

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL NETWORKS IN  
FRAZIER COURTS HOPE VI  
DEVELOPMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

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The HOPE VI program enacted in 1992 represented a shift in public housing by addressing resident's needs through physical design improvements, self-sufficiency programs, and the deconcentration of poverty. Funding through HOPE VI allowed local housing authorities to demolish deteriorated public housing units and replace them with new income-inclusive housing units. The "hope" would be that low income residents would interact with middle income residents to access resources that are normally beyond the reach of low income individuals. This assumes of course that residents will interact amongst each other.

Therefore, I conducted a survey of residents at Dallas' Frazier Courts to understand the type and utilization of social interaction within the development.

Unfortunately, the results indicated that there is little or no interaction among residents and concerns with safety and management of the development itself.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The provision of housing plays an important role in the lives of families and individuals. Specifically the location and quality of housing will often determine the accessibility to employment opportunities, spending habits, and of course family and friends. Although this foresight may not have been envisioned during the authorization of public housing in 1937, it draws attention towards addressing the aging stock of public housing.

In 1989 Congress established the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing to develop a National Action Plan to eradicate severely distressed public housing. The report identified the deplorable conditions of 86,000 public housing units occupied by families. As a result, in 1992 Congress enacted the HOPE VI program to address revitalization of distressed public housing mainly through physical design improvements and the dispersal of public housing residents into other communities. The result would be the deconcentration of poverty and the possibility to attract outside investment and middle-income residents.

Within this new mixed-income environment, the hope was for lower-income residents to connect with middle-income residents and utilize their information and/or resources for positive opportunities. However, this assumes that mixed-income communities will become socially inclusive and not remain socially exclusive. Therefore,

my thesis examines Dallas' Frazier Courts HOPE VI development to answer two questions: What is the strength of the networks utilized by residents of Frazier Courts and two, in what ways do residents utilize their networks to interact with others? In answering these questions I utilized Granovetter's (1973) *Strength of Weak Ties* and his later work *SWT Revisited* (1983) to understand the strength of networks and apply his framework to themes and issues reviewed in HOPE VI literature and studies.

## CHAPTER 2

### OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC HOUSING

#### **2.1 Origins of Public Housing**

Authorization of public housing began with the Wagner-Steagall Act of 1937 otherwise known as the U.S. Housing Act of 1937. The Housing Act came on the heels of other New Deal Era programs and was meant to “promote the general welfare of the Nation...to remedy the unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions...for families of lower income” (US Housing Act of 1937). Of course authorization of the Housing Act was not without opposition. Cries of socialism went up from those involved in the private market such as the National Lumber Dealers’ Association and the National Association of Real Estate Boards<sup>1</sup> whom asserted government involvement in the housing market would “retard construction” and “discourage homeownership” (Friedman 1968). Opponents argued such supply side interventions would undermine the private market and reduce profits; furthermore, many felt that the federal government should have no role in the housing market at all. On the other side proponents of the Housing Act came from labor associations and housing reform advocates. In a resolution stated by the American Federation of Hosiery Workers, “Labor was representative both of the unemployed building and material workers and of low-income families in need of better housing”

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of Real Estate Boards was later renamed the National Association of Realtors.

(Friedman 1968). Therefore, public housing would address unemployment by spurring jobs through the construction of housing which would eventually house the previously unemployed.

Ultimately the Housing Act of 1937 represented a compromise between both the public and private sectors. Specifically, the federal government provided financial support and oversight through the creation of the United States Housing Authority, and left the development and operations to local public housing authorities. Local housing authorities would enter into a contract for annual contributions from the federal government to help pay for maintenance and operation of housing units, and in order to “buy, destroy, and build, local authorities would raise money by floating bonds on the private money market or by borrowing directly from the federal government” (Friedman 1968). Appropriating funds for annual contributions helped assuage fiscal conservatives by allowing provisions to be set upfront reducing the opportunities for debates; however, the level of funding from the outset was hardly adequate to address the needs of public housing. In comparison to 6.8 billion in private construction, funding for public construction totaled 300 million or 4.2 percent of housing construction (Keating and Marcuse 2006). Additionally, participation in the public housing program was optional; therefore, local jurisdictions could opt out of participating in the public housing legislation. By allowing local government to opt out, this would almost ensure that public housing could not encroach on the private market. Another safeguard against encroachment into the private housing market was the “one for one” replacement rule. The rule meant that there would be one new unit for every unit torn down or demolished

which essentially ensured that no new public housing would be built and the stock of affordable would remain static.

The location of public housing was also affected by the governance of local housing authorities. Since local housing authorities would be appointed by local officials to operate within certain jurisdictions, local opposition could effectively determine a project's location "guaranteeing housing projects would remain racially segregated" (The Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston n.d.). Furthermore, public housing from the beginning would always be dependent both on federal and local government. "Without the federal government, there were no funds to develop buildings and without local government there really was no ability to put those funds to use" (Smith 2006).

However, public housing was never meant for the poorest of the poor. Both members of congress agreed their efforts should provide housing for the "submerged" middle class. "There are some people whom we cannot possibly reach; I mean those who have no means to pay the rent...[O]bviously this bill cannot provide housing for those who cannot pay the rent minus the subsidy allowed" (Friedman 1968). The deserving poor, those actively seeking work but unable to obtain affordable housing were the main candidates for public housing. "The projects would mainly be filled with deserving but underpaid workers—innocent victims of economic reverses, who needed a "break" to tide them over the lean years" (Friedman 1968). By requiring public housing residents to cover operating expenses through rent, this created a link between work and public

housing. Efforts to attract the working poor picked up during and after WWII when public housing was used to house veterans.

During WWII funding and priority for public housing continued to decline and “liberal members of Congress, labor unions—wanted to revive the public housing program, in limbo after it’s defunding following a conservative upsurge in 1939 and its conversion to a war housing program after 1940” (Keating and Marcuse 2006). Additionally, financing through FHA and VA allowed many veterans to bypass public housing and achieve the American Dream of owning a home in the suburbs. Furthermore, through the creation of FHA and VA financed loans, housing policy created a two-tiered system by dividing the public and private sector roles in the production of housing which changed the urban landscape and essentially determined where poor people were to live (Smith 2006). The fate of public housing seemed unsure until The Housing Act of 1949 established funding of public housing for 810,000 additional units and the urban redevelopment program.

## **2.2 Urban Renewal and Public Housing**

The Housing Act of 1949 insisted on “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American Family”. In terms of public housing, the Housing Act of 1949 provided the lofty goal of creating 810,000 units which took nearly two decades to accomplish, but most importantly the Housing Act created the urban redevelopment program. The urban redevelopment program, or rather the slum clearance program, decimated neighborhoods, many of which were occupied by poor African Americans

represented a bottom in housing policy (Smith 2006). Furthermore, pressure from the real estate industry pressured Congress to limit public housing to the very poor, which along with changing demographics, costs, and design helped diminish political support for public housing (Dreier 2006). Public housing was now linked to urban decay in that cities could wipe out deteriorated housing projects and start anew.

Many felt public housing had failed mainly due to the layout and design of the buildings themselves. “Congress wanted public housing to act as a way station for the temporarily; dispossessed; it was to be a “slum of hope” (Friedman 1968). Again, the need to balance the federal government’s involvement in the provision of public housing needed to be controlled. Fiscal conservatives implemented cost limitations that would “virtually ensure that public housing would be minimum housing in looks and in life-style; it would be physically better and safer than the slums, but it would never grace the landscape and bring pleasure to the eye” (Friedman 1968). Furthermore, once the Great Depression had ended, the price of land within urban cores came at a premium; thus, the need to build high-rise projects made sense economically. However, these cost limitations often meant units without closet doors, cinderblocks as walls instead of plaster, and projects lacking enclosed lobbies (Schwartz 2010).

Oscar Newman, commented on one such high-rise public housing project, the Pruitt-Igoe building of St. Louis, which was plagued with vandalism, crime, graffiti and human waste. He noted, that the layout of the interior created insecurity and a lack of control thereby contributing to disaster for welfare dependent families (Newman 2005).

Urban critic Jane Jacobs likened the corridors of public housing as enclosed “streets piled up in sky” lacking the constant surveillance found in public spaces (Jacobs 1992). Lastly, high-rise projects were not suitable for poor families who had to manage their children from the sixteenth floor especially if they have to wait thirty minutes or more for an elevator (Friedman 1968). Poor interior design, shoddy construction, and isolation from the surrounding community created a space of neglect resulting in higher maintenance costs. It was time to recognize that public housing was no longer housing the working or deserving poor since many had left to the suburbs. Instead public housing had been filled almost exclusively by “broken families, dependent families, and welfare families, many of them jobless Negroes locked in the urban ghetto” (Friedman 1968).

Under Title 1 of The Housing Act of 1949, local redevelopment authorities would select areas for redevelopment, acquire the land and make ready for sell to a private developer for redevelopment. Redevelopment began slowly since the process was inherently complex, involving private developers, investors, and local officials and most importantly – redevelopment was to be predominantly residential. Private developers were not keen on developing low-income housing and instead wanted to focus on downtown shopping and commercial centers (Cullingworth 1997). Still, local redevelopment authorities needed to have redevelopment plans approved by their governing body; thereby, ensuring the interests of local elites and private developers would be satisfied. Specifically, “nothing restrained the authorities from drawing maps [redevelopment plans] in such a way as to include enough houses to meet the statutory requirement” of predominately residential (Friedman 1968). This allowed local



authorities to interpret regulations more broadly. As a result, the redevelopment initiative was used to finance the New York Coliseum at Columbus Circle project by Robert Moses, site acquisition for the New York Stock Exchange, and a 219-space downtown parking lot in New Hampshire (Friedman 1968). It was clear, that the urban redevelopment program had little to do with public housing and more to do with eradicating slums, displacing residents, and reshaping the physical landscape of urban cores. The urban redevelopment program<sup>2</sup> continued as a tool to change the face of public housing and surrounding neighborhoods until its termination in 1974.

Urban renewal began with The Housing Act of 1954 and picked up where urban redevelopment left off. Specifically, the term urban renewal emphasized that areas of “blight” and “slum” could be contained or renewed. However, as a result urban renewal was seen as tool to concentrate and contain Black minorities. Local elites used urban renewal for widespread slum clearance in Black neighborhoods while White-dominated city councils blocked construction of minority housing projects – this forced poor minority families into existing public housing which were segregated from other parts of the city (Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993). Urban renewal became synonymous with “Negro removal” since many communities used federal money to rid themselves of Black minorities from certain sections of town. Suburban communities were adept in ridding themselves of such eyesores and exporting non-whites back to the urban core (Friedman 1968).

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<sup>2</sup> The urban redevelopment program was renamed the urban renewal program through legislation in 1954.

The supply of public housing actually saw a net reduction during the urban redevelopment and urban renewal programs. “By 1967 approximately 400,000 residential units had been destroyed with only 10,760 public housing units built on their site” (Keating and Marcuse 2006). Urban renewal had failed and poor minority families were to suffer. Frank Gotham (2001) in his case study of Kansas City during urban renewal noted a “decreasing supply of affordable inner city housing, widespread displacement and flight of people and business”. Urban renewal had strayed from providing a decent and suitable environment for the American family as envisioned in the Housing Act of 1949. What urban renewal really did was promote racial segregation by shuffling poor Black families from one section of a neighborhood to another while satisfying the needs of the private sector and local elites.

