of information (in terms of how the resident participation system functions and when meetings take place, as well as about the

policies that affect their lives) and technical training of residents in order to motivate them to participate and facilitate them doing so.¹⁹

Language Barrier

The language barrier is another problem that severely constrains the ability of residents to participate in all types of community-based organizations, and it is disproportionately problematic in lower SES neighborhoods and in public housing, where immigrant populations largely reside (Vargas-Ramos 2003, Leung 2005). While all non-English speakers are impacted by this problem, Latinos are the largest minority group to be affected in New York City, with nearly 2 million native Spanish speakers residing in the city (Communities for Housing Equity Coalition 2006), and over 40% of public housing residents being Latino.

Unfortunately, virtually nothing has been written on this issue as it relates to public housing residents and participation, although there is some scant literature on how it relates to accessing services and communicating with management. A report by the Communities for Housing Equity Coalition found that 62% of limited English proficient (LEP) residents in the general New York City population did not know that there are supportive services to help them with housing needs and maintaining housing code standards, and that this was directly attributed to the city's insufficient outreach strategies provided in alternate languages. Furthermore, 55% of those who knew the procedures to file a complaint either could not do so because of the language barrier, or had to find a translator of their own to help them (Communities

¹⁹ To clarify, this does not support Social Disorganization theory or theories on the impact of individual SES, as information and technical training are resources of a different nature.

for Housing Equity Coalition 2006). This occurs on the city-wide level, but in public housing, where resources are scarcer, the situation is likely to be worse. Saldov discovered that for the predominately Chinese-speaking public housing residents in Canada, the language barrier was the biggest problem for residents to communicate with management personnel. As a result, they were very unfamiliar with the services they could receive (1996). Residents who face the language barrier are unable to understand what to do when problems arise and how to be active in their communities. Consequently, they are also less likely to participate, which can exacerbate their problems, given that they are already more vulnerable to poor housing conditions (Leung 2005).

Social Distrust

A lack of social trust greatly impedes resident participation. Recall that

Putnam argues that social distrust (as a result of direct past experiences) is a major

factor that contributes to declining participation in civic associations, and that poor,

African-American, urban people are all the most likely groups to experience it (2000).

Similarly, he contends that those living in poor neighborhoods are more prone to

distrust of government, due of lack of services and funding (2002). I argue that this

articulation of social distrust accurately explains one barrier that residents in public

housing face for participation, but that his entire theory does not fully account for the

problems of non-participation, and it wrongly serves to suggest that residents in

public housing are less likely to participate than other groups.

Other theorists have also researched social distrust, without problematizing it as Putnam does. Leavitt and Saegert discovered that, in their case study of low-income residents in Harlem, tenant associations that displayed mutual support, affection and trust were more successful at gaining ownership, whereas "tenants' associations in buildings marked by hostile and indifferent relations among tenants never went beyond an immediate response to crisis" (1990: 85). As might be expected, residents who have greater social ties also have greater social trust, since they are more likely to have faith in those that they know (Conway and Hachen 2005). It also acts as a "bridging resource" for diverse social groups within public housing and, as Leung argues, is necessary for effective and sustained participation. If social trust is not in place between residents, cooperation is nearly impossible to maintain, and will produce a chaotic and unsuccessful association. In turn, residents will find participation undesirable (Leavitt and Saegert 1990, Leung 2005).

The Process of Participation: Nominal vs. Substantive

The barriers to participation are related to whether the system is substantial and has meaning for the residents. As Arnstein argues, there is a "critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process" (1969: 216). In her examination of resident participation in the HUD Model Cities, Arnstein constructs an eight-rung ladder of citizen participation, with the bottom rung (under the category nonparticipation) representing manipulation, and the top rung (under the category of degree of citizen power) representing citizen control, which would be full managerial

control. The most important "rung," as it pertains to the NYCHA participation structure, is *partnership* (the sixth rung), which enables residents "to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders" (1969: 217). A successful partnership requires a base of strong resident leaders who can exert influence and hold the powerholders accountable. As social psychologist Robert M. Kramer argues, when public housing residents are blocked from directly participating in the substantive decisions that shape public housing, they are

doomed to a demiworld existence as a noncommunity. If, on the other hand, tenants participate in the central issues, a healthy encounter can develop an atmosphere of battle-tested mutual trust and respect [between tenants and management]. Upon this can be built a cycle of community improvement fostering community spirit and sustaining further community improvement and development... (1967: 212).

If participation is only nominally in place, residents cannot effectively communicate their problems with public housing, strengthen community ties, and enhance individual and general well-being. Essentially, even if residents are able to overcome the barriers to participation, they will not be able to effectively accomplish anything if they are ignored and excluded by the powerholders. This involves the power of "Exit" and "Voice" strategies.

In the 1970's Albert Hirschman contrasted the *Exit* choice, or the ability to leave a situation, with *Voice*: the ability of members of an organization to "express their dissatisfaction directly to management or to some other authority to which management is subordinate or through general protest addressed to anyone who cares to listen" (Hirschman 1970: 4, as quoted in Karn et al. 1997: 11-2). If leaving their developments as an Exit strategy is not a viable option for public housing tenants due to clear financial reasons, then all they are left is with the power of Voice.

As I outlined in Chapter One, federal and local policies dictate that residents--through RAs, RCs, and RAB--are entitled to effectively communicate their desires and needs to NYCHA, and to be heard. But to speak and to be heard are two different matters. The former simply entails the ability to communicate. The latter entails recognition of the Voice by the partner involved and careful consideration by the partner as well. RAs seem to have little to no Voice with CCOP and RAB, while CCOP and RAB have (at best) a weak Voice with NYCHA. As Hirschman has explained, "'the short-run interest of management in organizations is to increase its own freedom of movement...Thus voice can become mere 'blowing off steam' as it is being emasculated by the institutionalization and domestication of dissent'" (Hirschman 1970: 124, as quoted in Karn et al. 1997: 14). Residents are doubly limited in their ability to get involved from the barriers set by the participation system and by being ignored, which leads to further disempowerment.

Chapter 3: Methodology

When I began my research, I hypothesized that the majority of NYCHA public housing residents did not know about their Resident Associations and that their participation rates would be low. Similarly, I surmised that the residents were even more ignorant about CCOP and RAB. These hypotheses were initially pushed by public housing members of the non-profit organization Community Voices Heard (CVH), who felt dissatisfied--if not infuriated--with the resident participation system.

As an intern with CVH over the summer of 2008, I was fortunate enough to be a part of a survey project that has served as a quantitative goldmine for my research. In fact, this project opened my eyes to the current state of the resident participation system under NYCHA, and inspired me to write my thesis. One could say that the survey started it all, but I had no idea what kind of results I would get until I was already knee-deep in researching literature on public housing and participation. This scared me, since there was a strong possibility that I would find no clear or cohesive results.

The survey was constructed by a committee of New York City public housing residents, CVH organizers, and a policy analyst. It focuses on five different areas of public housing: building conditions and maintenance, NYCHA services, public housing policies and policing, the NYCHA budget deficit, and NYCHA resident participation and governance. There are also several variables that measure individual characteristics (race, age, gender, etc.) and socio-economic status (SES), which is measured by education, employment status, and public assistance status.

The organization's goal was to survey 40 out of the 343 NYCHA developments, and these were chosen based on varying resident population size and distribution within the boroughs. This was done in order to capture the diversity of public housing as much as possible. The aim was to get at least a 3% response rate from the total population per development, totaling 1390 surveys. Interviewers were independently sent out and instructed to knock on every door in the developments until the 3% goal was met. All of the surveys had to be verbally administered by the interviewers in order to ensure that surveys would be completed quickly, and that residents would answer with their initial or "gut" responses. I personally administered over 100 surveys, which allowed me to get a sense of the pulse of the developments. As of late October 2008, 812 surveys were completed from 31 public housing developments throughout the five boroughs of New York City (Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island). It is these surveys that I use.

A Run-In with "Dirty" Data

Unfortunately, I was not a part of the committee that created the survey. I was just one interviewer out of a core group of about ten. Therefore, I lacked control over this part of the research process. If I was able to contribute, I would have included a question that measures participation in community-based organizations at the neighborhood level (such as religious groups, PTAs, etc.) in order to test if involvement in other groups has an association with participation in RAs. I would have also included a direct measurement for residents' social ties within the development, as well as a variable that measures emotional attachment to place

(perhaps asking about their attitude and feelings toward the development). In addition, I believe that some questions were poorly worded on the survey, which affected the outcome of responses, and made some of my analysis difficult as I sifted through the data. I also noticed (in retrospect) that there were problems with the structure of the interviews. While interviewers were supposed to ask all of the survey questions to the respondents, this was not the case: there are missing data for many respondents. Data collection is never perfect, but this does mean that some variables will be skewed.

. The vast majority of the surveys were conducted in English, with 88 conducted in Spanish, and 2 in Chinese. Some interviewers spoke only English, so they were often unable to conduct the survey when they came in contact with non-English speaking residents. However, being one of those interviewers, I tried my best to see if there was a relative or friend in the apartment who could help translate, and I was sometimes successful. Given the large presence of Spanish-only speakers in New York City, this group may have been underrepresented. Yet as a group, Latino respondents were fairly proportionate to the actual numbers living in these developments. Since virtually all of the surveys conducted in Spanish were administered to self-identified Latinos, there is a possibility that Spanish-only speakers were fairly represented, but it cannot be said with certainty whether or not this is true.

Another factor that affected the population of survey respondents was timing.

The surveys were administered between the hours of 2pm and 8pm on weekdays. As

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²⁰ There were surveys written both in English and Spanish, but one interviewer was able to translate and administer it in Chinese.

²¹ One respondent declared being white and one respondent declared being "other."

a result, unemployed people were overrepresented and employed people were underrepresented: 34.5% of respondents reported working full-time or part time, as compared 45.9% of families reported by NYCHA as of June 2008 (Fact Sheet 2008). At the same time, I believe that this discrepancy is actually smaller, since this question measured the respondents' individual work-statuses, and not that of their families. Since residents as young as ten and as old as 98 were interviewed, it's likely that the number of working families represented by this survey is higher than reported.

In some ways, the data are demographically accurate. For instance the racial make-up of survey respondents is fairly consistent with the make-up of residents in New York City public housing. Indeed, 50.8% of those interviewed self-identified as Black/African American, 43.9% as Latino/Hispanic, 1.8% as White, .6% as Asian-American/Pacific Islander, .3% as Native American, and 2.7% as "other". According to data compiled by NYCHA, in January 2008 48.9% of residents were labeled as Black, 42.3% were Hispanic, 4.3% were White, 3.8% were Asian and .7% were labeled "other" (Resident Data Summary 2008). While White and Asian residents were somewhat underrepresented, Black and Latino residents are almost perfectly represented. Gender also appears to be adequately represented, with 75.1% of the respondents identifying as female, as compared to 76.6% of households headed by women as of January of 2008 (Resident Data Summary 2008).

Despite some clear problems with the survey and interview process, the CVH data represent an enormous and virtually unprecedented source of information

regarding the opinions of residents in 31 NYCHA public housing developments throughout the five boroughs. These data are crucial for informing my work.

Data Analysis

For my data analysis I used the SPSS program. There were 94 variables from the survey, which were nominal, ordinal, interval, string, or open-ended. I recoded age, race, number of children, and public assistance status, thereby totaling to 98 variables. I ran both frequencies and cross-tabulations for my analysis, ²² and I used chi-square as the test for independence for the cross-tabulations, where a p-value less than .050 indicates that the findings are significant.

