

PART I: INTRODUCTION: SO IT BEGINS

CHAPTER ONE JUST GETTING STARTED

By the early 1990s, public housing was widely regarded as a failure, trapping tens of thousands of extremely low-income families in crumbling, problem-plagued developments with neighborhood poverty rates upwards of 40 percent
Ascribe Newswire, 2002

1.0 The Start of My Journey

Prior to beginning this qualitative dissertation, I held a view of public housing quite similar to that expressed by the above epigram—although in truth I don't remember thinking much about public housing because it was so beyond my world. I didn't know anyone who had lived in public housing nor had I ever visited a public housing community. Little did I realize then that eventually I would write a dissertation about the very topics with which I previously had so little experience. How I made the transition from indifference to or stereotypical perspectives on public housing to a dissertation on the topic actually began with a very simple act: helping a friend.

In 1998, after my friend Derek said his wife needed volunteers at the Resolution Action Center (RAC), I began my training, training that would become the first step in my journey toward a deeper understanding of public housing communities. For over ten years the center has trained hundreds of people in the principles of conflict resolution and has provided mediation for over 700 disputes¹.

To increase the community's capacity to resolve disputes effectively, the RAC conducts several programs and workshops throughout the state. One community with which the center has worked especially closely is public housing. To support such work, the center has received a Resident Opportunity and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) grant from

¹ Quite simply, mediation is an informal and voluntary process for working through interpersonal or group conflicts: through it, people can resolve conflict without going to court or hiring a lawyer.

the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a type of funding developed from the Public Housing Reform Act (PHRA) of 1998, which initiated reforms aimed at creating mixed-income communities. The program initiatives are intended to promote self-sufficiency, enhance quality of life for public housing residents, and create personal responsibility in communities. With this grant money, the RAC was supposed to increase the ability of public housing residents to resolve conflicts effectively and non-violently, thereby enhancing their ability to become economically self-sufficient and improving their quality of life.

My job was to enhance the general mediation model so as to make it appropriate for the types of disputes typically found in public housing neighborhoods. As I started working on my section of the grant, two problems arose: I discovered that the conflicts found in public housing differed from the disputes I had mediated and that the mediation strategies I had learned were not an appropriate cultural “fit.”² In order to create a mediation model, I realized that I needed a better understanding of the context in which the conflicts arose. After all, as a sociologist I have learned that attitudes, behaviors, values and beliefs are "always situated within and shaped by the social context of relationships among people who share the experience of belonging to a community" (Smith, Littlejohns, and Thompson, 2001:34). No doubt this is true of conflicts as well.

As a result of this realization, my ideas about a new mediation model metamorphosed into a dissertation topic about community within a public housing context. This topic, I reasoned, should be feasible project, since the RAC worked closely

² The mediation strategies I learned were appropriate for dealing with the business and corporate culture; tenant and landlords in the private sector; custody issues; and divorces.

with the Ridgeway Housing Authority³, a situation that gave me access to and a legitimate standing with public housing residents and administrators.

My background reading for this research reassured me that my focus on community within the public housing context was indeed on track. For example, when I read literature about public housing distributed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), I noticed that the agency itself stresses the concept of “community.” In its mission statement, strategic goals and planning document, as well as throughout its web site, HUD uses such terms as *community development*, *community empowerment*, and *self-sufficiency through community*. Even in its 2004 fiscal budget report, HUD writes that it offers “new opportunities for communities nationwide to generate renewal growth and prosperity through programs that promote local decision-making” (HUD, 2003).

I began this project with the goal of including all of the public housing communities in the city of Ridgeway.⁴ Through my affiliation with the RAC, I met with several of the managers at the different public housing sites, attended site-based, joint resident council and other general community meetings, spoke with the executive director and members of the housing authority, and began going to resident council meetings. After a time, my face became known in all the public housing communities, and I realized I had cultivated a sizable and valuable network of contacts. At my idea of exploring all the communities, however, my advisor laughed. With such a large subject

³ The city of Ridgeway is where this study takes place. The Ridgeway Housing Authority owns and operates all the public housing facilities in the city. Ridgeway is a pseudonym. For a discussion of pseudonyms and other confidentiality issues, see Chapter Two.

⁴ There are between 8-12 public housing communities in the city of Ridgeway. I am not giving the exact number as a small effort to disguise the location of Ridgeway. Issues of confidentiality are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

base, how would it be possible to produce the sort of intensive research document I envisioned? Finally, I had to admit that I am not a one-person army: I needed to focus on *one* of the communities with which I had become familiar.

In qualitative research, selection of a case can be based on a variety of criteria. For example, a case can be selected because it portrays something uncommon or is considered typical, because it is rich in information or is political, because it offers accessible and readily-available informants, or because of the intensity of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 1990; Stake, 2000). To select my community, Rivertown,⁵ I used practical and personal reasons, both reasons having positive implications for the quality of the data collected. My choice was practical: this location offered me easy access to a nearby community where my presence was already established through my work with the RAC. I knew that having such access would allow me to understand and study the uniqueness and complexities of this particular community in public housing in great detail with far greater intensity than researching a community without such access.

My choice was also personal. Qualitative researchers are well aware of the importance of status characteristics and how they affect every aspect of qualitative research (Bailey, 1996). My status characteristics certainly were a factor in how I selected Rivertown as my subject of study. Of the managers I met, only two were African-American women. The manager of Rivertown, Vanessa,⁶ was the younger of the two women, and as a 28-year-old black woman, I found that I was more comfortable with her. Our rapport seemed to provide the basis for a more fruitful research experience.

⁵ Rivertown is a pseudonym. A discussion of this and all pseudonyms and confidentiality issues is presented in Chapter Two.

⁶ Vanessa is a pseudonym.

Once I had settled on a particular community, I revisited my initial plan of studying the community of Rivertown. As I looked again at the HUD writings that emphasized the concept of community, I had to ask myself: what do they mean by “community” and how do they expect “community” to be developed? I began to wonder whether HUD’s consistent, repeated use of the term actually means there really is *no* community in public housing at present or that the concept is an idealized one, potential yet currently unachieved. Or is the type of community that currently exists in public housing a negative one that needs constant fixing or “tweaking” because it does not in its present form meet HUD’s or society’s norms and standards of community? These and other questions led me to realize that I could not study “the community” without a better idea of what is meant by this term. With this realization, my dissertation topic morphed from a study of “the community” to what is meant by community within the public housing context of Rivertown.

With my research interest refined from a general study of community in public housing to the more limited issues of how community is defined and developed in Rivertown, I started conducting preliminary interviews. Although I had decided on Rivertown, I thought insight from the other managers of the different housing communities might provide my study with essential background. One of my first interviews was with Tyler Jones.⁷ While Tyler provided useful information regarding several areas of investigation, he repeatedly returned our conversation to the topic of “site-based meetings,” saying such things as the following:

“At site-based meetings....you know and see what our community wants.”

“Site-based means everything is done.”

⁷ “Tyler Jones” is a pseudonym.

“Site-based meetings have full control over our properties.”

“You need to come to a site-based meeting.”

When I reread my field notes prior to analysis, it was clear that I had become increasingly frustrated by Tyler’s single-minded fixation on site-based meetings. I had written:

“That man gave me a headache, I didn’t get the response I wanted and he kept talking about site-based meetings.”

“ Almost every other word was site-based meetings. I asked about a shooting death that happened in the community and he talked about the resident council.”

“I can’t believe this man asked me to help out with his site-based meetings. He wants to put me to work.”

“This man scheduled the next site-based meeting around me because he wants me there. I don’t think so.”

Today, I am somewhat embarrassed to read my own reactions to his emphasis on site-based meetings. Fortunately, however, I know such feelings are not uncommon among qualitative researchers. For example, Van Maanen (1982:107) admitted how embarrassed he was that his early field notes, conducted at the beginning of his study, expressed his “loathing” for police.

Although each of the communities I initially considered were vastly different, as I interviewed other managers, I in fact began to discover a relatively widespread emphasis on site-based meetings. At the advice of these managers I decided to attend some site-based meetings to gather background material.

Attendees at the site-based meetings generally consisted of resident council members, the manager, maintenance personnel, and Community-Oriented Police

Enforcement (COPE) officers. After attending several site-based meetings at the various communities, however, I noticed that forming the heart of these meetings were members of the resident councils. The nonresidents who attended the site-based meeting directed the majority of their comments and questions toward council members. In fact, it was not uncommon for the resident council members to be the only members of the community in attendance. It seemed clear to me that if site-based meetings were the source of insight into this community, the lens would be the resident council.

As I continued my reading of HUD materials, I noticed that they too stressed the importance of resident councils as a means to develop community; residential councils were, as it turns out, initially organized and supported by the agency in order to involve residents more fully in building their communities. HUD and the Housing Authority (HA) also have actual policies that not only stress but support residential councils.

After attending the site-based meetings and reviewing more HUD policies, I could not shake the feeling that HUD was expecting a great deal from the residential councils. I begin to wonder if the residential council in Rivertown was able to build community as HUD implied they should, and if they were, what activities did they engage in that lead to community building. If they were not, why not? Was their role purely symbolic? I was curious if they had a role in creating the policies and laws that stress community building and rules that governed them. I found myself wanting to know if the various parties—HUD and Housing Authority officials and, the council members themselves—agreed that seeking community was an important goal for the residential council and if following the policies was the best way for the residential council to meet the goals. Was there agreement among all parties in their interpretation of the policies and the practices of the

residential council or were there areas of disagreement. With these and other questions, I had finally arrived at the beginning of this research.

The purpose of this research is to describe and explain any possible disjunction between HUD's expectations for the resident council as an active agent for community building and the actual practices of the resident council. As I will explain later, to guide this research, I will use a conceptual framework that combines critical race theory with a scholar activist methodology. I will explore the following central research questions with the resident council members, housing authority officials, managers, and community service workers:

1. What are the HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?
2. How do the managers, Rivertown Resident Council members, housing authority officials, and community workers interpret HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?
3. Are there areas of disjunction among the interpretation of various constituencies, the practices of the resident council, and the HUD and housing authority written policies that govern the community building activities of the resident council? If so, how can they be explained?
4. How could the daily lives and experiences of the Rivertown Resident Council members in their interactions with housing authority, managers, and community workers promote community-building activities?

The next chapter of this dissertation will discuss the methodological approach I will use to accomplish this research. The chapter will introduce, define, and discuss the Scholar Activist Paradigm, qualitative research, ethnographic case study, and Critical Race Theory.

CHAPTER TWO METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This chapter describes the methodological procedures used to explore the effectiveness of resident councils for building community in public housing. It also explains how the research questions are embedded in the Scholar Activist Approach and Critical Race Theory.

2.0 Paradigms

Paradigms, which form the backbone of any research, help us “understand the nature of sociological knowledge” (Wells and Picou, 1981). They refer to the set of beliefs or worldviews that guide action (Creswell, 1998; Guba, 1990; Kuhn, 1970). The paradigm of the knower (researcher) determines the nature of “scientific investigation,” such as the types of questions that will be asked, how they will be answered, and how they will be analyzed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also discuss how paradigmatic assumptions will mold how problems that result from the inquiry are defined, identified, and analyzed.

I am using a Scholar Activist Paradigm⁸ and corresponding methodology for my research. The Scholar Activist approach and its methodology are guided by three primary elements: centeredness, critical analysis, and empowerment.⁹

⁸ Dr. Terry Kershaw developed Scholar Activist Approach. The approach is embedded in black studies and sociological disciplines

⁹ Throughout this dissertation I use the terms *Scholar Activist Approach (SAA)* and *Scholar Activist Paradigm (SAP)* interchangeably.

2.1 Centeredness

Centeredness, which is situating research and theory in the life chances and experiences of the subject, is essential to the SAP. This concept of *centeredness* also includes becoming grounded in the history and culture of the subject. Kershaw (2003) established three main questions that serve as a guide for centered research:

- How do people describe their lives?
- What would they want their lives to be like?
- What do they see as obstacles preventing them from living the lives they want to live?

These questions not only serve as a guide for centered research but also make operational the central research questions pursued by this study (See interview questions for further details). For the purposes of this research, the questions for the residential council members derived from SAP are:

- How do residential council members describe the current situation of the resident council and its ability to engage in community building activities?
- What would the resident council members want the council to be like?
- What do the resident council members see as obstacles preventing the resident council from having the type of council and engaging in community building activities that they want?

Slightly modified, but parallel, questions are asked of the housing authority officials, community workers, and managers.

Although these questions are the over-arching questions from SAP, given the ethnographic nature of this research, the unstructured and structured nature of my interviews, my more specific research questions, and the fluid nature of qualitative research, I asked many additional questions and modified versions of the above three questions during the actual course of this research.

One way to be centered during research is to use storytelling as a major form of data collection. Storytelling is an important feature of both the black studies paradigm and for gathering qualitative data in general. Ambert (1995:6) eloquently reiterates the power of storytelling:

Above all, the richness of the quotes, the clarity of examples, and the depth of illustrations in a qualitative study should serve to highlight the most salient features of the data. Evaluations of what has been included in this respect should be made on the basis of how these data illuminate and give readers a sense of being there, visualizing the [groups] members, feeling their conflicts and emotions, and absorbing the flavor of the....setting.

Patricia Hill Collins, Patricia Williams, Kimberle Crenshaw, bell hooks, Joyce Lander, and Angela Davis have all interwoven storytelling to enrich the academic rigor of their disciplines. Academics of color who have been on the margins have used this technique because the voices of the people they are studying have long been dismissed or thought of as invalid. Storytelling generally falls within the rubric of qualitative research. Consistent with the emphasis on storytelling, I used qualitative techniques to become centered in the lives and perspectives of resident council members, housing authority officials, managers, and community workers.

2.1.1 What is Qualitative Research?

To gather a rich understanding of how resident councils create, expand, and maintain community, this research utilized a qualitative methodological framework. Defining qualitative research can be difficult because the "field . . . is far from a unified set of principles" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: ix). Despite its interdisciplinary nature and complexities, qualitative research can be defined as "multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter . . . attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2). The goal of qualitative research is to discover patterns that emerge from symbols, social structures, language, and so forth (Berg, 2001).

Qualitative research requires the ability to look at a situation from different dimensions. Berg referred to this method of understanding social reality as "triangulation". Morse (1998:66) explains the importance of triangulation:

Different 'lenses' or perspectives result from the use of different methods, often more than one method may be used within a project so the researcher can gain a more holistic view of the setting. Two or more qualitative methods may be used sequentially or simultaneously, provided the analysis is kept separate and the methods are not muddled.

Consistent with these views, I used different methods, for example, observations and interviews, in my research.

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative demonstrates how the nature of reality is socially constructed: it examines the relationships between the knower (the researcher)

and the known (subject, participant, and informant), what is studied, and how situational constraints shape inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:8). Therefore, under this method the researcher must possess the ability to consider different facets of each situation. Other characteristics common to most forms of qualitative research include:

- Use of the natural setting for the collection of and as a source of data.
- The researcher acting as the human instrument of data collection.
- The predominant use of inductive data analysis.
- Descriptive reports that incorporate expressive language and the “presence of voice in the text.”
- An interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for individuals who experience them and the interpretations of those meanings by the researcher.
- Close and pervasive attention paid to idiosyncrasies, seeking the uniqueness of each case.
- An emergent design.
- The discovering of critical themes and patterns and the seeking of understanding (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Berg, 2001; Creswell, 1998; Bailey, 1996; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The specific qualitative strategy of inquiry I used in this study is an ethnographic case study.

Since the focus of my research is to describe and explain any possible disjunction between HUD’s expectations for the resident council with regard to community building and the actual practices of the resident council, an ethnographic case study is an

appropriate strategy of inquiry. Ethnographies are done in the natural setting over a prolonged period of time. Ethnographers focus on the views of those in the setting and the analysis is contextualized.

An ethnographic case study provides “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, a social unit,” the aim of which is to understand and uncover “interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 2001: 27). A case study is defined as a “specific, unique, bounded system” (Patton, 2002: 447). For instance, a case could be a teacher, a program, a specific policy, or an organization, among other things. An ethnographic case study allows me to better understand aspects of particular organizational policies that apply to the residential council; its purpose is not to develop or test new theory (Berg, 2001). Data for case studies include interviews, observations, content analysis, and contextual information (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2001; Berg, 2001). In summary, my use of a qualitative design allows me to be centered in the research process, which is an essential feature of SAA.

2.2 Critical Analysis (Problem Posing)

The second element of the Scholar Activist Approach (SAA) is *critical analysis*. Critical analysis focuses on problematizing the obstacles identified by the group. In critical analysis, the question becomes *Are the obstacles identified by the subject “real” obstacles?* Once the obstacles have been identified by the subject, the next step in SAA is to determine if the obstacles exist in the way they are perceived.

At this point, theory is applied to explain what is found. I used Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the theoretical starting point for my research and eventually to help

explain what I found. I am going to now present a brief overview of CRT and then focus on how my research questions are related to Critical Race Theory and SAA. A more complete presentation of CRT is provided later.

Critical Race Theory is best known for its focus on the implication of laws and policies for the lived experiences of African Americans. Critical race theorists have explained inequality, in part, by showing how race and racism are perpetuated in laws and policies. Thus, it is CRT that guided me towards looking at possible disjunctions between the policies and the actual practices of the residential council members.

Just as the Scholar Activist Paradigm is centered, Critical Race Theory is also centered on the narratives of individuals. Critical Race Theory has differentiated itself from traditional theoretical perspectives by insisting on the importance of auto/biography and narratives in shaping legal doctrine and practice and for understanding their implications. The knowledge/ narratives of marginalized groups are central to unmasking hidden racial narratives (or other oppressive narratives in regards to gender or class) in laws and policies.

Since the purpose of this research is to understand a possible disjunction between HUD's expectations for the resident council to be an active agent for community building and the actual practices of the resident council, I focused on how laws and policies have been interpreted and possibly racialized. Therefore, Critical Race Theory is an appropriate theoretical lens to use for this project. I now turn to my specific research questions that are derived from CRT and SAP.

2.2.1 Research Questions

Because I am using CRT as my theoretical frame, my first research question is on the laws and policies that shape HUD's relationship to public housing.

What are the HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?

The data to answer question one came from the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), which are the laws and policies that govern the residential council and are enforced by HUD. The answers to question one allows us to understand the policies and how they are supposed to support and empower the resident council in regards to community building.

Since resident councils and public housing communities are governed by housing laws and policies, I wanted to know how housing officials understand the rules by which resident council members must abide and how members of the resident council understand the rules.

The second research question, which is consistent with SAP's emphasis on centering, is:

How do the managers, Rivertown Resident Council members, housing authority officials and community workers interpret HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?

The data to answer question two came from interviews, participate observations, and field notes. Housing authority officials, community service workers, managers, and resident council members were interviewed to assess their interpretations. Related sub-questions allowed me to seek answers to SAP's second question: how do the resident council members describe the current condition of the council and what they would like the council to be like. By using a mostly unstructured interview guide, the various

constituents were able to develop their answers through the filters of their own lived experiences, which is important from the perspective of Critical Race Theory.

The third research question is also derived from Critical Race Theory, a theory that focuses, in part, on illuminating differences between the claims of the equality of the law and the interpretations and practices of the applications of the law.

Are there areas of disjunction among the interpretation of various constituencies, the practices of the resident council, and the HUD and housing authority written policies that govern the community building activities of the resident council? If so, how can they be explained?

2.3 Empowerment (Problem Solving)

The Scholar Activist Approach (SAA) provides a means for enacting social change through critical reflection and action. This element of SAA is referred to as *empowerment*. According to Kershaw (1992:480), “It also promotes researcher participation with the group in the development of tools/strategies that can be used to change negative conditions into positive conditions as they impact on the groups’ life chances/experiences”. The third part of the SAA is evaluative research. It is the responsibility of the researcher to move the research from problem posing to problem solving.

There are two interrelated questions that can help guide the researcher through this part of the scholar activist approach: 1) What tasks have been undertaken to eliminate the obstacles and 2) Have those tasks been successful? I incorporated this part of SAA by making recommendations for closing the gap between any possible disjunctions. My fourth question is designed to reflect on possible solutions to either eliminating the disjunctions or closing the gap:

How could the daily lives and experiences of the Rivertown Resident Council members in their interactions with housing authority, managers, and community workers promote community-building activities?

Again, the knowledge, perspectives, and stories of the life experiences of the resident councils and housing authority officials, managers, and community workers, in conjunction with my sociological insights, are used to answer question four.

In summary, the first part of the Scholar Activist Approach requires that I be centered by understanding people's lived experiences. My theoretical frame, Critical Race Theory, directs me toward an analysis of the laws and a search for possible disjunctions. Consistent with the second part of SAA, critical analysis, I will seek explanations for why any disjunctions exist. As will be demonstrate later, Critical Race Theory is an important part of my critical analysis. Empowerment, the third part of SAA, is included in this research in hopes that I can help bridge the gap between how HUD thinks the resident councils should work and how the people are actually doing it based upon what I have learned from the participants of this research. As Parker and Lynn (2002) asserts “only through listening can the conviction of seeing the world one way be challenged and one can acquire the ability to see the world through others’ eyes.” Whether talking with blacks or non-blacks in public housing, SAA should guide us toward seeing their worlds in new ways.

2.4 Defining Community

Although widely used, the term community has so many different meanings and interpretations that as long ago as 1955, Hillery counted over 94 different definitions of the word. The essence of community can be narrowed down to four main components: *shared morals and values* (Bender, 1982; Etzioni, 1993; Suttles, 1972); *connections of*

common bonds, social interactions and networks (Chaskin, 2001; Effrat, 1974; Bender, 1982); *geographical space* (Stone, 1986; Gusfield, 1975; Bender, 1982); and *shared bonds based on history, networks, emotions, and interactions* (Suttles, 1972; Stone, 1986; Brager, Specht, and Torczyner, 1987). Putting all four component together, community can be defined as “we-ness” with a “group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it. Such a community is not quickly formed. It almost always has a history and so is also a community of memory, defined in parts by its past and its memory of its past” (Bellah, 1985:333). Community development in public housing communities is a tool for combating poverty because it “produces assets that improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents” (Ferguson and Dickens, 1999:4). The Goal of Community Development:

“Is to help people improve there social and economic situations with public polices, governmental actions, economic activities, institutional building, and other types of actions that not only affect people but can be affected by people. It primarily is concerned with people as stimulators of social action processes. It focuses on the humanistic elements involved in change and how such change contributes to social and economic well being”(Christenson and Robinson, 1980:3).

2.5 Participants

My research will focus on four groups: (1) active members of the Rivertown Resident Council, (2) managers of Rivertown, (3) community workers involved with the resident council, and (4) housing authority officials involved with Rivertown and the resident council. For this study, I interviewed 12 people, all of whom are over the age of 18. These individuals are:

- All four of the members of Rivertown Resident Council, past and present, over the last 2 years.
- Three managers of Rivertown.
- Three officials from the Housing Authority who interact with resident councils.
- Two Community Agency workers who are involved with the resident council.

For a variety of reasons—deaths, relocations, leaving of the council, never coming to council meetings, and unavailability- I was not able to interview all of the elected council members.

Prior to speaking with any subject, I asked the Ridgeway Housing Authority (RHA) for permission to interview residents and the manager of a public housing community. Because of my affiliation with the Resolution Action Center, RHA stated that no additional permission was required.

The information collected for this study came from over two years of personal observations, participant observations, written field notes, typed notes, and interviews. I conducted multiple and repeated open-ended and semi-structured interviews with the 12 participants. For the qualitative data analysis, NVIVO¹⁰ software was used.

Given the qualitative nature of this study, many questions were asked in the course of normal conversation, and thus, they cannot all be listed here. However, in a more formal interview setting, I attempted to ask the following or similar questions related to my research questions two and three. The first set of questions was asked of the HUD officials (housing authority, managers, and community workers) and the remainder to the residential council members (See Appendix A).

¹⁰ QSR International developed the software. QSR is the developer of NUD*IST, the pioneer program for Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing- now in its sixth version as N6- and its partner software NVIVO.