During the 1970’s housing policy was about to change towards demand side policies in providing affordable housing. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 effectively ended the public building of public housing perhaps because the federal government had made a mistake by providing funds to private interests for the provision of affordable housing (Smith 2006).

### **2.3 Segregation and Housing**

Racial segregation would be the end result of urban renewal and the construction of public housing. Segregation became more apparent as white families were able to escape to the suburbs due to discriminatory lending practices that promoted homeownership in the suburbs rather than urban downtowns. Additionally, banks

initiated “redlining” a discriminatory practice that meant declining loans or services to certain neighborhoods. As a result poor minority families were forced to concentrate in low quality housing as urban centers continued to decline. This grouping of poor households caused a “*critical mass* effect that multiplied the impact of many problems associated with poverty” (Downs 1974). Public housing was so bad, that even the mere presence of a public housing unit contributed to an increase in poverty (Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993). Of course, as Anthony Downs notes, it is only a small portion of individuals that engage in destructive behavior leaving the non-destructive individuals to bear the social costs of maintaining a desirable neighborhood (Downs 1974). Nevertheless, maintaining the neighborhood with limited resources is hard, especially when you live across a lead smelter facility as was the case of a 3,500 unit public housing project located in West Dallas (TexasHousing.org).

In many instances neighborhoods in which public housing were located often times lacked many of basic necessities – stores, financial institutions, hospitals, and even fewer employment opportunities (Turner, Popkin and Rawlings 2009). Increasing economic isolation of the Black poor in inner-city communities and the loss of middle- and working-class role models gave rise to what Wilson (1987) termed the “underclass culture” (Turner, Popkin and Rawlings 2009). Everything that could go wrong did in these highly concentrated neighborhoods. Wilson (1987) identified a range of social ills such as drug use, violent crime, school truancy, teen parenthood, and labor force detachment in areas of concentrated poverty. As Massey and Denton show in *American Apartheid* (1993), these negative forces are intensified by segregation and contribute to a

perpetual decline in a neighborhood because the well-being of any neighborhood is based on the interactions between individual and collective behaviors. A few bad apples within a neighborhood of limited resources can have a profound effect on the socioeconomic status of everyone.

As an example, Massey and Denton (1993) offer the scenario of a working-class neighborhood that receives new residents with lower incomes with just enough to cover rent; therefore, leaving little for property maintenance or investment. As a result, these properties begin to show signs of deterioration spreading to other properties as landlords and property owners decide to invest less in property maintenance. There is little incentive for entrepreneurs to invest in a neighborhood in decline; therefore, as mentioned earlier, these residents are denied resources such as grocery stores, banks, and businesses to offer employment opportunities. Not being able to access these goods or services creates a burden upon households with limited means.

In their study of access to grocery stores, Berg and Murdoch (2007) interviewed stakeholders about their decisions in the location of stores and “concerns over crime eliminated low-income areas from consideration, without any quantitative cost-benefit calculation”. They cited issues with shoplifting and the increased expenditures with security that would affect their bottom line, and even if they received a subsidy equal to their rental costs for a year, they would still not locate within high-crime areas (Berg and Murdoch 2007). The perception of crime not only limits outside investment, but also investments within the individuals themselves. Specifically in areas with crime,

“residents modify their routines and increasingly stay indoors; they minimize their time on the streets and limit their contacts outside close friends and family” (Massey and Denton 1993) . Crime therefore not only isolates individuals from outside the neighborhood but also from within since interactions among individuals are weakened and limited. Reducing the interactions among residents, puts “residents at a severe disadvantage for escaping poverty and achieving upward mobility” (Curley 2010).

As the effects of discrimination and segregation in housing became apparent, urban protests prompted the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Housing Act of 1968 to eliminate discrimination in both private and publicly assisted housing. To ensure compliance, Congress enacted the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act in 1975 and the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 which established provisions for loan reporting and to ensure banks meet the needs of low and middle income individuals. Although blatant segregation in the housing market has declined, the current subprime lending mess indicates that discrimination still exists among minority or low-income households and their equal access to fair lending in primary markets (Calem, Gillen and Wachter 2004) (HUD 2009). Therefore, it is important that housing policy not only recognizes the physical but also the social aspects of housing. We can only deliver on “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American Family” when housing provides for fair access to opportunities.

## **2.4 HOPE VI**

Although the construction of public housing ended during the 1970s, there are still 1.2 million households living in public housing units managed by 3,300 local housing authorities (HUD 2010). At its height, public housing reached 1.4 million units in 1994 and continues to decrease due to demolition (Schwartz 2010). So although public housing may soon become a thing of the past, there is still a need to address the current supply and their residents.

The HOPE VI<sup>3</sup> program enacted by Congress in 1992 came at a time of uncertainty for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD's budget authority had decreased from \$63.7 to \$18.9 billion (in 2001 dollars) during the Regan administration (Dreier 2006). Public sentiment for HUD was seen as a wasteful and inefficient agency, and by the time Clinton took office in 1993, "HUD was one of the least popular or respected agencies of the federal government" (Dreier 2006). The *Washington Post* reported that "Politically, HUD is about as popular as smallpox", and Bob Dole the Republican presidential candidate in 1996 remarked on public housing as "one of the last bastions of socialism in the world" (Dreier 2006).

HUD's uncertainty was further compounded by an earlier report on the state of public housing. In 1989 Congress established the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing to develop a National Action Plan to eradicate severely distressed public housing by the year 2000. In 1992 the Commission presented the report to congress appropriately named "The Final Report" and stated "This *must* be the final

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<sup>3</sup> HOPE VI stands for Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere

report; as a Nation we must act immediately to eliminate conditions that cause the families—men, women, and children—living in approximately 86,000 units of severely distressed public housing to reside in physical, emotional, and social, and economic distress” (National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing 1992). The commission recommended revitalization in three areas of public housing: resident needs, physical conditions, and management needs.

A new direction was needed and in 1994, HUD secretary Henry Cisneros presented *HUD Reinvention: From Blueprint to Action*, which laid out a plan to streamline the agency’s “crazy-quilt programs and hand the funds over to states and cities” (Smith 2006). The plan drew bipartisan support, by allowing HUD to continue as an agency but also limiting its role in the supply of housing and instead focusing on demand side policies through housing vouchers and tax credits. For public housing it meant revitalization through the HOPE VI program.

The HOPE VI program incorporated earlier ideas from other dispersal programs by providing vouchers to residents to seek housing in less poverty stricken areas and reducing the concentration of poverty at the original HOPE VI site. However the HOPE VI program went further by creating mixed-income communities in hopes of attracting middle income residents into areas of distress in order to provide better opportunities for the original public housing residents. Specifically, the HOPE VI program provides grants to local housing authorities to demolish distressed public housing units and replace them lower density mixed-income housing units and vouchers to residents who wish to relocate

elsewhere. The main elements of the HOPE VI program include: physical design improvements, establishing programs to promote resident self-sufficiency, reducing the concentration of poverty, and creating public-private partnerships to leverage resources.

Achieving these goals is no easy task; however, the most visible change in the HOPE VI program is the physical design of the of each HOPE VI development. HOPE VI projects are designed to blend in with the surrounding community, replacing the negative images associated with public housing, and feature higher level of amenities than the original public housing they replaced (Schwartz 2010). HOPE VI developments also invoke the design principles of new urbanism<sup>4</sup> by incorporating “defensible space” by reducing public space where residents are less likely exert control (Popkin, et al. 2004). Through the HOPE VI program, the image of public housing would change. No longer would public housing be associated with high rise housing in isolation from the rest of the community, but instead incorporate innovative ideas in design and public private financing.

Although the new developments are aesthetically appealing, by promoting lower density mixed-income units it is inevitable the loss of public housing units would result. In Chicago the Robert Taylor Homes have seen close to 4,000 units demolished with plans to rebuild only 1,276 units, and on the city’s north side, Cabrini-Green is slated to lose 1,200 units with fewer than 600 being rebuilt (Goetz 2003). Despite the loss of units there has been substantial success in demolishing severely distressed housing

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<sup>4</sup>HUD was a signatory to the Charter of New Urbanism executed in 1994 (Popkin, et al. 2004)



environments, and replacing them with much higher quality, mixed-income communities (Popkin, et al. 2004).

It would be easy to dismiss the HOPE VI program as a success if replacing distressed housing units with higher quality and aesthetically pleasing housing units were the main goal; however, revitalization goes beyond buildings. “Revitalization involves both buildings and individuals. It refers to safe, secure, and functional homes, schools and community amenities as well as residents who have opportunities to improve their situations through the development of human and economic capital” (Kelly 2009). As such, much of the current research on HOPE VI programs has focused upon case studies which attempt to measure resident outcomes before and after HOPE VI redevelopment. One of the most systematic studies on former residents’ outcomes comes from the *HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study* (Buron, et al. 2002). The report relied on survey data to produce results on the outcomes of residents at eight HOPE VI redevelopment sites. Consistent with replacing distressed housing with newer housing, only 15 percent of respondents reported their housing conditions were worse than before. However, 40 percent of respondents indicated problems with paying rent, utilities, and about half reported having difficulty affording food (Buron, et al. 2002). Furthermore, counseling for relocation services meant to alleviate barriers to housing – physical and mental disabilities, large family sizes, and complex personal problems – have been found to be inadequate in overcoming these barriers (S. Popkin 2006).

Although the initial HOPE VI program assessment seems discouraging, Popkin notes, given the flexibility and latitude local housing authorities have in implementing the HOPE VI program, providing simple answers regarding programmatic effectiveness is impossible (Popkin, et al. 2004).

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **3.1 HOPE VI & Social Interaction**

A main tenet of the HOPE VI program is to provide opportunities to low-income individuals by mixing their interactions amongst middle-income individuals. As mentioned earlier, the concentration of poverty negatively affects an individual's ability towards upward mobility. An individual with limited resources that must contend with the fear of crime, distrust of neighbors, and lack of safety leaves the individual less time to address the needs of others let alone themselves. Furthermore, past segregation and discrimination in housing has left many poor minorities in areas without adequate services. Therefore, HOPE VI was meant to create opportunities for advancement by attracting middle-income residents into these revitalized areas.

These "opportunities" would be advanced to low-income individuals by way of interacting amongst those with affluence, contacts, and resources beyond the reach of low-income individuals. This assumes of course, that mixed-income communities will interact and share resources amongst one another. As Turner, Popkin and Rawlings note (2009), social divisions among class and race can inhibit interaction "especially if white residents are singles or couples while public housing tenants are families with children". Also, "resource disparities could lead to competition, resentment, perceived deprivation, and negative outcomes, especially for young people" between the more affluent and less

affluent residents (Tuck, DeLuca and Rosenbaum 2005). If residents cannot see the benefits in interacting amongst one another, because of different lifestyles or a sense of inferiority then the end result is a community in isolation that may actually be worse than before HOPE VI revitalization.