Since my goal is to analyze NYCHA's resident participation system, I primarily focused on the variable of the residents' awareness of the RA, measured by the question, "Do you know if your development has a Resident/Tenant Association?" and the participation variable, measured by the question, "Do you participate in your Resident/Tenant Association?" I had to clean up the participation variable in my analysis because six respondents replied that they were both unaware if their development has an RA and that they participate in their RA. These cases were excluded, resulting in 108 total participants. I also looked at the questions that measure the residents' knowledge of and attitudes toward CCOP and RAB, since the resident participation system does have three components to it. To my knowledge, this level of analysis goes beyond any other social science research that has been done

²² There must be two conditions that are satisfied for cross-tabulations to be valid: 1) that no more than 20% of cells have a value of 5 or less, and that 2) the minimum expected count is greater than 1. All of my reportings meet these standards.

before, as the research on resident participation has focused solely on resident groups within the developments.

Qualitative Comments and Interviews

As I administered the surveys, many residents spoke freely to me about their lives and their feelings toward public housing. These comments, which went beyond the questions on the survey, were just as important for the research process as was administering the survey, and I have used parts of these conversations in my analysis. I also held unstructured interviews with public housing residents from Clinton Houses in Harlem, as well as with public housing residents who are members of CVH. Any names that I use have been changed for purposes of confidentiality. Overall their responses were similar, but the members of CVH, who are more informed about the NYCHA participation system from CVH meetings and literature, were better able to articulate the complexities that exist within the system.

Archival Records

In order to get a better picture of how CCOP and RAB function, I read RAB meeting minutes from 2005-2006, which were acquired by CVH under the New York State Freedom of Information Law. ²³ I also incorporated records of public statements made by New York City Officials about the resident participation system. These records enabled me to contextualize the interactions between CCOP, RAB, and

²³ CCOP meeting minutes are not made available to the public, an issue that has been contested by some public housing residents. The RAB meeting minutes are the most recent that CVH could access.

NYCHA from socio-historical and political perspectives, and further determine the effectiveness of the participation structure.

Hence, the following results come from multiple sources, using multiple methods. These have enabled me (in my modest attempt) to pinpoint what causes and limits resident participation in NYCHA public housing, to discover why many residents feel so frustrated with the system, and to determine how effective the system actually is.

Chapter 4: Research Results and Discussion

Who participates?

In order to participate, residents first have to be aware that an RA exists in their development. Slightly over half of the residents, 57.0%, responded that they know whether their development has a Resident Association, 24 and 24.4% of those residents (or 16% of the total population) claim to participate. 55 My finding is consistent with past research, as Conway and Hachen determined that 18% of public housing residents have participated in a RA some time over the span of a year (2005) and Cissner reported that 10% of public housing residents frequently participate in their RAs (2004). While my finding for participation is moderately low, it is not insignificant. I do not have any data from this survey of resident participation rates of non-public housing residents, but going compared to Olsen et al. (1989) et Cissner's (2004) research, this directly challenges Social Disorganization theory and Putnam's theory of civic engagement. Indeed, public housing residents are entirely capable of organizing for voluntary resident associations, and it appears that they do so in greater percentages than the rest of the general public.

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It is my belief that the survey question that measured this response was poorly worded. While two-thirds of the developments do not have RAs, all 31 of the developments surveyed officially do. The question asked "do you know if your development has a Resident/ Tenant Association," but interviewers were not given clear instructions on how to mark the response when public housing residents said "yes, there is no Resident Association." Since all of the buildings are reported to have RA, a better question to test their knowledge would be "is there an RA at your development?" ²⁵ Henceforth, whenever I talk about residents and participants vs. non-participants, I am referring to the 57.0% of the population (450 public housing residents) who indicated that they knew about their RA (unless otherwise noted), since it would be meaningless to include those who are unaware if their development has an RA in the "non-participant" category. Also, given that the level of involvement was not defined in this survey, it is likely that fewer people regularly attend the meetings. Residents could have self-reported as participating even if they went to one or two meetings in the past, but no longer do.

At the same time, my findings (in isolation) provide no clear picture of how informed residents are about the NYCHA resident participation system and what participation actually looks like. They also do not describe how effective the system is and what meaning it holds for the residents. These are the points I seek to understand, but first I will further examine who participates.

Demographics

For the most part, participants in NYCHA RAs are representative of the typical public housing resident: Black, female, middle-aged to elderly, and have lived in public housing for 16 or more years. At the same time, there is a difference between what groups are most represented in the RA and which have the highest participation rates, which is more indicative of their level of activity.

Table 4-1: Breakdown of Participants (by %)

Gender	Female	83.7
	Male	16.3
Race ²⁶	Black	77.5
	Latino	19.6
	White, Asian-	0.0
	American,	
	Pacific Islander	
	"Other"	2.9
Age	20-29	4.5
	30-39	14.8
	40-49	15.9
	50-59	21.6
	60-69	22.7
	70-79	12.5
	80 and up	8.0
Length of	0-2	0.0
Tenure (in	3-5	8.7
years)	6-10	11.5
	11-5	2.9
	16+	76.9

N = 108

By using the chi-square test in my cross-tabulations to test for independence, I determined that all of these variables have significant associations with participation.

Age and race have particularly strong associations.

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²⁶ Racial composition in the RA breaks down to Blacks, Latinos, and residents self-identified as "other", and not a black-white dichotomy, as our society tends to structure race. This is probably due to the fact that White residents are an extremely small minority in public housing. Whites, Asian-Americans, and Pacific Islanders are grouped together because they represent a nearly statistically insignificant portion of the population. I also acknowledge that "Latino" is modernly used to describe an ethnicity, and not a racial category, but for the purpose of this paper, I fit it under the variable of "race" in order to discuss the residents' self-identification.

Table 4-2: Age and RA Participation

				Participation	
			Yes	No	Total
Age	10-19	Count	0	10	10
		% within Age	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	20-29	Count	4	48	52
		% within Age	7.7%	92.3%	100.0%
	30-39	Count	13	47	60
		% within Age	21.7%	78.3%	100.0%
	40-49	Count	14	64	78
		% within Age	17.9%	82.1%	100.0%
	50-59	Count	19	45	64
		% within Age	29.7%	70.3%	100.0%
	60-69	Count	20	35	55
		% within Age	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
	70-79	Count	11	18	29
		% within Age	37.9%	62.1%	100.0%
	80 +	Count	7	8	15
		% within Age	46.7%	53.3%	100.0%
	Total	Count	88	275	363
		% within Age	24.2%	75.8%	100.0%

chi-square = 25.353, p-value = .001

The rate of participation directly increases with age (except for those who are 40-49), with residents who are 80 years or older having the highest rate of participation, despite the increased likelihood of health and mobility issues. This contradicts Conway and Hachen's finding that middle-aged, forty year-olds are the most likely to participate (2005), and supports Leavitt and Saegert's qualitative analysis that elderly women participate the most in low-income housing (1990). One possible explanation is that age could be linked to long periods of tenure. As I shall soon demonstrate, those residents who have lived in public housing for 16 or more years have the highest participation rates, and it would make sense that older residents

are also more likely to have lived in public housing for this amount of time. I performed a cross-tab analysis to test this hypothesis and I found that there is a strong positive linear association²⁷ between age and tenure. Indeed, 89.7% of residents who are 80 years or older have lived in public housing for 16 or more years. Yet another possible explanation could be related to where the RA meetings are held. One woman informed me that her development's RA meetings are in the senior center. If this is true for other developments, it could heighten the seniors' awareness of when the meetings occur and possibly influence them to participate.

Table 4-3: Race and RA Participation

	<u>-</u>		Participation			
			Yes	No	Total	
	African-	Count	79	174	253	
	American/ Black	% within Race	31.2%	68.8%	100.0%	
	White,	Count	0	10	10	
Asian American, and Pacific Islander Latino/	% within Race	.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
	Count	20	127	147		
	Hispanic	% within Race	13.6%	86.4%	100.0%	
"Other"	Count	3	10	13		
	% within Race	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%		
	Total	Count	102	321	423	
		% within Race	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%	

chi-square = 19.048, p-value = .000

Out of the three main racial categories in public housing, Black residents are the most likely to participate and Latinos are the least likely to participate. Recall that

 $^{^{27}}$ chi-square = 1.447E2, p-value = .000

Latinos are a significant portion of public housing residents: 43.9%. Since Black residents constitute three-quarters of the RA participants and have a participation rate that is over double that of Latinos, I suspect that there are structural and cultural forces that either prevent or dissuade Latinos from participating. This should be further explored in future studies.

Table 4-4: Tenure and RA Participation

			Participation		
			Yes	No	Total
Tenure	0-2 years	Count	0	12	12
		% within Tenure	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	3-5 years	Count	9	25	34
		% within Tenure	26.5%	73.5%	100.0%
	6-10 years	Count	12	50	62
		% within Tenure	19.4%	80.6%	100.0%
	11-15 years	Count	3	59	62
		% within Tenure	4.8%	95.2%	100.0%
	16+ years	Count	80	173	253
		% within Tenure	31.6%	68.4%	100.0%
	Total	Count	104	319	423
		% within Tenure	24.6%	75.4%	100.0%

chi-square = 24.684, p-value = .000

Residents who have lived in public housing for 16 or more years clearly participate more than the other residents and new-comers (residing in public housing for 0-2 years) do not participate at all. However, there seems to be no other correlation between length of tenure and participation for residents. Despite this fact, I will later explain how these findings generally fit under the attachment to place theory.

Table 4-5: Gender and RA Participation

			Participation		
			Yes	No	Total
Gender	male	Count	17	87	104
		% within Gender	16.3%	83.7%	100.0%
	female	Count	87	235	322
		% within Gender	27.0%	73.0%	100.0%
	Total	Count	104	322	426
		% within Gender	24.4%	75.6%	100.0%

chi-square = 4.852, p-value = .028

Women have an almost 10% higher participation rate than men. This quantifies William and Kornblum's qualitative study of NYCHA, where woman largely dominated the RAs because, as one woman reported, "men see this as women's work" (1994: 203). Indeed, most literature supports that participation and social movements related to public housing (or other low-income communities) are largely driven by women (Leavitt and Saegert 1990, William and Kornblum 1994, Feldman and Stall 2004). This is not to dismiss the role of men in their RAs, but to acknowledge the efforts of women in their social, civic, and political efforts to enhance their communities.

Individual SES Factors Don't Hold Strong

I have already discounted Social Disorganization theory and Putnam's theory of civic engagement as being sufficient explanations of participation in public housing resident associations, in comparison to the participation rates of non-public housing residents. But how does individual SES or other resource-based factors

impact the residents' ability to organize and participate in their RAs? As I outlined in Chapter Two, many theorists contend that the higher the SES or resources an individual has, the greater the likelihood that they will participate. One variable that is associated with this line of thinking is political participation. According to many social theorists, political participation increases civic efficacy and raises the chances that residents will participate in their community groups, or RAs (Olsen et al 1989, Conway and Hachen 2005). While I cannot determine from my data if civic efficacy causes participation in RAs or visa-versa, I found that participation does have a strong association with political participation.²⁸

Table 4-6: Civic Participation and RA Participation

	-	_	Did you vote	in the last mayor	al election
			I voted in the last mayoral election	I did not vote in the last mayoral election	Total
Participation	Yes	Count	71	27	98
		% within Participation	72.4%	27.6%	100.0%
	No	Count	174	137	311
		% within Participation	55.9%	44.1%	100.0%
	Total	Count	245	164	409
		% within Participation	59.9%	40.1%	100.0%

chi-square = 8.447, p-value = .004

Indeed, 72.4% of participants voted in the mayoral election in 2004, versus only 55.9% of non-participants.²⁹ This finding serves to indicate that those who participate in their RA are more engaged in their wider community than non-participants.