2.5.1 Confidentiality and Informed Consent

To obtain university permission for interviewing participants and to ensure that their rights and safety were protected, I completed appropriate documents requested by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which on January 19, 2001 granted expedited approval of the project. IRB approval is guaranteed for 12 months, so at the close of that original period, I submitted a re-approval request to continue my research. My IRB was effective until May 19, 2004.

Each person interviewed for this study received an informed consent form that explained my research purpose, the amount of risk involved, their freedom to withdraw, and their level of confidentiality (see Appendix B). Informed consent forms were signed and kept on file. Two paid transcribers, who were also bound by confidentiality agreements, transcribed the interviews.

To maintain participants' confidentiality, I use pseudonyms. However, I realize that this is not enough to ensure confidentiality. One of the concerns of this project is that Rivertown can be fairly easily identified by anyone who wanted to do so. The nearness to Virginia Tech and its demographic characteristics are enough to identify it. Once the particular public housing project is identified, protecting the confidentiality might not be possible. For example, since I have been at Rivertown, the complex has had only three managers. The context of a quote, for example, could easily pinpoint which manager said it. Consequently, the informed consent clearly stated that confidentiality might not be possible in all cases.

2.5.2 Dissertation Format

Given the purpose and design of this research, I hope that its audience will include more than just readers in academia—that it will, in fact, be beneficial to residents of housing projects, potential resident council members, policymakers, and even the general public.

**PART II: CENTEREDNESS:
HISTORICALLY SITUATED**

3.0 Historically Centered

As discussed in Chapter Two, a key feature of the Scholar Activist Paradigm is centeredness. Centeredness is a complex concept with different dimensions. For example, it refers to situating research and theory in the life chances and experiences of the subject; it requires a methodology that is based on the voices of the subjects of study as the primary data; and it includes becoming grounded in the history and culture of the subjects (Kershaw, 2003). These dimensions of centeredness are not unrelated. For example, to center research in the life chances and experiences of the subject requires grounding in the historical and cultural context in which they live.

Critical Race Theory also requires an understanding of history. One of the major tenets of Critical Race Theory is that policies ignore history. Thus, a critical analysis, a second feature of a Scholar Activist Approach, which is guided by a Critical Race Theory perspective also necessitates examination of the policies and laws within the larger contextualized history that undergrid their construction.

In keeping with SAA and CRT, the next three chapters situate this research within broader historical and cultural contexts to provide the background for the analysis of any possible disjunction between HUD policies and the practices of a residential council within a public housing context. The first step in a centered and critical analysis of HUD policies is situating the analysis within the historical conditions that gave rise to public housing in the first place. Thus, the first chapter in this section of the dissertation is an overview of housing and inequality. The chapter that follows sets the historical context for public housing as a response to housing and inequality. The third chapter in this section centers the research in the historical and cultural context of the life experiences of

the residential council members. This historical foundation will be used later in the dissertation during the critical analysis phase of this project.

CHAPTER THREE HOUSING AND INEQUALITY

This chapter provides a brief overview of the importance of housing in general and explores the inequalities encountered by the poor and racial minorities in the housing market. An awareness of the social and historical significance of housing inequality in America provides the frame for understanding the complex relationships among public housing, HUD, and the resident council.

3.1 Housing and the American Dream

Housing is an integral part of the American dream (Vale, 1998; Feagin, 1994). At a minimum, it is seen as fulfilling one of our most basic needs, that of shelter (Stone, 1993). Beyond providing for the merely physical, however, housing symbolizes success and upward mobility (Stone, 1993). Vale reiterates this point when he states that “[i]n America, the form of tenure—whether a household owns or rents its place of residence—is read as a primary social sign, in much the same way that race, income, occupation and education are” (1998: 268). Although housing is a central part of the American dream, in spite of government programs and policies that are putatively designed to reduce inequalities in the system, fair housing still eludes many minorities and poor people.

A critical factor in the persistence of housing inequality is racial residential segregation (RRS) (Seitles, 1996). Although in 1968 the first Fair Housing Act was passed, residential segregation still persists. On average, whites live in neighborhoods that are 80.2% white, blacks live in neighborhoods that are 51.4% black, Hispanics live in neighborhoods that are 45.5% Hispanic, and Asians live in neighborhoods that are 18% Asian (Lewis Mumford Center, 2001).

As Massey and Denton (1993:183) point out, RRS has a negative social and economic effect on the life changes and experiences of blacks and other minority groups because:

once a group's segregation in society has been ensured, the next step in building an underclass is to drive up its rate of poverty. Segregation thus makes it politically easy to limit the number of governmental jobs within the ghetto, to reduce public services, to keep its schools understaffed and underfunded, to lower the transfer payments on which its poor depend, and to close its hospitals, clinics, employment officers, and other social support institutions.

The continuing detrimental effect of racial residential segregation has not been contested, although the causes of residential segregation are still being explored (Massey, 2001; Gotham, 2000; Wilson, 1996; Oliver and Shapiro, 1995; Fischer and Massey, 2000). Explanations for residential segregation have been based on one or all of the following: racial discrimination in public and private housing markets, class/economic segregation, and individual preferences.¹¹ For the purpose of this research, I focus on how federal laws and policies have historically discriminated against racial minorities in the housing market and how class/ economics shapes the housing experience for minorities.

¹¹ The information for individual preferences goes beyond the scope of this research. Evidence has shown that blacks and other racial minorities want to live in integrated neighborhoods. For more information, see Quillian, 2001; Bobo and Zubrinsky, 1996; Harris, 2001; Emerson, Yancey, and Chai 2001; Farley, et al, 1994.

3.2 Brief History of Twentieth Century Housing Policies

For black Americans, state and federal policies—for example, the Constitution, Jim Crow laws, slavery, Black Codes, and Homestead acts—have represented a mixture of racist attitudes, overt and covert discriminatory practices, and private behaviors, which have disenfranchised and historically segregated them from the housing market (Massey and Denton, 1993; Seities, 1996).

The current conception of housing policies began in 1929 with the economic crisis of the Great Depression. In the face of extensive job loss, reductions in income, and skyrocketing rates of foreclosures and evictions, government intervention in the area of housing was required (Gotham, 2000; Salins, 1987; Hays, 1995). For instance, the number of home foreclosures increased from 78,356 in 1926 to 273,384 by 1932, and housing starts decreased from 700,000 in the 1920s to 93,000 in 1933 (Gotham, 2000). To help pull the country out of this economic crisis, President Roosevelt’s administration focused on public housing programs, which were “the wheel within the wheel to move the whole economic engine” (Radford 1996: 179).

In the summer of 1934, the National Housing Act was enacted to solve the nation’s housing shortage: it bolstered a credit system that supported home ownership. Under the National Housing Act, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was established to improve housing standards and conditions, to provide an adequate home financing system through insurance of mortgages, and to stabilize the mortgage market (HUD, 2000). Simply put, the FHA’s mission was and remains that of insuring residential mortgage loans, which would increase home ownership for working and

middle class families by providing long-term, low down payment mortgages (Hays, 1995).

3.3 Race and Inequality in Housing

Regardless, the FHA was successful in rescuing only the “submerged middle class” from the depression (Bell 2000). The criteria used by the FHA—for example, restrictive covenants, redlining, and exclusionary zoning ordinances—were a major cause of residential racial segregation, which excluded blacks from gaining equal and fair treatment in the housing market. For instance, to evaluate neighborhoods and properties for insured mortgages, appraisers used the FHA’s Underwriter’s Manual, which stated, “if a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes” (U.S. Federal Housing Administration, 1938). The FHA further solidified discriminatory practices among blacks¹² when it implemented and legalized restrictive covenants¹³ (Squires, Friedman, and Saidat, 2002; Gotham, 2000; Oliver and Shapiro, 1995; Massey and Denton, 1993).

Besides restrictive covenants, the FHA also used a system of *redlining* to reinforce racially discriminatory practices. Redlining was a process “whereby lenders and insurance companies [would] refuse to underwrite mortgages or insurance policies within geographic areas redlined because of racial composition” (Harrison and Weinberg,

¹² These practices were not exclusive to FHA. Restrictive Covenants prohibit sales to minorities and Jews were prevalent

¹³ Racial restrictive covenants, “were agreements between buyers and sellers of property, which took the form of an appendix or article in the deed not to sell, rent, or lease property to minority groups, usually blacks, but also, depending on the part of the country, Jews, Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, or any non-Caucasians.” Jones- Correa: 2000: 543)

1992:42). Since African-American neighborhoods were redlined,¹⁴ mortgage funding to help finance housing was channeled away from African-Americans, a policy which kept them isolated in the inner cities and denied them access to white neighborhoods (Massey and Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1996; Yinger, 1987). African-American and other racially-dominant neighborhoods were seen by financial lenders as poor investments for home and commercial loans (Zenou and Boccoard, 2000; Dymski, 1995).

Since racial minorities were excluded, middle class whites became the beneficiaries of housing policies. In a historical analysis of racial segregation in housing, Seitles (1996:8) explains “between 1930 and 1950, the FHA financed three out of five homes purchased in the US, but only two percent of the FHA loans were made to non-white home buyers. As a result of such practices, it could be argued that the FHA became the first federal agency to openly counsel and support segregation”.

The Supreme Court case *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) ended the enforcement of racial covenants (Bell 2000), and in 1977—some forty years after the practice had been instituted by the FHA—the Community Reinvestment Act outlawed redlining (Dymski, 1995). Even though institutional discrimination and racism in housing were banned by court cases and federal laws, racial residential segregation and housing discrimination still flourished (Bullard, Grigsby, and Lee, 1994; Tobin, 1987; Meyer, 2000; Feagin, Vera, and Batur, 2001). Quite simply, discriminatory practices have continued because government-housing policies have had difficulty validating and monitoring covert

¹⁴ The Federal Home Owners Loans Corporation actually created the practice of red-lining. FHA followed suit and created four categories of neighborhood quality based upon a color scheme. The lowest of the categories was the code color red; hence, redlining “ American Apartheid”

discrimination¹⁵ in the private housing market by banks, real estate agencies, landlords, and mortgage companies (Care, 1998; Yinger, 1998).

Several audits and housing studies have revealed that African-Americans and racial minorities are still subjected to discriminatory housing practices by real estates agents, landlords, and banks (Yinger, 1999; Yinger, 1998; Galster, 1990; Dymski and Veitch, 1994; Ross and Yinger, 2002). From 1977 to 1990, studies uncovered evidence of discrimination in the housing market in over 70 cities (Yinger, 1998; Yinger, 1987). The 1992 Federal Reserve Bank study (also known as the Boston Fed study) revealed that blacks and Hispanics were two to three times more likely than whites to be denied mortgage loans, and banks turned down minorities with higher incomes more often than they did lower-income whites (Oliver and Shapiro, 1995; Carr and Megbolugbe, 1992). In 1989, another national housing discrimination study sent over 3,500 testers to two dozen reality offices. The study found that black home seekers were shown fewer and different housing units than were whites with the same income (Yinger, 1998).

Two explanations for racial disparities in mortgage and lending practices are *blockbusting* and *steering*. Harrison and Weinberg (1992: 41) define blockbusting as “the process of encouraging panic selling among typically white property owners by inculcating their fear of the racial integration of previously all white residential neighborhoods.” This process is also known as *white flight*. Another method of discrimination is steering, the practice by which real estate agents direct prospective buyers or tenants to particular residential areas. According to Harrison and Weinberg (1992:43), “It’s presumed that white agents (who comprise 95% of the population of real

¹⁵ Discrimination that is hidden and thus not directly public.

estate agents in the United States) prejudice customers by race and steer them toward appropriate properties in segregated neighborhoods”.

3.4 Class Segregation

Social economic status (SES) is another explanation for residential segregation. Wilson (1980:3) argued that racial issues took a back seat to class characteristics in determining societal rewards; he expounds on this point when he describes modern industrial society as a “progressive transition from racial inequality to class inequality.” He argues that in the labor market economics, not race, is used to explain the success and failure of African-Americans. However, few would deny that inequality by race still exists.

Significant gaps exist between the income of whites and nonwhites. For over 40 years the median black income has been approximately half that of a white family (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). According to the 2001 U.S. census, the median household income for blacks was \$29,470; for whites, \$44,517; for those of Hispanic origin, \$33,565; for non-white Hispanics, \$46,305; and for Asian and Pacific Islanders, \$53,635¹⁶. If blacks disproportionately make less money and are poorer than whites, then not having the resources and capital to purchase a home or move into a good neighborhood will restrict their options regarding home ownership and neighborhood selection (Oliver and Shapiro, 1996).

¹⁶ On average, Asian Americans make more than whites. The census average for Asian Americans does not account for incomes, cultural, historical, and socialized differences among intra-ethnic differences for Asians such as Japanese, Korean, Chinese, or Southeast Asians. Nor does it account for discrimination of Asian Americans in the workplace. This literature is beyond the scope of this research. See Takaki (, Le Espiritu, Kivria, and Cho for further information. The average does not take into consideration the averaged earned dollar or the wealth accumulated by whites compared to non-whites. For instance, for every dollar earned by a full-time, year-round white male worker, black men earned 74 cents, white women earned 73 cents, black women earned 64 cents, Latino men earned 61 cents, and Latino women earned 53 cents (Weber, 2001).

However, economics explains only a fraction of racial residential segregation (Galster, 1990; Farley, Fielding, Krysan, 1997). Even when blacks have the same SES as whites, they still encounter residential segregation. Darden's 1994 study of residential segregation in metropolitan Detroit, Michigan found high levels of residential segregation between blacks and whites with the same level of income and equal educational backgrounds. In fact, blacks and whites earning between \$30,00-\$39,000 were more segregated than those earning less than \$2,500 a year. Massey and Denton (1988) found no difference in the neighborhood integration between high-income blacks and high-income whites, and low-income blacks and low-income whites. Inequality in housing cannot be explained solely on economics.

3.4.1 Implications of Place on Lived Experiences

The ramifications of where a person lives on life experiences are profound. Where a person lives affects their life chances and experiences with issues such as health, education, and jobs (Smelser, Wilson, and Mitchell, 2001; Williams and Collins, 2001). This is especially true for minorities and poor people. For instance, a growing literature exists that argues place, in addition to a person's characteristics, affects health. A study undertaken by Lochner, Kawachi, Brennan, and Buka (2003) showed that the social organization of a neighborhood influences health outcomes. Weinbur and Epstein (1996) and LaVeist and Wallace (2000) indicate that higher numbers of liquor stores and lower numbers of supermarkets are found in low-income neighborhoods. Lack of access to and consumption of healthy food translates into a higher risk of health-related social problems for people who reside in low-income areas compared to people who live in the suburbs.

Neighborhood characteristics also put the poor at increased risk of environmental pollutants. Many impoverished members of society, such as African-Americans and other minorities who live in cities or rural pockets of America, often find their communities chosen as sites for factories, landfills, and other structures that can be deemed environmentally-unsafe (Hines, 2001). Research has shown that the socioeconomic status (race, education) of a community plays an important role in whether it will be chosen as a site for the disposing of waste and toxic or polluting materials (Bullard, 1992; Hines, 2001; Arp and Boeckelman, 1994). The disposing of toxic materials in poor and minority neighborhoods has led to numerous health problems for these communities, particularly pollution-related diseases such as cancer, heart disease, birth defects, and diseases of the respiratory system (Pinderhughes, 1996).

Another way in which place affects quality of life and social mobility is through education. Wilson (1996) argues that children from poor and disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to attend inferior schools with uncaring and unqualified teachers.

The lack of and limited variety of jobs a person is able to obtain also can be affected by place (Browne et al, 2001; Weinberg, 2000; Wilson, 1996). The *spatial mismatch hypothesis* states: “residential segregation affects the geographic distribution of black employment; increases black underemployment; and the negative effect of housing segregation on black employment is magnified by the decentralization of jobs” (Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, 1998: 851). Geographic isolation from employment can be especially problematic for those people who cannot afford transportation. Studies have examined the effects of employment proximity to employment outcomes. For example,

studying the transportation costs of 379 welfare and wage-reliant single mothers, Edin and Lein (1997) found working, which involved transportation and day care costs, actually cost them more than they earned and led some of them to choose welfare reliance over employment. Wilson's (1996) Urban Poverty and Family Study in Chicago also stressed transportation costs, commute time, and length of job searches for people living in poor neighborhoods. Where a person is allowed to live most assuredly impacts quality of life.

Economics and the intersection of economics and race are important factors in understanding why, how, and to what extent housing inequality still exists for the poor and minorities. To reduce and/or eliminate housing inequality, the federal government created a cabinet-level housing agency: The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The next chapter provides an in-depth explanation as to how public housing was designed to be a vehicle for reducing inequality.

CHAPTER FOUR

PUBLIC HOUSING: RESPONSE TO HOUSING INEQUALITY

As discussed in the previous chapters, the theory and the paradigm used in this work call for a centered and critical analysis that is grounded in historical understanding. Thus, previous chapter presented a broad historical view of social inequality in the housing market and its impact on individual life chances and experiences. This chapter addresses the role public housing and HUD has played in attempting to eradicate such inequality.

4.0 Introduction to Public Housing

Social inequalities based on race, ethnicity, and class often have prevented people from obtaining safe and affordable housing in the United States. In this chapter, I will focus on how public housing was construed under the direction, development, and administrative guidance of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to combat housing inequality. Before I discuss public housing and HUD, however, I will briefly explain the history of legalized government public housing, which actually began 30 years before the creation of HUD.

4.1 Public Housing Before HUD

The roots of public housing began over 140 years ago when moral reformers, environmentalists, and philanthropists embarked on a campaign to clean up the “slums” of urban America (Von Hoffman, 1998; Von Hoffman, 2000; Salins, 1987). In the mid-nineteenth century the detrimental environment of the slums was believed to “[threaten] the safety, health, and morals of the poor who inhabited them” (Von Hoffman, 1998:4). For housing reformers (also known as *public housers*), eliminating the slums through

public housing also meant eliminating the social problems that the poor encountered (Marcuse, 1998).

The campaign of the public housers, along with a push from the economic crisis of the Great Depression, was instrumental in the passage of the first major federal program aimed at providing low-income housing: the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937. The purpose of the Wagner-Steagall Act was to:

Provide financial assistance to the states and political subdivisions thereof for the elimination of unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions, for the eradication of slums, for the provision of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income and for the reduction of unemployment and the stimulation of business activity, to create a United States Housing Authority and for other purposes (Housing Act of 1937, 1937).

This act established three goals for public housing: to help provide low rent housing, slum clearance, job and economic development; to define terms such as "low rent housing" and "families of low-income"; and to set income limitations. Despite the goals, the real purpose of the act was to “relieve present and recurring unemployment, not shelter poverty” (Stone, 1993: 98).¹⁷ Radford (1996) describes the policy of the housing act as two-tiered. At the bottom, housing was built for low- income people; at the top, the government helped private real estate and housing industry. This act set the precedent for two-tiered public housing legislation, in which policies were attached to political agendas and social issues, masking the needs of the low-income people who actually needed the housing (Stone, 1993; Von Hoffman, 1998). In others words, the Housing Act of 1937 was not primarily about providing housing for those who could not afford it and needed

¹⁷ Since America was in a depression, housing policies had to have a large goal then just “ shelter poverty”

help—in fact, those goals became secondary. Instead, the act became a primary tool for helping the real estate and housing industries.

As the Depression ended and World War II began, “public housing built during the war was not directed toward the poor; income limits were irrelevant; place of employment and connection with the war effort were crucial” (Marcuse, 1998: 27). The act of providing housing was geared not toward the poor but toward WWII veterans. Also, after the war the “submerged middle class” was able to leave public housing while people of color and the extreme poor were forced by circumstance to remain (see Chapter Three). WWII put the “public housing agenda” on hold. Public housing was, however, given a new boost by the Housing Act of 1949.

Just like the Housing Act of 1937, the Housing Act of 1949 continued a tradition of contradictory goals and objectives for public housing. The goal of the act was a “decent home and suitable living environment for every American family” (Housing Act of 1949). To achieve this goal, another two-tiered housing policy was applied. One of the requirements of the 1949 act was that “building public housing would not compete with private housing industry” (Stone, 1993:111). As stated in the act, “private enterprise shall be encouraged to serve a large need” (Housing Act of 1949, 1949). Unlike the Housing Act of 1937, however, that of 1949 established the first national housing objectives, which provided federal aid to assist in slum-clearance, community development, and redevelopment (Martinez, 2000; Hartman, 1975).

The 1949 act reflected a concern for the housing stock and the structural quality of housing. Although it stressed the clearing of slums, the act did not specify how this goal was to be achieved. Unfortunately, there were no goals, plan timetables, or

guidelines about how to implement the act's objectives (Hartman, 1975). In truth, the act focused on the structural quality of housing rather than on the living environment or the concerns of residents. Title I of the act, *Slum Clearance and Community Development and Redevelopment*, established the "adoption, improvement, and modernization of building . . . [as well as] the use of appropriate new materials, techniques, and methods in land and residential planning, design, and construction" (Housing Act of 1949).

The language of the Housing Acts of 1959 and 1961 continued to stress Urban Renewal and Urban Planning. By this time, the government had become slightly aware that their concept of "urban development" was in fact dislocating families instead of providing equal housing. The Housing Act of 1961 "provided housing for low and moderate-income families and families displaced from urban renewal and or as a result of governmental action" (Housing Act of 1961, 1961). The accommodations built for such families were high-rise units that became associated with the face and stigma of public housing.¹⁸

4.2 Public Housing and HUD

The Department of Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 created the federal cabinet-level agency known as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Despite the creation of the new cabinet, however, obstacles still existed on the road toward providing decent and affordable housing for all Americans. For instance, from the 1965-Watts riots in California to the 1967 riots in Newark and Detroit, African-Americans were calling attention to urban blight and racial injustice in housing. For racial minorities, the promise of the Housing Act of 1949 was still not honored.

¹⁸ Chapter 10 explains the physical structure and location of "public housing" buildings.

The passage of the 1968 Housing and Urban Development Act (as known as the *Fair Housing Act*) only reaffirmed the mission statement of 1949. The goal of the 1968 act was a “decent home and suitable living environment for every American family.” Provisions in the act stressed homeownership, urban renewal, and community and land development, as well as outlawed discrimination in public housing as a means of accomplishing the act’s goal (Housing Act of 1968, 1968). For many of “the nation’s lower income families [,however,] this goal was not fully realized” (Martinez, 2000: 269). The only provisions offered by the act were production goals for numbers of dwelling units and income classes.

Two decades after the 1968 Housing Act and the creation of HUD, housing quality and the needs of the poor in public housing had not improved substantially. Many researchers have documented the problems and struggles that residents have had with public housing. For example, Nicholas Lemann’s book, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* (1991) and James R. Ralph Jr.’s book, *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King Jr., Chicago, and The Civil Rights Movement* (1993) described racial unrest associated with the large numbers of blacks migrating from the south to the urban north and into public housing. *HUD Scandal*, by Irving Welfeld (1992), focused on how in the 1970s -1980s HUD’s mismanagement of programs, abuses of policies, and financial problems led to internal and external scandal and how such policies made residents suffer. Institutional racism and mismanagement of programs and finances have given HUD a reputation of being the “black hole of management” (Welfeld, 1992).

In an attempt to solve the problem, in 1993 the federal government established the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), the purpose of which was to improve the confidence of citizens by holding agencies accountable for program results (Ashbaugh, 2001). Under the GPRA, government agencies have to develop multi-year strategic plans, measure performance, and provide annual performance reports. In theory, clear strategic plans, goals, and objectives will produce better outcomes—in this case, better outcomes for residents of public housing.

4.3 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 requires that all federally-funded agencies develop and implement an accountability system based on performance measurement, including the setting of goals and objectives and the measuring of progress toward their achievement. (The various purposes of the act are listed in Table 4.3.1.) This act was based on Congressional findings that:

- Waste and inefficiency in federal programs undermine the confidence of the American people in the government and reduce the federal government's ability to address adequately vital public needs.
- Federal managers are seriously disadvantaged in their efforts to improve program efficiency and effectiveness, because of insufficient articulation of program goals and inadequate information on program performance.
- Congressional policymaking, spending decisions, and program oversight are seriously handicapped by insufficient attention to program performance and results.