Another caveat with the HOPE VI program is the revitalized development may actually sever the networks that many low-income individuals rely upon for support, especially if these new networks of opportunities are closed or never flourish as “hoped”. Venkatesh and Celimi’s (2004) research on the Robert Taylor Homes public housing development in Chicago highlights the concerns of one public housing resident, “Poor people help poor people. They have no one else, so they know how to help each other get by.” Support came from local storeowners extending credit, bartering with friends and exchanging services, and local churches providing food and job assistance (Venkatesh and Celimli 2004). In another survey, residents of the Columbia Villa public housing development in Portland, Gibson (2007) uncovered that the “isolation” of the development from the surrounding community created an environment with greater a greater sense of community because residents relied on each other and shared the same common grounds. In some ways, the homogenous grouping of public housing residents allows them to bypass the issues of class and focus on the needs of their community through the support of one another. Perhaps as Allport (1979) suggests, positive opportunities are more likely to occur for individuals of equal status.

Our tendency to gravitate towards similar individuals is also captured in the popular idiom “birds of a feather flock together” which is supplemented by research focusing on the relocation decisions of public housing residents. Research on the relocation of public housing residents through dispersal programs has shown that many residents situate in neighboring communities with similar demographics. Approximately 40 percent relocated to neighborhoods, though less poor in terms of poverty, still had poverty rates over 30 percent, and many of the relocates ended up in census tracts that were primarily minority – some as high as 90 percent African American (Popkin, et al. 2004). Even if residents move outside their comfort zone, many relocated public housing residents will reconnect with their former social networks for support especially through family and kin. In the Yonkers <sup>5</sup>scattered site public housing program, many of the movers returned back to their prior neighborhoods to access their support networks of family and friends (X. d. Briggs 1997).

Another case study found that residents of the DuBois public housing in Philadelphia kept in contact with former ties and networks with other public housing residents after dispersal (Clampet-Lundquist 2004). However, their networks were far smaller than previous since many of them kept to themselves so as to avoid conflict with their new neighbors (Clampet-Lundquist 2004). Also many of the residents had lived at Dubois for years, and a few residents mentioned how depressed they had been since the move. These new neighborhoods lacked the shared experiences residents had prior to

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<sup>5</sup> In 1985 the City of Yonkers, New York was federally mandated to place minority residents into newly constructed housing units within middle-class neighborhoods.

their move placing them at a disadvantage in the creation of networks. For some, the sudden rupture of social and emotional bonds can create what is known as *root shock* which can contribute to “every kind of stress-related disease, from depression to heart attack” (Fullilove 2005).

The current research on dispersal programs highlights the lack of consideration given towards the social ties and networks that many public housing residents have long established. For many residents, these networks provide assistance for the individual’s day to day activities. Even though residents may view their support networks as amongst other housing residents, their interaction among local businesses and churches allows them to utilize resources far beyond their immediate source of family, friends, or neighbors. Understanding how low income residents utilize and interact among their social networks can help develop programs to enhance their existing networks or build new ones.

### **3.2 Social Networks**

In the previous section I highlight the themes and issues public housing residents encounter within HOPE VI and dispersal programs in general. Particularly how interactions vary based upon the type of contacts or networks that are utilized between individuals. To gain a better understanding of these networks, I build upon Granovetter’s 1973 *The Strength of Weak Ties*, and his later 1983 *The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited*.

Granovetter defines our connections among individuals as either “strong” or “weak” ties through which the strength of a tie can be determined by the “amount of time, emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and reciprocal services which characterize each tie” (Granovetter 1973). Although the strength of a tie can be determined through a combination of the relationships, stronger ties are normally developed through frequent contact and larger time commitments. Granovetter then goes on to state that “the stronger the tie connecting two individuals, the more similar they are, in various ways” (Granovetter 1973). Therefore, information exchanged between our strong ties will more often than not be information that we may already possess or have access to, which Granovetter emphasizes by defining the importance of weak of ties.

In a labor market study, he emphasizes the connection between the job seeker and the individual providing information because as he states although our “strong” ties may have our best interests in mind, it is our “weak” ties that allow us to have access to information beyond our immediate circle of networks (Granovetter 1973). As suggested, many of the individuals received their job information through contacts from old college friends, former coworkers, previous employers, or contacts from “individuals whose very existence they have forgotten” (Granovetter 1973). Since we are not in regular contact with our weak ties, we are unaware of the information or benefits that can be obtained. This may explain why a majority of respondents in the labor market study went straight to the prospective employer for job opportunities rather than waiting for information to be passed along or “diffused” through other networks.

In *SWT: A Network Theory Revisited*, Granovetter posits that information obtained through weak ties varies among individuals. Specifically that weak ties for lower socioeconomic groups “are often not bridges...the information they provide would then not constitute a real broadening of opportunity” (Granovetter 1983). Reactivating weak ties for lower income individuals may actually be the result of overcoming barriers to connectivity, and so any perceived benefits of obtaining new information through these “infrequent” contacts may actually be non-existent. For example, when searching for employment utilizing weak ties may actually inhibit opportunities or mobility if previous employers or connections necessitate the need for low wage or low skill labor.

Of course any employment is better than unemployment which is why during times of need individuals will utilize strong ties because of quick accessibility to information no matter how useful the information may be (Granovetter 1983). Not only will our strong ties be more pervasive in our networks, but often times if we view our strong ties as consisting of close family and friends, the expectation of reciprocity in benefits may also exist. As mentioned earlier, public housing residents are more apt to utilize their immediate network, or strong ties in obtaining both social and economic support. However, Granovetter then goes on to state “the heavy concentration of social energy in strong ties has the impact of fragmenting communities of the poor into encapsulated networks with poor connections...which may be a reason why poverty is self-perpetuating” (Granovetter 1983).



My task within the remainder of my thesis is to apply Granovetter's work on the strength of a network to themes and issues identified in the preceding section to understand the networks within the Frazier Courts development. By understanding the networks utilized by residents of the Frazier Courts development future programs will be better tailored to the social aspects involved in housing individuals. Therefore, my thesis will seek to answer two questions: What is the strength of the networks utilized by residents of Frazier Courts and two, in what ways do residents utilize their networks to interact with others.

CHAPTER 4  
METHODOLOGY

**4.1 Overview**

As previous research suggests, dispersal programs such as HOPE VI may actually sever or hinder a resident's social network limiting their options for upward mobility and positive outcomes. Since many areas targeted for HOPE VI redevelopment were segregated both socially and economically, residents' social networks were vital to their day to day activities. My research builds upon previous literature by utilizing quantitative information obtained from surveys administered to residents of the HOPE VI revitalized area of Frazier Courts, and qualitative methods from personal observations and informal questions with residents to expand upon the issue of safety. Each survey was coded and tabulated and compared with personal observations.

**4.2 Target Area**

In 2003, Dallas Housing Authority received 20 million in HOPE VI funding to redevelop the Frazier Courts public housing units. Funding provided demolition of 550 public housing units to make room for 234 new public housing units, 76 public housing townhouses, and 53 single family homes for the Frazier Court Homeownership Project (City of Dallas Committee Briefings 2006). As discussed later in Chapter 5, redevelopment of the Frazier Courts housing units were part of larger efforts to revitalize the South Dallas Area known as Frazier Courts Neighborhood.

Figure one in the following page provides an aerial view of zip code 75210, which contains Fair Park and the Frazier Neighborhood. Also outlined in figure one are the Frazier Courts public housing development which is bisected by Hatcher Street running north and south, bounded to the west by Spring Avenue, and to the east by Wahoo Lake.

Probably the most current and relevant information on the 75210 zip code comes from the J. McDonald Williams Institute. The Institute functions as a research arm for FCE, Foundation for Community Empowerment, to provide research and policy updates for the revitalization of low-income urban areas. According to their latest report which compiled various statistics for 75210, the largely African American (75%) followed by Hispanic (22%) area contains high levels of poverty (42% of families) and low levels of educational attainment with 57% of individuals having less than a high school diploma or certificate of equivalency (Martin, et al. 2006). In regards to health, cardiovascular disease and cancer are the two leading causes of death, and even adjusted for age variations for all causes of death, 75210 surpasses the City of Dallas as a whole for rate of deaths (Martin, et al. 2006).

Other factors which compound the effects of poverty are the lack of opportunities for employment or career advancement. According to the institute's research, residents in the area were less likely to be employed and those who are employed, often found jobs in low-wage service sector jobs (Martin, et al. 2006). Also rates of residential crime are the highest throughout the City of Dallas at a rate of 4 times higher than the city average.



understanding may indicate a weak tie and/or a barrier to connectivity. For example, question two asked residents if they agreed that other residents in their neighborhood are helpful or respectful of others. An indication of disagreement in question two would suggest a lack of mutual understanding between residents and the potential for a weak tie. Additionally question four asked residents whether they have invited others over to their house, provided assistance, or helped others with transportation in an attempt to measure the willingness of the resident to engage with others. We would expect residents who disagreed in residents helping other residents, would also be less inclined in helping others as well. Lastly, it was also important to measure the contact frequency among residents if no other than differentiate between a strong and weak tie. Therefore, question six asked residents how often they stay in contact among family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances.

Also understanding the context in which these ties are utilized was important to capture. Since socioeconomic status may contribute to a lack of weak ties that “bridge” individuals to better opportunities, there is a tendency for lower income individuals to rely more heavily upon strong ties. Therefore, in question seven residents were asked to indicate who they turn to for assistance such as childcare, utilities or rent and household chores among others which are common themes identified in reviewing HOPE VI literature. Lastly as suggested earlier, the HOPE VI and dispersal programs aim to place lower income individuals into proximity of others that may have access to greater networks and or opportunities. Therefore, question eight asked residents how active they are in local government and organizations. Any indication of limited activity may suggest

residents are reluctant to initiate contact with others outside their immediate network thereby limiting the effects of mixed-income communities. The final survey consisted of fourteen questions that can be sorted into three sections: resident safety and perceptions of others, how resident networks are utilized, and general information on the residents themselves including participation in organizations and associations. A copy of the final survey administered in the field is attached in Appendix A as *Frazier Court Resident Survey*

#### **4.4 Survey Implementation**

The survey was conducted at selected residences within the Frazier Courts HOPE VI development with no particular preference as to which buildings would be surveyed. I selected a set of buildings and began knocking on each door one by one. In choosing residences, I set my preferences towards residences that seemed inviting and/or occupied. Specifically, since the survey was conducted during the month of October, many residences displayed Halloween items on their windows or porches which prompted me to visit these residences first. Likewise, residences that had missing window screens, blinds, or were devoid of any front porch activity were not included in the survey. While systematically each individual residence would need to be visited to ensure every resident had a chance to participate, due to time constraints this was not possible. Instead these homes were noticed as personal observations within the Frazier Courts Development.

Residences were also targeted whenever residents were outside hanging out or loitering around the development. In these instances, residents were approached and asked if they would like to participate in a survey about the HOPE VI program. If the resident decided to participate, the resident was then asked for their place of residence so as to avoid visiting their residences if I had not already done so.