²⁸ Measured by voting in the 2004 Mayoral election.

²⁹ These numbers are extraordinarily high compared to typical voter turnouts and this is probably a case of over-reporting. Still, it serves to demonstrate that there is greater political efficacy among participants.

However, I found that education, the presence of children, employment, and public assistance status--all variables that are emphasized by theories on resources in explaining participation in community organizations-- are significantly independent of participation in the RAs.³⁰

Table 4-7: Education and RA Participation

			Participation		on
			Yes	No	Total
Education	less than high	Count	25	81	106
	school	% within Education	23.6%	76.4%	100.0%
	high school diploma	Count	38	105	143
		% within Education	26.6%	73.4%	100.0%
	GED	Count	5	14	19
		% within Education	26.3%	73.7%	100.0%
	vocational school	Count	1	8	9
	diploma	% within Education	11.1%	88.9%	100.0%
	some college	Count	14	59	73
		% within Education	19.2%	80.8%	100.0%
	college degree	Count	17	48	65
		% within Education	26.2%	73.8%	100.0%
	Total	Count	100	315	415
		% within Education	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%

 $\overline{\text{chi-square}} = 2.492$, p-value = .778

Table 4-8: Presence of Children and RA Participation

			Participation			
			Yes	No	Total	
	0	Count	37	108	145	
	Children	% within Children	25.5%	74.5%	100.0%	
	1-3	Count	41	152	193	
	Children	% within Children	21.2%	78.8%	100.0%	
	4+	Count	10	25	35	
	Children	% within Children	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	88	285	373	
		% within Children	23.6%	76.4%	100.0%	

chi-square = 1.632, p-value = .504

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³⁰ Recall that education has been heavily reported as a direct positive influence on resident participation and the presence of children has mixed findings on participation. Public assistance and employment (as a time constraint) are reported to constrain participation (Rankin and Quane 2000).

Table 4-9: Employment and RA Participation

			Participation		
			Yes	No	Total
Employment Status	working part	Count	9	29	38
	time	% within Employment Status	23.7%	76.3%	100.0%
	working full time	Count	21	75	96
		% within Employment Status	21.9%	78.1%	100.0%
	unemployed	Count	56	171	227
		% within Employment Status	24.7%	75.3%	100.0%
	retired	Count	14	30	44
		% within Employment Status	31.8%	68.2%	100.0%
	Total	Count	100	305	405

chi-square = 1.632, p-value = .652

Table 4-10: Public Assistance Status and RA Participation

			Participation		
			Yes	No	Total
Public Assistance No Public Status Assistance	Count	52	174	226	
	Assistance	% within PA Status	23.0%	77.0%	100.0%
	Receives	Count	52	152	204
	Public Assistance	% within PA Status	25.5%	74.5%	100.0%
	Total	Count	104	326	430
		% within PA Status	24.2%	75.8%	100.0%

chi-square = .360, p-value = .548

The survey data suggests that SES and achieved resource-based conditions neither encourage nor constrain participation in public housing RAs. My research generally mirrors that of Conway and Hachen, whereby they found that these factors

also do not have an effect on participation, except for education. As they were quoted in Chapter Two, "being resource-poor does not constrain one's willingness or ability to participate in tenant associations" (2005: 41). This is a major finding, as it contradicts past theories that claim that people with higher SES or greater access to resources are more likely to participate (or conversely, those with resource constraints are less likely to participate). The causes for participation are not entirely clear, and they need further exploration. Still, this leads me to believe that the causes for participation are more experiential and relational.

Motivations for Participation

As I discussed in Chapter Two, Karn et al. found that RAs enable residents to become more aware of their grievances, and Conway and Hachen argue that residents with grievances are more likely to participate, but that this happens only indirectly, as discovered when controlling for social ties and tenure. Surprisingly, my quantitative data challenge theirs, as I found no association between grievances and participation. However, I gather from my personal conservations with participants and from the survey data that both an attachment to place and social ties motivate residents to participate. These would support a more experiential and relational theory.

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³¹ However, I do not entirely agree with their reasoning. They contend that "a plausible explanation for the absence of resource effects is that public housing tenants are a relatively homogenous, resource-poor population with few full-time employed persons and low incomes. The one resource variable that does differentiate people within this population (education) is also the only resource variable that affects participation in this population" (2005: 31). Unlike Conway and Hachen, I found that education does not have an impact on participation, and moreover, I argue that education is not the only marker of diversity in public housing. Out of the entire population that was surveyed by CVH, 55.8% were unemployed and only 17.6% of residents received either cash assistance or food stamps. Thus, while my findings almost entirely match theirs, I do not believe that their explanation of public housing residents as a homogenous population (with the exception of education) is a valid way to articulate why resource effects do not apply to resident participation in public housing RAs, at least not in the case of New York City.

Grievances: Measurement of Residents' Satisfaction and Influence on Participation

During my visits to various developments throughout the five boroughs of New York City I witnessed roaches in cupboards, cracks in the ceilings and walls, graffiti in the stairwells, mold, and foul stenches that I cannot identify. I have been told stories of it taking two weeks for the NYCHA service men to repair broken lights in the main living rooms, several days of going without water, or months without having other household problems fixed (all of which NYCHA is supposed to do promptly and without charge). Over the course of the past few years, NYCHA has cut the number of maintenance workers³² and some residents can tell. Indeed, 44.7% of the entire resident population surveyed³³ said that the current amount of workers has caused building conditions to be worse than before, 40.8% said it stayed the same, and only 14.5% thought conditions improved. With a five year old boy plummeting to his death in August 2008 because of a broken elevator, and nearly 75% of internal inspectors rating NYCHA elevators as unsatisfactory, the living situation in NYCHA developments is revealed to be all the more dire (Wallace 2008).³⁴ Furthermore, New York City investigations have recently found that that the faulty maintenance is attributed to not just a depletion in resources, but negligence and careless oversight by the housing authority (Rivera 2009).

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³² Currently there is supposed to be one maintenance worker for every 250-300 units, but several public housing residents who live in larger buildings (1000 units or more) have complained to me that they do not see more than one or two workers. Whether residents realize it or not, the number of service workers has dramatically decreased. NYCHA has cut over 2,500 positions in the past decade across fields, including maintenance workers

³³ These percentages include residents who are unaware of their RA, and are based on N=812.
³⁴ Moreover, conditions are significantly worse than housing in the rest of New York City. In 2002 public housing units were 1.64 times more likely to have 5 or more maintenance problems than the general housing population (NYCHANIS 2008). Since these data were provided by NYCHA, I suspect that there is an even greater discrepancy.

Similarly, community-oriented services are being reduced dramatically due to NYCHA's budget cuts, and even some of the surviving community centers are highly non-functional as a result of inadequate staffing and resources.³⁵ The programs at these centers provide services that not only enhance life, but help sustain life. Some senior centers have medical services and at least one free breakfast a week for the elderly, a way for them to socialize and get a meal they potentially would not be able to afford on their own. The residents' physical and social well-being are greatly reduced with such opportunities waning.

Given that public housing is falling apart, and residents have anecdotally expressed extreme frustration with conditions and services, I expected that the data would show a high level of resident dissatisfaction and that there would be a positive association with grievances (both over building conditions and community services) and participation in the RAs, but neither of these held true. There was no statistically significant difference between participants and non-participants when rating the functioning of their elevators, safety in the buildings, cleanliness of the common areas, or overall conditions. Moreover, their evaluation of overall conditions (when graphed) follows a normal bell curve, with a very slight skew to the negative side [See Appendix A]. Indeed, 40.2% of participants and 38.7% of non-participants rated their conditions as "okay."

I cannot conclusively determine why the residents did not report greater dissatisfaction with their living conditions, and why participants and non-participants responded similarly. It is clear that they are aware that problems exist, as they call

³⁵ They are also supposed to be free of charge for the public housing residents, but many residents have complained that they are asked to pay for the programs.

³⁶ I now refer back to the population that is aware of their RAs.

NYCHA about repairs in high numbers (95.1% and 92.6%, respectively). This then excludes the possibility that they simply do not pass a "recognition barrier" (Karn et al. 1997) when assessing their conditions. A possible explanation for their rating of conditions could be a problem of methodology, as there tends to be an underreporting bias in oral interviews of people living in marginalized conditions.³⁷ Yet regardless of how they rated their conditions, the findings reveal that grievances about building conditions neither act as a motivating force for participation, nor become more salient to those who participate.

Grievances over community services also do not appear to drive residents to get involved in their RAs. When asked to rate their level of satisfaction, residents overwhelmingly responded that either they were not sure, or that their development did not have such services. As a result, only a small percentage of residents gave a rating, rendering the measurement of their satisfaction unreliable [see Appendix A]. Still, for those who expressed an opinion, the cross-tabulations indicate that there is no association between participation and the rating of any of the individual services, with the exception of youth programs, where participants are more likely to be *satisfied* with these programs.³⁸ There is also no association between participation and

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³⁷ Social psychologist Nederhof explains that "social desirability reflects the tendency on behalf of the subjects to deny socially undesirable traits and claim socially desirable ones... [and is] resultant of two factors: self-deception and other deception" (1985: 264). This would also account for why many residents rated their living conditions were "okay" over "poor" or "bad".

³⁸ As a result of poor survey construction, I had to change the variables that measured satisfaction over individual services for this analysis. The survey questions problematically conflated "not sure" and "not in my development" as an additional selection for residents to choose, which are two very different measurements. The value of the chi-square was unduly dominated by this category. By removing it, the p-value of the chi-square no longer became significant, except for the rating of youth programs.

the rating of overall services.³⁹ There does, however, seem to be an association between RA participation and a greater awareness about the *lack of* services. Indeed, 62.1% of participants reported that they think there has been a decrease of services over the past five years (which in fact, there has been), versus 48.3% of non-participants.⁴⁰ Hence, while participants may be more knowledgeable about what NYCHA (fails to) provides them, from these results it seems that dissatisfaction does not motivate residents to participate.⁴¹

Attachment to Place

When talking to RA participants, I quickly noticed that they often display an emotional attachment to their developments, resulting from a positive framing of the past and/or feelings of being connected to the community. Evidence of this came out in a discussion I had with Mr. Gardner, who has lived in public housing for the majority of his life and is also a member of Community Voices Heard. As he told me,

we [public housing residents] sit here and we complain about crime and safety but these things aren't going to change unless we help the youth. We need things for the kids! We see them in the streets and that's because they don't have nothing anymore. Back in the 80's and early 90's--the heyday of housing--they used to have basketball teams, with them jerseys, and field trips, you know, stuff to keep them occupied. We need that back.

Activities and services in NYCHA public housing in fact used to be more prolific and vibrant. If residents positively remember the "heyday" of public housing,

³⁹ This question did not include the category "not sure/not in my development" and, as with the residents' rating of overall conditions, the responses seem to follow the bell curve, with a slight skew to the positive side for participants.

⁴⁰ Chi-square = 6.071, with a p-value of .048.