(<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/gpra/gpra.htm>)

The GPRA forced a shift in the focus of federal government agencies from concerns about staffing and activity levels to goals that would link resources and achieve results (Ashbaugh, 2001). GPRA attempted to make things better for public housing residents by holding HUD and the housing authority accountable for all their actions in regard to public housing. As result, all federally-funded agencies are required to establish guidelines built around the five processes emphasized by the GPRA (See Table 4.3.2). In compliance with the act, HUD established a strategic plan of goals and objectives (See Table 4.3.3). The most relevant one for this study is Strategic Goal #4, which calls for the agency to “improve community and quality of life.” As will be developed in detail later in the document, to aid in meeting Strategic Goal #4, HUD rules specify that residential councils should be formed with their purpose being, in part, to improve public housing communities.

Although race should not be an issue in the creation and implementation of equality within the law, it has long been so.¹⁹

¹⁹ Further historical understanding of race and how it is embedded in the law will be discussed in chapter 10. Current use of race in the law to achieve equality can be found in Affirmation Action and Immigrant laws and policies, for example.

Table 4.3.1: Purpose of The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993

IMPROVE	<p>The confidence of the American people in the capability of the Federal Government, by systematically holding Federal agencies accountable for achieving program results</p> <p>Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction</p> <p>Congressional decision making by providing more objective information on achieving statutory objectives, and on the relative effectiveness and efficiency of Federal programs and spending <u>(http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/mgmt-gpra/gplaw2m.html#h2)</u> </p>
INITIATE	<p>Program performance reform with a series of pilot projects in setting program goals, measuring program performance against those goals, and reporting publicly on their progress <u>(http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/mgmtgpra/gplaw2m.html#h2)</u> </p>
HELP	<p>Federal managers improve service delivery, by requiring that they plan for meeting program objectives and by providing them with information about program results and service quality <u>(http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/mgmt-gpra/gplaw2m.html#h2)</u> </p>

Having overt racist and discriminatory laws clearly violates “equal protection.”

Discriminatory and racist laws prevented millions of racial minorities the right to equal housing and income to afford to live in a “good neighborhood”. To remedy and redress the legal imbalance of “ equal protection and rights,” Civil Rights legislation of the 1950s and 1960s was supposed to eradicate unequal protection by ensuring that all laws be de-racialized—in effect, colorblind. Also housing laws of the 1990s such as the Government Performance and Results Act was enacted to make the government accountable for

providing a “decent and safe” living environment for all citizens in need of public housing.

The next chapter addresses literature on public housing and establishes why I am focusing on the resident council.

Table 4.3.2: Five Processes of the GPRA

STRATEGIC PLAN

Develop a comprehensive mission statement, description of general goals and objectives, along with a plan for achieving them, an identification of any specific external factors that could impact the ability of the goals, a description of program evaluations, and stakeholders and customers are to be consulted to provide input during the development of the strategic plan.

PERFORMANCE PLAN

Develop annual performance plans, which establish specific program goals, identify resources required to meet those goals, and then link the strategic plan to the annual budget by detailing the process towards the plan that is intended for the upcoming fiscal plan.

PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Review the agency's success in achieving the year previous performance goals, evaluate the performance plan, and provide an explanation when goals have not been achieved.

MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

Allows agencies to include proposals to waive certain administrative requirements in their annual performance plans.

PERFORMANCE BUDGETING

Allows agencies to include proposals to waive certain administrative requirements in their annual performance plans.

www.HUD.gov

Table 4.3.3: HUD’s Strategic Goals and Objectives (2000- 2006 Strategic Plan)
www.hud.gov

<u>Strategic Goal One:</u>	<u>Strategic Goal Two:</u>	<u>Strategic Goal Three:</u>	<u>Strategic Goal Four:</u>	<u>Strategic Goal Five:</u>
Increase the availability of decent, safe and affordable housing in American Communities	Ensure equal opportunity in housing for all Americans	Promote housing stability, self-sufficiency and asset development of families and individual	Improve community quality of life and economic vitality	Ensure public trust in HUD
<u>Strategic Objectives</u>	<u>Strategic Objectives</u>	<u>Strategic Objectives</u>	<u>Strategic Objectives</u>	<u>Strategic Objectives</u>
1.1 Homeownership is increased	2.1 Housing discrimination is reduced	3.1 Homeless families and individuals achieve housing stability	4.1 The number, quality, and accessibility of jobs increase in urban and rural communities	5.1 HUD and HUD’s partners effectively deliver results to customers
1.2 Affordable rental housing is available for low-income households	2.2 Minorities and low-income people are not isolated geographically in America	3.2 Poor and disadvantaged families and individuals become self-sufficient and develop assets	4.2 Economic conditions in distressed communities improve	5.2 HUD leads housing and urban research and policy development nationwide
1.3 America’s housing is safer, of higher quality, and disaster resistant	2.3 Disparities in homeownership rates are reduced among groups defined by race, ethnicity and disability status	3.3 The elderly and persons with disabilities achieve maximum independence	4.3 Communities become more livable	

CHAPTER FIVE REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

Why should studies of public housing focus on the resident council? How do such councils impact community building activities, and what might affect their abilities to do so? By surveying the literature of public housing, this chapter will help us understand the value of those questions and better anticipate responses to them.

5.0 Public Housing a Different Ballgame

Public housing has received a great deal of attention by researchers, as this chapter will indicate. The focus of this review is on public housing “projects,” not on low-income or poor neighborhoods, Section 8 housing, or neighborhoods in general. Such omissions are vital to an accurate depiction of the setting being studied: low-income neighborhoods are not always public housing neighborhoods; Section 8 and public housing are both funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), but they are two different types of housing programs; and neighborhoods in general refers to a motley collection of types.

Compared to the other forms of housing mentioned above, public housing is an altogether different “ballgame.” It is unique because the different and complex legal and administrative structures that govern it lead to different dynamics and rules that do not exist in poor and other general neighborhoods.

The massive amount of literature and research that has been established on public housing covers a wide array of topics, including:

- welfare (Van Ryzin, 2001; Varady, 1998; Stone, 1993);
- crime (Bowie, 2001; Rosenbaum and Harris, 2001; McNulty and Holloway, 2000);
- race (Venkatesh, 2000; Bell, 2000; Massey and Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987);

- poverty (Bolland and McCallum,2002; Kuo, 2001; Smith, 1999);
- segregation (Bickford, and Massey, 1991; Goering and Coulibably, 1991);
- women’s health (McAllister and Boyle, 1998; Rollins, Saris, and Ingrid Johnston-Robledo, 2001);
- children and families (Currie and Yelowitz, 2000; Coley, Kuo, and Sullivan, 1997; Rankin and Quane, 2000); and
- empowerment of communities (Reichl, 1999; Faircloth, 2001; Vale, 1998; Peterman, 1996)

The literature that seems the most relevant involves that which has focused on tenant/resident management in public housing. Tenant/ resident management in public housing involves tenants of public housing communities coming together to improve the conditions of their communities. In that same fashion, resident councils are public housing tenants participating in improving their community. Thus, the brief history of tenant management that follows can provide a background for this research on resident councils.

5.1 Tenant/Resident Management

The idea of citizens coming together to form tenant organizations and associations is not a new phenomenon. Since the early 19th century, citizen associations in both upper and lower-class neighborhoods have been a part of the American way of life (Peterman, 2000; Green and Haines, 2002). Citizens in upper-class neighborhoods formed associations to keep people out of their communities, while people in lower-class slums and other areas often have formed tenant groups to gain access to services. Both groups came together to achieve control of and foster empowerment in their respective

communities. The motive of residents coming together to empower their community holds true for public housing. The formation of tenant management, also known as resident management corporations, grew in response to the unique internal and external problems that affect public housing (Koebel and Cavell, 1995; Carlile, 1990).

5.2 Importance of Tenant Management

Tenant management in public housing first appeared 33 years ago in Boston and St. Louis, where residents—in jeopardy of losing their homes because of mismanagement from the housing authority—took control of the situation (HUD, 1992). In 1971, in Boston’s Bromley Heath Project, residents became managers and assumed the duties of acquiring health and social services for residents. In St. Louis, tenant management developed as a result of the 1969 public housing rent strike (Peterman, 1996). Between 1973 and 1975, five separate developments in St. Louis became resident-managed.

In 1975, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), along with the Ford Foundation, collaborated on a National Tenant Management Demonstration Program (NTMDP). The purposes of NTMDP were twofold: establish new resident management corporations and evaluate their effectiveness for improving public housing management (HUD, 1992).

Evaluating the effectiveness of tenant management, the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (1981) concluded that resident management corporations “were costly, and it was unlikely that they could be universally successful and recommended against expanding the demonstration program” (Peterman, 1998: 48). Ten years later, HUD evaluated the effectiveness of resident management in public housing. Its evaluation found that under a full-service Resident Management Corporation (RMC),

residents had a “more positive perception of the quality of life at their development” (HUD, 1992: 5).

Cochran Gardens is an example of a positive impact of resident managers. Located in St. Louis, Cochran Gardens is a 12-building complex with 1,900 residents. The buildings smelled of urine and were riddled with bullet holes, and drugs were being sold and used openly. Because of the actions of resident managers who took responsibility and control of the buildings, Cochran Gardens was transformed into a community with clean floors and painted walls, where minor repairs made the buildings more livable (Wilkerson, 1988). At Kenilworth-Parkside in Washington, D.C., resident managers took over operations “of social services in the community, formed a crime patrol, developed a drug center, and established tenant-run businesses in the development such as a co-op store, a thrift shop, and a beauty salon” (Carlile, 1990: 65).

To encourage RMCs in public housing developments, in 1987 Congress amended the Housing Act of 1937, with Section 122 of the Housing and Community Development Act (HUD, 1992). Subpart B of Part 964, entitled *Tenant Participation*, describes in detail the requirements for the formation of a Resident Management Corporation. Additionally, Congress set forth the regulations governing the relationship between a housing authority and a Resident Management Corporation in the Code of Federal Regulations (24 C.F. R. 964.120: *Resident Management Corporation Requirements*). Resident Management Corporations can operate in conjunction with resident councils or in the absence of resident councils.

Resident Councils are entitled to the same laws, responsibilities, and privileges of the RMC with two key exceptions. First, they do not have managerial control of their public

housing community, which means they cannot hire or fire people or be considered employees of the housing authority. Second, under the laws of each state, Resident Management Corporations are incorporated, non-profit organizations, whereas resident councils receive funding only from the housing authority and HUD, such as stipends for members who agree to volunteer their time and services. In addition those differences, both bodies are supposed to help build communities and empower residents in public housing. Some public housing communities have both a RMC and a resident council, some have a RMC and not a resident council, and others just have a resident council. The size, resources, situation, and the relationship between the residents and housing authority dictate whether there is a resident council, RMC, or both.

Rivertown, the public housing community in this study, has a resident council instead of a resident management corporation. All the public housing communities in the city of Ridgeway only have resident councils.

5.3 Resident Councils: Why Do This Research?

Although there is a significant amount of literature on public housing, Resident Management Corporations, and tenant associations, little research has focused exclusively on resident councils. My research will fill this gap. It will differ in four essential ways from previous research.

First, few studies have examined the impact of resident councils as an effective tool for building community in public housing. Studies have examined the impact of tenant management (Carlile, 1990; Peterman 1998; Peterman, 1996; Lane, 1995), home ownership (Vale, 1998), community development and organization (Vale, 1998; Ferguson and Dickens, 1999; Chaskin, 2001), and asset building (Green and Haines,

2002), but these examinations differ markedly from a study of the policies, rules, histories, and structures of resident councils.

Second, to allow resident council members of a public housing community to define those issues most important to them, I am using a scholar activist methodological lens, which places the residents themselves at the center of the analysis. Traditionally, sociological research that has tried to explain the life chances and experiences of minorities and the poor predominantly has relied upon census data, surveys, and quantitative analysis. When qualitative work is done with interviews of the subjects, the reader gets primarily the researchers' explanation and interpretation, as in Wilson's *When Work Disappears*. There are some fairly recent exceptions that are extremely valuable because they allow the subjects of study to interpret their own life chances and outcomes such as *Streetwise* by Elijah Anderson, *Slim's Table* by Mitchell Duneier, and *American Project* by Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh. Also, the Scholar Activist Approach permits insight into implementing policy and political changes within the public housing system from the perspective of the resident.

Third, historical context and spatial context matter. Structural conditions, such as economic, political, and cultural factors, powerfully affect the internal dynamics of minority and poor community development, and these are often historically and spatially contingent (Wilson, 1987, 1996; Massey and Denton, 1993). Much of the research on public housing has long been done in metropolitan areas, such as the "Chicago projects" (Gothman, 2000a; Hensen and James, 1987). Studies conducted in Chicago and other metropolitan cities may not, however, be relevant to those undertaken in "The State"²⁰

²⁰ "The State" is the pseudonym for that state and city in which this research is being done.

because community and cultural dynamics, as well as political, economic, and legislative policies, will be vastly different.

Four, no previous literature has used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to study public housing, particularly resident councils in a public housing community. However, as explained in Chapter Four, the policies and legislation meant to help “every American” in the housing market became instead a tool for sanctioning institutional racism and discrimination with covenants, redlining, and denial of wealth accumulated from home ownership (Bell, 2000; Gothman, 2000; Oliver and Sharpio, 1996). Despite the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, lack of equal access to “decent and safe” housing still exists. Although HUD has instituted strategies and rules that have the goal of creating safe communities and empowering residents to be self-sufficient, an analysis of the effectiveness of these policies and procedures has not been done using the lens of CRT. CRT provides the theoretical direction for studying the intersectional relationship between structural, cultural, and power components in regard to the resident council and the organizations that oversee it.

PART III: CENTEREDNESS:

RIVERTOWN

CHAPTER SIX THE VOICES OF RIVERTOWN

This chapter begins in “Rivertown,” a public housing community. In this chapter, I include a physical description of Rivertown and background information on the resident council members and the housing officials. I begin by reemphasizing the importance placed by the Scholar Activist Paradigm and Critical Race Theory on making those under study the centerpiece of my research.

6.0 Centeredness

Since I am using a Scholar Activist Approach and Critical Race Theory to describe and explain the disjunctions between HUD and the resident council, I start by centering those in the study. Centeredness is best achieved, from these perspectives, by using qualitative methods. Through qualitative methods, marginalized groups can tell their stories, stories that other methods have too often rendered mute (Delgado and Stefancic, 1995). To understand the lived experiences of the resident council members and the housing authority officials²¹, I conducted structured and semi-structured interviews and engaged in participate observations over a two and a half year period. What follows is my observations and rendition of their stories.

6.1 Rivertown: Background

Constructed in 1972, Rivertown is the fourth largest public housing community in Ridgeway, with 150 apartment units. It is nestled in a valley of rolling hills and trees, a location antithetical to the traditional conception of “public housing.”

What attracted me to the community was not only the manager but also the diversity among the residents. As of June 2002, there were 439 total residents living in

²¹ Housing authority officials includes the managers, housing authority, and community workers

Rivertown: 183 whites (42% of the total population), 192 black (44%), 8 Native American (2%), and 56 Asian (12%). The racial composition of Rivertown has a higher African- American and Asian population than either the city of Ridgeway or the state in which it resides (see Table 6.1.1). The majority of the residents' income in Rivertown is derived from SSI, Social Security, TANF and child support; some had no income at all. Heads of households ranged in age from 19-64.

Table 6.1.1: 2000 Census Data for “The State” Population by Race and Region²²

Census 2000 Data	The State	Ridgeway City	Ridge County	Rivertown
Overall Population	7,078,515	94,911	85,778	439
White person, not of Hispanic /Latino Origin	70.2%	68.8%	93.0%	42%
Black or African – American person	19.6%	26.7%	3.4%	44%
Person of Hispanic or Latino origin	4.7%	1.5%	1.0%	-
Asian Person	3.7%	1.2%	1.6%	12%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.1%	-	-	-
American Indian and Alaska Native Person	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	2%
Person reporting some other race	2.0%	0.7	0.4%	
Person reporting two or more races	2.0%	1.8	0.9%	

6.2 My First Visit to Rivertown

As I first approached Rivertown, two things became clear immediately: this community was located in a residential neighborhood, and it was the farthest away from other public housing communities in the city. In my mind, public housing was urban,

²² Some of the figures may not equal 100% due to the expanded categories of the census. Go to www.census.gov for a detailed explanation of the quantitative configuration.

concrete, brick, noisy and involved high-rise structures, a conception that is perhaps shared by others. The location of this community was definitely suburban. I am from Cincinnati (population 350,000), where public housing abounds, and Rivertown did not look like any of the complexes I had seen either in person or represented through the media, real or fictionalized.

Driving down the two lanes of Walker Street en route to Rivertown, I passed a Subway restaurant, gas station, laundromat, convenience store, and several colorful houses on the left side of the road. On the right side of Walker Street, a river runs parallel to the road, and there I observed people fishing and gathering for recreation. If one passes the left-facing entrance to Rivertown and continues down Walker Street, one would find a major grocery store, a Dollar Store, and a fire station. The end of Walker street is marked by a fork in the road: the right turn takes drivers by an industrial park within the city limits; the left turn, however, leaves the city limits and enters Ridge County.

From Walker Street, one enters Rivertown by turning left onto Mill Street, the complex's main entrance. As I drove around the community I noticed that, besides the Mill Street entrance, Rivertown is comprised of two main streets: Lemontree Drive and Baywater Drive. The community is laid out in an L-shape, with Baywater at the bottom of the hill and Lemontree at the top. Along Mill Street, single housing units can be found on the left, and the community building is on the right.

In this important community building, one finds the community room, as well as offices for the property manager, maintenance, and resident council. In front of the community building is an open field and a playground set. The latter item provided a point of departure for the rest of the journey. Fully equipped with swings, slides, and

other paraphernalia to provide the children of Rivertown with hours of fun, this playground set is also brightly colored in yellows, reds, and oranges. Its happy hues provided a startling contrast to the bleak apartment buildings of Rivertown.

The physical design and color of the buildings spoke loudly for the fact that, despite the picturesque surroundings, this was indeed public housing. I came upon several buildings with brick foundations; either painted a mustard yellow or covered with dark brown stucco. As I drove closer, I saw stains on the buildings that suggested leaks. Had something inside leaked and run down the exteriors? Whatever the origin, this mark, which ran down several of the buildings, made them look dirty, dark, and nasty. The building themselves did not physically or aesthetically match the quality of the single-unit houses on Mill Street. They were built closely together. Some possessed shuttered windows, while others did not—or either the shutters were barely hanging on. Some doors revealed peeling paint; others, graffiti. The physicality of Rivertown alone made it stick out like a sore thumb. Once inside the complex, one saw quickly that it looked very much like “typical” public housing.

As I continued to drive around on Baywater and Lemontree, I noticed the quality (or lack thereof) of the landscaping: some yards were covered sparsely with grass, while others appeared to be mere dirt, with no grass or flowers to alleviate the brownness. Moreover, the residents seemed to have done little to add the sorts of personal touches that make a house a home. There were no door signs proclaiming *The Joneses* or *The Smiths*, nor did I see any house or yard fixtures. In fact, besides a couple of wind chimes hanging from someone’s porch, and a minimum of exterior decorations scattered on top and the bottom of the hill, I saw nothing that made one apartment distinguishable from

another. The two big dumpsters that service the complex were overflowing with trash and dirt. Needless to say, my first impressions of this place as antithetical to traditional conceptions of public housing changed dramatically. Within this physical location reside most of the individuals central to this research.

6.3 Cast of Voices

Physical design and aesthetics aside, Rivertown is a place where people must live. Its residents did not grow up aspiring to live in public housing, but they arrived at this destination nonetheless. Their pasts, as well as their present situations and hopes for the future, inform who they are.

This section focuses on one group of residents--the current members of the Rivertown Resident Council. Their life events and situations mold their interactions with managers, the housing authority, and community workers who also have stories of their own. Before we can begin to understand HUD's expectations for the resident council as an agent for community building, we must come to know not merely the council but also some of the people who interact with them. This chapter now turns to that task.

6.3.1 Resident Council Members:

In the course of my time with the Rivertown Resident Council, six residents were either already members or joined the council.

6.3.1.1: Cast of Voices: The Resident Council, Managers, Housing Authority Officials and Community Workers

Resident Council Members	Managers	Housing Authority Officials	Community Workers
Sam Johnson	Vanessa Collins	Jane Lare	Sharon Assuliman
Rick Rogers “Tiny”	LaTonya Franks	Alvin Miller	Maynard Assuliman
Linda Sky	Dixie Carter	Daniel Harrison	
Lucy Lu			
Jessica Simpson			
Pebe Taylor			

Sam Johnson

One of the first council members I met, Sam, has been living in Rivertown for almost 20 years—which is why I call him the senior statesman on the council and in the community. When I first met him, I thought he was merely a flirty old man. He would ask for hugs, offer me something to drink, sit close to me at council meetings. At first I was annoyed, but as I got to know him, I realized that he is just a friendly, sweet, kind, and loving man who craves interaction with people. Sam is also generous—and a gentleman. He would go out of his way and spend his own money to buy me salads or a diet soda. He would also do that for the other women on the council.

Sam is African-American, about 5’6’, with short salt and pepper hair. Although he is just 57, he looks much older—you can see a hard life reflected in his face and in his big brown eyes, which are sometimes glassy and tinged with red. However, you cannot tell his age by his spirit, which makes him seem younger than 57. Although his face is

covered with wrinkles, when he laughs (and he laughs a lot) those wrinkles turn upright. He is always making jokes and kidding with people. When he talks, he stammers slightly; however, that doesn't stop him from speaking his mind or flirting with the ladies. In addition to his loving nature, Sam always has a well-groomed appearance. Even in his work uniform, he has his shirt tucked into his pressed pants, and he always smells good. This is the Sam that I have gotten to know.

In his younger days, Sam used to be a "wild man." He used to drink hard and often. Sam and I have shared many conversations about our past drinking days, but without a doubt, my college drinking days are tame compared to his. He told me that he would not call himself an alcoholic but he did say that "back in my drinking days, I drank every day and I was bad"²³ and "I did a lot of disrespectful things to myself, women, and I wasn't right with God." But one day he stopped drinking cold turkey, because he had had enough. Now he is a devoted Christian and family man, which might explain why he is always helping the children and young men in the community, passing along his words of wisdom and lessons learned through experience.

Before they changed the resident councils meetings to Friday, Sam's day off, he would come directly from work, despite having just finished a long day as a truck driver with Ridgeway's sanitation crew. He has been working for the city for over 20 years, and four of those years he has spent as a truck driver. As Sam stated, "the majority of his years working for the city were spent behind the truck". As Sam tells it "I worked behind the truck, picking up trash." Sam has a strong work ethic. He will be the first to tell you

²³ When talking to the resident council members, managers, housing authority, or community workers, I used double quotes ("") to indicate passages taken directly from the interviews with the subjects, while a single quotation mark (') indicates a conversation from fields notes in which I paraphrased. An indented paragraph also represents a direct quotation from the subject, recorded during interviews

that he has worked all his life, and he takes pride in what he does. He told me that “even when I was drinking, I still worked.” He was even given an award for his service and dedication to the job. The city had a dinner for all the civil employees, and as a thank you for his years of service, he received a watch.

Sam is the classic example of someone that I would call “just on the edge, just on the cusp” between middle and lower class. Before he moved to Rivertown, he and his family lived in a rented house. The landlord did not want to take care of maintenance issues that occurred in the house, and as a means of ridding himself of his tenants, he increased the rent to a price that Sam’s family could not afford. Sam recalls:

[The] landlord didn’t want to fix nothing and, uh²⁴, we had to move out because, the rent went up, and he couldn’t tell us why. We lived on 5292 Cherry Lane. You could cut the heat on in the morning and you go to work and come back and there would still be no heat. And the water, you’ll have so much water in the tub, and when they found out what was wrong with the problem, humm, they told the landlord they have to fix it and he fixed it but, huh, he went up on our rent and didn’t tell us. And we were going to go to court. He didn’t want to go into battle. He sent us a moving notice instead.

Then we moved over to southwest for about three-four years until that guy, hmmm, he got the landlord over there, and another company took over. They went up on our rent. And I said too much rent, so we landed down here (Rivertown) and we’ve been here every since.