The dialogue between the resident and me consisted of explaining to the resident that I was a student conducting research on the HOPE VI program with a survey that would take fifteen minutes to complete. Initially, I gave residents the option of returning later in the day or the week to retrieve their completed survey. This resulted in residents offering to have the survey completed the next day or sometime during the week. When pressed for a specific time, many said next weekend or late Sunday afternoon. From this, I changed my approach in survey implementation since it would be hard to accommodate each individual request in picking up surveys.

My new approach consisted of letting the resident know that the survey would take fifteen minutes and that I would leave the survey with them and would return in thirty or so minutes. Residents were also given extra pens so as to reduce any limitation in completing and participating in the survey. All residents who participated were read the HOPE VI informed consent form which is included in Appendix B as *Resident Consent Form*. Residents were asked to review and sign the form when returning the survey which served as a receipt for resident participation in the survey. In summary, by dropping off surveys with extra pens and informing residents of my return within thirty or

so minutes, participation increased greatly. In some instances, I did not have to revisit residences for completed surveys, since a few children tracked me down to hand over the completed survey and signed consent form.

During my two visits to the Frazier Courts housing units I was able to collect a total of 24 complete surveys and individually spoke with two residents about the area which is discussed later in this thesis.

#### **4.5 Research Limitations**

The issue of time created a limitation in conducting research on residents in the Frazier Courts development as a researcher. Since my availability for conducting the surveys was limited to weekend hours, I knew this may have not produced a representative sample of participants. Limiting my availability to weekends may have left out residents who work irregular hours and/or weekend hours with availability during the week instead. Furthermore, a few residents commented that Sundays in particular were especially busy since many participated in church and/or family gatherings. However, even with the limited availability, I was surprised at the rate of participation among residents.

Another limitation in assessing HOPE VI program efforts in resident interaction was the inability to specifically target households participating in the HOPE VI program. While other HOPE VI studies such as Gibson's (2007) study on relocated Columbia Villa public housing residents, Boston's (2005) assessment of mixed-income revitalization on residents of Atlanta Housing Authority, Boyd's (2008) study on residential mobility



within the Chicago Gautreaux program, and of course the case study which tracked residents at eight HOPE VI redevelopment sites (Buron, et al. 2002), were able to track individual residents, my research was unable to specifically target a group of households participating in the HOPE VI program. As one resident I surveyed mentioned, not everyone participates in the HOPE VI program; however, I do not believe this detracts from my ability to capture social interaction among residents.

For example, if the aim of HOPE VI is to place low income individuals in contact with middle income individuals for resources, then it is just as important to understand whether individuals are interacting amongst each other. Furthermore, unit turnover will always create a mix of residents that may or may not pursue participation in any housing programs. However, the benefits in targeting specific HOPE VI participants would have allowed for greater comparisons between participants and non-participants.

Another research limitation was the inability to obtain relevant documents on the Frazier Courts revitalization efforts. An attempt was made with the local housing authority to request for information on any relevant plans or services relevant to Frazier Courts but the request was unfulfilled. The information would have proved invaluable in targeting my research to particular residences and perhaps site specific information such as costs, units, layouts, vacancy rates, and so on. Instead, much of the information had to come from newspaper clippings or internet searches which undoubtedly reduced my time in the design and implementation of surveys.

## CHAPTER 5

### HISTORY OF SOUTH DALLAS & FRAIZER COURTS

#### **5.1 History from 1940s through 1970s**

Dallas like many urban cities during the 40s and 50s dealt with the issue of race and segregation. In particular, South Dallas and the Frazier Neighborhood highlight the resistance towards African American communities during the 40s and 50s. Much of the following section was through access to the Dallas Morning News Historical Archive provided by NewsBank at the Dallas Public Library.

A search using terms “South Dallas”, “Public Housing” and “Negro Housing” revealed that racial tensions stemmed from lack of affordable housing options for the African American community. Dallas attempted to assuage the growing population of African American families into South Dallas through the creation of an “interracial committee”. Recommendations from the committee included designating specific locations for housing Black minorities, constructing more public housing units, and offering assistance to relocate Black minorities from areas that were predominately white. This would essentially ensure the segregation of Black minorities and increase the area with families in need of assistance through programs such as public housing.

Although the construction of the original 250 unit of Frazier Courts in 1943 faced opposition, it was eventually acknowledged as a way to provide suitable living conditions and ease racial tensions. In one article, *Dallas Leaders Inspect Negro Living Conditions*, families were living in shacks and discarded city buses. Many times these makeshift housing units were shared by as many as nine families and each would share one toilet and water faucet.

However, although the deplorable conditions may have been eventually fixed, the impetus for addressing the housing shortage was also in response to the growing violence between Black and White families which involved the bombings of homes inhabited by Black families. Eventually South Dallas during the 70s became predominately inhabited by Black families and the Frazier Courts housing still standing since the 40s, began to serve as an icon for a neglected past and overall deterioration of the neighborhood. Efforts thereafter to revitalize the neighborhood were met with little enthusiasm among residents.

## **5.2 History from 2000s through Present**

Perhaps the greatest proponent in promoting revitalization of the Frazier neighborhood came from retired Trammel Crow chairman, Don Williams. In 2003, Williams worked with Dallas Housing Authority to help secure 20 million in HOPE VI funding towards the total 60 million needed to redevelop the Frazier Courts public housing units. Williams and DHA realized redevelopment of the public housing was a start, and shortly after hired urban planner Antonio Di Mambro to work with Frazier

neighborhood residents in creating a comprehensive plan covering more than 1,100 acres. At the request of the comprehensive plan, Frazier Revitalization Inc. a non-profit and offshoot of FCE, was created to implement the visionary plan for revitalization.

From the FRI website, “FRI’s role is to assemble land, negotiate with developers, and help residents advocate for public policies that will support a thriving community that offers the highest quality of life to longtime residents and newcomers alike” (Foundation for Community Empowerment 2010). At first, wide scale revitalization through land assembly was met with skepticism by residents since plans were reminiscent of land takings during the 70s for the expansion of the Cotton Bowl and Fair Park. Efforts for land takings came to the fore front in early 2007 when FRI proposed an eminent domain strategy that would allow for the acquisition of “blighted” neighborhoods instead of individual parcels of land. Their proposal would mean a change in eminent domain state law and so during a community meeting at the Juanita Craft Recreation Center in South Dallas residents voiced opposition because as many knew, “Good intentions come and go. Changes to the property law stay” (Goldstein 2007) (Schutze 2007).

Perhaps, the demolition of the Frazier Courts public housing units in 2005/2006<sup>6</sup> provided the impetus that Williams and FRI were serious about changing South Dallas and had good intentions (Wilonsky 2006). Who wouldn’t agree to convert the old 1940 barrack style crime ridden units into a modern habitable space? The project was meant to serve as a catalyst to other strategies aimed at revitalization of the economically depressed area of South Dallas. Recognizing this need, Dallas’ 2006 comprehensive plan

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<sup>6</sup> Date is referenced in Wilonsky’s 2006 Dallas Observer article; therefore, it is an approximation.

called for tax increment finance districts, a neighborhood improvement program and a neighborhood enhancement program (City of Dallas Strategic Planning 2006). Other proposals specific to the South Dallas area include a trust fund to provide low interest loans for business ventures, and initiatives to extend DART Green Line rail service to spur economic investment through transit oriented development.

While all the strategies mentioned to spur revitalization will help the public sector leverage private resources, it also highlights the complexities of revitalization in an area that has seen its share of isolation and neglect.

## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYSIS

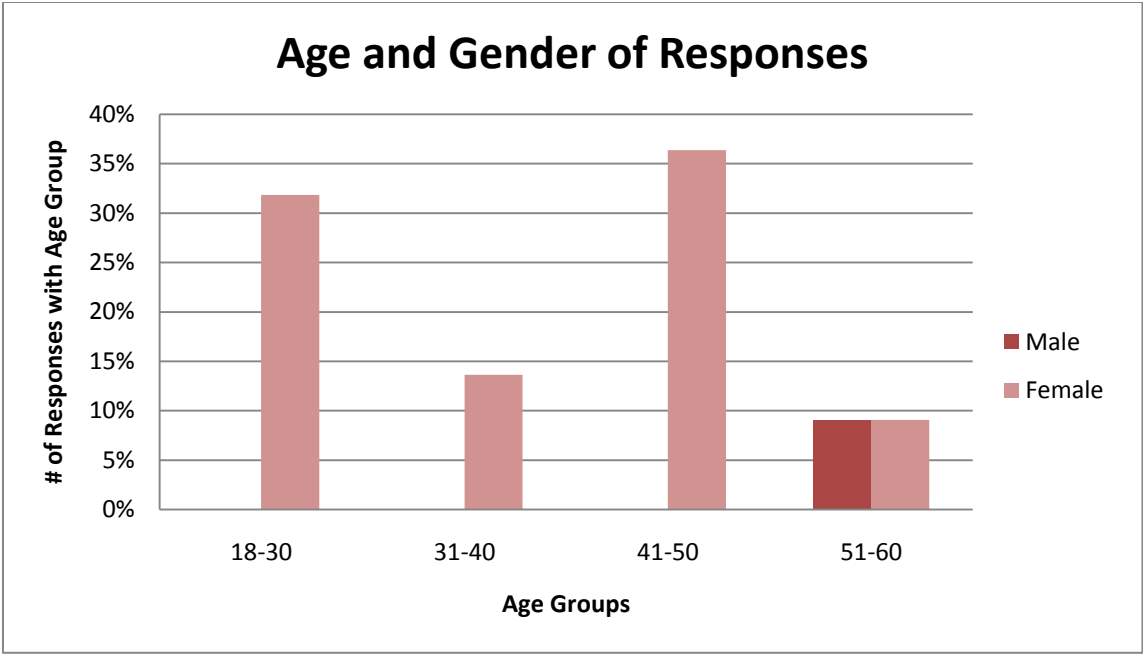
#### **6.1 Background Information on Residents**

Each survey was coded and tabulated to identify resident perceptions of others and safety and the types of networks used for interaction. The average tenure for residents of Frazier Courts is 2.5 years within the Frazier Neighborhood; however, this excludes four responses which indicated 30 or more years of tenure within the neighborhood. The longest tenure within the neighborhood was indicated at 37 years while the lowest was indicated at less than a year. A majority of residents indicated that they were former or current public housing residents (80% ) and within this group (N=23), only five responded that they were no longer receiving any form of federal, state, or local assistance.