⁴¹ Still, I am compelled to argue (from my discussions and from reading open-ended responses on what kinds of services residents would like to see) that there is a link between grievances and participation in RA meetings. This should be further explored in future research.

they have a potential impetus for involvement in the RAs in order to reclaim a better standard of living. I find evidence for this from my quantitative data. Recall that there is an association between tenure and participation, and those living in public housing for 16 or more years have the highest participation rate. This particular finding supports the attachment to place theory, since residents who live in public housing for a very long period of time consider their apartments to be permanent homes, rather than a temporary step in the process of getting out of poverty. They are more likely to be committed to public housing, and thus more prone to participate, due to valuable experiences and memories of the past. At the same time, there is not a linear correlation between participation and length of tenure. Residents who have just started to establish themselves (living in public housing for 3-5 year) have a relatively high level of participation, while those who have lived in public housing for 11-15 years displayed a relatively low rate. I cannot make any conclusive statements about these results, but one explanation that is supported by the literature on attachment to place is that residents who have lived in public housing for 3-5 years are new and optimistic, and are motivated to participate in order to become closer to the community and change the problem areas that they start to recognize. Those who continue to participate are likely to be influenced by the older, more dedicated residents (Small 2002, Feldman and Stall 2004). It is plausible that residents who have lived in public housing for 6-15 years are disillusioned with the resident participation system, since they entered public housing during times when there were intense battles over the structure and nature of resident participation (the 1990's conflict with CCOP and associated problems in the early 2000's). This could

influence them to have a negative framing of their housing and/or of RAs, which is why they would potentially not get involved. Hence, the residents' responses, in conjunction with my survey data, lead me to believe that this is a significant factor in motivating them to participate.

Social Ties

While I also had no direct measurement of social ties, I propose that demographics--by race, age, and gender--indirectly create a strong association between social cohorts and participation. Given that Black, elderly women constitute the highest percentages of public housing residents and are also the most likely to participate in their RAs, it is highly plausible that they involve each other in RA meetings. This is not to say that all residents who identify otherwise are socially isolated, but that the presence of social ties increases the residents' likelihood to get involved. Word of mouth between these cohorts can act as a key motivating factor for participation, and I witnessed this process with Community Voices Heard public housing meetings. Although the outreach team contacted public housing residents though several different approaches, some first time participants expressed that a friend or neighbor told them about the organization or asked them to come, rather than that they had been recruited by the organization. Their trust in their friend had imbued them with confidence to start participating in the organization too.

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⁴² Conway and Hachen found that those with an attachment to place are more likely to socialize with other residents and form social ties (Conway and Hachen 2005). I was unable to determine this with my data, but it is worth considering.

Related to social ties is the residents' sense of feeling that they are connected to others. When I asked one man why it is that he bothers to go to the meetings he replied,

because I want to give equal parts to everyone. [I want] no greed. If we share, and \underline{help}^{43} each other, then we can make it better.

Like Mr. Gardner, this man situates himself within the community, which translates into feelings of reciprocity and fuels a desire for change. By participating, they hope to make possible their vision for a more just future. In this sense, their respect for others (which is an element of social ties) motivates them to get involved. These ties do not have to be "strong" or rooted in long-term relationships, but are simply enough so that participants are driven to join their RAs by feeling connected to the greater web of social relations.

To summarize: I find that Social Disorganization theory, Putnam's theory on civic engagement, and theories on effects of individual SES all do not comprehensively account for conditions that enable participation, nor do they fully explain issues of non-participation. This leads me to believe that the causes are more experiential and relational. Due to the fact that I did not create the survey, I was limited in my ability to measure these causes. However, I believe that an attachment to place and social ties are important. The residents' framing of their homes and their relations with other residents are better determinants of their participation than their ability to draw upon SES-based resources (that are either ascribed or achieved). Still, why is it that three-quarters of residents who are aware of their RAs do not

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⁴³ Underline note connotes original emphasis.

participate, given that it has the potential to be an empowering mechanism that enhances the quality of the community?

The Barriers

There are some people who, no matter what, would never attend their RA.

This is true for all types of participation and not just with public housing residents.

However, this is not a sufficient explanation for why less than one-fourth of residents participate. So what is happening? I argue that the key underlying mechanism is the NYCHA resident participation system itself, which is structurally weak and ineffective, and sets up bulwarks to residents for having their voices adequately heard. In essence, this participation system discourages residents from participating.

Given that only two-thirds of the developments currently have active RAs, one-third of public housing residents are denied fair and adequate access to participation from the beginning. But even the structure of RAs seriously limits or dissuades residents from participating. Conway and Hachen suggest that "the existence of a tenant association, the extent of its presence, and its accessibility within a housing development may impact participation" (2005: 37). They absolutely understate the importance of these factors. Even for those who are lucky enough to have a RA, there is a dearth of readily available information and technical training. Language barriers also negatively impact resident participation. Furthermore, many residents report that meetings are inefficient and produce tensions and feelings of distrust. I argue that this is indirectly caused by the larger structural inefficiencies of the system. The structure does not support itself.

Lack of readily available information and technical training

Public housing residents are often stigmatized as being apathetic welfare cases who do not invest in their own housing. Sometimes this image is even held by public housing residents themselves. When I asked one man why he thinks others do not participate he told me that "ignorance and laziness is what stops them." Yet survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated in an open-ended question that they do not participate because they do not have enough information.

As I reported earlier, 57.0% of residents know that their development has an RA. This response would contradict my initial belief that that the majority of NYCHA public housing residents do not know about their RAs. Yet when these residents were further questioned, they were glaringly unknowledgeable about the basic composition of a RA and its powers.⁴⁴

Table 4-11: Frequencies for Knowledge about RA

Measurements of RA Knowledge	Yes (%)
Do you know what powers it has?	18.3
Do you know who the officers are	31.3
Do you know when the RA meets?	42.1
Do you know when the elections are held?	24.8

N = 450

Residents are highly uninformed about RA powers and when the elections for RA positions are held, 45 as well as not knowing who these officers are, and when RAs

⁴⁴ Resource effects also do not seem to account for an awareness of RAs. There was no association between the presence of children (chi-square = .713, p-value = .700) or public assistance status (chi-square = 1.139, p-value = .286). Although there were associations with participation and education (chi-square = 17.101, p-value = .004) and employment (chi-square = 12.320, p-value = .006), these variables did not follow any expected trends. Those who attend vocational school or had some college education were actually more aware of RAs than college graduates, and residents working full time were the most aware, whereas part-time workers were the least aware.

⁴⁵ The RA elections determine which residents will make up the executive board of the RA. Elections are supposed to be at least once every three years, although I've heard from residents that often it has taken up to five years to have an election.

meet.⁴⁶ And the divide in information is even more staggering when broken down by participants and non-participants.

Table 4-12: Frequencies of RA Knowledge based on Participation Status

	RA	Non-
	Participants	Participants
	(%)	(%)
Do you know what	45.1	10.1
powers it has?		
Do you know who the	68.9	20.2
officers are?		
Do you know when the	78.6	31.2
RA meets? ⁴⁷		
Do you know when the	52.9	16.2
elections are held?		

 $N=450^{48}$

There are two important points to draw from this table. Firstly, those who participate in RA meetings are far more informed about RAs than those who do not participate. It is not possible to determine whether this is a cause or effect relationship, but it is likely that the act of participating increases residents' knowledge, since they are able to share information with each other. At the same time, less than half of the participants know what the RA powers are, and it is implausible that the level of individual ignorance in the public housing developments could be this high. Hence, while a lack of knowledge about RAs acts as a major

⁴⁶ Feldman and Stall similarly found that public housing residents had unsatisfactory knowledge of "whom to contact when they have a management problem" and of "the RMC's role in the community" (2004: 83).

⁴⁷ Because the frequency of participation was never defined in this survey, it is also understandable that a certain percentage of participants do not know who the officers are or when there are meetings, either because they participate too infrequently to get a sense of this, or they participated in the past, but no longer do so.

⁴⁸ Percentages are adjusted to reflect numbers responding to each question.

barrier to participation, it even affects the participants' ability to participate, since they do not entirely understand the participation process itself.

The lack of knowledge is critically tied to the problem of insufficient information and resources provided for residents to learn about and participate in the RA. The only awareness-raising promotion for RA meetings or elections is accomplished through the posting of one flyer by the mailboxes in the lobby (if that even occurs). As one respondent informed me,

yeah, they put up flyers. But it gets ripped down within about two hours. So no one knows.

Another said,

they should put a flyer in every mailbox. When it comes to things like paying rent, NYCHA [upper management] always makes sure it sends us each a flyer. Why can't they do the same for RA meetings?

Ms. Lincoln, who is a member of CVH and who has been an activist for her community for several years, expressed that just using fliers is an insufficient tactic for informing people:

People [residents] don't really understand there might be programs or situations where they can voice their concern – so there's a lot of ignorance...What people [RA board members] do in my building – I don't know about other buildings – is fliers. Fliers don't always work. I think [that it should be] people presence. Maybe if people in the TA⁴⁹ actually do what they supposed to do, school [inform] people, [it would work]. And I think the most important way to get info out is by word of mouth. Maybe fliers do help, maybe phone calls would help, maybe if TA people get the word out...

The residents raise two important points: access to information and the effectiveness of how it is disseminated. Obviously residents will not attend RA

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⁴⁹ The TA is equivalent to RA.

meetings if they do not even know about them. Yet even if residents do happen to see fliers, this is not always a successful method for getting people to attend RA meetings. Most residents do not understand what RAs are about or how RAs potentially can be of use for bringing positive changes to the development. They need more information than what one flyer can outline. ⁵⁰

NYCHA's mismanagement of TPA funds--which (among many other activities) are supposed to be directly used for awareness raising promotion--has exacerbated these problems. Only 29.4% of participants are even aware that NYCHA is supposed to get this funding, a direct sign that the NYCHA board is not amply informing the residents about their rights to such funds. Although NYCHA blames the state and federal governments for a lack of funding for public housing, this type of mismanagement reflects that the housing authority does not support the resident participation system enough to allow for outreach or the promotion of activities that would get residents involved.

Moreover, the majority of public housing residents do not think they get enough information about the very policies that guide their lives. Only 42.3% of residents who are aware of their developments' RAs, or roughly one-fourth of all public housing residents, believe that their RA provides information about NYCHA policies. When this figure is broken down by participants and non-participants, 69.6% of *participants* agree that this is true. That is, while participation does correlate with a much higher faith in the structural system, nearly one-third of participants still are not convinced that RA board members keep them adequately informed. Furthermore,

⁵⁰ Williams and Kornblum also came to this conclusion in the 1990's.

both participants and non-participants perceive themselves to be much more informed than they actually are.

Table 4-13: Information on NYCHA Policies and the State of NYCHA

NYCHA Policies and the State of	RA Participants	Non-Participants
NYCHA	informed (%)	informed (%)
Do you know that NYCHA receives	29.4	16.0
federal money for resident participation?		
Have you ever heard of NYCHA's Annual	34.3	20.4
Plan?		
Do you know that NYCHA gives \$73	18.4	7.1
million to the NYPD?		
Do you know that NYCHA is in a \$195	38.9	19.9
million deficit?		

 $N=450^{51}$

Residents are largely unaware of the federal policies that mandate the participation system, as well as the state of NYCHA.⁵² This echoes the faults of the resident participation system in the Model Cities of the 1960's, in which Arnstein discovered that "residents who were participating in as many as three to five meetings per week were unaware of their minimum rights, responsibilities, and options available to them under the program... [and] most of the technical assistance provided by CDAs and city agencies was of third-rate quality, paternalistic, and condescending" (1969: 221).

Technical training is also crucial for developing the know-how in participants.

Currently, RAs have a "sink or swim" approach to participation; in other words, there is no technical training whatsoever. The management process has changed over the

⁵¹ Percentages are adjusted to reflect numbers responding to each question.