Sam and his wife have raised six children in Rivertown. At one point he planned to move his family from Rivertown and purchase a home of their own. They had even gone through one of the housing authority’s funding programs to finance a \$70,000 loan, but before he could sign the contract, he was injured on the job—his left hip popped out of its socket. Sam refused to have the surgery that would correct this problem because he didn’t want to miss work. As he puts it “I’ve worked all my life, I’ve never taken a day off.” Despite his reluctance, though, eventually Sam had to undergo the surgery, which

²⁴ I left in most of the huh,oh,etc. to retain the original style and speech patterns of the individuals.

indeed kept him unemployed for two years. Since he didn't know the extent of his injury and he didn't want to go in debt, his plans for moving his family out of Rivertown changed. As Sam puts it "We had to put looking for a house on hold." Sam's injury and surgery occurred in 1998, the same year he was asked to volunteer with the resident council. Over time, he went from volunteering to being a member of the council.

Rick "Tiny" Rogers

When I first meet Tiny, I must I admit I was saddened and even a bit disconcerted by his appearance. He is a Caucasian man in his late 50s, fragile and thin, with long thin white hair and horrible teeth, some black, some missing. He wore glasses that seemed to consume his small, pale face. Even his mustache was white and thin. When he would talk, I could barely understand him, and he could not read or write. I assumed that he was sick, but I wasn't certain.

My suspicion was soon verified: Tiny was extremely ill; in fact, he had cancer (by all evidence, lung cancer). Once a week, he received chemotherapy treatments that left him sick and very weak. On numerous occasions he would come to the resident council meetings pulling his green oxygen tank. Attached to the tank was a breathing tube that he would insert in his nose. What perplexed me, but yet showed Tiny's indomitable spirit, was the fact that he continued to smoke, even when he had to remove his breathing tube to do so.

The fragile exterior that Tiny presented to the world, hid the fact that he was an artist and collector, and an intelligent, sweet man. Several of his intricately carved and painted pictures hang on the community room walls. They depicted girls, Native Americans, and landscapes. He could make a bevy of artistic things using wood, photos,

and knives. One day he brought in his antique knife collections, and he told me the history of all of them. I was taken aback by his wealth of knowledge regarding them. I just had to wonder what kind of person he was before the cancer hit.

Tiny was also known as the keeper of the keys. If anyone needed to get into the community room after hours, they came to him. Even the children in the community knew he was the key keeper. They may not have known his name but they knew he had those keys. One evening, I went to Rivertown for a meeting. As usual I was early and the door was locked. Several children playing outside the building told me that “the man across the street in that house over there, has keys to the community room.” The man to whom they referred was Tiny.

Tiny was married, and he lived in Rivertown with his wife, Beth, who could occasionally be seen driving him to his weekly chemotherapy sessions. Unfortunately, I never got a chance to know Tiny to any great degree or to interview him, because on November 4, 2002, he died. Shortly before he died, on September 27, Rivertown held its resident council election. Tiny was there, even though he was not feeling well. He told me that he was feeling good about the election, and he was excited about the prospect of being re-elected. The election was a complete shoe-in for him.

Being on the council meant a lot to him. Although he was very ill, he would do his best to help out or just be there at events to show his support. At the October 28, 2002 meeting, he said: “I wasn’t able to do too much as for as organizing the event (Halloween Party for the community), but I’ll be there.” Sure enough, three days later, he showed up at the party. Little did I realize that this would be the last event that I would see Tiny attend. His actions and appearance at the party foreshadowed what was about to come.

Rereading my field notes, I did not have the proper wording, but I knew he was near the end:

Tiny looked so bad, he looked like walking death. He didn't say anything or interact with anybody. He just stood in one place. Instead of going home, he stayed at the community center, watching over the children. When one of the children was acting up, he tapped me on the arm and pointed to the little Harry Potter, troublemaker, to make him stop tearing down the Halloween decorations.

Linda Sky

Linda, the unofficial president of the resident council, is a white woman in her late fifties. A thin and curvy woman, she has a head full of short gray hair, a face full of wrinkles, and a strong, straightforward attitude. She drinks coffee and smokes incessantly. An active grandmother, she takes her grandchildren to school and to their extracurricular activities, making sure their needs are met. Although her grandchildren keep her busy, though, she still finds time to hang out with her boyfriend, who is in his late thirties. Linda has been living in Rivertown for five and a half years, and she has been on the council for three of those years. The circumstances that brought her to Rivertown go beyond economics—they involve loss and depression.

Linda is from Cleves, a small, rural, mountainous town located four hours away from Ridgeway. Growing up, she was not used to the cultural or ethnically diverse population that most cities offer. Linda admits:

Where I grew up there were no black people. The first time I saw a black person was when I moved to Ridgeway. I was taught that black people were not human. It wasn't until I had to work next to them, that I realized they were just like me.

Given this background, it is ironic that Linda's life would take the turns it has: she has become good friends with and a confidante to the manager, who is a black woman; her son, who is gay, has a relationship with a black male; her daughter has three

children by and lives with a black man; and her teenaged granddaughter dates a black man.

Linda suffers from depression. When she was 20, she was hospitalized for the illness and received both medication and shock treatment. As she explains, “depression and panic attacks are something that I have struggled with all my life.” When Linda was a teenager, her parents left their small town and moved the family to Ridgeway. While she was in Ridgeway, she met her husband and soon after they moved back to Cleves. She stayed there until her husband died in a car accident. A widow with four small children, she went back to the city, bought a house, and took a job at a packaging plant.

As a single mother, Linda kept her children involved in a lot of activities. She admits doing so was difficult, particularly when her children were teenagers. From our conversations it became apparent that the neighborhood she could afford to live in caused some problems for her two girls. She said:

I brought a house up on 9th street and they (two girls) joined the girl scout club in their teenage years, and they were having a lot, a lot of problems because they were skipping school and.... At night, by the last night we were living in the house, I just picked up that night and moved out the next day because they were having a lot of fights in the front yard and my girls are good children, but they were just kinda wild, you know, they just picked a fight with everybody in the neighborhood and there were some guns involved that night, so I said well this is the end of it. So that afternoon I rented a house on Plant Road and just moved. It was just like my house. I've been paying for it for 10 years.

Linda's son was also picked on by the neighborhood children. At one point, she even considered buying him a gun for his own protection. Confronting the police, Linda made a statement to them:

So I told them, since they were not going to do anything, I'm going to go head and get a gun and give it to my son because they were always getting up at him (the neighborhood kids) but they never touched him. All the foul mouthing and stuff you know. Threatening remarks. Ok, they said, until they touched him there

was nothing they could do. I said there is something that I could do, I'm going to give him a gun. I have to work, I have 4 children here that I'm trying to raise by myself. And I said I'm going to get me a gun and I'm going to get him one. He said (police) you know you're going to jail for the rest of your life. I said I'd rather be in jail than hell. So he went down and talk to the boys, you know after that, they never came to my house again. They went down there and told them, you know she's going to kill ya'll if ya'll come up there.

Until five and a half years ago, Linda lived with her oldest daughter and granddaughter and still worked at the packing plant. Because of her depression and panic attacks, Linda cannot live by herself. When her daughter died of cancer, she tried living with her older child. As she describes it,

I can't live with them, they're young (she laughs), after Pat passed away I moved in with Belinda²⁵. And, we get a long great and we're real close and I get along with the children. Someone came knocking on her door at 1:30 in the morning. They come in and they start "talking". I hear all this going on. "I told her I had to get out of here." Her boyfriend wouldn't come over at night because he didn't want to disrespect me, to come in after dark. This was creating a problem for me because she had to go out the house to meet him. She said it wasn't bothering her but it was bothering me. It was little things. Like with my things, you know, Like if I lay a piece of paper down here, four days later, I want that piece of piece of paper laying were I left it.

Having no where else to go, not being able to work or be a burden on her children,

Linda was forced to live in public housing. She elaborates:

Because my daughter passed away and I didn't have no where else to live and Hmmm, my case worker that worked with her suggest that I continue to work, but then after she passed away I wasn't able to go to work I didn't want to move here (Rivertown) but I had learned to deal with life and be independent.

Linda's daughter's death put her in a severe depression. At the same time, she became the legal guardian of her granddaughter. In addition, her younger daughter, Belinda, gave her custody of her son, since she was not in a position to take care of him herself. When Linda first moved to Rivertown, she took care of her grandchildren and

²⁵ Pat and Belinda are pseudonyms for Linda's two daughters

stayed to herself. As she stated “I was scared and nervous all the time.” During this period, she lived at the bottom of the hill on Baywater; however, she eventually moved to the top of the hill on Lemontree, where she began to manage her panic attacks and depression and, as a result, became more sociable.

Everybody in the community calls Linda “Granny.” She helps out and takes care of other people’s kids. Despite the fact that Linda’s main income derives from Social Security Insurance (SSI), she routinely invites children over for dinner or sleepovers. Since she had already become involved with the children in the community, the manager encouraged Linda to be on the council:

The Manager, Ms. Vanessa, suggested that I might want to join the council. She said that by joining the council, I could help the children (in the community) even more and it would be an outlet to get out of the house (which would help with Linda’s Depression).

Lucy Lu

A young Vietnamese woman, Lucy has two children and is enrolled at Pike Community College. She has been living in Rivertown for three years, having lived before at another public housing community. When Lucy first moved to Rivertown, the manager strongly encouraged her to join the council, since she had a lot of resources and skills (networking, typing, technology, and organizational) that she could bring. She was on the council for four months, but then all of a sudden she stopped coming to the meetings, and no one was able to contact her.

Jessica Simpson

Jessica is a 28-year-old white woman who has lived in Rivertown for two years. Shoulder-length black hair and pretty blue eyes highlight her youthful face. In fact, when I first met her, she appeared so young that I had a difficult time believing she was a

mother of four, three of whom live with her at the complex (the fourth lives with his father). Before she moved to Rivertown, she lived for a year-and-a-half at a family shelter. Both of Jessica's ex-husbands cheated on her and, worse, were abusive. For her, moving to Rivertown was another step toward getting back on her feet. She adamantly states:

I have a plan and a lot of stuff to work on, like my license and getting a car and cleaning up my credit and stuff like that.

Currently she is unemployed, her main source of income is child support. With a horrible irony that suggests the cyclical nature of life in public housing, over 22 years ago Jessica's mother lived in the very apartment in which she now resides. Jessica recalled living in Rivertown for a short time as a child:

A year or two, I believe. I was showing my mom my apartment and I was tellin' her the number, and she said, "I used to live in that one." And I said, "That's the one I'm livin' in too." And she was like, "No way. You used to live here when you was a little girl." So, that was weird.

She also remembered:

A little girl that lived over there where Dori²⁶ lived, a little girl threw a rock and busted my head open. That's the only memory I have.

Jessica hopes to move out of Rivertown in a couple of years. She wants to work as a physical therapist, which means further schooling. In the meantime, she has become involved with the community through the resident council, which she heard about from her neighbor, Linda Sky:

She was just tellin' me that, you know, it's a good way to get out here and meet the people and, I don't know, I basically wanted to get on it to do something with my time, something positive, and ...it was something I wanted to do.

She was on the council for six months.

²⁶ Dori is the pseudonym for a girl that currently lives in an apartment 5 doors down from Jessica

Pebe Taylor

Pebe is a 27-year-old African-American woman, married with three children. At first I thought she had four children, the way she talked about her blue birds:

If I'm feeling sad or depressed, it's like my bird, my blue bird Christie, and she will walk over to the end of my stick or wherever I'm at and she'll just whistle for me to come over..... she'll just sit there and whistle and do her head side to side, that's my baby (Pebe said with a big smile on her face). I don't let her fly where we at now because she's runs into the wall, she's not used to the apartment. And I don't really think she is adjusted to it because she's used to our house. When we had a house, I had a tree at the dining room window, the living room window and ahhh a red robin would come every morning and sit there and they would talk. Yeah, everyday and if my window was closed. It would tap on my window until I raised it up, so they could talk. I would let Christie go outside and I would stick the cage up on the tree, you know, I can't do that over here (Rivertown) because there are a lot of cats running and dogs running

Unlike Jessica, Pebe seems much older than her age. She is very mature, insightful, and calm. She lived in Rivertown for a year-and-a-half before she left and found a house she could rent. Just like Jessica, Pebe viewed Rivertown as a temporary fix because living in Rivertown provided her family with a means to get back on their feet.

We came here (Rivertown) just to better ourselves and to get all our other bills caught up so once we get out of here will be financial stable.

Although both Pebe and her husband worked, financial problems and illness brought her family to Rivertown. Before they moved to public housing, they were renting a house, but her husband, who suffers from epilepsy, experienced a seizure which forced him to leave work. Because of the type of job he had, he could not receive disability for his seizures. This only added to the family's financial stress.

In addition, one of Pebe's children has been diagnosed as manic-depressive. As a result, she had to quit her job so she could stay at home with her son and give him the special care and attention he needs. Vanessa, the complex's manager, talked to Pebe

about the council, as did Sam. Just like Linda, Pebe was already involved with the community's children, so she joined the council in an effort to broaden her volunteerism. She was on the council for five months before her family moved.

6.3.2 Managers:

At Rivertown there were three managers in my tenure there.

Vanessa Collins

Vanessa was the manager at Rivertown for four years—the first African-American and the first woman to be property manager. At the time I met her, she was 47 years old, but with her red hair and stylish manner of dressing, she looked as though she could be in her late 30s. She is a single mother of two boys and has been with the housing authority for over ten years. My field notes read:

After meeting Vanessa, I remember thinking that this was a down-to-earth “sista.” In fact, she has a very matter-of-fact, in-your-face, “girlfriend” style of managing. Although she stands just 5’4”, she had an air about her that says “don’t bullshit me, and I’m an advocate to help you out as best I can, and I’ve been there and done that.” How true that is. Growing up, Vanessa lived in Parkview Heights²⁷, one of the larger public housing communities in the city. She became one of a handful of African-Americans who graduated from a private college in the region. She majored in criminal justice and worked in the court system before making a career move into property management.

In her 30s she got married, had two boys, and then was divorced. Her ex-husband became involved in illegal activities and is currently in jail. As she describes the situation:

He used to have a nice auto repair business, but he started taking people’s money and not finishing the job. He was doing crack and he had started drinking.

Her husband’s drinking and drug use only escalated the physical and mental abuse that she received from him.

²⁷ Parkview Heights is a pseudonym of the public housing community Vanessa lived in

When it came to managing Rivertown, Vanessa possessed a skill that amazed me. She knew the names of all residents, as well as detailed information about them, and she could tell you the numbers of the apartments in which they lived. To some degree, she acted as a therapist for residents, who frequently came to talk with her about situations that were going on in their lives and in the neighborhood. For example, residents came to Vanessa when a teenaged girl (18 years old) in Rivertown was having oral sex in the laundromat where everybody could witness it. Then, later on, Vanessa got a call from the maintenance man, who told her that the same girl's toilet was clogged because it was filled with condoms. Vanessa went over to the apartment and told the girl how to properly dispose of condoms and how to conduct herself in a lady-like manner and to be safe.

The fact that Vanessa is very people-oriented can be witnessed by her eventual pursuit of a master's degree in social work. When new applicants moved into Rivertown, Vanessa would tell them about the council and why they should be involved. She was always present at council meetings and at community events.

LaTonya Franks

Vanessa's replacement, LaTonya, worked in Rivertown for only four months. A young, single African-American mother in her late 20s, with her short skirts and stylish wardrobe, LaTonya reminds one of the title character from the television series *Ally McBeal*. Her nails were always done, her clothes pressed and polished. She always wore high heels, and her makeup and hair were always flawless. She was tall, thin, and pretty. As I look back on my field notes, I realized that I stereotyped her based on her appearance:

Oh, miss thing is too cute to be a manager. I wonder if she knows anything about property management. I wonder how long she's been doing this, a week maybe? She is no Vanessa Collins. Despite the short, short skirt, she was looking good.

I soon found out that before she came to Rivertown, LaTonya had been a property manager at another public housing community and that she had been involved with such management in the public and private sectors for over eight years. She started off as an office manager with the housing authority, then later received training as a property manager. This well-manicured, fashionable woman knew her stuff. LaTonya told me that several lawyers, judges, housing authority officials, and property managers have suggested that she pursue law school because she already possesses an in-depth knowledge of property laws and policies. She has such aspirations, but she does not know if she can pursue them, since there is no law school in close proximity and she does not want to uproot her young daughter from a stable environment.

In the short period LaTonya worked in Rivertown, she made some interior and exterior changes, such as redesigning the property manager's office and the sitting room, and installing mini trash cans and "Children at Play" signs around the property. Even though she didn't get a chance to enact it, when she left, she was working also on a plan to get residents more involved in the community.

Dixie Carter

When LaTonya relocated to another public housing community, Dixie replaced her and, at this date, is still the manager of Rivertown. A white woman in her mid-30's, she is the remarried mother of a little girl and a college graduate from a middle-class background. Her mannerisms remind me of the comedienne Roseanne Barr's—she is upfront, loud, and brash. Yet, she is also personable and has a great laugh. For instance,

when Vanessa and LaTonya would meet with residents or potential residents, they had their office door closed, while other people waited. Dixie, on the other hand, keeps her office door wide open. Her ex-husband used to be a policeman, and she has strong ties with the city police. In a year's time, Dixie went from being an office manager, to being trained as a property manager, to actually running four different public housing properties.

6.3.3 Community Service Workers:

At Rivertown, I also met two key community service workers, Sharon and Maynard Assuliman.

Sharon and Maynard Assuliman

Maynard and Sharon are a married couple in their late twenties and early thirties from New Orleans, Louisiana. I call them afrocentric hippies because they have truly immersed themselves in the history, knowledge, drumming, and dancing of African culture. Both are vegetarians (as are their two dogs) and Muslims. They have incorporated African-centered traditions into their extremely successful workshops, outreach, and community building activities for the adults and children in the public housing communities.

Sharon wears her hair natural, in braids or a twist, and is fond of vividly-colored flowing clothes and hair wraps. Maynard wears Afrocentric jewelry and attire. They like to hike, fish, canoe, and mountain climb. Maynard is taking classes to be a certified scuba diver.

Since they are always together they jokingly tease and tell people to just call them "Shamayne." Shamayne came to the state from New Orleans five years ago because they

had exhausted their resources in that Louisiana city, and they needed a positive change. In New Orleans, the couple ran into economic hard times. They were working odd jobs, when they could find work; they couldn't afford a car, phone, or a decent place to live. One day they found a bike that someone threw out, and, after Maynard fixed it, it became a primary mode of transportation (in addition to public transit). They lived in a high-crime neighborhood, in a place also occupied by bugs and rodents. They were literally down on their luck and had gotten tired of having to consistently borrow money from family and friends. Eventually, parents and friends cut them off because they had borrowed so much.

One day, Sharon got a message from her cousin, who was living in the state where this research takes place, asking the couple to visit. They borrowed a truck and drove 15 hours. Once in the state, they said "we loved it and it felt right, it felt good." Three weeks later they made a permanent move and started looking for work. One day Sharon found an ad in the newspaper for a program trainer/mediator who would help public housing residents overcome conflict. Once she had the job, Maynard would volunteer and help her out. Soon after, he became a program coordinator for residents and resident organizations in public housing.

6.3.4 Housing Authority

Residents of the community also come into contact with several representatives of the local Housing Authority.

Alvin Miller

Alvin Miller is a thirty-something, African-American male who has been working

for the housing authority for less than a year. Originally from New York, he has a background in social services. Before he came to the housing authority, he was a food stamp eligibility worker with the City of Ridgeway. Not only does he work for the housing authority, but he is also a married father of two and a church deacon.

Jane Adams

Jane Adams, a white woman in her late fifties, is a former nun who holds a masters degree in education. Before joining the housing authority, she worked as a volunteer coordinator for non-profit local ministries and soup kitchens. Jane first started working for the Housing Authority in 1995, when she was hired as a resident council coordinator, a position she left in 2002. Because of organizational restructuring, Alvin, Maynard, and Sharon now do the job that Jane once did by herself.

Daniel Harrison

Daniel Harrison is the housing authority's management director, overseeing the operation of all Section 8 housing, as well as the public housing program. He has been involved in such work for over 25 years. An African-American male in his mid-to-late 50's, Daniel is a very tall, stately-looking man with short salt-and-pepper hair. He wears glasses and is known for his booming voice. He is the highest-ranking African-American in the housing authority.

Despite his rather stately physical appearance, Daniel is very laid back, humorous, and personable. At joint resident council meetings, I have watched him work the room like a good politician, smiling, laughing, shaking hands. Compared to the other housing authority officials with whom I have interacted, he is the most outgoing.

The fourteen individuals herein described all play major roles in this ethnographic

case study. Each has an essential hand in the effective functioning of the Rivertown Resident Council. Their backgrounds, perceptions, experiences, and interactions with each other, as well as with residents, shape the council's development and determine how it will implement community-building activities.

The next chapter of this study discusses the rules, expectations, and purpose of the Resident Council from the perspectives of HUD, the Housing Authority, Community Workers, and Managers.

**PART IV: CENTEREDNESS: IDENTIFYING
DISJUNCTIONS IN RIVERTOWN**

7.0 Identifying Disjunctions

In the first chapter in this section, Chapter 7, I provide an overview of the laws and policies that govern and shape the resident council and community-building activities of the resident council. In addition, I center the perspectives of the HUD officials (housing authority officials, managers, and community workers) by providing an overview of HUD officials' interpretation of the purpose, responsibilities, and role of the resident council and their responsibilities to the council. The next chapter, Chapter 8 gives a detailed account of how the Resident Council members see their purpose, responsibilities and role in community building. Then, in Chapter 9, I will compare the interpretations and understandings of the Rivertown Resident Council with those of HUD officials to identify disjunctions between HUD officials and the Residential Council that might be an obstacle for the Residential Council.

In keeping with the focus of both SAA and Critical Race Theory, I *center* this research in the voices of the participants. Prior to seeking an explanation of the answers to these questions through the critical analysis offered in Part V, I use this chapter to provide detailed accounts of the different interpretations of the roles and responsibilities of the Resident Council relative to the stated policies. As these chapters will demonstrate, the day-to-day lived experiences, including status positions and histories of those involved, result in difference among the different constituents.

CHAPTER SEVEN: HUD POLICIES AND INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the resident council as defined by federal laws and regulations. It also explores how the housing authority officials, managers, and community workers interpret these laws and regulations. This chapter includes a discussion of meetings and managerial styles. Specifically, I address two of my central research questions:

What are the HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?

How do the managers, Rivertown Council Members, housing authority officials, and community workers interpret HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?

This chapter begins by presenting the laws and HUD rules that specify the role(s) and expectations of the resident council, as well as the responsibilities of the managers, housing authority officials, and community workers to the resident council members.

7.1 Legal Role of the Resident Council

When I first heard about the resident council, I knew from reading HUD literature and conducting preliminary interviews with the different managers that such bodies played an important role in the structure of public housing. However, at that early stage in my research, I was in the dark regarding the specific function of the council. Over my two years with the council, however, I learned that within the structure of public housing, its role was extremely complex. Where the resident council is located within this hierarchy is illustrated in the figure 7.1.0 (a-b) HUD's Organization Chart.