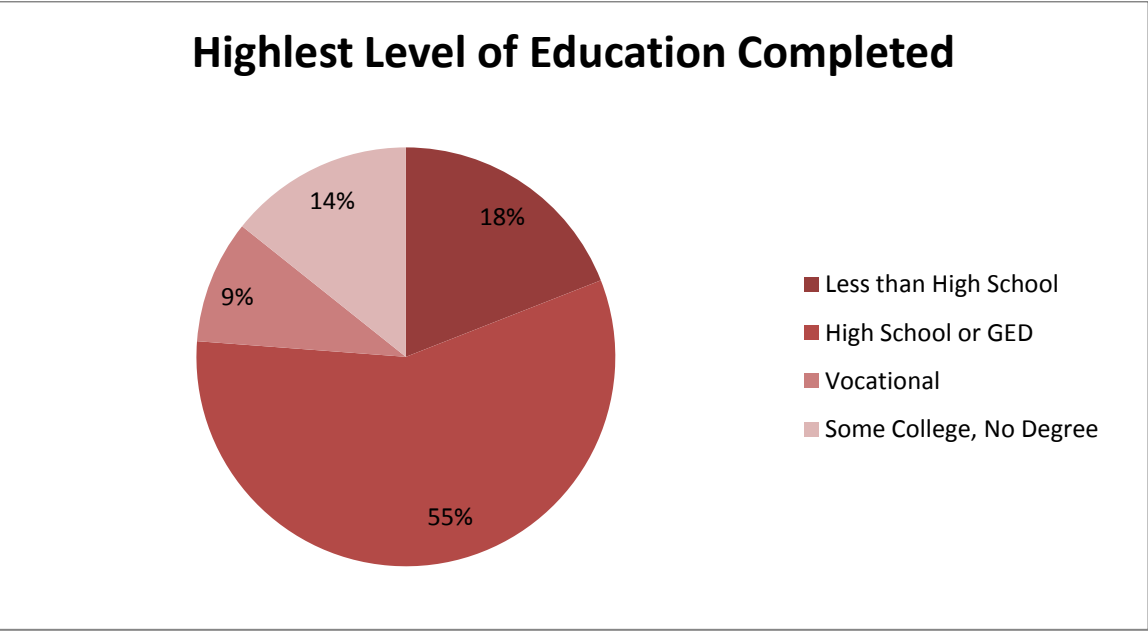
In the following pages, Figure 2 displays that 91% of individuals I encountered available for completing the survey were females. However, I did see many of the males either coming and going, or visiting with friends/neighbors within the development. Still, according to Census 2000 tract level data, females represented 57% or 2,334 of the total population for the area which contains the Frazier Courts development (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Therefore, the information reveals that interaction of residents with outsiders is normally done through females or those surveyed represent female headed households.

Additionally, the average household size including the survey taker was three persons per household which includes two responses indicating a six and seven person household. This was consistent with census tract level information indicating an average household size of 3.39 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

In regards to households having six or more individuals, one resident informed me that the resident would often care for the children of family members or close friends thus this may explain a resident's indication as having a large household. Furthermore, within my own personal observations I noticed many times children would enter occupied units without knocking which I would assume were the children's family or close friends. Therefore, the indication of a large household may also be based upon the inclusion of sporadic visitation from children and not permanent household members. Lastly, many of the residents indicated that their highest level of education as high school or GED followed by less than high school.



**Figure 2: Age and Gender of Responses**



**Figure 3: Highest level of Education Completed**

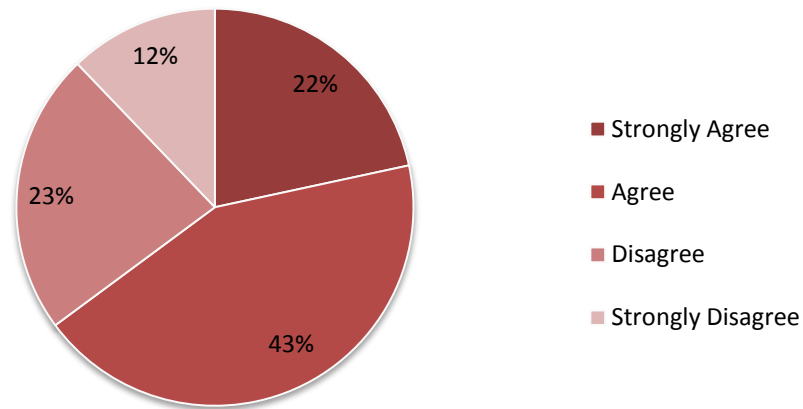


## **6.2 Safety and Perception of Others**

A majority of respondents indicated that they felt either safe or very safe within their neighborhood with three residents indicating they felt unsafe or very unsafe. However, when asked how safe residents felt at night, 10 residents indicated feeling unsafe or very unsafe within their neighborhood. The three individuals who felt unsafe during the day also felt unsafe during night, two of which expanded upon the issue of safety within the neighborhood. For one resident, there is a lack of police presence within the development itself. As a victim of a car break-in, the resident believes a stronger police presence not only along Hatcher Street, the main thoroughfare, but also within the development itself would likely stem some of the malevolent behavior. The other resident attributed the lack of safety to a general distrust of residents within the neighborhood. For this resident, seeing the actions of others within Frazier Courts led the resident to disengage from the neighborhood. Both of these residents indicated they would leave the Frazier Neighborhood if an opportunity came.

Despite this, when the results of question two are combined, over half of the residents indicated that they agree or strongly agree with the statement that “residents in their neighborhood are helpful, active through organizations, and respectful of neighbors”. This is shown in figure 4 on the following page.

**Do residents agree that others in their Neighborhood are: helpful, active in organizations, and respectful?**

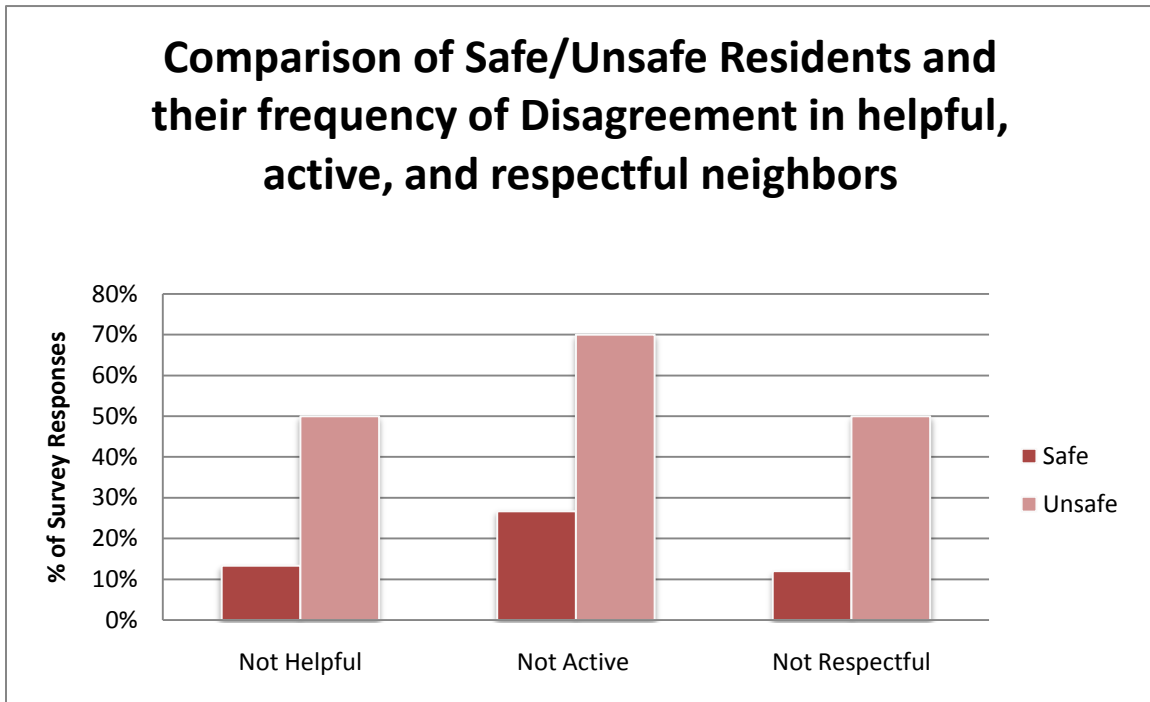


**Figure 4: Resident perceptions of others**

To further explore the issues of whether safety plays a part in how residents perceive others, I separated the respondents based upon their indication of an unsafe/very unsafe neighborhood. Within this sample, I then identified the frequency in which they indicated disagreement on whether residents in their neighborhood are helpful, active through organizations, or respectful of neighbors. The results are indicated on the following page in figure 5.

The results indicate residents who feel unsafe also have a tendency to perceive other residents as unhelpful, not active through organizations, and disrespectful of their neighbors. This coincides with previous literature suggesting that individuals within unsafe environments will tend to themselves in order to avoid trouble or shelter

themselves from outside influences. This withdrawal of behavior can inhibit a resident from interacting with others reducing the development of mutual understanding or trust which can contribute to a negative perception of others (residents are not helpful, not active through organizations, and not respectful of others).



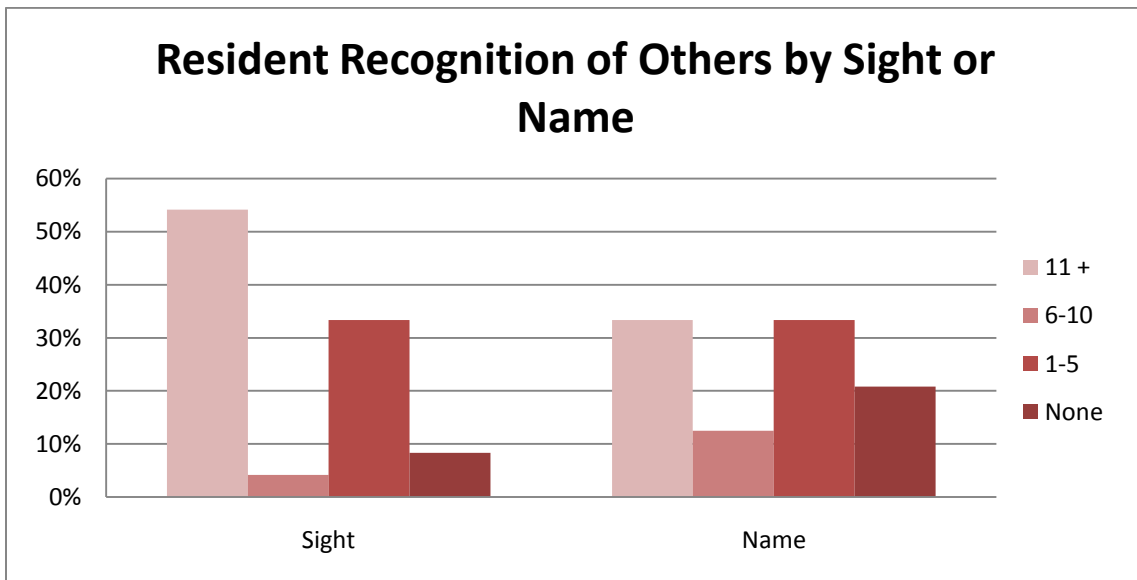
**Figure 5: Resident disagreement according to safety**

### **6.3 Networks and Interaction**

In the previous section, I suggested neighborhood safety played a role in forming resident perception of others and for the most part a majority of the residents held favorable views of others within their neighborhood. In this section and the following sections, I interpret the results of the survey to identify strong/weak networks and how these networks are utilized among residents.