⁵² While the state of NYCHA is not the same as the policies set by the authority, if residents were truly involved in public housing through their RAs, they should know (for example) that NYCHA pays \$73 million to the NYPD each year or is in a \$195 million deficit.

past forty years, but the difficulties for resident access to information and involvement are just as great. It can not be overstated that a dearth of these resources results in a structurally ineffective system for residents to voice their concerns and produce positive change.

Language Barrier

The language barrier poses another crucial hurdle for participation, most notably for Spanish-only speakers since Latinos make up 43.9% of the resident population and 19.4% of Latinos (or 8.8% of the total resident population) are Spanish-only speakers. Only 27.0% of this population knew if their development had a RA, compared to a 57.0% rate for all residents and 45.5% response rate for Latinos. Furthermore, only 1.8% of the Spanish-only speakers reported that they participate in their RA.

As Leung has proposed, "immigrant communities face language and cultural isolation from the larger society. This isolation often translates into a lack of understanding and awareness of how mainstream institutions work" (2005: 9). The problem of the language barrier is a problem of cultural sensitivity and access to information. The majority of fliers are only in English and there are no interpreters at the meetings. With previous resident participation funds being withheld and the budget as tight as it is, the residents will be unlikely to afford paid interpreters any time soon. As a result of the language barrier, these populations are left further uninformed and excluded.

"I Don't Go 'Cause They Fight": Tensions and Lack of Trust Between Residents

To reiterate, the vast majority of residents who say they do not participate cite a lack of information as the key problem. But there were some residents who expressed that the RA meetings are filled with tension, distrust, and an inability of people to collectively come up with productive solutions, all of which dissuades them from participating. They feel that there is a fractioning of groups and a lack of cohesiveness. In response to an open-ended question asking residents why they do not participate, one man said "it's too cliquey and it doesn't do anything." Others responded that "last time I went people argued," "all they do is gossip: nothing else," and "it's not organized [and there are] too many schisms." This disunity can lead to an inconsistency in member turn-out. As one woman expressed to me, "the president does good, but everyone else just comes and goes."

However, some residents reported that their RA board members are poor leaders and that voting for the RA elections will not change anything. As Ms. Lincoln explained,

they [residents] blame section 8 and welfare, and sometimes there's racism, you know about Latinos moving in, but they're ignorant about the real issues of [public] housing and the state it's in, so they blame each other. So it turns out dysfunctional meetings and I feel they don't get anything done. They might deal with individual problems, but they don't deal with the problems on the whole. So there's no <u>substance</u> – and I always come out feeling very dissatisfied and angry because of their ignorance. And there might be some TA people [officers] who care, but they really fix individual problems. I don't think they represent our interests.

On the surface, it appears that the residents cannot get their act together because of petty cliquishness and bickering. They are tired of hearing others complain about their individual problems with the development, and even if there is a collective

acknowledgement of these problems, they do not see any substantial results from RA meetings. Only half of the residents have faith that RAs have the power to make changes, and the majority of residents do not believe that it represents their interests or the interests of their development.

Table 4-14: Feelings about the RA

Feelings	Those	RA	Non-
	aware of	Participants	Participants
	RA (%)	(%)	(%)
Believe it represents their interests	38.4	68.0	29.3
Believe it represents the interests of	40.0	65.7	32.1
their development			
Believe it has the power to make	50.8	67.7	45.8
change			

 $N=450^{53}$

Participants, however, exhibit a much more positive outlook than non-participants that their RAs are successful. This would suggest that RA meetings are somewhat productive. Still, roughly one-third of even this population is frustrated and unsatisfied. And just as word of mouth is an important mechanism to get residents to participate, hearsay can also discourage non-participants from participating.

To some extent, these tensions result from a conflict of personalities. Within public housing there are a variety of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

Residents experience a mix of bonding and bridging social capital, and while the heterogeneity of bridging social networks is more likely to produce positive external effects (Putnam and Goss 2002), it can also be difficult to find common ground. As Ms. Lincoln has alluded to, sometimes racial tensions between Blacks and Latinos

⁵³ Percentages are adjusted to reflect numbers responding to each question.

erupt during meetings. I cannot conclusively determine if this is a consistent or significant problem in RA meetings, but it appears that increased frustration among residents about the quality of their lives in public housing can lead to displaced blame.

At the same time, conflict and tensions within RA meetings are nothing new, which suggests that this not just a matter of individual personalities clashing, but a long history of structural ineffectiveness. In Farmer's case-study of the largest public housing development in Brooklyn in the mid 1990's, she found that the RA

was ineffectual and nonfunctional. Most of the "leaders" were the "usual suspects," tied to the local political machine. The environment was hostile to new ways of doing things, and there was almost no participation at community meetings. There had not been a democratic election for the TA in several years and the group that ran the TA was so corrupt that the local public housing administration took the unusual step of deposing them (2005: 7).

Farmer's case is a rare instance of when NYCHA interacted and took action with a RA. And the manner by which they chose to deal with the problem--by removing residents from the participation system rather than help bring about collaboration--reflects their inability to work with the participants.

It would be remiss to look at the problems of the RAs without understanding their structural context. This blame game is a result of what I call *structural dysfunction*, and I define it as the breakdown of a social structure due to the way it is formed, regulated, and/or managed by the actors involved. Since NYCHA almost exclusively controls the structure and nature of the participation system, they are mainly the responsible party for the structural dysfunction. Residents are confused about what to do in the meetings and how they can produce effective change because

they are largely uninformed about their powers and responsibilities. This fuels their anger, in addition to any grievances they have and their dire need for funding. The mounting tensions that surge through the meetings produce increased levels of distrust and the belief that participating won't do anything. And to some degree they are right. They shout past each other when what they really want is for their voices to be heard by NYCHA. But in a system where residents are not informed about their RAs and are not provided with resources and more importantly, technical training that instructs them about the proper procedures to change problems and enhance the community, the strength, effectiveness, and usefulness of RA meetings greatly depreciates. The negative attitudes and unconstructive meetings are reflective of a structurally inefficient and weak resident participation system.

The Relationship between the RAs and CCOP/RAB

This structural dysfunction does not just exist within RAs but, in fact, grows increasingly more complicated with CCOP and RAB. There is an even higher lack of understanding of and faith by the residents in these two levels of participation than with the RAs. Only 15.9% of all of the residents surveyed⁵⁴ had ever *heard* of CCOP and even fewer, 13.2%, have heard of RAB. Moreover, their knowledge about how they are represented and what powers these groups have are extremely low.

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⁵⁴ I now return to the total resident population, N=812, and not just the 57.0% of residents who are aware if their development has an RA, since it is a possibility that those who unaware of their developments' RAs know about CCOP or RAB.

Table 4-15: Knowledge and Feelings about CCOP for Residents who are Aware that it Exists

Questions Determining Knowledge	
Do you know who represents you?	16.7
Do you know how the reps are chosen?	19.8
Do you now what powers it has?	16.7
Do you feel it represents your interests as a public housing resident?	19.5

N=129

Table 4-16: Knowledge and Feelings about RAB for Residents who are Aware that it Exists

Questions Determining Knowledge	
Do you know who represents you?	12.6
Do you know how the reps are chosen?	17.6
Do you now what powers it has?	
Do you feel it represents your interests as a public housing resident?	

N=107

Clearly, the residents in NYCHA public housing are disconnected from the upper levels that are supposed to represent them. But as with RAs, this should not be seen as just a problem of personal ignorance. As I will shortly explore, this too is linked to a lack of information and proper resources.

At the same time, there is a positive association between participation in an RA and an increased awareness of RAB and CCOP, which suggests that those who participate do have some form of contact with the other two levels. Indeed, 38.1% of participants have heard of CCOP and 43.8% have heard of RAB. However, their knowledge of and faith in the effectiveness of CCOP and RAB, albeit higher than the general resident population, are also low.

Table 4-17: Knowledge and Feelings about CCOP for Participants who are Aware that it Exists

Questions Determining Knowledge	
Do you know who represents you?	30.8
Do you know how the reps are chosen?	30.0
Do you now what powers it has?	30.8
Do you feel it represents your interests as a public housing resident?	

N = 41

Table 4-18: Knowledge and Feelings about RAB for Participants who are Aware that it Exists

Questions Determining Knowledge	
Do you know who represents you?	20.0
Do you know how the reps are chosen?	24.4
Do you now what powers it has?	18.2
Do you feel it represents your interests as a public housing resident?	26.7

N = 47

Remember that CCOP is supposed to inform RA members about their meetings with the NYCHA board, as well as receive input from RA members to bring to NYCHA. But only about *one-third* of RA members know who CCOP members are, and roughly one-third of those people (or one-ninth of RA participants) think that CCOP represents their interests. Since the nine CCOP members are RA presidents themselves, it is likely that the few participants who are informed either directly know CCOP members or have them as their RA presidents. Indeed, as Bach and Goldiner have reported,

The nine district chairs that make up CCOP rely on oral communication at monthly district meetings. As a result, what little resident association presidents know depends on what the Chair chooses to tell them, or finds important, within the confines of a monthly meeting. CCOP has not yet found an effective way to communicate with most residents, no less the resident association presidents that are its base. In the 21st century, CCOP is still communicating with smoke signals (2007: 3).

These findings reiterate the charges that RA members held against CCOP in the 1990's; namely that CCOP neither effectively communicates with the residents about the policies that impact their lives, nor represents them in dealing with NYCHA. At the same time, even fewer participants know who RAB members are, how the members are chosen, what powers they have, or feel that they represent their interests. Moreover, only 34.3% of participants have ever heard of the Annual Plan, and only 39.6% of those residents (or roughly 13.6% of all participants) know how they can give input to the document. As expected, the percentages are even lower for non-participants⁵⁵: 20.4% have heard of the Annual Plan, and 30.9% of those know how to give input (roughly 6.3% of all non-participants). This indicates there is also disconnect between RAs and RAB members, which I contend is largely a function of lack of adequate resources to inform residents, as well as funding for sufficient training of and outreach by RAB members. Admittedly, there only two limited ways that non-RAB members could give input into the plan: either indirectly through meetings with RAB, or at the annual hearing after the document is released. It makes sense that only a small number of residents know how they can contribute. However, if they are allowed to contribute and indeed, this is considered the appropriate avenue for residents to have a voice and take power in the decisions that rule their lives, it is very problematic that virtually no residents know about it.

With almost no collaboration between RAs and CCOP or RAB, there is insufficient opportunity for RAs to interact with NYCHA. RA participants are left in the dark with feelings of confusion and helplessness, which partially produces and exacerbates the tensions in their meetings. This is not to say that the residents are

⁵⁵ Non-participants are defined here as residents who are aware of their RA, but do not participate.

incapable victims, but they are reduced to the level of reacting to the other levels of the resident participation system, rather than being active players.

Such concerns were best highlighted in resident responses to the 2005 NYCHA Annual Plan (which were then followed by official NYCHA statements)⁵⁶:

Comment: Citywide Council of Presidents (CCOP) minutes should be distributed to all residents.

Response: CCOP is not mandated to do distribution of minutes to all residents.

Comment: CCOP meetings should be open to TA presidents and residents as observers.

Response: CCOP is not mandated to open their meetings to the public.

Comment: CCOP contact information should be provided to residents to address questions or concerns.

Response: All CCOP members provide contact information to their individual districts. (2004: 145)

Equally pressing concerns were put forth by the residents about both CCOP and RAB in the following year's comments on the 2006 Annual Plan:

Comment: NYCHA needs to change the CCOP structure. This group is too small to make decisions on behalf of all public housing residents, and lacks accountability.