Since resident councils are organized in government-funded public housing communities, they must abide by federal rules and regulations established by the Code of

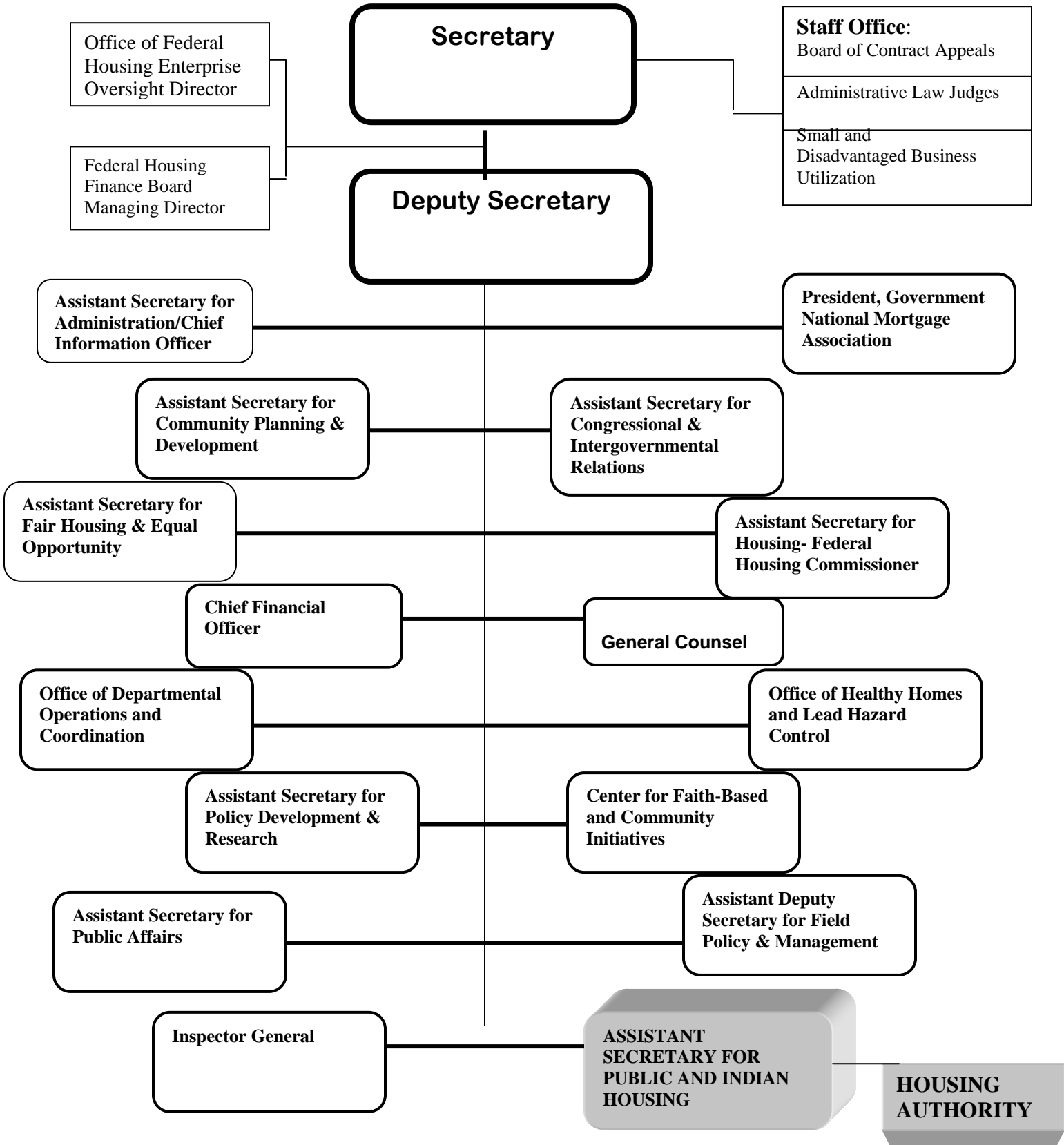
Federal Regulations (CFR), a codification of all permanent rules and regulations created by federal agencies and executive departments. The CFR is divided into 50 titles that represent broad areas, all of which are subject to federal regulations (www.gpoaccess.com). For instance, any regulation or law that addresses the subject of education can be found under Title 34; food and drugs, Title 21; protection of the environment, Title 40; housing and urban development, Title 24. Each chapter is divided into parts or sections that cover specific regulatory areas.

Title 24, Section 964.1- 964.430 establishes the rules for tenant participation, opportunities in public housing, and the purpose and rules of resident councils in public housing. According to these rules, the Housing Authorities (HAs) manage the properties and must be in compliance with the CFR. According to the CFR, the council should act to improve the quality of life for its residents and should undertake an active partnership with the HAs to achieve CFR goals. Section 964.100 defines the role of resident councils:

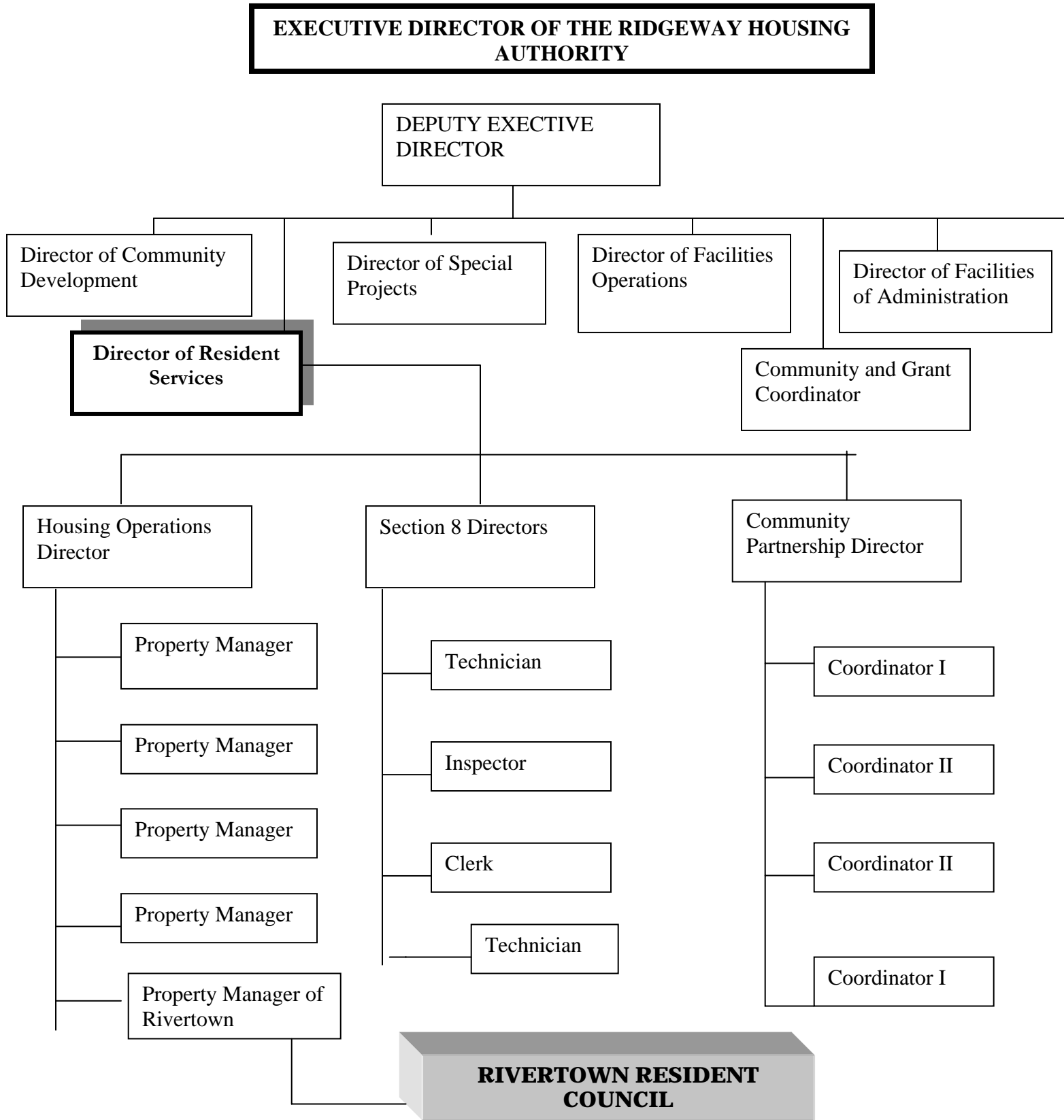
964.100 Role of the Resident Council

The roles of a resident council include improving the quality of life for residents, increasing resident satisfaction, and creating opportunities for self-help initiatives that would enable residents to create for themselves and to their satisfaction a positive living environment. Resident councils may actively participate through a working partnership with the HA to advise and assist in all aspects of public housing operations (24CFR964.100).

7.1.0a:U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD, 2004)



7.1.0b: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE RIVERTOWN HOUSING AUTHORITY



Members of the resident council are expected to improve the quality of life and the living environment for all community residents. They must do so, however, against the backdrop of a negative racialized history of residential segregation, discrimination, and mismanagement of government funding.²⁸ In an effort to prevent a return to the checkered past of public housing, the CFR stresses a strong partnership among resident councils, HAs, and HUD. Tenant concerns are primary, and the purpose of the resident council is to act as the conduit between such concerns and the administration. **Section 964.11 HUD Policy on Tenant Participation** indicates that

HUD promotes resident participation and the active involvement of residents in all aspects of a HA's overall mission and operation. Residents have a right to organize and elect a resident council to represent their interests. As long as proper procedures are followed the HA shall recognize the duly elected resident council to participate fully through a working relationship with the HA. HUD encourages HAs and residents to work together to determine the most appropriate ways to foster constructive relationships, particularly through duly-elected resident councils (24CFR964.11).

Under this section, residents have the right to organize to form a resident council that will represent their interests. **Section 964.14 HUD Policy on Partnerships** emphasizes that a strong partnership with the HAs functions as a crucial component of this endeavor:

HUD promotes partnerships between residents and HAs which are an essential component to building, strengthening, and improving public housing. Strong partnerships are critical for creating positive changes in lifestyles thus improving the quality of life for public housing residents, and the surrounding community (24CFR964.14).

For example, when I examined the housing authorities' descriptions of resident councils in Philadelphia, Seattle, and Santa Barbara, I discovered slightly different interpretations of the roles resident councils should play in their communities. Though

²⁸ For detailed discussion of racialized history, discrimination, segregation, and government mismanagement see Part III of the dissertation

different, each housing authority describes the responsibilities and purpose resident councils have towards strengthening and improving their public housing community:

From the Philadelphia Housing Authority²⁹:

.....The purpose of each resident council is to identify strategies to improve the quality of life for PHA residents. The Resident Councils serve as advocates for residents and encourage improvements in maintenance and physical conditions, public safety, and support services for residents. Each council helps to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate the provisions of services, and works with public and private agencies as advocates to obtain additional resources

From the Seattle Housing Authority:

Resident councils generally plan activities and events for their buildings, and also look for ways to make the building friendlier and safer. Sometimes they plan potlucks, social events, and educational events

From the Santa Barbara Housing Authority:

We currently have three active Resident Councils and two Youth Resident Councils in public housing developments. The councils help support the following activities in our community centers:

- ESL Classes
- SMART kids
- Family Movie Night
- Computer Labs
- Youth Leadership
- Parenting Classes

From the Ridgeway Housing Authority:

In Section 964.100 of the CFR, the Ridgeway Housing Authority, which has authority over Rivertown, provides its own description of resident councils:

HUD encourages housing authorities and residents to work together to determine the most appropriate methods of fostering constructive relationships, particularly through duly elected resident councils. Each duly elected resident council received individual and group training along with the opportunity to attend seminars and conferences throughout the United States. This training allows residents to network with other public housing residents and housing authority

²⁹ Descriptions of resident councils came from the websites of the housing authorities: www.pha.phila.gov; www.sea-pha.org; and www.hacsb.org. The since the website for Ridgeway is a pseudonym, the site can not be given

staff members to build new relationships and gain powerful insights on ways to improve their neighborhood

Legally and theoretically, the Code of Federal Regulations gives resident council members—when working in conjunction with the housing authority—some autonomy, support, and resources to improve their communities however they see fit. As will be developed later in this dissertation, however, in practice this does not always occur. In the next section I discuss how the interpretations of a resident council’s purpose affect its accomplishment of stated goals.

7.2 Interpreting the Role of the Council: Managers, Housing Authority Officials, and Community Workers

Research question one established the context and importance of the laws and policies that support, empower, and encourage resident councils to be involved in community-building activities in their public housing neighborhoods. The policies that guide the council also stress a strong partnership with the Housing Authority³⁰ that is designed specifically to help council members reach their community-building goals. To understand how the housing authority officials interpret these laws and policies and define their role and responsibilities to the council, SAP stresses that I must center on their understandings of laws and policies that support the resident council. In the following sections, I explore my second research question:

How do the managers, residential council members, housing authority officials, and community workers interpret HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?

In order to achieve community improvement and self-help initiatives in public housing, while also achieving resident satisfaction and community-building within each

³⁰ I’m using Housing Authority to be all inclusive of the Housing authority officials, managers, and community workers

development, the CFR emphasizes as critical the development of a strong partnership between the resident council and HA. As demonstrated below, managers, housing authority officials, and community workers revealed similar interpretations regarding expectations for the Rivertown Resident Council.

Managers

I began my search for answers to these two research questions by interviewing three individuals: Dixie, LaTonya, and Vanessa, who were Rivertown managers during my research. Dixie interpreted the role of the resident council to be that of community builder for the residents of Rivertown. Dixie said that “the resident council is here to help the residents to form a better sense of community and to be involved in the community.” Dixie’s interpretation of the council overlaps with LaTonya’s interpretation. LaTonya also saw the role of the council as a community builder in that it provides a sounding board for issues in the community. As LaTonya stated, “If the residents had concerns or complaints, they could go to the resident council to try to help alleviate some of the issues that were occurring within the community, since they were a governing body of Rivertown.”

Sections 964.11 and 964.14 of the CFR establish the importance to community-building of the partnership between the resident council and the housing authority. Yet, in their responses, Dixie and LaTonya did not mention as important this relationship. Vanessa also did not mention the resident council as an important link to the housing authority; however, she did define the council as that of “middleman” or liaison between the residents and outside agencies: “Yeah, it was a big property and a lot of people from other agencies and the community wanted to become involved with Rivertown. And they

needed representatives for that site to make decisions about what they would like to have for their community.” Although these managers expressed slightly different interpretations, they all defined the council as helping to build community and as possessing a connection to or link with the residents.

Housing Authority

To answer this question, I also interviewed Jane, Daniel, and Alvin, the housing authority officials. Consistent with the interpretations of Vanessa, Jane (former Resident Coordinator with the HA) believed the resident council should function as the “middleman” not only between the residents and outside agencies but also between residents and the housing authority. She interprets the council’s role as “representing the housing authority to the people and the people to the housing authority.”

For Daniel, the management director of the housing authority, the resident council should function as a tool for self-sufficiency and empowerment. In Daniel’s estimation, the role the resident council plays in establishing self-sufficiency can be drawn directly from CFR **964.100 Role of Resident Council**, which stresses that the council should “participate in self-help initiative[s].” In Daniel's view,

There’s a need for a resident council. I mean, you have people on developments who have input in what’s going on. I mean, it’s their lives too. And we’re talking about upward mobility. And they need to be involved in things that will enhance their awareness of things that they need to do and things they can do to help themselves and help other people. It’s a community.....Their responsibility is to try to make themselves become self- sufficient. Or, if not, to help other people become self-sufficient.

The connection between the council and the community was made by Alvin, the neighborhood coordinator with the housing authority. He reiterated the theme that the resident council spoke for the residents. He said that the purpose of the resident council

“was to have one voice speaking on behalf of the residents within that given community and to develop a partnership with the housing authority.” Alvin further indicated that the resident council “is supposed to be anything that our residents have a concern about, which can be good, but many times it’s something where they have a concern about either the way we’re providing a service, a service that they think should be provided, or about an expectation that has not been met.” Both Jane’s and Alvin’s interpretation of the council overlapped. To them, the council represents the voice and the concerns of the community, which are then relayed to the housing authority. In other words, the council serves as the communication link between the housing authority and residents. Alvin was the only person to mention the council as “developing a partnership with the housing authority,” which is a goal stated in 964.11 and 964.14 of the CFR. For Daniel, the primary goal of the council should be helping residents with self-sufficiency.

Community Workers

I also interviewed community workers Sharon and Maynard to gain insight into their interpretation of the resident council’s purpose. Sharon echoed the views of Daniel, Jane, and Alvin when she stated her opinion that the purpose of the Rivertown council is “to empower the residents in the community.... [a]nd they are a liaison between the residents and the housing authority to bring programs and different benefits to the community.” Maynard had a simple ten-word description of the role of the resident council. He said, “It’s the job of the council to empower the community.”

Overall, the managers, housing authority officials, and community workers defined the purpose of the council as helping build community and assisting the residents, whether through empowerment, the teaching of self-sufficiency, being a liaison between

the housing authority and the residents, or being the representative for resident concerns and issues. Although varied, their definitions of the council all were in compliance with the goals of CFR 964.100 regarding “creating a positive living environment for families in public housing.” However, another dimension of the relationship also bears investigation: the relationship of the housing authority officials and community workers to the council itself.

7.3 Responsibilities of Housing Authority Officials and Community Workers to the Resident Council

The housing authority officials, community workers, and managers³¹ understand the role(s) of resident councils in public housing communities. Housing authority officials, community workers, and managers identify several specific job responsibilities and duties of the resident council that help its members achieve a positive living environment for their community and build a strong partnership with the housing authority. These individuals also articulate their responsibilities to the council.

Housing Authority Officials

Of the three housing authority officials I interviewed, only two—Jane and Alvin—possessed job responsibilities that allowed them to have the most direct contact with resident councils. As management director, Daniel described his job responsibility as "oversee[ing] the operations of the Section 8, also the public housing, program." When I asked him what his responsibilities were with resident councils he said:

Basically for the resident councils the role has changed a bit. I used to be directly related to the resident councils at one time. That's when I had another division called the Community Partnership Division. And in that division, what we did was to actually try to help the residents be more involved at the Ridgeway

³¹ Manager’s responsibilities and the dynamic relationship between the resident council and the manager will be its own separate section.

Housing Authority, talk about maintenance that's being done on that development, improvement, and also try to get them involved in some of the policies that we have written. We also try to help them put in for grants which at one time a couple of the resident councils did receive some grants.

Basically we get monies to get them (resident councils) stipends, you know, each one based on them keeping records of how much money they spend and actually use this money to do programs, to buy specific things for the development that they need.

Because of the restructuring with the housing authority, Daniel told me that "right now, resident councils, most of them are held by a new division that we call the Human Service Division. Along with the Resolution Action Center (RAC) serving as liaison between housing authority and resident councils." Before the arrival of Alvin, Maynard, and Sharon, whose job responsibilities are to work directly with the residents and resident council, Jane was solely responsible for that job task.

Jane, the former Resident Council Coordinator with the housing authority, said she "was responsible for ensuring that each neighborhood had a properly-elected resident council that represented the needs of the residents to the housing authority and would effectively relay requests or decisions from the housing authority to the residents in the neighborhood. We were kind of like a communication bridge." Jane would go to all the resident council members in all of the public housing communities and help them organize, plan events, and follow the CFR rules for proper election of resident councils.

Alvin Miller,³² the Neighborhood Coordinator, describes his responsibility as "primarily to work with each of our communities as it relates to, not only the resident councils, but any services that can be provided that are currently not being provided in any of those communities." When I asked him about his specific responsibility with the

³² After Jane left the housing authority, Alvin was hired under the Human Service Division. Now Alvin, Maynard, and Sharon work together towards resident satisfaction. Before the restructuring, Jane was a one-woman army. Her job was to specifically deal with the resident councils.

council, he told me that it involved educating and promoting the resident council to the residents:

It's our responsibility to begin conversations to, number one, educate the people over there that they should have a resident council. Then after we do that, it's our job to educate the residents on what the resident council is all about. One of the things that I use the resident council for quite often is to let them know about all of the partnerships that we have.

Alvin also saw his responsibility as that of a link between the council and outside opportunities, a position that involves informing the Resident Councils about numerous partnerships available to help them achieve their goals.

Community Workers

Similarly, community workers interact with the council and thus bear responsibility toward it. For example, Maynard coordinates a program for the Resolution Action Center (RAC), a capacity-building program funded by HUD for residents and resident organizations in public housing, and he defines his role as helping the council get organized and build skills. Maynard is so passionate about his role that he hopes eventually it will be eliminated—that one day the need for it will no longer exist.

Describing his responsibilities, Maynard said

I am primarily focused on working with getting the resident councils organized and trying to get them the skills, or offer them the skills, that would make them more effective. So, basically, my role and purpose is to develop them to the point where a Maynard Assuliman, or whoever at the housing authority, is not a necessity. They are only a luxury. So that whenever they want to do something, they know how to do it, they know who to go to, and how to make it happen.....

He continued his description:

My job is to empower the resident council so they can empower their community. I am not going to go through Rivertown knocking on doors explaining what the resident council is about. I will explain to the resident council if they don't know what they're about. What their overall objective and mission should be. As a part of his job, Maynard is required to make council members fully aware of pertinent

laws and policies that govern and shape their actions and rights. As he explains,[M]any of the councils are not aware of their rights as a council. They're not aware of the code of federal regulations that governs the councils, and also governs the housing authority and the relationship between the two of them. So I work with both the housing authority and councils as a middleman between both of them to try to build the bridge of respect and working together so that they can become more effective. Both of them.

Maynard defines his responsibility to the resident council in Ridgeway as that of a bridge, a communication link between the council members and the housing authority. By informing the residents about the CFR and their rights, he hopes to give them the tools to empower themselves and the community. Whereas Alvin works with the resident council and the residents, Maynard works solely with the resident council.

Sharon, a program coordinator with RAC, runs a HUD-funded program called *Resolutions*, in which she teaches residents how to overcome conflict without using violence. Describing her position, she said "I have a program called *Resolutions* which is in all the neighborhoods for the Ridgeway Housing Authority and basically I'm a trainer/mediator for the communities and I basically train residents um on how to overcome conflict without fighting with each other and violence and all that stuff. Basically, how to deal with one another without conflict." Sharon works specifically with the residents and the resident councils in public housing. Comparing her responsibilities with those of Maynard in regard to the resident councils she said "I'm neutral, because I'm a mediator, um, but the capacity building coordinator is more of an advocate for the resident councils, and that's Maynard Assuliman, so he's not a neutral party." Levels of neutrality aside, the mere act of interaction and how the community workers interpret laws and policies means that community workers in some way influence the council.

Likewise, managers—always on the front lines in public housing communities—work closely with the council.

7.4 Responsibilities and Role of the Manager(s) to the Resident Council

In this section I describe the duties and function of the manager, both in general and to the resident council. Then I go into detail about the relationship between Vanessa (who managed Rivertown for the longest period of time) and council members.

The first official housing authority representative encountered by council members and residents is the property manager. This is someone with whom council members and residents interact and have access to on daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly bases. According to the official job description printed out by the Ridgeway Housing Authority, the housing manager

administers a program of rent collection, and collection of utility and maintenance charges; Read and record electric meters; handles resident relations and resident credit counseling; informs residents of rent schedules, payment dates and other housing regulations; helps settle new residents into their housing units, orienting on lease requirements and on their responsibilities as tenants; keeps records of individual collections and delinquencies; submits periodic collection status reports, occupancy reports, monthly housing managers, development report; and accounts receivable reports; periodically inspects each housing unit for compliance with decent, safe and sanitary living conditions. *See 7.4.0 for more Characteristic Functions of the Housing Manager.*

LaTonya, Vanessa, and Dixie described the responsibilities of being a property manager of Rivertown in terms virtually identical to that adopted by the job description. According LaTonya, her “responsibilities consist of renting apartments, dealing with residential complaints, collecting money, preparing court documents when necessary, processing regular reports (such as intent to vacate), scheduling reports required from upper management, doing credit reports, and keeping up with re-exam information and community service information.” Vanessa was “responsible for oversight of the property

and the administrative flow in the office.” And Dixie, the current manager of Rivertown, told me, “I have to manage the property and make sure things are in compliance with code.” Her statement sums up the two main duties of the property manager, although there are numerous other responsibilities.

Table: 7.4.0: Duties of a Housing Manager (Rivertown Job Description)

May work closely with specialized Ridgeway Police [COPE Team] units to curtail crime/drug sales/gang/delinquency/vandalism problems; investigates acts of vandalism, taking available preventive/corrective actions [e.g., assures gang graffiti is removed within 24 hours or has abandoned cars towed from the complex]; may work closely with the police and school officials to curtail truancy; and may help residents network with needed social service agencies; Conduct monthly meetings which may include Housing Manager, Lead Maintenance Mechanic, Resident Development staff members and Resident Council members.