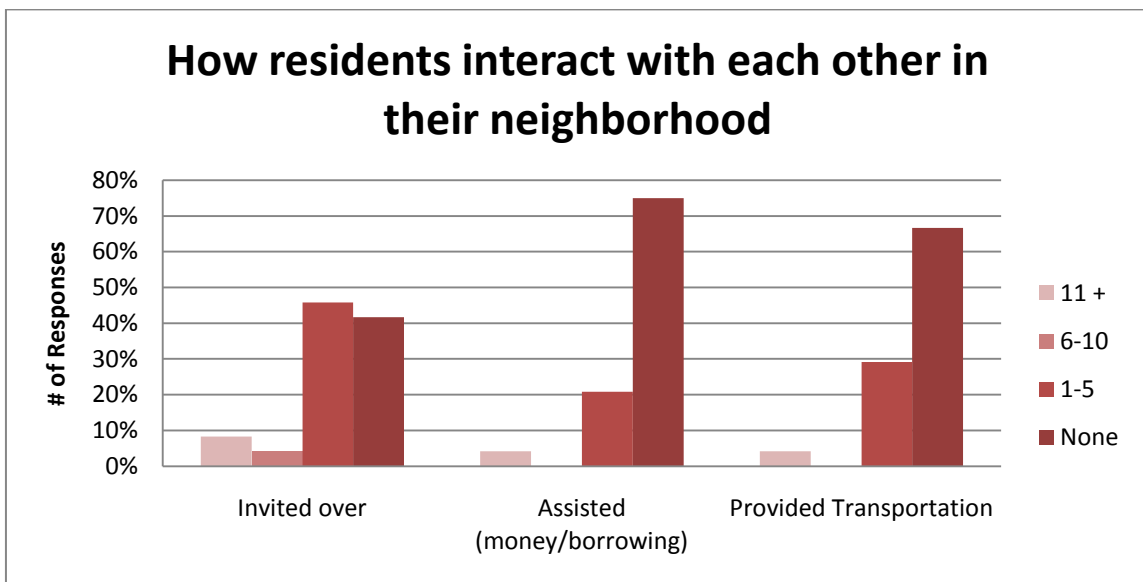
In question four of the survey, residents were asked how many other residents they would recognize by sight or by name and the number of residents that they have personally assisted through money/borrowing or provided transportation. The results of question four are broken into two parts shown in figure 6 and figure 7 on the following page.

In general, considering the favorable responses residents have of one another, we would expect residents to visually recognize the actions of others or acquaint themselves with others through name recognition. Figure 6 below shows that 54% of respondents are able to visually recognize eleven or more individuals within their neighborhood. When it comes to knowing individuals by name, the responses are split evenly between knowing 1 to 5 (33%) residents and 11 or more residents (33%).



**Figure 6: How many residents recognize others by sight or name**

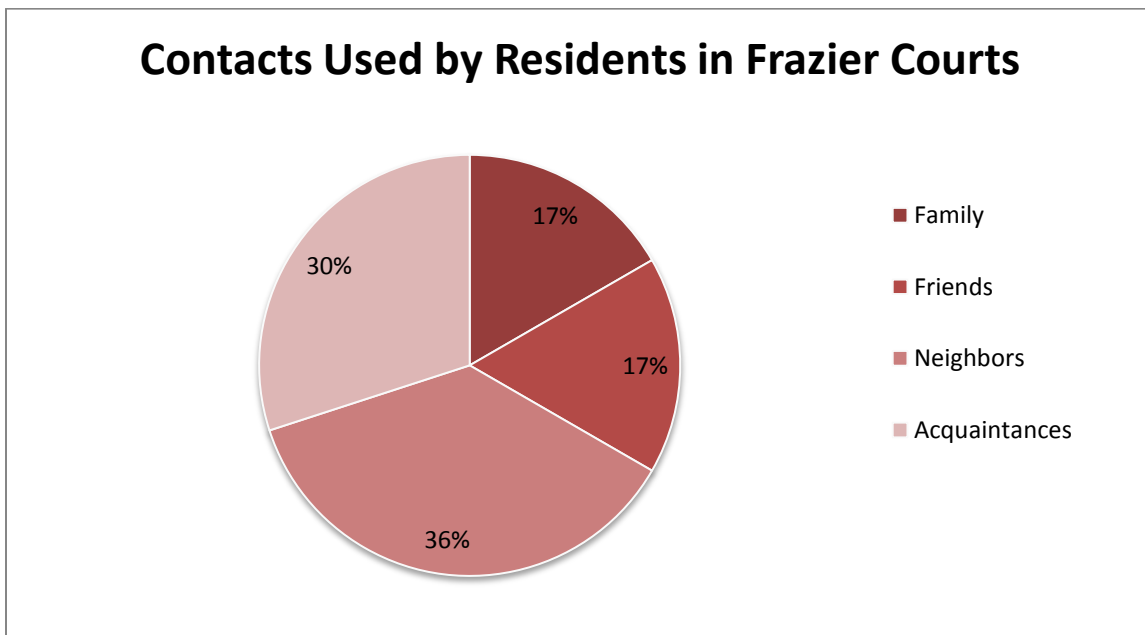
When asked if residents have invited others over to their house, 46% said they had invited 1 to 5 individuals followed by 42% indicating they had invited no one. Residents are also less inclined to assist others through money or borrowing with 75% of residents indicating they had provided assistance to no one; however, 30% of residents indicated they had provided transportation to at least 1 to 5 individuals within their neighborhood. The information given in figure 6 and figure 7 suggests that residents are aware of others but are not developing contact necessary to form a network in which to assist or help others.



**Figure 7: Resident interaction with others in neighborhood**

Residents were then asked if the previously mentioned types of interaction were mainly towards family, friends, neighbors, or acquaintances the results of which are presented in figure 8 on the following page. In the survey I defined an acquaintance as individuals who were friends of friends or co-workers in relation to the resident.

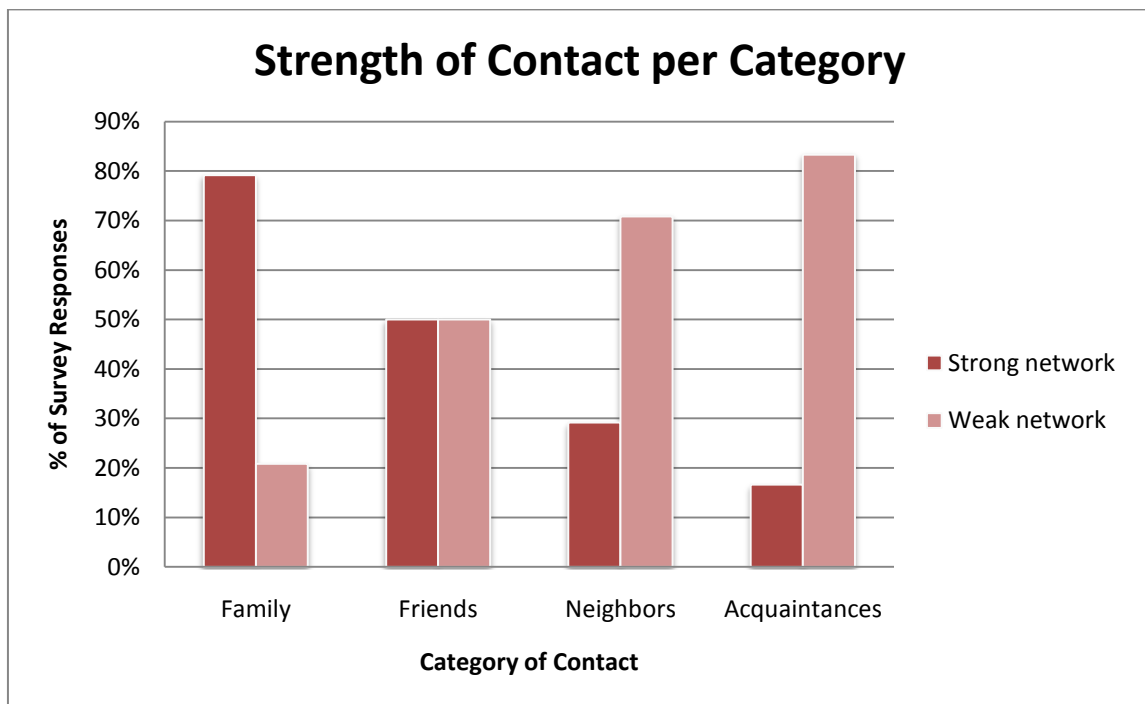
More than half of the residents indicated interaction with neighbors and acquaintances with 36% and 30% respectively. Interaction with family and friends were less prominent with less than 20% each. The results may indicate that many of the residents of Frazier Courts are non-related since there is little interaction among family members and also the prevalence of recognition by sight as opposed to name.



**Figure 8: Contacts Used by Residents in Frazier Courts**

Similar to previous literature in measuring the strength of a network, I asked residents to indicate the frequency in which they stayed in contact with family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. The survey measured frequency of contact using Very Often, Often, Somewhat Often and Rarely. I split the responses of Very Often and Often as a strong network, and Somewhat Often and Rarely as a weak network. The results are indicated in figure 9 on the following page.

Consistent with previous literature, many residents indicated frequent contact with family and friends; however, the frequency of contact with friends was split evenly at 50%. In this instance, I determined the strength of friends as either strong or weak within the context of each question. In regards to residents' frequency of contact with neighbors and acquaintances, these were less prominent indicating weaker networks. With this information we begin to see that interaction among residents is minimal and any indication of interaction tends to be limited to casually hanging out and inviting others over.



**Figure 9: Contact strength according to frequency of contact**

Knowing the strength of networks based on frequency of contact, residents were asked who they turn to for assistance or general help. The questions asked were similar to

commons issues and problems public housing residents encounter such as; assistance with utilities/rent, childcare, and household chores and maintenance among others. Additionally, residents were asked to whom they turn to for information on jobs or employment since Granovetter stresses the importance of weak ties in these instances.

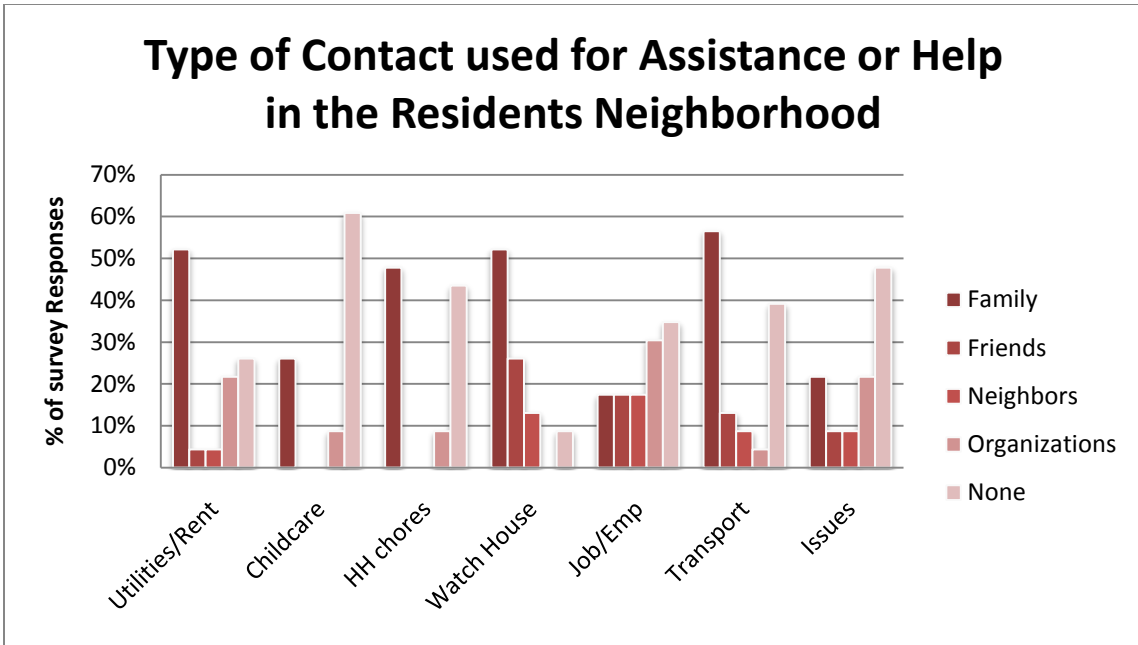
The categories within the survey remained the same except that acquaintances were replaced with support organizations. I did not identify support organizations as either a strong or weak network through frequency of contact as I did for previous categories. However for the purposes of analysis, I defined support organizations within the context of any entity providing help or assistance to residents such as; police, churches, employment agencies, housing authorities, food banks etc. Since these entities offer assistance or help on various schedules, we would assume visitation from the residents would be infrequent and/or non-recurring; therefore, I considered support organizations as weak networks. The types of contacts residents turn to are displayed in figure 9 and the percentage for each contact is presented in figure 10 in the following pages.