Response: Any changes to the current structure of the CCOP will need to be driven through the electoral process. This structure is supported by the current CCOP MOU and by-laws. Residents should consult with their representatives to propose changes to the structure.

Comment: The CCOP should regularly distribute minutes to all residents; open CCOP meetings to TA Presidents and observers; secure space in the NYCHA Journal to report on issues; provide CCOP contact information to residents; and publicize the RAB process.

Response: The CCOP has a mechanism for distributing minutes at their citywide and district meetings. NYCHA encourages the CCOP to

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⁵⁶ After the public hearing of the Annual Plan, residents are allowed to submit comments and concerns, to which NYCHA will respond and publish in the final Annual Plan submitted to HUD. As I just demonstrated, very few residents know about this, and I suspect that those residents who do take advantage of this opportunity are either RA board members, or public housing residents that are active in community organizing groups, like CVH. Also of note, NYCHA can choose to change the plan according to the residents' concerns, but is not mandated to do so. And in reality, NYCHA never does.

distribute information. Tenant Associations having difficulty should reach out to their District Chairs.

Comment: NYCHA should have a contract with TA presidents who are RAB members to make sure they are carrying out their functions.

Response: RAB participation rates for 2005 were in excess of 90%. Participation in the RAB process is voluntary. At the beginning of each planning process, the roles and responsibilities of each RAB member are outlined.

Comment: Can non-RAB members attend the RAB meetings? Response: Based on the current structure of the RAB process, non RAB members cannot attend scheduled meetings. Request for participation in the meetings, should be forwarded to the Citywide Council of Presidents. (2005: 155)

There is supposed to be structural cohesion between residents, their RAs, CCOP, and RAB. In reality, their relationships are marked by inaccessibility and secrecy. And these problems are consistent from year to year. At first this appears to be the fault of CCOP members and, to some extent, RAB. They do not seem to fulfill their responsibilities, and if they are not mandated to provide residents with information, they do not follow through with action. Another problem seems to be the overbearing role of CCOP within RAB. As Feldman has reported, "CCOP leaders still dominate the RAB. In fact, they chair every single committee" (2005). She suggests that tensions between CCOP and RAB ultimately prevent the residents from taking a unified stance against NYCHA. But this could also be a mechanism of the NYCHA board in order to maintain power. Indeed, the problems with CCOP and RAB must be contextualized within the greater structural realities of the NYCHA resident participation system, where there is, at best, negligence and at worst, deliberate exclusion. While CCOP and RAB members are not wholly passive victims caught in a barrage of structural injustices, the problems of miscommunication and resulting tensions between RAs, CCOP, and RAB are by no means just an effect of

their individual choices. NYCHA plays the major role in the creation of this structural dysfunction. However, their responses in the Annual Plan reflect the way in which they can manipulate situations to create the illusion that residents have greater agency than they actually do.

NYCHA shows little to no intent of bringing about successful collaboration between the three levels of participation. Their responses in the Annual Plans illustrate a flippant attitude toward residents at all levels and their blind eye to the nature of these relationships. When the residents demanded in the 2006 Annual Plan comments that "NYCHA needs to change the CCOP structure" because it does not represent all of the interests of the developments, NYCHA responded that the only way this could be solved is through the electoral process. But recall that only 19.8% of those who have heard of CCOP know how the members are chosen. That is roughly 3% of the resident population, and it is implausible that the other 97% are uninformed simply due to personal ignorance. If the residents do not know when CCOP elections are, they cannot change the CCOP structure. Similarly, the board members state that struggling RAs should reach out to the District chairs, even though it is the chairpersons' responsibility to reach out to RAs. This supports a fixed, "things-as-they-are" system. The residents clearly express to NYCHA how they feel, but the board members do not actively attempt to change anything. This is particularly clear when the residents desire a resident suggestion program in the 2005 Annual Plan:

Comment: NYCHA should establish a resident suggestion program. Response: NYCHA welcomes suggestions for consideration. As a means of encouraging greater participation by residents in Resident Association activities and meeting, perhaps this suggestion program could be

developed by The Council of Presidents or the RAB and suggestions presented formally to NYCHA for consideration by the appropriate offices. (2004: 138)

NYCHA audaciously proposes that the program be run by CCOP or RAB, despite the fact that the residents simultaneously express that these groups are ineffective for expressing residents' concerns. The housing authority ignores the structural problems of the resident participation system, and in keeping with business as usual, the residents remain silenced.

NYCHA board members are also insensitive to the mobility problems and limited resources that most public housing residents face. In the 2006 Annual Plan, residents suggested that

Comment: The NYCHA Board Meeting Calendars should be sent to all TA Presidents so they can be informed about NYCHA initiatives. Response: NYCHA's Board Meeting Calendars are made available to the public on the Friday before the following Wednesday's Board Meeting, and can be picked up at the Office of the Secretary (2005: 155).

This curt suggestion demonstrates the further barriers that NYCHA imposes for granting resident access of information. It is unacceptable that the residents--the majority of whom, by virtue of where they live, have unequal access to transportation (or the resources to afford it)--should travel all the way to this downtown office just to be informed about the board meetings, when this simple piece of information could easily be made available throughout the developments. In sum, the official statements from NYCHA illustrate that the board has no real interest in allowing the RA members to be more involved, nor is it willing to change the way in which the different levels function in order to accommodate the residents.

The Relationship between NYCHA and CCOP/RAB

In the last section I demonstrated how the residents of NYCHA public housing are highly unaware of and unknowledgeable about CCOP and RAB, and even those who are aware feel that they are not being represented or consulted. These conflicts act as hurdles for the residents to be unified when approaching their management. At the same time, NYCHA ignores that the problems go on and has no desire in changing how things are. But fixing the tensions requires more than just the participants collaborating more (although this is definitely needed). CCOP and RAB members are constantly in a power struggle with NYCHA, and believe that NYCHA belittles and silences them.

Given that the terms of the resident participation system are primarily determined by the authority itself, CCOP and RAB are confined in a paternalistic relationship. They are not provided the right to share power with NYCHA, but instead are fed occasional responsibilities as if these were treats. Indeed, "they receive their information and advice from NYCHA. Although they represent over 180,000 public housing families and over 80,000 Section 8 families, they have no budget ⁵⁷ and no independent staff" (Bach and Goldiner 2007: 3). Not surprisingly, one barrier to their participation is the lack of funding and technical support. But CCOP and RAB members are also kept uninformed about policies, and are consistently excluded from decisions that they should be included in. They are confused and infuriated, and have expressed these feelings time and time again in RAB meetings.

 $^{^{57}}$ As of 2005, CCOP members could budget the TPA funds by law, but it is questionable how much this actually happens.

The 2005 and 2006 RAB meetings occurred at a time when community centers continued to close or be outsourced to private firms, the NYCHA budget was forever tightening, and residents had still not seen their annual \$3.8 million TPA funds since 2001. At a meeting in January of 2005, one RAB member was distraught over the fact that NYCHA was selling community centers to private firms and that RAB was excluded from the process. He pleaded to the NYCHA board members,

if they [the private firms] have these programs that alienate the people in the developments, then they [residents] won't come. What do you want to do then? So all I am asking is let us be part of the process. It seems you have done it already, but let us be part of the process now... Stop all these secret meetings and keeping us out because I start thinking really crazy things and you don't understand why. But if you keep us out of the loop, that's why I do what I do (1/26/05: 18).

One woman similarly complained,

We are supposed to have 51% of residents participate in this community center. That is not happening... This lease renewal, we asked about that. We wanted to participate in that process... This makes no sense. After school programs, none. What are you [NYCHA board members] doing? Why are they [non-PH citizens] there?... Why? I have a new slogan for NYCHA. It's no, you can't honestly answer, because when we asked questions, we don't get honest answers. We appreciate honest answers as residents (1/26/05: 50-2).

No inclusion, no oversight, no accountability: these are the same charges that RAs have pressed against CCOP and RAB, and yet it is what RAB members press against NYCHA. The residents' concerns about the community centers serve as a perfect example of how NYCHA denies them a voice in matters that are extremely pertinent to the community's well-being. It is evident that the residents feel starved for these services, but the centers are non-functional or alienating. This is especially problematic when community activities can act as a buffer against youth crime. And if the privatization of the centers results in programs that are no longer geared toward

the public housing residents, their social ties within the developments diminish. These feelings were most dramatically expressed by a RAB member in a meeting in March of 2005. In anger she proclaimed,

I'm telling you this now, don't bring any of your city-wide programs into our developments unless we ask you. You know what we're dealing with? The Bloods, the Crypts, and now a new echelon of kids. ⁵⁸ Our focus will be...that we no longer be used and let our community centers go to outsiders... So all I'm saying, Hugh [the general manager of community operations], before you see these outside agencies, sit down with my leadership. I can only speak for my leadership. And ask us what we can do to help ourselves... What y'all did was – and put it on record... Y'all took the centers away from the leadership (3/3/05: 80-3).

Her words ring with intensity as she proudly declares a reclamation of public housing by the residents. Unfortunately, her dream was not realized. As the general manager was recorded saying in August 2006, "NYCHA's 'core real estate mission' [of selling off community centers in order to get money] will have to take priority over community programs in the coming years" (Bloom 2008: 262).

Unfortunately, NYCHA's exclusion of CCOP and RAB members occurs in multiple areas of their lives. In a RAB meeting in November of 2006 that included the NYPD, a RAB member expressed feelings of confusion and exclusion:

RAB member: I need to know, because I sit here on this board and I have nine Council of Presidents that should be representing me as a RAB board member... I need to know how many meetings this year did the New York City Housing Authority have with the New York City Police Department and the City-wide Council of Presidents and the city-wide chair for me as a RAB member and a representative from my development?

General Manager: I'll have to go back and look. I can't ---

Second RAB member: Zero.

GM: I'm not sure what the point is ---

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⁵⁸ These are references to the most notorious gangs in the United States.

RAB Member: So I'm asking you to send me something in writing to answer that because like I said, I read a document that was sent to me from the chairmen of this Authority and an issue that was in there was final for 2007. And in reading that document, which was important to me and my residents for Classon Point [housing development], I see nothing in there that there was any type of meetings with NYCHA and the NYPD and the CCOP, and I have some concerns about that.

GM: Okay.

RAB member: Because I only sit down here. The CCOP and city-wide leader is supposed to be meeting with each and every last one of you and any division that has something to do with this Authority and the quality of life of all residents in all of your 346 developments. Okay?

CCOP/RAB member: Supposed to! As one chair, you hit it on the tail (11/14/06: 67-9).

In this exchange, the RAB member expresses that she does not believe that she is informed by CCOP about issues of safety, and that she is unable to voice her own concerns. But the CCOP member explains that CCOP is just as excluded from meetings between NYCHA and the NYPD as the rest of RAB. The general manager, who apparently forgets that he never had any meetings with NYPD and CCOP together, still remains apathetic to the resident's needs. He never follows through by suggesting that they all have a meeting. CCOP and RAB members must go on a wild goose chase in order to get information, and this leaves them ragged.

Some CCOP and RAB members are more hopeful that their actions will bear weight, and they certainly do not remain silent on what is going on in their developments. Although my survey data found that RA participants are moderately satisfied to dissatisfied by their living conditions, these participants display extreme dissatisfaction with public housing conditions and how NYCHA limits them from

collaborating to fix the problems. As the previous chairperson of CCOP, asserted in a meeting in January of 2005,

They [NYCHA] continue to play us. And understand that we have been played out. Time has come that we have to stand up for ourselves, otherwise, this brick and mortar is going to fall down around us while they are planning...And we will be down there with the buildings falling down around us, toilets don't work, refrigerators that are broken down and outdated. Remember, there was a time we had them bringing stuff so we could review the stuff... We have been talking about that for over a year now. But we need to do that and we can put a stop to some of this stuff, this inferior stuff that they are bringing and putting into these apartments (2/3/05: 70-1).