Works closely with Resident Councils as an advisor on housing matters, including the formulation of development policies; reports on programs and operational problems and meets daily with the Lead Maintenance Mechanic on site to discuss maintenance needs; makes daily inspections of grounds and period round of each multi- family housing unit; identifies and refers severe problems to appropriate staff, selects, trains, and develops staff; participates in management team efforts in overall operation, improvement and extension of housing services; requests special interim and or regular reexamination of income and family composition and determines eligibility for continued occupancy; provides expert input in the development of the annual operating budgets, and may help formulate Authority politics for housing operations

Informs the Resident Selection Office of vacancies as they occur; prepares individual resident reports for eviction and works with the Finance Office staff in handling eviction cases; initiates and pursues legal action for non-payment of rent. Sends out no trespassing letters to all individuals that are legally barred from the premises; may testify in court proceedings; maintains an awareness of worker safety guidelines and procedures and applies these in performing daily activities and tasks; and performs related work as required.

7.4.1 Duties of the Managers to the Resident Council

Besides performing all of the duties expressed in the job description, the manager plays a pivotal role in the development and support of the resident council. Daniel, management director with the housing authority, said the “role of the manager is of course to try to enhance the resident council.” Daniel’s statement points to CFR 964.14,

which states that housing authority officials must develop a strong partnership with their respective resident councils. Since the manager presents the first and most visible opportunity for partnership building, he or she must act as a viable resource and social network for council members as they interact with the maintenance staff, community workers, and other housing authority officials on a regular basis. The duties of the manager also indicate that he or she “may work closely with the police and school officials to curtail truancy; may help residents network with needed social service agencies.” For instance, Dixie has a social connection to the Ridgeway Police Department. Last year, she contacted some of her friends on the force, who cooked Thanksgiving dinner for Rivertown residents. Vanessa had social ties to the school system and other social service boards. She would bring in applications or tell residents about school programs such as Upward Bound.³³ LaTonya was not at Rivertown long enough to incorporate into the community any social connections she might have had. Clearly, then, managers work in conjunction with council members to varying degrees; however, the council also assists managers.

7.4.2 Resident Council Helps Managers

From the managers’ perspective, an active council is an independent body that can help make the manager’s job easier. Dixie stressed the independence of the council and her lack of involvement unless they requested it. She defined the role of the council as “a group of people working on their own and being independent.” If the council members needed her help, then she was there. Dixie added that

the resident council handles all their own stuff and they go about their business and once in a while they come see the manager and aside from that they handle

³³ Upward Bound is a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education that is designed to encourage and prepare students to pursue a program of study at the post-secondary education level.

what they need to handle. They have their little site based meetings and aside from that there's not a lot of interaction unless there needs to be. . . . I just need to be the—I need to just—they need to handle their resident council so to speak at their own level, but yet I still need to be involved in management.

Both Alvin and Dixie agreed that an active resident council simplifies the job of the property manager. According to Alvin,

It makes their [manager] job so much easier because many times the resident council can defuse a situation before it gets ugly. . . . The [manager] is smart enough to understand that she knows that an effective resident council makes her job easier, cuts down on her phone calls, cuts down on the number of complaints that come into central [the Ridgeway Housing Authority main office] that she has to deal with.

Dixie also stated that resident councils could provide residents with a neutral source for commentary, complaints, and information. Things residents would not feel comfortable telling her, they instead take to the council. She noted:

I think it's a good thing [to have a resident council] cause I think that if there's things that the council can't come to me and complain about which you know or, I know in the past it's usually that they're going to complain about me, they need somebody else to go to do that. But, and it's nice cause I think that it gives them somebody to go to who may be a neutral person won't single them out.

With a positive manager-council relationship in place, all groups benefit. By fielding resident inquiries and complaints, the council helps the manager focus on responsibilities only he or she can handle. By offering support and resources to the council, the manager can reassure its members that he or she has only the community's best interests in mind. In short, it is not the role of the manager to dominate, dictate, and use the council for his or her own personal gain. The manager's role is to support and enhance the council and advise its members on housing matters. While I observed in Rivertown, however, I was able to see that the community's three managers interacted with the council in very different ways.

7.5 The Three Managers of Rivertown

In the two-and-a-half years I spent studying Rivertown, three managers were assigned to the property: Vanessa, LaTonya, and Dixie. Vanessa managed Rivertown for a total of four years. After Vanessa left, LaTonya managed the community for four months, then Dixie was given the job. Even though LaTonya and Dixie had not been managers at Rivertown for as long as had Vanessa, their interactions with and responsibilities to the resident council were shaped by the previous manager's style and her methods of interaction.

Since managers have a pivotal role in the enhancement of the council, I was able to witness the relational dynamics between the council members and the manager.

7.5.1 Vanessa's Managerial Style: People-Orientated

Vanessa defined her role with the resident council and residents in terms that went well beyond that of "property manager." She saw herself as a people-orientated manager rather than someone who functioned as a paper-pusher. Vanessa told me that she envisioned her role as that of "social worker, counselor, and school mediator that interacted with community resources." In fact, Vanessa's response regarding her responsibilities corresponds to the requirements set forth by the Ridgeway Housing Authority's description of the job, which under the subheading of "*Essential Knowledge and Skills: successful applicants for this position must possess*" states that "some knowledge of counseling methods and techniques; and some knowledge of available social assistance resources in the area.... Considerable skill in listening to and working with individual residents and resident councils to resolve problems and differences smoothly." The role Vanessa adopted for herself was thus completely within the

parameters of her job description. Since she said she enjoys “working with people and talking to them,” interacting with them on a personal basis came naturally to her.

Clearly, Vanessa conceived of her position in terms that can be described most accurately as “maternal.” In addition, she believed so strongly in the role of the resident council that she often actively recruited members, an activity that can be interpreted in both positive and negative terms.

7.5.2 Recruiting Council Members

During Vanessa’s tenure as manager, she often assumed the responsibility for recruiting council members, but this area is in fact a very gray one, fraught with potential conflict. Daniel agreed that recruitment depends on the manager and situation. He indicated:

... And I don’t think there’s a set way of recruitment, because it’s almost like you’re not supposed to discriminate. You follow what I’m saying? You’re not going to discriminate, and there’s no guidelines on how you select a resident council member. And I think ...What happens is that you’re supposed to have elections to get them. Supposed to. But think about it. Suppose you have an election and you don’t get nobody to vote for nobody, or you don’t get nobody who want to run. So what happens is we call these makeshift resident councils. I need six people, they’re not what you call bonafide, but I’ve got six people to act on behalf of a resident council. I cannot get me an official resident council. I think that’s where most of the problem is, is how you get an official resident council.

Vanessa firmly believed that success of the council depended largely on the recruitment of new members by the property manager. “You just have to get to know them and ask and be persistent,” she said. “It’s going to depend on that property manager. It always has. There are exceptions where people will just say *I want to be a representative in my community.*”

So strongly did she believe in recruiting new members to the council, every time a new resident moved into Rivertown, Vanessa introduced to them the topic of the resident

council and attempted to recruit them as participants. In fact, Linda herself joined the council because Vanessa talked to her about it. This example indicates that the manager's efforts at recruitment can be positive. Vanessa attempted to get people involved and to assist them in any way she could. How councils were formed in the past also might have affected recruitment efforts over time. As Vanessa noted:

Well, at one point in time we had a department whose position was specifically designed to form resident councils. However, people are creatures of habit and if they don't really know you, you've got to have a winning personality to get people to give their time as a volunteer to be a community leader. That takes a lot of work. A lot of work. But as property manager, I knew the people, you know, who was working and whose not working and you just know these things that other folks don't know, because it's like a big family. You know everything about these people. And so it was easy for me to formulate resident councils. It just took a little bit of time when I got to Rivertown because they didn't have a council. They had some people who thought they were on the council, and they weren't. And then they had some people who thought they were not on the council, but they were actually still active. So we gathered all of those folks together and we met and things started to work really well. But working with resident councils, you do have to work relatively close with them because they have a lot of, if they're not working they're on disability, or disability pending. And they have a lot of barriers, and you have to be understanding and open-minded and culturally competent because they're all different. And it takes a little nurturing on your part, as property manager, to bring them together. The property manager is more or less the facilitator, keeping them together.

Having lived in public housing herself, Vanessa saw herself as an advocate for the residents of Rivertown. By all accounts she went beyond the call of duty to live up to the Ridgeway Managerial Requirements and the legal policies requirements of the CFR and HUD. Moreover, she always acted within the parameters of the rules designated for organizing and running a resident council. The rules for governing the resident council are clearly articulated by HUD policies and are described in the next section.

7.6 Rules for Organizing a Council

Besides laws and policies that define the role and responsibilities of the resident council and housing authority, there are also laws that define the legal purpose, structure and importance of the residential council. I begin this section with an overview of these. In addition, a particular emphasis of these policies is meetings. Given that emphasis on meetings within these policies, meetings are described in the following discussion as well. Thus, further addressing my first research question:

What are the HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?

HUD and the Ridgeway Housing Authority recognize and support the resident council as a community liaison designed to improve the quality of life for residents of public housing and promote communities self-sufficiency initiatives from within. HUD legally recognizes the resident council as the sole representative of the public housing community. As a result of this privileged status, in order to support and strengthen council activities, HUD allocates federal monies to the housing authorities, which they budget each year to fund resident participation. Section 964.18 of the Code of Federal Regulations states:

964.18 HA role in activities under subparts B & C.

(a) HAs with 250 units or more. (1) A HA shall officially recognize a duly elected resident council as the sole representative of the residents it purports to represent, and support its tenant participation activities.

(2) When requested by residents, a HA shall provide appropriate guidance to residents to assist them in establishing and maintaining a resident council.

(7) In no event shall HUD or a HA recognize a competing resident council once a duly elected resident council has been established. Any funding of resident activities and resident input into decisions concerning public housing operations shall be made only through the

officially recognized resident council.

(b) HAs with fewer than 250 units. (1) HAs with fewer than 250 units³⁴ of public housing have the option of participating in programs under this part.

(2) HAs shall not deny residents the opportunity to organize. If the residents decide to organize and form a resident council, the HA shall comply with the following:

(i) A HA shall officially recognize a duly elected resident council as the sole representative of the residents it purports to represent, and support its tenant participation activities.

(ii) When requested by residents, a HA shall provide appropriate guidance to residents to assist them in establishing and maintaining a resident council (24CFR964.18).

In order for a resident council to (a) be officially recognized and (b) be eligible to receive HUD funding, which is budgeted and distributed through the Ridgeway Housing Authority, it must meet two requirements: (1) the election of resident council members and (2) the creation of meeting obligations. Actually, those two elements are intertwined. There are specific rules and procedures for duly electing a resident council.

Once elected, in order to receive funding, each resident council must meet certain requirements set forth by its housing authority. Hence, the Ridgeway Housing Authority requires

1. An annual budget approved and signed by the appropriate persons.
2. An annual written agreement, approved and signed by the appropriate persons.
3. That the Council is comprised of at least 5 and no more than 11 active members.
4. That at least one representative from the Council was present at the applicable
Joint Resident Council Meetings
5. That at least one representative from the Council was present at the applicable
Site Based Planning Meetings

³⁴ 964.18 b and 2(i)(ii) state the same thing for HAs with fewer than 250 units

7.6.1 Rules for Conducting Meetings

In addition to the general rules above, more specific rules govern resident councils and meetings. My observations indicate that these meetings are important to the Resident Council. The Resident Council meetings provide the arena in which members can come together to improve community. At the meetings, specific issues are discussed, decisions made, and activities planned, and—as an added bonus—social networking is able to flourish. Meetings also provide a forum that ensures residents have input and are actively involved in Rivertown management and Rivertown Council decisions and activities.

Even though the Code of Federal Regulations does not delineate how meetings are to be conducted, HUD requires resident councils to hold meetings and have by-laws or a constitution that organizes and guides each meeting's structure:

964.18 HA Role in activities under subparts B and C

(9) The resident council shall hold frequent meetings with residents to ensure that Residents have input, and are aware and actively involved in HA management-Resident council decisions and activities (24CFR964.18).

964.115 Resident Council Requirements

(b) It must adopt written procedures such as by-laws, or a constitution (24964.115)

964.105 Role of the jurisdiction-wide resident council.

(b) Function. The jurisdiction-wide council may advise the Board of Commissioners and executive director in all areas of HA operations, including but not limited to occupancy, general management, maintenance, security, resident training, resident employment, social services and modernization priorities.

(c) Cooperation with other groups. There shall be regularly scheduled meetings between the HA and the local duly elected resident council, and the jurisdiction-wide resident council to discuss problems, plan activities and review progress. (24CFR964.105)

While HUD policies establish specific rules that govern the resident councils, each community can develop its own strategies for ensuring that its council adheres to the policies.

7.6.2 Green Book and Bylaws

To help the resident councils conduct efficient and organized meetings, keep them informed about policies and laws that govern the council, and permit them to comply with HUD regulations, Jane helped create what is known as the “Green Book.” The Green Book is highly stressed by the managers, community workers, and housing authority officials. When I first began this project, I had no idea what this book was— however, the way all housing officials referred to it, I began to believe it was not green but golden. For example, in describing the importance of the Green Book, Maynard said:

Green book, it describes everything about a resident council. It tells them how to hold election, it gives them an outline of what their by-laws should include, it gives them scenarios on how to conduct meetings. And none of them had went through that (training on the Green book). So they³⁵ were just winging their meetings. They would hold meetings and people would come out and not come back again because it was totally unorganized. So I’ve been conducting workshops, have been going through that green book with them, so that they can become more familiar. And if they can just get that then later on we could work on CFR 964-whatever later on down the line. But right now we just have to get them in the basic operations of a resident council.

In reality, the Green Book is a green two-inch binder that contains printed information, including rules and laws, regarding productive and efficient council meetings. The binder has ten colorful tabs that divide the organized sections of information. When you first open this double pocket binder, you find information about the Ridgeway Housing Authority, including phone numbers and names of people who

³⁵ Maynard is discussing a meeting he went to at Summit Hills, one of the public housing communities. The resident council was not trained on the Greenbook.

work at the housing authority, information on their mission, a brief history and description of the housing authority and its upward mobility programs for residents.

After you get through eleven pages of background information, you arrive at a table of contents, which offers a breakdown of the ten sections included therein:

- 1: Notes
- 2: Information about your neighborhood
- 3: Directory of Names and Addresses
- 4: Forms
- 5: Fliers, Announcements, Sign In Sheets, etc
- 6: Bylaws
- 7: Money Matters
- 8: Elections Process
- 9: Agreements and Other Documents
- 10: A Guide to a Strong Resident Council

In *Section 10: A Guide to a Strong Resident Council*, which was developed by the Pittsburgh field office, one finds by-laws, rules, and definitions of roles that can be held within the resident council. This section states, “it’s important to note that a resident council should be run by the residents. The housing authority can only assist the council.” In essence, everyone in the community should “assist” the council, but its members should run and organize it. Since resident councils are a self- sufficient organization, everyone involved with the council is a “supporting character.” In other words, the council members themselves are responsible for organizing and determining the focus of the council.

Of course, the council can request the services of the manager and community workers. Managers can support the council with in-kind services, such as providing space, photocopying, and funding. According to the Green Book, the housing authority should respond promptly to reasonable requests, consult with council leaders on mutual problems, solicit suggestions from residents, and maintain channels of communication by

meeting and discussing issues regularly. The rules for conducting meetings, receiving funding, and having a duly-elected resident council are provided for in the By-Laws and Election Process.

Bylaws for the Meetings and Resident Council

The by-laws of the Rivertown Resident Council are composed of eight articles:

- Article I: Name and Address
- Article II: Purpose
- Article III: Elections
- Article IV: Interim Representatives and Officers
- Article V: Obligations and Responsibilities
- Article VI: Funding
- Article : VII: Meetings
- Article VIII: Decisions
- Article IX: Recall Procedures

The resident council members have to adhere to the bylaws, which lay the foundation for proper meeting procedures and for the election structure of the council. In defining the purpose of the bylaws, Sharon said:

Each council has their own bylaws that they can make up. You know they're not a set of bylaws that are given to them by the Ridgeway Housing Authority. They make their own laws up so each community has a different set of laws

Council members were given a draft of "HUD's Model Bylaws" so they could customize them to fit the needs of Rivertown; however, as of the date of this writing, the original model has not been altered. The Resident Council members simply adopted the bylaws that were given to them. These bylaws establish crucial rules for the council, from the organizing of meetings to the designation of leaders

Organizing and Holding Regular Meetings

In the Rivertown Council Bylaws, section *Article VII: Meetings* sets forth the rules for organizing and holding regular meetings:

The Council must organize and attend at least one regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the Resident Council, and one regularly scheduled monthly event which is open to all residents. The event which is open to all residents must be well publicized. Sign in sheets should be collected at both meetings.

At least one elected representative must attend the regularly scheduled Site Based Planning Meeting which is organized and facilitated by the Manager

Additional meetings may be called by any elected representative, however other representatives are not obligated to attend without at least 48 hours notice.

In addition to their own meetings, council members had to attend sessions organized by the Housing Authority, identified as *site-based* and as *joint resident council*. The next sections discuss the types and frequency of meetings attended by the Rivertown council and indicate in some measure the rate of attendance.

7.6.3 Meeting Types

Council members had to attend three different types of meetings: weekly resident council meetings³⁶, once-a-month site-based meetings, and once-a-month joint resident council meetings. I will briefly discuss the dynamics of the three types of meetings that Resident Council members had to attend.

Regular Council Meetings

The regular meetings formed the heart of the Resident Council; the meetings were controlled by members, and it was during them that decisions were made. Council members set the meeting schedule: initially, they met every Monday at 6 p.m., but

³⁶ Bylaws said resident councils should meet once a month but, they decided to have weekly meetings instead.

eventually—to accommodate schedules and encourage greater attendance—they switched to Fridays at 10:30 a.m. Based upon this schedule, then, the council should have met four times a month. However, in my 35-month involvement with the council, instead of holding 140 meetings, they held only 80, 42 of which I was able to attend.³⁷ The number and regularity of meetings would increase depending on the activities and events planned. At first the meetings were held in the community room but then the meetings were moved to the Resident Council office in the community center.

Before I attended my first Resident Council meeting, I assumed the session would be organized similar to the other meetings of groups and organizations to which I belong. For instance, at my monthly sorority meeting, everyone signed an attendance sheet, reviewed an agenda, and discussed the minutes from the last meeting. Once the president called the meeting to order, someone (usually the elected secretary) took minutes, and we could all expect to be able to voice our concerns and opinions. Such a meeting followed the tenets set forth in *Robert's Rules of Order*, the established “Bible” for conducting efficient, effective meetings.

The first council meetings I attended followed similar procedures. There was a sign-in sheet, an agenda was distributed, and someone wrote down the minutes. Jane was always there to ensure that the event followed “meeting procedure. As will be described later, overtime the Resident Council followed fewer and fewer of these procedures.

³⁷ Because of school, car trouble, vacations, business trips, or other conflicting meetings, I was not able to attend all the meetings. The scheduled meetings that I would attend and no one showed, I did not count that as a meeting because no one was there.

Site-Based Meetings

Site-based meetings occurred at 10:30 am on the second Wednesday of each month. The meetings were held in the Rivertown Community Center and involved the Resident Council, manager, maintenance personnel, and any outside community service providers who had been invited and chose to attend. During such meetings, issues, questions, and concerns are addressed to the community.

Recounting the things that property managers should be doing, Maynard told me that one of their duties is to hold such site-based meetings. He said:

There are things that property managers should be doing that they're not doing. Each month, every property manager is supposed to hold a site based meeting. Which include community service providers, the resident council, and maintenance to address issues in their communities.

When I asked him if the managers have to do it, he responded:

Yes, it's a requirement from HUD. And that's the area in which the residents councils will tell either maintenance or the property manager or both of them, the residents are having these issues. I have residents that put in a work order to have a window fixed three months ago and, you know, it hasn't been fixed yet. What's going on? But because the property manager isn't holding that meeting, then the residents don't have a venue to inform them of the concerns in the community.

Discussing a good time to have a site-based meeting, Dixie informed me of her role at the meeting and the importance of site-based meetings in general. She said:

We need a site based meeting date so that I can do minutes, we can hash out any issues that I need to be addressed with at that meeting and then the resident council if that's a good time for them they can keep having it. But, the other three meetings in the month are for the resident council and I'm not going to be involved in those, but what I'm going to do at that point is take those site based minutes and also let Alvin look at those and see if anything he needs to address and help with too.

And then what they will do is um they keep minutes they discuss things about the property what's going on, on the property any questions they have that have been addressed at the resident council meeting and then they'll address those to the manager and the manager will um usually come back with their reply or if its

something that needs to be addressed they'll address it and handle it and get back to them at the next site based meeting.

Joint Resident Council

The Joint Resident Council meeting occurs the second Thursday of every month. The meeting usually started at 6 p.m. These meetings consisted of resident council members from the area's other public housing communities. At these meetings the discussion revolved around the housing authority and the issues in all of the local public housing communities. Besides representatives from the resident councils, the executive directors from the housing authority attend, as do some managers and community service workers. I attended four of the Joint Resident Council meetings. Daniel defines these meetings, which are also known as the president's advisory board:

One of the things that we actually do is have a president's advisory meeting which is held at least once a month. And that's the president of all the resident councils. And we actually hold those meetings (the housing authority), and at different times we're invited to come to those meetings for specific reasons. At one time we had a staff that actually held this meeting. Right now that's being held by one staff person on the Resolution Action Center staff.

One might imagine that with all of the rules that govern the workings of the resident council and the responsibilities of the housing authority officials, community workers, and managers, as well as all of the opportunities given council members to meet either in their small groups or with other concerned councils, the pathway to successful planning and implementation of activities was clear, this is not the case. In fact, the Rivertown Resident Council was not meeting HUD expectations for the council as an active agent for community building.

Not Meeting Expectations

There are numerous laws and policies in public housing that support and encourage resident councils to build community. The laws and policies establish the rules and responsibilities of council, stress the critical relationship between the housing authority and resident council, and articulate the importance and structure of resident council relationships.

From the interpretations of the laws and policies provided by the housing authority officials, managers, and community workers, it is clear that they understood not only the necessity for implementing and enforcing these policies in order to enhance the council but also the importance they played collectively in helping the council improve their community and become self-sufficient.

Even through the HUD officials³⁸ followed and supported the CFR to support and enhance the council, in the end they did not think the Resident Council members were meeting expectations because the individuals on the council (1) lacked leadership, (2) had communication issues, (3) did not take advantage of the support and resources that HUD offered, and (4) operated under laws and policies that could be described as problematic.

7.7 Leadership: Who's Leading the Council?

When I first asked the community workers, housing authority officials, and managers why the Rivertown Resident Council was not effective, why they were not the active agents for community change that HUD and HA had envisioned, a common response focused on “lack of leadership.”

³⁸ HUD officials include Ridgeway Housing Authority officials, managers, and community workers

Community Workers

Both Maynard and Sharon felt that fear was preventing a strong leadership from developing within the Rivertown Council. Maynard stated that a strong leader was needed for the council, a person who would not be afraid of or back down from real issues:

They need a strong leader, you know, someone who is going to...whenever we, in any of the communities we deal with, whenever there's a controversial subject that comes up in the community all the residents come out, the room is packed, you've got to borrow seats to fill the room up, so you need someone that's going to keep...when all the feathers get ruffled, and I'm not saying someone antagonistic, but you need someone that's going to address the real issues and that's not afraid to address the real issues in the community.

Maynard also expressed his belief that lack of a strong leader is related to individual motivation and that the lack of individual motivation can lead to failures of policy and assistance. The agency, he notes, is doing all it can:

And that's because...well, no, because the housing authority held a meeting in each neighborhood, informing them of all these things, so it all boils down to the individual and what they want, you can't blame the housing authority for that and you can't blame the government for that, you gotta blame the individual for not getting up their backside and actually wanting to do something

If a stronger leader was someone unafraid of getting involved and dealing with issues in the community, then Sharon also suggested that fear was preventing leadership from arising in the Rivertown Council. "Rivertown I know has had a pretty rough time establishing a resident council, a strong resident council, um, since I've been in this position," She said. "I think from my observations many of the residents on the council are afraid to get out into the community and, um, really aggressively work the community."

Maynard and Sharon interpret the council as weak—not having motivation, a strong leader, or possessing leadership qualities among its various members. Despite

community dynamics or personal issues, they both feel the council could overcome those deficits and work to become a strong force in the community.