The results indicate that 52% of residents rely on family, their strong networks, when they are in need of financial help for utilities and rent. This supports previous literature and findings which suggest that since our strong networks tend to be more readily available; this helps to develop a chance for mutual confiding and/or benefits. The use of a strong network were also prevalent when residents needed help with household chores or maintenance, watching the house while they are away, and help with



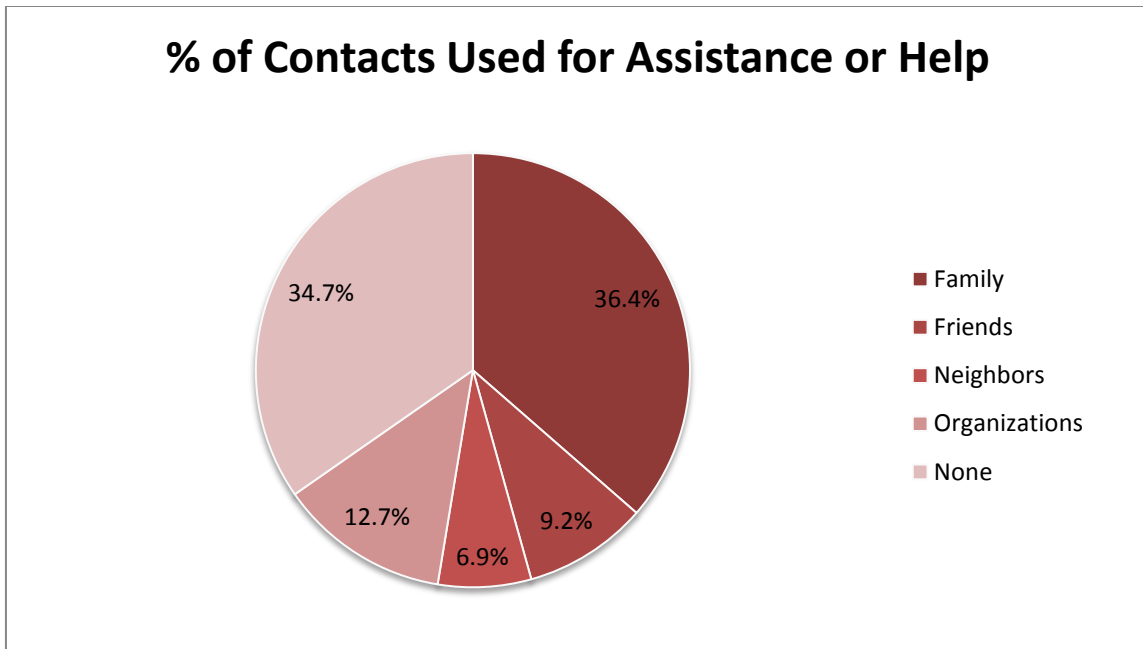
transportation. Again our strong networks are best suited for these tasks since we would not invite someone over without knowing their abilities or credentials.

In terms of using weak networks for finding jobs or employment roughly 34.8% indicated they did not connect with anybody followed by 30.4% for utilization of support organizations. The remaining forms of contact were evenly split at 17.4% each which may indicate that residents are indifferent towards family, friends, and neighbors when seeking help for jobs or employment. If we assign support organizations as a weak network then this would align with previous literature on the use of weak networks for job opportunities. Lastly, the prevalence of residents not seeking help for childcare can indicate a few things. For instance, the 60.9% of residents that did not seek help with childcare may be the result of residents taking responsibility for their own personal matters, or the residents not having a strong network in which to turn to for such matters. In both scenarios, the lack of a network may create strain for the resident and/or their family.



**Figure 10: Contacts within resident’s neighborhood used for assistance or help**

Figure 11 in the following page indicates the number of times as a percentage a resident indicated a particular contact; family, friends, neighbors, organizations, or none. The results indicate that residents will connect with family, a strong network at 36.4% followed by 34.7% of residents indicating they do not connect with any network. Residents are also less inclined to use their weak networks: neighbors 6.9%, support organizations 12.7% and friends 9.2%. The results also indicate that a resident’s strong reliance on one particular network creates a “Yes or No” situation in that if a resident cannot receive assistance or help through family, they opt out in seeking help at all.



**Figure 11: Percent of Contacts used for assistance or help**

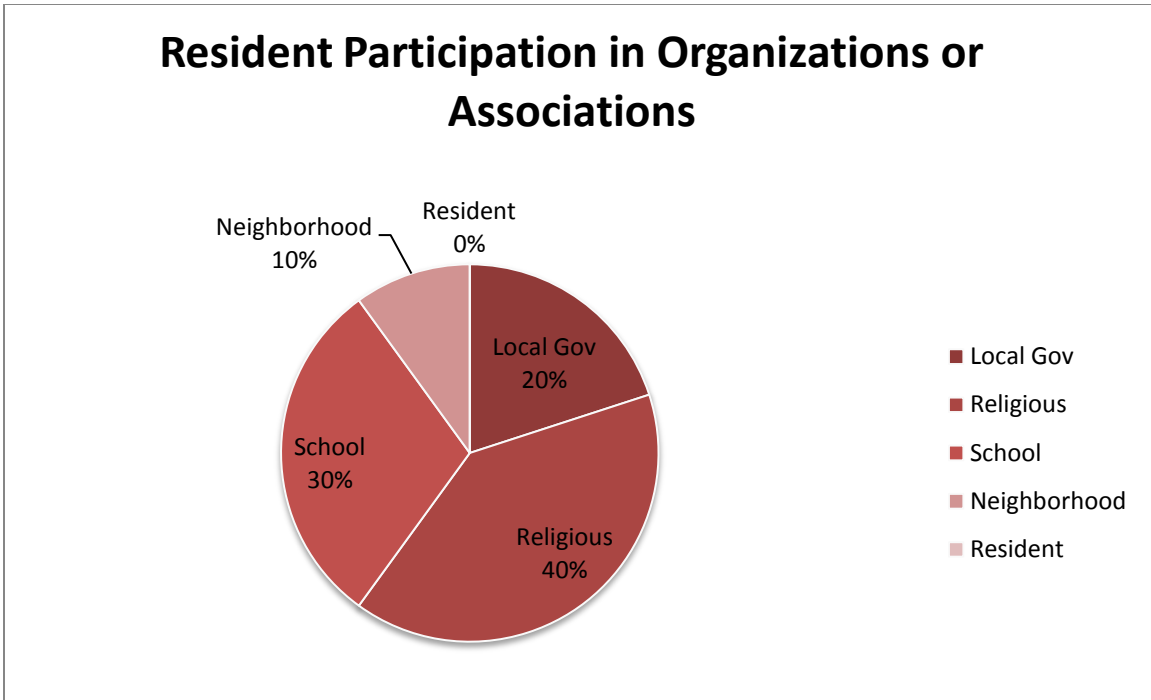
#### **6.4 Resident Participation in Organizations or Associations**

Earlier I discussed how a resident’s perception of others within the neighborhood can be shaped according to safety of the neighborhood which can lead to limited interaction. Furthermore, I highlighted that many residents placed reliance on one form of connection rather than branching out and using other networks. To understand how much of the interaction or lack thereof is a result of the residents themselves, I asked residents how active they are in various organizations or associations: local government, religious organizations, and school, neighborhood, and tenant/resident associations. Since participation in the aforementioned organizations or associations requires the initiative of the residents themselves, the results may provide insight into the willingness of residents to interact among others. Additionally, participation in organizations or associations

allows for residents to connect with individuals outside their neighborhood which can form links to other networks. The results of resident participation are displayed in figure 12 on the following page.

A majority of residents indicated they were involved in religious organizations followed by school associations with 40% and 30% respectively. Very few residents were active in local government or neighborhood associations with 20% and 10% respectively. No one indicated any participation with tenant/resident associations. I asked three residents if a tenant/resident association existed since it was common for HOPE VI developments to contain one, the residents I asked were unaware of the existence of any association.

Many of the residents I spoke with expressed the importance of staying involved with school associations for the needs of their children and to meet other parents with similar household compositions. In regards to religious organizations, one resident referenced that conducting the surveys on Sundays would be a bad idea since many residents would be involved with church and familial matters. Nevertheless, the percent of participation in the aforementioned associations/organizations is low and any involvement did not seem to show up in my earlier analysis in the strengths of networks. Specifically, we would expect residents to have a stronger network of friends than indicated due to the participation in the aforementioned organizations or associations.



**Figure 12: Resident Participation in Organizations or Associations**

**6.5 Summary of Analysis**

When viewed comprehensively, I can make assumptions about the residents’ interactions and the networks used and how they relate to previous literature. For instance, a majority of the residents who participated in the survey were female with high school education or GED as their highest level of education consistent with previous literature (X. Briggs 2005) (Buron, et al. 2002). If one views education as a proxy for opportunities towards mobility, particularly career advancement, then Frazier Courts contains a significant concentration of individuals facing limited opportunities towards mobility. Therefore, the goal of placing low-income residents in contact with middle-income residents does not occur or at least, was not reflected in the surveys. The small

number of surveys collected and also a lack of interest from a diverse population to move into the Frazier Courts area may attribute to the results.

Then there is also the issue that a majority of residents surveyed were female. Since I conducted the survey during the day time, many of the females may have felt at ease answering to visitors because as mentioned earlier a majority of residents felt very safe within their neighborhood during the day time. Although there was not a follow up question about the head of household, it highlights that females are the first point of contact with visitors.

Neighborhood safety also played a part in how residents perceived others. Safety was mainly a concern during night time since the 10 respondents that indicated night time as unsafe/very unsafe also indicated a safe/very safe neighborhood during the day time. These 10 individuals were also more likely to disagree that their neighbors were willing to help one another, active through organizations, and respectful of neighbors. The lack of safety may force individuals to become withdrawn from others limiting time to interact with others and possibly create favorable perceptions.