No one can speak of the conditions of public housing better than the residents themselves. The CCOP chairperson is infuriated, and it is obvious that she is fed up with the way that NYCHA has treated the residents and prevented them from being involved in their own housing. What is even more disturbing is that as recently as the early 1990s, Williams and Kornblum found that the only way that RAs had substantial power in their development was in their decisions over what amenities went into the building (1994). Indeed, as a RA president expressed in their case study,

As president I deal with everything – from maintenance to security problems, the whole thing. We try to make management more accessible to us. But we don't have that much power... What we do have is power to choose. For example, tenants are going to get new cabinets and sinks. The tenant association will be involved. We will go and look at them and approve some (1994: 203).

Gone are the days when RAs had the power of deciding what goes into the developments! Public housing may never be a palace, but these residents deserve decency, respect, and acceptable living conditions. NYCHA's approach toward the resident participation system is one of secrecy and exclusion. If CCOP and RAB members have the legal right to be heard and to advise, but "strenuously voicing their

opinions" means that their words go in one ear of the NYCHA board members and out the other, the meetings are rendered useless.

These problems are so blatant that even outside officials are aware of them. In this section I used past Annual Plans as a way of illustrating the multiple concerns of residents, the structural dysfunction between all levels of the resident participation system, and how NYCHA remains indifferent and avoids being accountable. But the greater problem with the Annual Plan is that RAB members are denied collaboration, a violation of federal law. This has not gone unnoticed by local officials, and NYCHA has received flack. In testimony before NYCHA, New York City Comptroller William C. Thompson said,

One of the primary purposes of the Draft Plan is to provide residents, elected officials and the public with an overview of how NYCHA proposes to meet the needs of its current and future residents and what policy and operational changes it plans to make over the coming year... NYCHA's strict reliance on the federal template fails to provide an accessible picture of NYCHA's plans and procedures. The lack of supporting information and detail concerning the programmatic changes and current operations described in the Draft Plan limit the ability of the average NYCHA resident to contribute to the development of NYCHA's major initiatives and objectives for the coming year... In addition to the need to expand the basic information included in the Draft Plan, NYCHA's response to the RAB's comments on the Draft Plan should be much more detailed...NYCHA's response to these recommendations was limited to cursory statements that its practices were being explored and evaluated. The RAB certainly deserves a more substantive initial response or, where appropriate, a commitment from NYCHA that a complete response will be forthcoming within a reasonable time frame (2003).

Similarly, in his 2007 testimony on the 2008 Annual Plan, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer insisted that,

NYCHA must listen to and work collaboratively with its residents. NYCHA's failure to work effectively with the Citywide Council of Presidents and the Resident Advisory Board and to not take their views into consideration when drafting agency plans violates the federal resident participation requirements. If NYCHA is unable to work within its own resident participation system, then it should consider creating an independent entity to strengthen the system. The hundreds of thousands of residents who live in public housing, who pay rent to NYCHA, should not have to learn of changes in their services and quality of housing through hearsay or at the last minute (2007).

There's an elephant in the room, and the comptroller and the Manhattan president are third-party bodies that have the power to say it. Unfortunately, these officials do not have the power to push NYCHA to make real change.

Admittedly, NYCHA is not purely composed of evil-doers who sit in dark towers, wondering how they can destroy the lives of the marginalized. This structural dysfunction is partially influenced by HUD. The most recent example is the streamlining of the 24 CFR 964 regulations. This is another act of deregulation through which the federal government eschews responsibility and throws it into the hands of the local housing authority. At the same time, HUD has no meaningful way to track NYCHA's failures, since it does not require that NYCHA disclose its plans for facilitating resident participation. Yes, the problems of the NYCHA resident participation system are almost exclusively a result of NYCHA's policies and the way in which it deals with the residents. But this structural dysfunction is enabled by a federal system that long ago refrained from taking accountability and continues to limit resident involvement.

A Process of Denial

In light of HUD's lack of oversight, the real concern is with NYCHA's role in this process. There is a process of denial by NYCHA on three fronts. Firstly, there is a physical denial of information and resources to the resident participation system on all levels. This crucially hinders the residents' abilities to understand the resident participation process and get involved. Secondly, there is a denial that tensions exist among residents at the three levels of the resident participation system, and that these are largely caused by the structurally inefficient system itself. And thirdly, there is a denial that the continual process of exclusion in the resident participation system reduces the residents' social capital, as well as exacerbates issues of alienation, dilapidation, crime, and insecurity in public housing. NYCHA has been given the task of creating a system that functions as an avenue for empowerment of residents and, in turn, improves their living satiation. Instead, it has created a system filled with dysfunction and neglect.

Conclusion: Structural Changes and Alternative Forms of Collaboration

For decades the United States federal government has incorporated resident involvement in local public housing as a mechanism to get residents active in their communities with the hopes that this would combat physical deterioration, alleviate cost burdens, and promote security. An historical process of trial and error has brought us to the currently preferred system of resident participation, where residents have a partnership with the PHA, but not direct managerial control. Yet as a result of a slew of federal policies that have increasingly devolved most powers to the local PHAs, the structure and functioning of the resident participation systems are riddled with vagueness. This problematically prevents any sense of uniformity or consistency among PHAs across the country in their decisions to cede power to the residents. Although NYCHA is considered by HUD to be a top-ranking authority, they rest comfortably as residents struggle to be heard through this system.

From a theoretical perspective, the benefits of resident involvement exceed just the aspects that the government and PHAs would expect. Social theorists have long praised participation in community organizations as being a key mechanism that both enhances social capital and promotes individual and community well-being. In addition to the gaining of material and social benefits, residents achieve a greater sense of satisfaction with their living situations, and are empowered both by the changes that they are able to create and the act of participation itself.

Still, there needs to be certain factors that cause residents to get involved. In Chapters Two and Four I evaluated Social Disorganization theory's argument that the

SES and resources of a neighborhood drive participation in community-based organizations. Through the "othering" of low-income members of society, many social theorists have supported that residents in poor neighborhoods are incapable of participation due to the general SES of the area and its limited access to material resources. From my direct experiences with public housing residents, I strongly came to believe that this theory is nothing more than an outdated explanation of resident non-participation in public housing. In fact, my quantitative data reveal that 24.4% of residents who know about their Resident Associations participate, a fraction that is much higher than non-public housing community associations (Olsen et al 1989, Cissner 2004). I also determined that the factors emphasized by theories on the SES and resources of individuals largely do not do not have an impact on the ability of residents to get involved. Indeed, the causes are much more relational and experiential. I found stronger associations with attachment to place, and indirectly with social ties, as suggested by the participation of specific demographic groups.

Similarly, I discounted Putnam's theory of civic engagement, which suggests that low-income, urban, and African-American citizens are all less likely to be civically engaged then their counterparts. While I do agree with Putnam that social distrust dissuades residents from taking part in the NYCHA resident participation system, this is just part of the major problem.

The main obstacles that prevent residents from getting involved in their RAs result from the *structural dysfunction* of the NYCHA resident participation system, and this structural dysfunction negatively affects each level of the resident participation system. The absence of cohesiveness and collaboration between the

residents is not due to their lifestyles or personality types, but the barrage of barriers that the participation structure has (de facto) set in place. It appears that residents must jump hurdles in order to access information and have real, meaningful participation. This is of great concern, given that public housing residents are already marginalized and stigmatized in our society, and that the resident participation system is one of the limited ways in which they can get involved in their community and have any sense of power over their developments.

New York City's public housing is unique due to its sheer size and scope, and the housing authority's commanding presence in the United States as supposedly being a successfully-run management system. If NYCHA board members are truly more in tune with the residents than other PHAs, our country seriously needs to reconfigure the resident participation system. Part of the dysfunction results from the way in which the federal government has approached resident participation in public housing. HUD leaves most of the discretion to the PHAs, and at least in the case of NYCHA, the powers are vaguely defined by the authority. As a result, residents are limited in their actions, since they are not entirely sure what they can and cannot do. I suspect that the same holds true throughout the country, and more research should be oriented toward analyzing the language and nature of local public housing authority policies. Even when residents are clearly entitled to have a voice or some form of power in the participation system, there are no proper checks to ensure that this actually happens. This, combined with a lack of information, resources, and secrecy, produces a system that is anything but an avenue for empowerment.

Clearly NYCHA's participation system must change and both NYCHA and the residents can work to combat its ineffectiveness. The first changes must begin with RAs, since they involve all residents. There absolutely has to be more access to information and technical training and sensitivity to the diversity of languages spoken by the residents, as well as an effective communication system between residents.

Without a doubt, information and technical training are critical resources for motivating residents to participate, and participate effectively. By analyzing the responses to an open-ended question from the survey, I found that most residents who do not participate cite a lack of information as the key problem. Currently, the resident participation system is riddled with red tape. If NYCHA stores a good deal of information downtown (where few public housing residents reside), it is not of much use. The housing authority might contend that most of their information is on the internet, but in my experience, only a select group of residents actually have a computer or e-mail account. Unless they have access to the internet at work, residents can only access free internet at the New York City public libraries, which is limited to one half-hour per day. NYCHA needs to disseminate information by mailing it to each resident's mailbox. The TPA funds should be used by RA presidents in order to put fliers about upcoming meetings in the mailboxes, and NYCHA should also take the time to mail residents the monthly newsletters that they print out. Still, as I expressed in the previous chapter, fliers are not always the most efficient way to get out information, especially if residents do not have an understanding of the system itself. There has to be more outreach.

The language barrier is an extension of the problem of access to information. The NYCHA participation system needs to be more sensitive to this fact so that all residents are endowed with the equal opportunity to be active in their community. The presence of translators at meetings would largely help residents overcome these obstacles. It is doubtful that the TPA Funds will be used for this purpose, but it would be an excellent use of the money.

The problem of information is not just a matter of access, but also an issue of secrecy. There is no reason that the CCOP minutes should be withheld, and the management needs to assume responsibility by providing RAs with these minutes. Similarly, secrecy dominates the interactions between NYCHA and CCOP and RAB members, and there needs to be greater checks and balances to stop this.

NYCHA should also support residents through technical training at RA meetings in order to develop skills in new members so that they have the knowledge about what RAs are actually allowed to do and understand the intricacies of the system. This heavily depends upon funding and to some extent, a presence of NYCHA members at meetings. 73.3% of residents who are aware of their RA and 88.5% of participants believe that NYCHA should have a presence at meetings. This could provide residents with adequate technical training, a direct way to voice their concerns, and a general exchange of information between both sides. NYCHA members could range anywhere from board members, to (more realistically) the general manager, the deputy general manger for community operations, each borough's director of community operations, and the director of resident support services.

There are numerous benefits to this type of collaboration. By working at the ground level, NYCHA members will be more in tune with how these meetings really function, and potentially realize how drastically residents need support. They can answer residents' questions, explain the roles of the three committees that RAs are supposedly allowed to form, as well as help develop leadership roles so that RAs are not dominated by cliques. It is important that several RA members are strong and active, as opposed to just one or two leaders, so that they can better guard themselves against the power of the authority (Monti 1989). At the same time, the presence of NYCHA members could have a humanizing effect. Residents will finally see that the authority is not some illusive entity working from a mighty tower downtown, but is run by people with faces. In turn, residents may gain more confidence in approaching these decision makers. It will take a while for residents to build up trust even if the NYCHA members are genuinely concerned with the residents' lives, but this collaboration will lay the foundation. And hopefully an exchange of information can be gained by both sides, with residents informing the authority about the problems they see, the services that they need, and informing the policies that management makes.