Housing Authority Officials

For Alvin, strong leadership requires people becoming fully dedicated to the council and to the community. If a resident council does not have a strong leader, in Alvin's opinion, its members do not care about their community. "I think leadership is number one," Alvin noted. "For the over ten communities that we have, the most effective resident councils right now are the ones that have individuals, men and women, that are just dedicated not only to the council, but are committed to the community which they live in."

Jane provides a mechanism by which the council could take advantage of a strong leader already available to them: she believed that the resident manager should lead the council. In Jane's view, having a manager as the leader simply makes things easier: "Just let the manager decide to and let somebody who's there from eight in the morning until five in the afternoon on a good day uh and not there on the weekends not there at night.... uh that person run it (the resident council)."

In public housing, residents move in and out on a regular basis as their fortunes improve or destabilize, so transience can affect the council, as well as community leadership in general. Jane expressed a belief that since managers were around more often, they could provide the stable and strong leadership vital to ongoing projects and long-term goals. According to Jane, the individuals who, because of emotional stability and positive personalities, are best suited for leadership positions on the

council are also those who are least likely to live for very long in the housing projects. Jane puts it this way:

Another problem that the people who generally express an interest in being on a resident council usually have—they're not the depressed people. They're not the—they have, they have some pizzazz. They tend to be the people who are gonna move on fairly quickly. They have some leadership, some and it may be misdirected um now but um if you get a good resident council going chances are those folks aren't going to be there very, very long.

Managers

In the opinions of Dixie and LaTonya, leadership must be centered on the council. Dixie attempted to show her support by letting the council handle their own business without involvement or interference from the manager. In her words, "They need to handle their residents, so to speak, at their own level."

Dixie also expressed her opinions that the individual bore the responsibility of providing for himself or herself and that if the council members were forced to handle their own business, they simply could not be lazy. Dixie said:

And I tell them—I tell them they need take responsibility for where they are and who they're around and that, that's part of being an adult and their responsibility of being a home owner if they ever want to get to that point, but those are things they need to understand.

I think a lot of it boils down to—I hate to say it, but laziness because they find out they actually have to go do something now and then and they just don't want to be bothered. They want somebody to do it for them and then they just want to reap the benefits and you know unfortunately I think they're going to have a shock when the community service things are really hardcore implemented and they need to uphold those and they've not complied and they're being evicted for it, so.

If the council members needed her help or suggestion, however, Dixie was there, although she seemed to prefer a "hands-off" approach. As a manager, she saw her primary role as dealing with management issues.

Vanessa tended to extend her support in a different manner, defining her responsibility as that of “bringing the council together.” Both Vanessa and Jane believed the manager should be the leader of the resident council. Vanessa even defined this as her responsibility. She said, “I had a very good Rivertown resident council. The residents in Rivertown, just like residents that I got together at all the other councils and properties, are people that need their property manager to be their leader. Plain and simple. They need a leader just like any other organization.” Despite the fact that the CFR states that resident council members should lead their own organizations, even among the managers, community workers, and housing authority officials there is some confusion with regard to who is responsible for leading the council. Since various individuals on all levels articulate differing conceptions of leadership, it is little wonder that the council itself is hampered by leadership issues. An additional problem that impacted the effectiveness of the council members—at least, as identified by some contacts—is a rather ironic one: the very location of the Rivertown development.

7.8 Locating Rivertown

As noted previously, Rivertown is situated far away from other public housing communities and downtown Ridgeway. As discussed in Chapter 6, the location can be described as both “suburban” and “semi-rural”; in fact, Ridgeway is a hop, skip, and a jump from the Ridgeway County line. In other words, Rivertown is on the edge of the city limits. Alvin, Vanessa, and Jane all commented on how the physical location of Rivertown impacts the effectiveness of information distribution to the resident council.

Alvin suggested that the physical distance of Rivertown causes its residents to draw less attention and resources than those in the other, more urban public housing

communities. Because Rivertown is the farthest away, it is out of sight, out of mind. In Alvin's terms:

I think it's, for some, it's almost the out of sight out of mind where to get to Rivertown you've got to have a reason for going there, where some of our communities we might pass them going somewhere else. Like Winton Park. We have probably eight or nine employees here that mentor some of the kids at Winton Park Elementary School, where every week when we go we pass that development. So if there's something going on in that development let's say appearance-wise, that's a concern. We see it, we come back to the office, we mention it to somebody, and the wheels start turning. Where Rivertown is located, West Chester is close, but you pass West Chester before you get to Rivertown so you don't have the same kind of interaction. The only time I myself go to Rivertown is when I'm meeting with a resident or I have a purpose for going out there. But I pass West Chester almost every day when I go to work. I pass Forest Park on the interstate. I pass Oakland³⁹ on the interstate. So a lot of times it's just the recognition of something is going on, something is out of synch, or something doesn't look right. A lot of times that leads to other conversations.

Location and environment can affect many facets of a person's life. For example, Grice and Skinner (1998) noted that the environment can detract from effective communication. Alvin's statement suggests that this is true for the Rivertown Resident Council. Vanessa commented on how Rivertown was in its own little cul-de-sac. "Down here we are (isolated), but each housing development is like that, expect for the high rises," she said. "We're in our own little world."

Vanessa also realizes that if Rivertown was located closer to a big city or a more progressive area, the information shared by and interaction of the managers with the resident council and the community would be a lot different. Vanessa believed much to be affected by a combination of both location and the mindset of the people with whom she worked. In her estimation:

I think because of the location of where we are, I think that if we were in Northern City, I think it would be totally different. I know it would be totally different.

³⁹ Winton Park, West Chester, and Oakland are pseudonyms for the different public housing communities in the city.

Still the location of where we are and the mindset of your supervisor plays a big role on how respectful the staff will be. That's key right there. If you've got a jerk or someone who is narrow-minded for your supervisor, you can't expect to grow. But that's something that I found that I had to tolerate.

Unlike Alvin and Vanessa, Jane believes Rivertown to be in a good location as far as conveniences offered the community. She sees the location of Rivertown as better than that of some of the other communities because it provides residents with conveniences unique to place:

There are physical things too like they're right next to a grocery store. Just up the street from the laundry mat as opposed to the folks at West Chester with no grocery store anywhere near them, no laundry mat anywhere near them. People who have no car are really stuck. You have to carry your laundry on the bus, you have to carry your groceries on the bus and it gets old.

Jane also believes, however, that with regard to location, the council and the residents they serve might also receive less attention from the "outside," including assistive agencies, because unlike other communities in the area, Rivertown is not located in a chaotic environment that draws the attention (both good and bad). Additionally, Jane suggested that this lack of chaos—while very good in the larger sense—might also lead to complacency on the part of residents and council members. In her opinion:

It wasn't chaotic um if anything it was just the opposite. Um it wasn't chaotic enough. Um they were—everybody was too compliant too um and I don't know as they say the physical make up of the community um they didn't have to deal with some of the issues that, that other neighborhoods had to deal with so there was a level of I guess stability maybe that um I don't know, I don't know what—I don't know how—I don't know what factors impact on the dynamics of neighborhoods. It's just not an area of expertise for me, but it would stand to reason the quality of life would be different in a community where your basic needs for food and laundry and transportation there's a river over there um there are things at Rivertown...and that beautiful playing field—the dynamics of that community are gonna be very different than the dynamics at Winton Park. There's no open area where kids can play, where there's a heavily traffic street cutting right through the neighborhood, no grocery store, no laundry mat, no um so different kind of person is gonna want to live there for starters um and maybe be more content living there and feel less

Distance, location, and visibility (or lack thereof) might help describe why Rivertown and its council members may not receive a lot of attention from the housing authority. On top of that, Rivertown is not known for possessing an attention-getting chaotic environment. Issues of drugs and crime are major concerns for severely distressed housing, but they do not seem to affect the residents of Rivertown.. Severely distressed public housing is characterized by the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing (1992)⁴⁰ as possessing violent crime and drug problems, high vacancy rates, physical deterioration, and high rates of unemployment and poverty. Although some of these features might describe Rivertown—unemployment, some physical deterioration of the site—clearly others do not. In addition to these factors, Rivertown council members faced another problem: how to make the council known to residents.

7.9 Communication: Advertising the Council

In order to create a successful resident council, those involved must ensure that residents fully understand the purpose, role, and responsibilities of the council. Despite everything the council does to distribute information about meetings and community-wide events, residents in the community do not attend Rivertown Council meetings nor participate in community activities. Sharon said she believes that residents don't come to the meetings because they don't see any actions from the council and they don't know what's going on. "I think some of them do, but the one's that do I don't think they really care," she said. "I don't know if they know the effectiveness of a resident council in their community and the benefit of having a resident council, so they really don't care cause they don't see anything happening, you know." With the makeup of the resident council

⁴⁰ See National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, The Final Report 9-31 (GPO,1992) ("Commission Report") (Summarizing the National Action Plan)

constantly in a state of flux, LaTonya discussed how the inconsistency of the meetings reflects poorly on the group's ability to communicate with residents about matters of importance. She said:

So, kids activities is a definite must down there and of course by having the council on board they get help to initiate and institute a lot of programs for the kids and if you have a resident council body like that was there that was formed and then unformed that sends a message out to the residents that perhaps our community is not together. Maybe our management is not together, because we can't even hold together an elected body staff. So I think it poses a negative impact when you create a body and then it is no longer in existence, so...

LaTonya realized that perhaps management might be contributing to the inconsistency of the resident council. Even Daniel agreed that a better method for communication between residents and council members must be discovered. He stressed that HUD needed to create specific policies regarding communicating or suggest a process by which councils could more effectively recruit people. He said:

In my opinion, and you know, HUD needs to come out with a way to select resident council members. In other words, not so much as who to vote on and stuff like that. How do you recruit me as a resident council? What do you look at in a resident council member? "Okay, you're going to be on the resident council. I don't have but three people and need six." I think it's a bit more than communication. I think that even with the communication, if you don't have a way of selecting the people, you still not going to get anywhere. In other words, you can put out all kinds of flyers. We have done things like take kids out to the play they had last year. We sent flyers out to everybody in the development. I bet we didn't get 50 kids, all told. And we was going to provide transportation and get them there. It's the Jackie Robinson story. We wound up getting kids like from the schools and other locations to go because we wanted to fill the house up. But a lot of them were not the kids from our developments.

Vanessa also agrees with Daniel that the organizational layers of communication between HUD and the housing authority should be clarified. She said:

Communication is the key. It wouldn't have mattered that I left. When LaTonya or Dixie took over the property they should have kept going. But how do you measure your priorities? We have all these office management tasks to do. You got layers. You got all your office work to do. You've got applications to do. Then you've got physical property. Then you've got internal property. Then

you've got maintenance. Then where do you put your resident council? They had the whole population in general. So you've got to prioritize. And I'm going to say that the housing authority will fluctuate as to what's a priority. They go back and forth, and it drives you, it gives you a sense of imbalance. You're never able to stay focused and caught up. And I started working for the authority when I was in my early 30s. And I'm just as intelligent and just as educated as any of, as a matter of fact, these kids that they've hired recently, they don't have Bachelor's degrees. So it's not about your education. The housing authority just has to understand that they need to bring another person into these properties so the managers can focus and get everything okay. How they're doing it now is they're just workin' themselves to death.

On the other hand, in Dixie's opinion, meetings are held too infrequently. She suggested a banner or some other form of overt advertising for such meetings. She indicated:

Yeah, cause that's one thing I'd like to do. I'd like to see us send out information on their having the resident council meeting. I think that's another important thing. If they weren't sending out flyers to the residents telling them and I think its to frequent to do every week I think it needs to maybe be biweekly or monthly resident council meeting and if they set it like lets say every third Wednesday night at 6:30 everybody knows that the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 is the resident council meeting.

Like I know when I had a homeowners association that it was always a specific date and time and that you knew—you know maybe one month you had to miss it because you had other commitments or what not was going on but you know you knew that, that was the night they had it and everybody would be there so.

And the other thing I know the resident council has money but they might want to consider doing is getting a banner that says resident council meeting tonight or some kind of signage where people drive in at night and they know where the resident council meeting or resident council meeting tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. or something so that its visible for the people in the community you know it could go on the corner in here you know or we can hang it on the side of the building here or something, but um you know this way it's a reminder, people are seeing it they know it's going on.

Meeting dynamics and communications about the meetings play integral roles in the success of resident councils. Some of the issues with communication involve the structure of the meetings and HUD not having specific guidelines for communicating

information about the resident council. The next section will focus on the laws and policies that help shape the dynamics of the resident council.

7.10 Resident Council Laws and Policies

To support and encourage resident councils to build communities, HUD has provided funding and offered numerous programs and opportunities. Some of the housing authority officials, managers, and community workers thought that Rivertown Resident Council members were not taking full advantage of their opportunities, while others thought the laws and policies themselves were problematic. LaTonya suggested that residents were not taking advantage of the funds that were already available. She said:

we have funds there for the resident council so we can do things in the community for the residents and if we don't have a council or body then the residents won't get those funds to do the extra curricular activities that we do.

LaTonya thinks the housing authority is doing an exceptional job of providing funding to the resident councils. Furthermore, she believes that lack of community support hinders residents from taking full advantage of the funding opportunities. In her opinion:

I think the Housing Authority is really great as far as trying to back up the council in the community, trying to give them what they need to get operating and going. But, the problem is the lack of support that we get from our, I guess, the residents within the community to participate. I mean its there for us. Like, you know, the resident council body's there, the funds are there for them to utilize for the community, but you just got to get the people to want to participate and take advantage of that so I think the Housing Authority is doing a great job as far as making it available to them. But, as far as them acting it out and carrying it out that's where we are lacking.

In comparison, Vanessa thought that funding did not matter if the council members and residents did not buy into the purpose/role of the council. She said:

The residents have to buy into this. They're not doing it because HUD says it's so important for the housing authority to have these resident councils and all this money in the resident council. The resident council at Rivertown, they really didn't focus that much on the criteria that HUD put out there. They just did it because they wanted to make a difference and they had a little extra time that they could give. And that's where it stopped. There's a whole lot of rhetoric and if you're poor and you're living in public housing and you're on the resident council, so what if they've got all this money and all these guidelines and all this stuff that the housing authority needs to have done. All I want to do is volunteer, maybe go on some trips now and then, take some classes if they offer for free if I can take it. But sometimes that doesn't work, because the Rivertown resident council had a budget and budgeted computer classes. But no one took advantage of it. It just wasn't a priority.

7.11 Laws and Policies Provide Opportunities

Both Vanessa and Maynard think that, overall, HUD policies and laws provide opportunities for the resident council. Vanessa said:

I think they've got a lot of opportunity for resident councils. There's a lot of opportunity for them. And if they were willing and able, they could take that opportunity. Especially a young person who is trying to go to college or a young mother. She can use that experience to put on her resume to enhance her to get a better job even. So I think HUD has some good policies out there for residents.

Maynard said he would not mind living in public housing because of all the opportunities that policies and laws provide for residents. He said:

There's a program right now, let's say I'm paying...right now the highest rent you can pay is four hundred dollars a month, for whatever apartment you live in, and let's say I'm paying two hundred dollars right now, because of my income level, there's a program that you can sign up for right now, that as I develop my skills and I'm able to get a better job, my rent goes up, because as you know as your income increases, your rent increases, so let's say my rent goes up to four hundred dollars a month, that extra two hundred dollars the housing authority puts to the side, every month, and at the end of stay at the housing authority, let's say in five years, and I am ready to leave, that increase, they give all of it back to me, for whatever I want to do, if I want to put a down payment on a house, I could have ten or twelve thousand dollars, so what would have been money just going to the housing authority before as a rent increase, actually became an escrow account for me. See what I'm saying? So there's a lot of benefits to living here. There are programs right now if you want to buy a home, and your credit isn't ok, the housing authority has housing around Ridgeway that they will put you in a home, nice houses, real nice houses, three bedrooms homes, they only sell for like eighty

six thousand dollars, they will put you in that home for three years, and let you pay rent, in order to build your credit, and they will put you through a credit program.

7.12 General Equality in the Laws and Policies

The laws and policies that govern public housing serve to establish certain rights for residents and to define permissible behaviors, but they also serve to ensure that application is equitable—that, in other words, discrimination does not exist.

Laws don't discriminate

Staying in compliance with federal laws, the Ridgeway Housing Authority also makes sure that residents of public housing are treated equally. According to Alvin, sanctions and policies are in place to deal with any evidence of racism or discrimination.

He said:

There should be a grievance policy that is posted at every development where if a resident has a problem with their property manager that they know the steps that they need to go to. All the property managers' report to Jen Simpson. And I've seen Jen be Johnny-On-The-Spot when she gets a phone call about an issues, especially when it's something as serious as race or money or anything that's considered illegal. And I've seen Jen resolve issues. And most of the time it's misunderstanding. "Well, my manager told me this." And Bridget talks to the manager and it's just two sides of a coin. And she tries to bring both parties together to do that. And again it should be posted at every development.

The grievance procedure is a method prescribed by HUD for dealing with resident complaints. Although such a procedure exists, not all residents or members of the council seem aware of what the procedure entails. All housing authorities are required to meet the regulatory requirements set by 24 CFR 966.50-57 (PHOC, 2004:208). In each lease it describes the grievance process and the resident's legal rights. Although the policy also should have been posted in a public location, I was never able to verify where or if it was displayed. In Vanessa's office, HUD information and materials were routinely displayed

in an enclosed glass case hanging on the wall, but the grievance policy did not seem to be among these documents.

With regard to sanctions and policies, Maynard disagreed that such a system of checks-and-balances was in fact in place. Of such policies, Maynard indicated:

There is none. Let's say the three of us are residents and we don't have a resident council in our neighborhood. Sharon goes to the manager and she went through a scenario where she felt she was treated unfairly, that the property manager is very disrespectful to her. And the three of us go down and we say, "Oh, Jim Bob, our property manager, is disrespecting us." Some people at the housing authority, they're okay let me take your information and put a request in and whatever.

In several cases I've heard one particular property manager who has a serious history of this and their hand was slapped. "Don't do that no more." If there was a strong resident council in that neighborhood, the housing authority now has to make some serious ... they're forced now to make some serious changes with that person. Now whether it be take some type of classes, whether it be ... it's not Maynard, Sharon and Tiffany, it's a HUD-backed organization that represents the needs and concerns of the whole community. Saying we have a problem with our manager who has done this, this and this, and now we have a record of it and if he does it again ... if you're not going to take care of him, we're going to take him to the next level. And that next level is going to recognize us. Not just me, Maynard, and Sharon and Tiffany, but the resident council for this neighborhood. So that's power. The policies are there to give them justice. But it has to be done through their resident council.

Maynard—who was on the job eleven months when I interviewed him—said that he keeps his eyes and ears open for any new policies that may be unfair to minorities or women. "Let me say this ... I have not, and I'm not saying that it's not there, but in my eleven months of helping residents, I have not come across ...and whenever they've mentioned a new policy I'm very critical in listening for those types of things," He noted. "I have not come across anything that I would say, 'Okay, that's unfair to black people or that's unfair to women or that's unfair to any particular group.'

Maynard further explained that it's not so much the policy that matters, but how the policies are interpreted. Additionally, he indicated, the lack of sanctions to prevent negative or neglectful translations of the policies also proves a problem. According to Maynard:

Some of the managers view the residents as "I'm better than you." In that type of job, and a lot of that is based on race and a lot of that is based on gender. A lot of that is based on past experience. You have managers that are looking inside of resident's windows at three o'clock in the morning. Yes. You have managers that laugh, you know, and tell "Yeah, I threw such and such out, she was beggin' me, she was on her hands and knees beggin' me to keep her and I threw her out. Ha ha ha." Laughing about it. Bragging about it to other managers about how they've not manipulated, but basically kicked somebody while they're down. And to me that's not a good manager. To me, that's not management. Definitely, definitely. That's what these people have said, but Sharon and I have actually seen this with our own eyes. So there are issues of racism. There are issues of sexism. There are issues of "you people." It's not just with black, just a black and white thing, but just "you poor people," "You people who are less than me, you're going to get whatever I take you." "You're gonna deal with me on my terms." And if there was a strong resident council in those neighborhoods that would not be the case.

I asked Maynard whether, since he had been on the job, he had seen any evidence of this from the manager of Rivertown, to which he responded:

I think that may be the case comin'. That may be the case, because that new manager has worked under those people. That's been her example of management. That's been her example of management. So, and she's worked under two that are likethat. So, that's been her example. And so it's going to be interesting to see if she chooses that road or chooses something that's better. I'm going to say this. The property managers are only able to get away with what their supervisors let them get away with. And I'll leave it at that. You know, it's kinda like, um, having a Klan member as a manager and David Duke is your supervisor and you're complaining to David Duke that your manager is racist. what do you do. And I'm not saying that that's the exact scenario of a Klan member, but I'm just giving a scenario. You have someone who is supportive of that sort of rule, so complaining to them is no good. As an individual, it's no good.

Daniel also agreed with Alvin that the policies that govern public housing are equal. Embedded in the laws and policies are processes that deal with inequality. Daniel

said:

The policies that we have, that I know we deal with, we don't discriminate. They're completely fair across the board. I mean, as far as I know. I mean, if you want to participate in the resident council and you're black, white, green, red, it don't make no difference. Right now, if someone can't speak English, we'll hire somebody to come in and interpret. We'll make the appointment for you to come in, and we'll schedule somebody to come in ...And we pay up to \$600 for somebody to interpret.. In other words, it don't make any difference. If you're supposed to pay your rent, it doesn't matter what color you are, if you don't pay your rent, then we'll wind up evicting you.

For Daniel, the housing authority and HUD provide a wide variety of services designed to ensure that everyone can have equal opportunity to join the council or understand the laws and policies, even if that involves paying for a translator. Daniel remained emphatic that the policies are straightforward, from the lease itself to the fair process of a hearing:

as far as I know, all the policies I know of are straightforward. Just like the lease. The lease is straightforward. It don't have anything to do with what color you are. Everything is the same in the lease. And if you see, right now, when you come into public housing, we get a police report on you, a credit report on you, and a landlord reference on everybody. And you don't come in unless we get those three things. So everybody is on the same basis. So we pretty straight across the board with all of our policies. It's just pretty easy, I'm speaking here and I don't know what other people to do, but they should have the same policies. They *should* have the same policies. Our policies are straight across the board. In other words, what's for one is for others. I think that we've only had two fair housing complaints and both of them was resolved. One of them had something to do with landlord reference, which panned out. The man was mad because he got a bad landlord reference from one of the property manager's, but it was true. The file documented all of it. And then plus his previous landlord before us. But normally on landlord reference we try to just tell what we actually know. You can't tell anything if you don't know it. You have to have it documented in your file, or you can't even go there with it. But I think all of our policies, as far as admissions policy, continuing occupancy, resident councils. Everything is pretty above board.

Ideally, then, all necessary processes—from applying for public housing to filing a grievance—are identical for everyone who lives in public housing. In matter of fact,

however, while Daniel stressed how other housing authorities should have the same policies and should be following them, he expressed doubts about whether such equal interpretation and application always occurred.

LaTonya also agreed that HUD laws and policies were not discriminatory. She compared HUD policies and laws to that of the private housing market:

Basically the procedures they have here is also similar if not identical to procedures that are in private housing and I've worked in private housing for a number of years and a lot of the same policies and procedures that we had in private we have here. So, I don't feel like the policies here are more stringent toward the racial issue or sexual issue or anything of that nature. Its just basic landlord tenant laws that the tenants need to abide by and also the HUD regulations that we have to mandate so, therefore, we're in compliance with our records

I asked LaTonya if she thought there was a difference working in the private sector versus the public sector, particularly since the latter possesses a disproportionate number of people who are low-income. "The policies here wouldn't affect the poor—its no difference with the policies with a poor black person or a poor white person," She replied. "It just, you know, black and white to the point regardless of color, creed, sex, race any of those things."