When we view the networks utilized, residents rely strongly on family as a network for help or assistance which can limit a resident's opportunities to connect with new networks or information. Within the neighborhood, residents did not seem to connect with neighbors or friends for help or assistance which may be attributable to low tenure rates. However, connecting with neighbors or friends may open up new resources

possibly for childcare since no one indicated requesting help, and also transportation in case family members are not always available.

When it came to personal matters, family was the preferred contact for financial assistance with utilities/rent, household chores and maintenance, and watching over the house while the resident is away. Residents also indicated that often times they did not seek help at all which may indicate a lack of availability among friends/neighbors or limited interaction as well. The result is a “Yes or No” situation in which if the resident is unable to receive assistance or help they do not reach out to other individuals or organizations.

In terms of resident activity, residents were most likely to be involved in school associations and religious organizations. This helped residents become involved with their children’s needs and become involved through church. However, the participation in these associations and organizations did not seem to translate into creation of stronger networks. This may be supported by the resident’s lack of initiative or willingness to interact with others. Specifically, the high incidence of residents able to recognize 11 or more individuals by sight but only a minimal by name reflects limited interaction among residents within the neighborhood.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### **7.1 Summary and Remarks**

There is no doubt that the HOPE VI program has created better living conditions for residents of Frazier Courts as evidenced through the physical shape of the development. To the casual observer there is only a difference in housing styles, one-storey, two-storey, and townhomes, with no physical distinction between the subsidized and unsubsidized units. Inside the development children can be seen playing in playgrounds located throughout or coming and going from various units. Therefore visually, it would seem that the stigma of isolation or segregation normally associated with public housing has been ameliorated through physical design. However, reducing the HOPE VI program as a redevelopment tool draws similarities to the era of urban renewal and so HOPE VI has also meant addressing the needs of residents through self-sufficiency programs and the creation of inclusive communities.

Inclusive in that the new development would blend in with the neighborhood, welcome a variety of incomes, but most importantly provide opportunities to low-income individuals. These “opportunities” would be advanced to low-income individuals by way of interacting amongst those with affluence, contacts, and resources beyond the reach of low-income individuals. This assumes of course residents will interact amongst each



other and as my thesis examines, this is not the case within the Frazier Courts development.

## **7.2 Comparison of Residents to previous studies**

Specifically, my thesis set out to examine the strength of the networks utilized by residents within Frazier Courts and how residents use their networks to interact. As expected, many of the residents indicated strong networks with their family (79 %) and friends (50%) and weaker networks with neighbors (71%) and acquaintances (83%). This is consistent with Granovetter's theory on networks in that our strong ties involve larger time commitments which allow for mutual understanding and benefits to develop (Granovetter 1973). However, he also stresses the importance of weak ties (neighbors and acquaintances) in the diffusion of information especially for opportunities for mobility in the labor market (Granovetter 1983). Still, identifying the strength of a network only helps categorize networks, it is the context in which they are utilized that is important.

In my review of public housing, interaction amongst individuals relied heavily upon family and friends for help or assistance such as payment for rent, utilities, or childcare. For example Venkatesh and Celimli 2004 study indicated that 76% of public housing residents of the Robert Taylor Homes friends were comprised of other public housing residents. In Gibson's 2007 study, residents felt the enclosed nature of the Columbia Villa public housing helped create a greater sense of community among residents and a sense of safety for their children. Yet, residents within Frazier Courts did not exhibit the above characteristics. Only 36% of residents relied on family for support

followed by 35% indicating no support needed and 7% for neighbors and 9% for friends. The results are problematic because many of the residents have only been in the neighborhood for an average of 2.5 years; thus, they may be more likely to need assistance or help. One resident spoke to me about a local church or organization that would provide meals to the neighborhood, but once she moved into the Frazier Courts units, she was unaware if the program still existed and will likely be unable to find out from her new neighbors. Additionally, residents themselves exhibit little initiative to involve with others through organizations with only 40% indicating involvement through religious organizations followed by school associations with 30%.

Perhaps indicative to a lack of interaction among residents is the issue of safety and how it affects the perceptions of others. Although my survey did not extensively review the issues of safety, it does reveal that a lack of safety contributes to negative perceptions of others. Specifically, the 10 residents who indicated an unsafe/very unsafe neighborhood also tended to disagree that residents were willing to help others, be active in organizations, or be respectful of neighbors. One resident explained to me her frustration with the lack of police presence which led to her car being broken in to. For her, if the task of increasing police presence in the neighborhood could not be accomplished then nothing would; thus, she did not care for others and would eventually seek residence elsewhere. The same resident also explained that management was rude and not receptive to issues regarding property maintenance. In fact, I did notice two housing units that had been boarded up and the physical deterioration on the façade of many housing units. If these issues are left unchecked, Frazier Courts may enter into

decline like its predecessor they replaced. Therefore it would seem prudent to increase police protection and improve management if not only to address resident's needs, but also to promote interaction within the Frazier Courts development.

### **7.3 Policy Recommendations**

Paul Brophy and Rhonda Smith (1997) in their case study of seven mixed-income development identify factors that can contribute to the success of programs that seek income integration such as HOPE VI. In their review, a recurring theme was the issue of strong management and safety. Specifically, their discussion on the Harbor Point development in Boston, Massachusetts highlights that management regularly sponsors a meet and greet with incoming residents. This helps newcomers understand the expectations of living at Harbor Point but also a chance to interact with other residents. Management at The Jones Family Apartments located in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, which contains a diverse mix of residents, works to promote interaction through celebrations and community meetings, but also tends to the residents personal needs by providing an onsite social worker (Brophy and Smith 1997). Lastly, all of the developments studied ensure security by contracting with private companies or through secured access to and from the developments.

Future programs that require redevelopment should emphasis the need for strong management to ensure the stability of residents and the neighborhood as a whole. Program participants should be able to identify which steps will be taken to ensure the program will continue long after funding has ceased. Furthermore, programs should

realize that the needs of the residents will change over time and management should be able to address these needs. For example, HOPE VI requires the creation of a self-sufficiency program and for Frazier Courts; the Head Start Facility located on site addresses this issue through emphasis on health and education of low-income individuals. However, focusing on one approach may neglect the needs of current and future residents of the area. For instance, the redeveloped Columbia Villa units of Portland, now named New Columbia, provides many opportunities for resident advancement. New Columbia provides spaces for birthday parties, celebrations, a career center, a youth development program, trade apprenticeship programs and the development is LEED certified (Portland Housing Authority 2010). Obviously, not every development will have the resources to be as comprehensive, but program participants should be attuned to the resident's needs as they change over time. Emphasis should be given to program participants that can outline a plan that shows program stability through effective management and how they will address resident's needs over time.

Specific to Frazier Courts, the creation of a resident association or council will allow for residents to interact and talk with others about issues or concerns. A few residents I spoke with were unaware of any such association or organization but expressed interest in creating one. Also, this may help to reduce crime as residents begin to work towards the interest of their neighborhood.

The HOPE VI program and the Frazier Courts development, can serve as a catalyst towards neighborhood revitalization, but only if residents feel their efforts are

worthwhile. Perhaps once residents begin to see the visible changes within the neighborhood they will be more inclined to connect and work together to support their neighborhood.

APPENDIX A  
FRAZIER COURTS RESIDENT SURVEY

## Frazier Courts Survey

**1. How long have you lived in the Frazier Courts Area? \_\_\_\_\_.**

**2. In general, residents in my neighborhood...**

Are willing to help one another?

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

Are active through Organizations?

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

Are respectful of their neighbors?

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

**3. How safe do you feel within your neighborhood?**

At home alone during day time?  Very Unsafe  Unsafe  Safe  Very Safe

At home alone during night time?  Very Unsafe  Unsafe  Safe  Very Safe

**4. How many residents in your neighborhood...**

Would you recognize by sight?  None  1-5  6-10  11 or more

Do you know on a first-name basis?  None  1-5  6-10  11 or more

Have you invited over to your house?  None  1-5  6-10  11 or more

Have you provided assistance to through money or borrowing?

None  1-5  6-10  11 or more

Have you provided help with transportation?  None  1-5  6-10  11 or more

**5. In regards to question 4, a majority of the individuals were? (Mark all that apply)**

Family  Friends  Neighbors  Acquaintances (coworkers, friends of friends)

**6. How often do you stay in contact with the following individuals?**

Family?  Very Often  Often  Somewhat Often  Rarely

Friends?  Very Often  Often  Somewhat Often  Rarely

Neighbors?  Very Often  Often  Somewhat Often  Rarely

Acquaintances? (Co-workers, friends of friends)

Very Often  Often  Somewhat Often  Rarely

**7. When you need help or assistance, who do you turn to for the following?**

Family  Friends  Neighbors  Support Organizations  I do not seek help

Help with utilities or rent?

Help with Childcare?

Help with household chores or maintenance?

Help watching the house while you are away?

Help with finding jobs or employment?

Help with transportation?

Concerns or issues with the neighborhood?

**8. How active are you in the following?**

Not active  Somewhat Active  Active  Very Active

Local Government

Religious Organizations

School Associations

Neighborhood Associations

Tenant/Resident Associations

**9. Do you own or rent?**

Own  Rent



**10. What is your highest level of education completed?**

- Less than high school    High School or GED    Vocational  
 Some College, no Degree    Associates Degree    Bachelors Degree  
 Graduate or Professional Degree

**11. What is your Age and Gender?**

- Male    Female  
 18-30    31-40    41-50    51-60    Over 60

**12. Including yourself, how many are in your household? \_\_\_\_\_.**

**13. Do you currently receive any federal, state, or local assistance?**

- Yes    No

**14. Are you a current or former public housing resident?**

- Yes    No

**Thank you for your time and participation in this survey. The information you provide will help me complete my research on the HOPE VI program in Dallas.**

APPENDIX B  
RESIDENT CONSENT FORM

**HOPE VI – Informed Consent**

I am a graduate student at the University of Texas at Arlington working on my Masters on City and Regional Planning. I am conducting a study on neighborhood perceptions and social interaction among residents in the Frazier Courts Area. The survey will ask you questions on neighborhood residents and safety, your interaction with family, friends, and neighbors, and your general household information.

The survey should take no more than fifteen (15) minutes to complete and participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to answer as many or as few questions as you like, and the information you provide will help me in my research study. Furthermore, any information that you provide will remain confidential and will not be disclosed, other than to provide evidence of resident participation in the survey and research. Lastly, no information contained within the survey shall be associated with an individual’s identity.

In order to acknowledge that you understand the purpose of the survey and that I have answered all questions and/or concerns that you may have, Please sign below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Resident (Signature please)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Christopher Buentello is a native of San Marcos, Texas where upon graduation from San Marcos High School attended Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. While at Texas Tech University, Christopher achieved Dean's list five consecutive semesters eventually leading to a Bachelors of Arts in Geography and a minor in Economics in 2007. In 2008 Christopher pursued a graduate degree in city and regional planning at the University of Texas at Arlington focusing on community and economic development with specific attention towards affordable and public housing. In December of 2010, Christopher received a Masters in City and Regional Planning from the School of Urban and Public Affairs.