These are not outlandish expectations for NYCHA. In fact, many of the housing authority members that I referenced already attend RAB meetings. But RAB meetings are not held in the developments, and as I have illustrated through my explanation of the structural dysfunction of the resident participation system, CCOP and RAB members are not able to fully represent RA members for a variety of reasons. The housing authority needs to feel and breathe public housing, and this can

best be accomplished by maintaining consistent contact with RAs. It would be a good start if these authority members alternated in attending even one RA meeting (selected at random) per borough, per month.

Finally, the power to affect change should not just lie in the hands of the NYCHA board members. Residents should not be made to feel that the "brick and mortar" is falling down around them, and all that they can do is idly stand by. Leavitt and Saegert found that with tenant associations in distressed buildings, floor captains were highly successful at keeping residents informed and involved (1990). In other words, there was a semi-institutionalization of the process of "word of mouth," whereby the exchange of information extended beyond social ties and into the larger community network. This would add to the residents' understanding of and/or interest in the fliers and newsletters. Moreover, the existence of standing communities was extremely effective for the successful running of associations (1990). Residents should engage in these practices as much as possible.

With these improvements of RAs, there still needs to be a fundamental shift in the structure of CCOP and RAB, and better collaboration between all three groups. A great source of confusion between the three levels is a lack of understanding of each other. NYCHA should disseminate pamphlets and hold meetings that better explain how the levels can work together, and provide the necessary resources so that CCOP members can communicate more directly with their district chairs. The greater the dialogue, the stronger the participation system. Also, CCOP and RAB members can no longer be excluded and ignored. Essentially, NYCHA needs to have greater transparency, accountability, and inclusion.

Ultimately, the purposes of the resident participation system are to improve building conditions and quality of life standards, and give residents a stake in their community. Unfortunately, there has been a long history of NYCHA ignorance, carelessness, and inaction. This negligence mirrors that of management during the Model Cities. As Rachel Arnstein wrote, "in most case where power has come to be shared it was *taken by the citizens*, not given by the city. There is nothing new about that process. Since those who have power normally want to hang onto it, historically it has had to be wrestled by the powerless rather than proffered by the powerful" (1969: 222). Yet the residents have been wrestling for a long time and, for the most part, have not won.

NYCHA may succeed in making minor changes, but I seriously question whether anything real and effective can come about from the authority. Since the problems of participation largely stem from the structural dysfunction of the resident participation system, and throughout this time NYCHA members have sat comfortably in their seats of power, I do not have faith that they will act any time soon. Like many other contemporary housing theorists and activists, I believe that a third party entity, such as community organizing non-profits or CDCs, should help facilitate resident participation in order to create change (O'Brien 1995, Bach, Wright, and Branca 2002, Feldman and Stall 2004, Conway 2005, Leung 2005). These organizations are successful because they have resources and trained professionals that devote themselves to the residents' needs and concerns, and are not entrenched in bureaucracy. Currently, residents are voiceless against NYCHA.

the collective voice of the community. Additionally, as Leung explains, "residents are often used to being acted upon instead of holding these institutions [housing authorities] accountable" (2005: 22). Community organizations can combat this problem and enable residents to be more comfortable with approaching powerholders, by educating residents on housing policies and the participation system, and helping to develop the residents' leadership skills. I have witnessed the strength of this affirming process several times throughout my time as an intern with Community Voices Heard, where even the simplest act of resident involvement or confrontation of powerholders boosted their self-confidence. This does not mean that NYCHA can free itself from its responsibilities or abstain from taking accountability. Instead, a third-party entity would help residents to gain strength and confidence to hold NYCHA more accountable, and redistribute power so that they have a voice whenever possible.

These suggestions are a good starting point, but they are also simply that: a starting point. There is no magic solution for how residents can most effectively participate in their community, but clearly the current system of neglect is not working. What I hope, as I have attempted to do through my research, is that theorists and activists continue to analyze the strength and weaknesses of public housing resident participation systems across the country. This means that researchers need to stop focusing on the causes and conditions for participation, and start to explore how effective the participation systems are for facilitating real involvement and giving residents a voice. I believe that *effective participation* does have the power to enhance social capital, raise resident satisfaction, and empower residents. This does not

require full resident managerial control, but a shared partnership where, as Somerville expresses, residents have the freedom to choose whether "to control or not to control" (1998: 254). We are at a point in history where there is a new presidential administration that promises hope and billions of dollars for housing. It is essential that public housing resident participation systems are strong in order to influence how this money is successfully spent. It is time for a new voice for NYCHA

Appendix A

Table A-1: Rating of Elevators and Participation

			How	How do you rate the functioning of the elevators?					
			excellent	good	fair	poor	bad	Total	
Participation	Yes	Count	13	20	22	10	34	99	
		% within Participation	13.1%	20.2%	22.2%	10.1%	34.3%	100.0%	
	No	Count	40	58	70	58	85	311	
		% within Participation	12.9%	18.6%	22.5%	18.6%	27.3%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	53	78	92	68	119	410	
		% within Participation	12.9%	19.0%	22.4%	16.6%	29.0%	100.0%	

chi-square = 4.683, p-value = .321

Table A-2: Rating of Safety and Participation

	_	-	How do you rate the safety in your building?					
			excellent	good	fair	poor	bad	Total
Participation	Yes	Count	18	31	19	16	19	103
i artioipation		% within Participation	17.5%	30.1%	18.4%	15.5%	18.4%	100.0%
	No	Count	48	91	68	46	69	322
		% within Participation	14.9%	28.3%	21.1%	14.3%	21.4%	100.0%
	Total	Count	66	122	87	62	88	425
		% within Participation	15.5%	28.7%	20.5%	14.6%	20.7%	100.0%

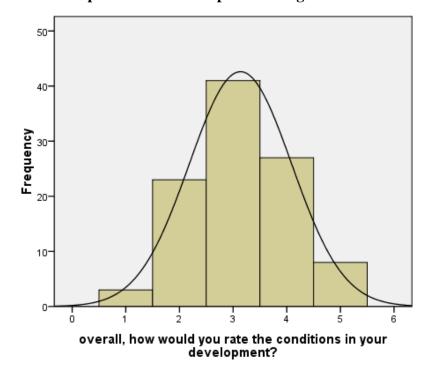
chi-square = 1.114, p-value = .892

Table A-3: Rating of Overall Conditions and RA Participation

		_	Overall, how would you rate the conditions in your development?						
U.			excellent	good	okay	poor	bad	Total	
Participation	Yes	Count	3	23	41	27	8	102	
		% within Participation	2.9%	22.5%	40.2%	26.5%	7.8%	100.0%	
	No	Count	9	81	121	71	31	313	
		% within Participation	2.9%	25.9%	38.7%	22.7%	9.9%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	12	104	162	98	39	415	
		% within Participation	2.9%	25.1%	39.0%	23.6%	9.4%	100.0%	

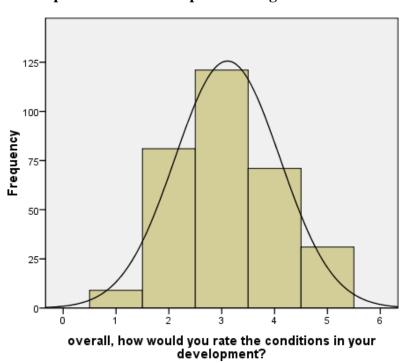
chi-square = 1.203, p-value = .878

Graph A-1: RA Participants Rating of Overall Conditions



Mean =3.14 Std. Dev. =0.955 N =102

Graph A-2: Non-Participants Rating of Overall Conditions



Mean =3.11 Std. Dev. =0.994 N =313

Table A-4: Rating of Senior Centers and Participation

			How would you rate the senior centers in your development?						
			excellent	good	fair	poor	bad	Total	
Participation	Yes	Count	14	11	10	5	6	46	
		% within Participation	30.4%	23.9%	21.7%	10.9%	13.0%	100.0%	
	No	Count	15	35	21	6	7	84	
		% within Participation	17.9%	41.7%	25.0%	7.1%	8.3%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	29	46	31	11	13	130	
		% within Participation	22.3%	35.4%	23.8%	8.5%	10.0%	100.0%	

chi-square = 6.035, p-value = .197

Table A-5: Rating of Resident Employment Programs and Participation

			How would you rate the resident employment programs in your development?						
			excellent	good	fair	poor	bad	Total	
Participation	Yes	Count	4	5	10	4	9	32	
		% within Participation	12.5%	15.6%	31.2%	12.5%	28.1%	100.0%	
	No	Count	4	17	25	8	21	75	
		% within Participation	5.3%	22.7%	33.3%	10.7%	28.0%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	8	22	35	12	30	107	
		% within Participation	7.5%	20.6%	32.7%	11.2%	28.0%	100.0%	

chi-square = 2.179, p-value = .703

Table A-6: Rating of Youth Programs and Participation

			How would you rate the youth programs in your development?						
			excellent	good	fair	poor	bad	Total	
Participation	Yes	Count	9	7	11	0	7	34	
		% within Participation	26.5%	20.6%	32.4%	.0%	20.6%	100.0%	
	No	Count	8	23	27	14	15	87	
		% within Participation	9.2%	26.4%	31.0%	16.1%	17.2%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	17	30	38	14	22	121	
		% within Participation	14.0%	24.8%	31.4%	11.6%	18.2%	100.0%	

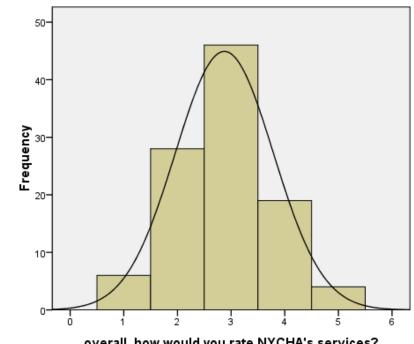
chi-square = 11.165, p-value = .025

Table A-7: Rating of Overall Services and Participation

	_	-	Overall, how would you rate NYCHA's services?						
			excellent	good	okay	poor	bad	Total	
Participation	Yes	Count	6	28	46	19	4	103	
		% within Participation	5.8%	27.2%	44.7%	18.4%	3.9%	100.0%	
	No	Count	4	76	133	74	21	308	
		% within Participation	1.3%	24.7%	43.2%	24.0%	6.8%	100.0%	
	Total	Count	10	104	179	93	25	411	
		% within Participation	2.4%	25.3%	43.6%	22.6%	6.1%	100.0%	

chi-square = 8.886, p-value = .064

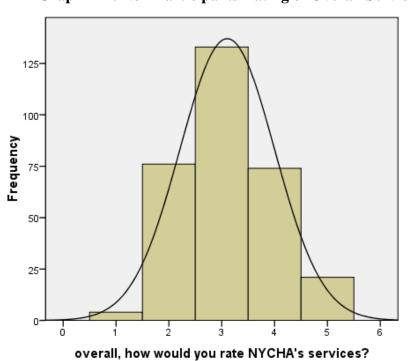
Graph A-3: RA Participants Rating of Overall Services



Mean =2.87 Std. Dev. =0.915 N =103

overall, how would you rate NYCHA's services?

Graph A-4: Non-Participants Rating of Overall Services



Mean =3.1 Std. Dev. =0.896 N =308

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