In LaTonya's opinion, housing policies are equal and quite similar to those that govern the private sector. But she did acknowledge that in public housing, laws and policies provide a structure for residents and council members, as well as opportunities for betterment. Commenting on such structure, she said:

Structure, You gotta maintain structure some kind of way and if we don't have the policies in place to be practiced then it would be chaos. It would—it would, cause there would be no structure. There would be no limits no rules so people would just do whatever, because there's no limitations there. It would be effective for the council members, because it would provide, again like, a basis, foundation for a program so, therefore, we know what our guidelines are so we can just kind of build up from that. If there was no basis, no structure, no foundation then it

would be really hard for the resident council to try to go out and do, you know, what they need to do, you know, what they need to do in the community. So, there has to be some kind of format or structure

Later in our conversation, LaTonya did talk about some differences that exist between the public and private housing sectors. The key factor is government funding, she said. “No, we don’t have that in the—that was not in the private sector, because there was no assisted funds—there was no kind of assistance being given by any government entity so, therefore, we didn’t have stipulations like that,” she indicated.

It is interesting to note that she did not seem to think that an array of rules are vital for those who live in the private sector, she thought it justified for residents of public housing.

Alvin, Daniel, and LaTonya expressed their jointly-held beliefs that HUD policies and laws are indeed universal and equitable for residents of public housing. Vanessa and Maynard believed the policies can help the residents and Resident Council. Maynard realized that if the policies are interpreted differently and if there were no sanctions in place to ensure proper translations of laws and policies, then inequality could indeed be a problem. One of the more interesting recent policies implemented in the public housing sector involves a community service requirement for residents.

7.13 Policy: Community Service Requirement

A recently-implemented policy—the Community Service Requirement (CSR)—was designed to help Resident Council members increase their membership, achieve self-sufficiency, and empower themselves. The managers, community workers, and housing authority officials all had different interpretations regarding whether this new policy did in fact help residents and Resident Council members.

7.13.1 Community Service Requirement

According to the Community Service Requirement, implemented under Section 12 of the Housing Act of 1937, as amended, every adult resident of public housing is required to perform eight hours of community service each month. This requirement does not apply to various exempted groups such as elderly persons, certain disabled individuals, and others (24 CFR 960.600-609). At first the community service requirement (CSR) was required only for those communities that received a HOPE VI Grant. Now, however, non-HOPE VI Grant communities have to abide by the requirement as well. The managers, community workers, and housing officials perceive this new requirement in a variety of often-contradictory ways: from helpful to ineffective, equal to discriminatory.

Community Service and Helping The Resident Council

One goal of the Community Service Requirement is to increase membership on the resident councils. However, Sharon was not sure that residents would join the council simply because of the new policy. She said:

It may make the council's membership grow, but once they get on the council I don't know if they'll do anything cause they're being forced to join something to do something and they may look at joining the council as the road of least resistance "Oh I'll just jump on the council and spend a little time with them just to do my eight hours," but what they do—how they utilize that time that will make the difference. So, I don't know if it will help or not if the motive isn't correct.

On the other hand, Dixie hoped that the CSR would indeed encourage residents to join the council. Volunteering in the community is something that the residents can do easily. She said:

See they could be on the resident council and use that as community service, however, they wouldn't receive the stipend, because I know that there's a stipend

that some of them receive to also participate. If they receive any kind of stipend for that or rent credit program then they—that does not count toward their community service. They cannot receive a monetary fee and then receive that same...

Right. So, what they have to do is—and I tell them, “you know, you can go downtown two days a week or one day a week and serve for two hours each day, serve lunch at the homeless shelter, go to the Red Cross and volunteer and put in your time,” and it you know I said two hours a week you know I said it’s not that long if you think about it, it’s the amount of time that it takes the average person to get up and get ready to go to work, you know.

Regardless of the fact that the requirement could, in fact, increase council membership, many of the individuals interviewed for this research indicated that they had doubts about its nature and goals. Enough conflicting opinions exist about the requirement to make further investigation important.

Community Service Requirement: Discriminatory or Not?

Regarding the nature of the CSR, Alvin and Vanessa held divergent opinions. Alvin argued that the new policy wasn’t discriminatory because certain people are exempted and its implementation could help the community. He sees the act as a part of the political debate. He said:

I know over the last two months this issue has been debated on political talks shows. And for the Democratic Party, many are saying that it’s the Republican led effort to punish people that are in public housing. Where the Republican Party has said no, the taxpayers are helping to subsidize someone living in public housing then they should do something during their day, and eight hours is not enough. But I know a lot of our residents feel like it is punishment. Some have not said anything, but some verbally have said “Why can’t I just go about doing what I normally do” and “Why do I have to work eight hours?” “Why are you doing this to me?” So it’s going to be debatable as long as the requirement stays in effect. We will always have some people who will say, “You are punishing me because I live in public housing.” No, I don’t think so because of the exemptions that are being given for someone the age 62 or older, someone who has a disability, someone who is working, I think it is 30 hours a week or more. If those exemptions were not in there, then I would say we’ve got a big problem. But all of the exemptions out there, to me, are the common sense these people

should not be asked to do it. Because basically what you have left are a pool of people that are not working, that are not considered elderly or not considered disabled. So asking them to do eight hours a month, they could knock that out in one day.

Vanessa, however, believes the policy to be very discriminatory. She thinks the eight-hour requirement is a good thing but that there is already too much government involvement in public housing. Regarding the volunteer requirement, she indicated: “I think it’s good. But I think that the government is runnin’ somebody’s life. In order to live here, that’s what you’ve gotta do. This is America. That’s what this is, America, home of the free. Now I can’t live here for free unless I volunteer for you? What do you think about that?”

Reflecting on the longevity of the requirement and its usefulness, she said:

I think that it might not last long. It may last long. It’s just a way to control people. I could say that now because I’m not working for the housing authority. It’s a way to control them. If they’re working they’re exempt. And if they’re disabled they’re exempt. But let’s see how a kid, just 20 years old and not workin’. They can’t even hold a job, you think they’re going to be able to do community service? They may not fully understand the whole concept of what it means to do community service. They may not understand that. My children understand community service because they know that I’ve always been in a volunteer role. They know I do things for free where I don’t get paid. And I tell them I’m volunteering, this is community service. But you’ve got people there who don’t have a clue. What does that mean to them? Have they fully been told, or do they just slap that paper out there, this is what you’ve gotta do and if you don’t do this you’re gonna be put out.

In the opinion of Vanessa, HUD did not thoroughly think through who lives in public housing and what community service would mean to them. Vanessa did not think the policies are inherently racist but she thinks they are discriminatory toward low-income people, the very audience they are meant to serve. She said:

You’re poor, but you can’t live here because you’ve got to do this in order to live here. So that’s why. There’s stipulations on them, and that’s another stress to add onto them. Suppose they’re not capable of, or willing to do whatever that lease

requires them to do? So what are they gonna do? Put 'em out and create more homelessness? And then what about your staff? That's another job task for your staff that's doing all the office procedures as it is. They're hiring people to monitor the community services on each site. That's the thing. Whose gonna monitor? And will the judge comply with the lease? Will the judge uphold the lease and put a family out because they haven't done eight hours of community service within a twelve-month period? And whose gonna be willing to challenge that? I'm sure somebody would be willing to challenge that. Probably not here in this city, but in another city. I don't see that going to the Supreme Court. This violation of somebody's civil rights. I don't think public housing was created ... my understand, public housing was created for people who need to have decent, safe and sanitary housing. That's the whole premise behind public housing. To provide decent, safe and sanitary housing. Period.

It is clear that some individuals involved in the day-to-day operation of the public housing community see the problems inherent in the implementation of a community service requirement, but even in terms of this policy, the range of opinions they offer varies greatly. The same is true of their opinions regarding other questions involving the council: Who should lead it? Has it been successful? If not, why not?

To recap the answers provided in this chapter to such questions, some housing authority officials believe that it is the manager's responsibility to be the leader of the council and recruit members, while others believe the council should be self-governing and responsible for its own member-recruitment policies. Those who believe the council to be ineffective suggest that this failure can be attributed to ineffective leadership, lack of motivation on the part of council members, lack of effective communication regarding the council, and even location of the community itself. Housing Authority officials also had mixed responses to HUD laws and policies. Some agreed that they provide opportunities to the Resident Council members but that members failed to take advantage of them, while others believed certain of those policies to be discriminatory and ineffective. Clearly, there is little agreement on all sides.

While this chapter articulated the responses of Housing Authority officials to the resident council and to HUD policies, the next chapter will describe the Rivertown Resident Council members' responses to HUD laws and policies governing the council and explore their interpretation of the responsibilities of Housing Authority officials, who are supposed to assist them in their endeavors.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CENTERING THE COUNCIL

As presented in the previous chapter, Housing Authority officials have their own views of the Rivertown Resident Council and posit several reasons this group has been unable to meet HUD's expectations. This chapter centers the Rivertown Resident Council members and will also explore how council members at times felt that housing officials failed to meet their obligations. All of the council members I interviewed—Jessica, Sam, Linda, and Pebe—interpret the primary purpose of the Rivertown Council to be helping the children in Rivertown, with a secondary purpose geared toward helping the community as a whole.

8.0 Interpreting the Role of the Council: The Council Members

HUD stated that the role of the resident council is to engage in community building, provide self-help initiatives, and improve the quality of resident satisfaction. The Rivertown Resident Council planned to achieve such goals by focusing on the children in its community. Focusing on children was a concern that the council members decided was an issue worth pursuing.⁴¹ The children were so important to the Resident Council that during my time with the council, all of their community-building activities involved children (See Chart 8.0.1).

During my interviews and interactions with the Resident Council, the importance of children was raised again and again. When interviewing Jessica, she indicated that her conception of the council is bound to what it can do for children and the community as a whole: “Basically they’re here for this community to help them and do stuff for the kids.” Like Jessica, Sam interpreted the purpose of the council to be meeting the needs of

⁴¹ As Alvin stated “the resident council is supposed to be anything that our residents have a concern about.” Depending on the location, situation, and needs of the public housing communities, the focus can vary from improving safety or conditions of the elderly, eradicating crime, improved resources, etc

the children: “Our job is to make sure that like you know the community is involved before we make the decisions we make and you know we have dances we have something for the kids-plays and stuff like that there, any kind of games and stuff like that there.” When Linda went to her first resident council meeting, she found out that children were to be the primary focus of members’ activities. Describing her first meeting, she said “And so I attended one of the meetings that they were having and they were talking about all these things that could be done here with the children and you could get a group of these kids together and take ‘em to a movie or we could do all kinds of things.” Because Linda already helped the children in the community, the objective of the council met with her approval.

The goals of the council had an impact on why members joined. All of the council members wanted to do things for the children in the community. When I asked Jessica why she joined the Resident Council, she responded: “The whole purpose of me bein’ on the council is for the kids. And plus I wanted Angie (her daughter) to see me doin’ somethin’.” Likewise, Sam joined the council for the same reason: “Well I just volunteered cause you know the kids need things, I was just trying to help out.” Linda, too, joined the council “for the children. I was just trying to make things better here for the children.” And Pebe said she joined because she “wanted to do something for the children—They need activities and things to do here because the parents aren’t doing anything.” Pebe did not explain to me what she believed the purpose of the council to be but she had no trouble articulating why she joined.

As stated in CFR 964.11 “resident councils represent the interest of the residents” and in 964.14 “ a strong partnership between the HA and Resident Council is critical for

improving the quality of life for the residents.” Thus, one might expect that the housing authority officials to support the Rivertown Resident Council’s focus on improving the immediate conditions of the community’s children, and perhaps by doing so improving their potential as well. This was not perceived to be the case by the Resident Council members. When I asked council members Sam, Linda, and Jessica⁴² how the housing officials and community workers helped them develop and implement community activities for the children and with the council in general, they all told me that Maynard, Sharon, Alvin, Jane, and Vanessa were not helpful or effective at all. Actually, some of the council members were confused regarding the roles and responsibilities of the community workers, housing officials, and manager; or they really never knew what they did; or they thought the community workers, housing officials, and manager were not doing their job.

As a whole, members of the council did not believe or feel that the housing officials, community worker, and manager were performing their jobs. They reported receiving little to no help from these individuals. Sam talked about how the community workers, especially Maynard, never attended meetings. He also reported having some difficulty reaching Maynard: “Well, see, when you, when you, ah, sent out a message for him, he (Maynard) didn’t respond. And we, ah, emailed him and he didn’t respond. And so you know and when we come to the meetings they say they comin’ and they never showed up.”

Sam understands that both Alvin and Maynard are supposed to help the council become more self-sufficient, but he asserts his belief that they do not do what they are paid to do. To this effect, he made an insightful comment: “I understand what he’s

⁴² Pebe, Lucy, and Tiny were not longer with the council

(Maynard) saying about rely on him less but Maynard and Alvin they are getting paid to show us how to get the resident council up and going.”

When I asked Linda to define Maynard’s role and his responsibility to the council, she confessed that she had no idea what he did:

I never could figure out what Maynard did. He never did anything for us. He’d call and make appointments and the only time he would keep ‘em is if it was something he wanted. If he needed something. Like, when he needed something that I had, a paper he wanted, he would keep the appointment. If it was something that I needed he just didn’t call me back at all. If he did call me, he wouldn’t keep the appointment. The other lady that was, what was her name, she... we has a little thing going up here.

Whenever there was an “incident” involving neighbors in Rivertown, Linda knew that it was “the other lady’s” (Sharon’s) job to help resolve the conflict, but she wasn’t sure what such a job truly entailed:

It was their job to step in and try to resolve things with the families that were living here. I never did figure out what that was supposed to be (Sharon’s role) because, well, Jessica had a slumber party down at the center one night, and I think Sharon came down for a little bit to that. She helped her set up, or something.... And I know they (Maynard and Sharon) go to Melrose Meetings.⁴³

Jessica also concurred with her fellow council members that Maynard and Sharon were not particularly helpful to the group or to its efforts. When I asked Jessica to explain what these individuals might have done for the council and whether they had, in fact, helped the group’s efforts, she replied:

Sharon more so than Maynard because, like you know, I asked her to come to the sleepover and do something. She’s really good with that. Other than that, that’s all that I’ve really talked to her about. She was willing to help me with the cooking classes and stuff like that, which that would have been good, but like I said, I got off the council before that happened.

⁴³ The Melrose Meeting is where the council members had to go for the Joint Resident Council Meetings. Meetings are discussed in chapter 9

Discussing Maynard, Jessica added that she would appreciate someone who would be more personal with the council. “He was just, I only really talked to him one time, and that was about goin’ to the meetings,” She said. “And he said either he or Sharon could come and get me or find somebody to take me.”

Although Maynard and Alvin were deemed ineffective by many members of the council, Sam expressed his opinion that these two individuals held the key to the empowerment of the council and to the community as a whole. In Sam’s words, “Them the two keys, right there. Them the two links supposed to hook it up.”

What exactly were the two supposed to “hook up?” In Sam’s estimation, Maynard and Alvin were the avenues by which the council could gather the resources in order to accomplish its goal of helping the community’s children.

Before Jane left the housing authority, Sam and Linda had most of their interactions through her (Jessica joined the council after Jane left). Sam and Linda had constant issues with Jane, which later developed into an appreciation towards her. Sam said “Everybody had issues with Jane. There this thing with me and Jane just like that there. See I always tell her like you know I just tell her straight up you know you want me to tell you how I feel about it? She said go ahead. I said well I’m gonna hurt your feelings. She said so, go ahead and hurt my feeling then. I just tell her you can’t come in here and do what you wanna do.” Linda said she did not like Jane at first because she “ would give [me] attitude at first. But she helped me with the budget.”

Of all the resident council meetings I attended, I remember seeing Jane at nearly every one. I recall seeing Sharon, Maynard, or Alvin only once⁴⁴—this despite the fact that I was told on numerous occasions by Linda and Alvin that Maynard or Sharon was scheduled to attend. The lack of a “strong partnership” between the council and its “outside” cohorts, the community workers and housing officials, clearly is not in keeping with CFR 964.14 HUD Policy on Partnerships or with the mission or operation statement of Ridgeway.

Regardless of the fact, however, that some council members believed that the housing authorities were less than diligent about their responsibilities, they did manage to plan several activities that focused on the community’s children.

8.0.1 Rivertown Community Activities

In order to reach their goal of helping the children in the community, Rivertown Council members planned and conducted several activities, from a health fair to a bike rodeo, from a visit by Santa to a Clean Valley Day (See table below on page 142).

⁴⁴ This was at a site- based meeting, not regular council meeting. Going through my fieldnotes, I found that Maynard and Sharon never showed up at the meetings. If they did attend, I was not present at the regular meetings.

Table 8.0.1a: Rivertown Community Activities

May 19, 2001: Health Fair: There was food, music, health booths, and prizes given away. The local arena football team came. There were 5 booths with different social service agencies. This event made the residents aware of the various social services in the area that could help them with specific needs.

December 15, 2001: Santa Comes to Rivertown: From 2-4pm, the children and their families could meet and talk with Santa Claus. For \$3 the children could get their picture taken with him

May 24, 2002: Family Fun Night: This event started at 5:30 p.m. In the community room, we rented the movie *Snow Dogs* and had food. Parents and children came out and enjoyed themselves.

June 8, 2002: Bike Rodeo: The local police came out to teach the children about bike safety. After going through an obstacle course the children could get a bike rodeo certificate. The police passed out bike helmets and safety pads. Along with the police, a local bike repair shop owner volunteered his time and services to fix the children's bike. The resident council had a cook out and music for the event.

October 31, 2002: Halloween Party: In the community, we had a movie (*Scooby Doo*), and treats for the children and parents. The children wore costumes.

April 5, 2003: Clean Valley Day: Everyone in the community was invited to pick up trash and beautify Rivertown. Afterward there were hot dogs and hamburgers

April 19, 2003: Easter Egg Coloring and Hunting: The children colored eggs, and we hid them throughout the community

May 23, 2003: Girls Night Inn: There was a slumber party and self-esteem lock in for the young girls in the community. The girls spent the night in the community room and there were various activities for them throughout the night. They watched movies, made popcorn, made tie dye shirts and jewelry, played board games, did karaoke, and in the morning they made their own breakfast

June 28, 2003: Bike Rodeo: Same as the earlier rodeo.

8.1 Leadership of the Council

While the Rivertown Council did not officially elected officers to the council— instead opting for a more egalitarian setup—Linda often performed the multiple and time-consuming duties of an elected president. She said that she would

keep all the records of everything and, kept the checks and I more or less did most of things on my own. When Tiny was around he helped a lot and then Alvin just said, “Whatever you want to do.” So it was pretty much up to me. I did the shopping for the events and carried out the events to make sure everything went okay and , made sure that every meeting that I could I would attend, or try to make sure that somebody else attended.

Jessica saw Linda as the individual who was capable of enacting the sort of positive leadership model that would enable the council to work on its own. As she indicated, “Ms. Linda was the one that pulled everything together pretty much.” In Sam’s terms “Linda gets things organized and together.” In fact, I have witnessed this: if Linda was absent from a meeting, it inevitably tended to fall apart and not be as organized as when she was present. She was capable of getting the council together and keeping its members motivated. While council members saw Linda as a leader, they could not say the same about the housing managers, who easily could have adopted leadership roles or provided leadership assistance to the council.

8.2 Manager Not Helpful to the Council

The council members agreed that, in terms of her people skills, Vanessa was a successful manager who was always willing to help them with personal problems and lend a sympathetic ear. When it came to the Resident Council, however, she was far less effective. Defining the manager’s responsibilities to the council, Sam stated that “she had nothing to do with the council.” In Sam’s view, when Vanessa managed Rivertown, nothing was accomplished in the community. He reported that “things I was telling

Vanessa wasn't done." In his opinion, LaTonya was a far more effective manager, although her tenure was brief: "Hey, she came in here and she had a whole lot of work to do. . . . [W]hen she came in here and she started working and she come in here like you know you could see the impact from jump. When she started in here you could see the impact quick."

Linda chooses her words carefully when asked about Vanessa. The manager helped her with personal issues and acted successfully as a sort of social worker, she reports. Once when Linda was ill, Vanessa even "helped me keep my sanity. . . . On days like that [when Linda was ill], I'd just go down and talk to her and everything would be all right." Yet, Jessica admits that Vanessa was not a particularly effective property manager, and that her work with the council was often detrimental to council goals. "She was involved, but she shot a lot of ideas down," Jessica said. "Like, I wanted to do in the beginning like a, not a girl power [event for the community's girls], but something to that effect. And she kept shooting that down."

Despite the fact that council members did not always feel that they were receiving appropriate levels of assistance from either housing authority officials or resident managers, they did express positive feelings about their work on the Resident Council.

8.3 Council Meetings as Esteem Boosters and Social Events

In spite of the changing dynamics (new members, managers, and housing authority officials) of the council, the active Resident Council members told me that they enjoyed coming to the meetings. Attending the meetings was an esteem booster, but it also provided a chance for social gathering, as several members indicated. In Linda's opinion, for example, attending the meetings boosted her self-esteem. She indicated that

“when I’d go down there (to the council meetings) I would feel pretty good about myself, about what I was accomplishing.”

Jessica indicated that she enjoyed going to the meetings because it got her out of the house and provided a period of time when she could be sociable with other adults. She said, “I enjoyed getting out of the house, definitely. Doing somethin’ with my time and goin’ down there and it was a time for me to be social with everybody.”

Sam said he liked attending the meetings because he felt that the other members of the council were his family. In addition, he enjoyed the outcomes the meetings would produce. He said: “Hey, cause it’s fun and I tell you when I see them kids like ah just last Friday when all them kids face lit up when all this food and stuff hey that makes joy.” He even appreciated those members who did not show up on a regular basis and other residents in the community who did not become involved. “Hey, the ones not on the Resident Council? I like them, too. They still my family.”

All who routinely attended meetings agreed that the time spent at the council sessions were enjoyable because they provided an opportunity to socialize, a chance to establish goals, and a period of time wherein they felt they were working toward the common goal of helping the community’s children.

In my time with the council, they showed stability and flexibility, consistency and inconsistency, and group cohesion and group disarray. In that time there were multiple changes in HUD rules and policies, three managers, two people from the housing authority and two community workers who worked directly with the resident council. Out of the nine duly-elected Resident Council members, only three were truly active members.

Chart 8.3.1 provides a visual description of attendance at regular resident council meetings. The black straight line with the arrow indicates resident council members who were elected but never attended meetings. The X indicates resident council

members who attended meetings, while the O indicates managers, housing authority officials, or community workers who were present. The dashed lines indicates people who had some type of involvement with the council but never came to a meeting.

Based on this chart, one can make several analyses:

- 1). There were three active, consistent members.
- 2). The Housing Authority members were not physically at the meetings.
- 3). The community workers were not physically at a lot of the meetings.
- 4). There were changes with the manager.

Viewing the chart alone does not even begin to tell the complex dynamic inter-intra personal relationship that existed among council members, managers, community workers, and housing authority officials. The chart suggests that Vanessa was the strongest leader and manager and that Alvin was the most active council member—but that is not the case. Life experiences, discussed in Chapter 10, contributed to flux within the resident council.

Table 8.3.1: Meeting Attendance

	Feb. 14, 2001	May 9, 2001	Sept 24, 2001	Dec. 15, 2001	April 19, 2002	May 17., 2002	Oct. 28, 2002	Jan 3, 2003	March 7, 2003	April 18, 2003	July 11, 2003	Nov. 14, 2003
Managers												
Vanessa Evans	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O		
E. Franks											O	
Dixie												O
Resident Council Members												
Sam	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Linda	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Tiny	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Caroline	X											
Jessica							X	X	X	X		
Pebe				X	X							
Lucy						X	X					
Alvin C												
Esther Ward												
Housing Authority Officials												
Daniel Harrison	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Alvin Miller	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jane Adams	O	O	O		O	O						
Community Workers												
Maynard Muhammad	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sharon Muhammad	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

While council members reporting enjoying the meetings because they viewed the gatherings as social events or as esteem boosters, the meetings were also meant to be—at least in terms of their conception by HUD—governed by specific rules and regulations.

Members of the council admit that they did not always follow such bylaws—nor did they fully understand all of them.

Understanding Bylaws

Council members were given a draft of “HUD’s Model Bylaws” so they could customize them to fit the needs of Rivertown; however, as of the date of this writing, the original model has not been altered. Council members simply adopted the by-laws that were given to them. The council members understand that bylaws are important, but not all of them understand why they are significant—and some of them simply did not understand them at all. For example, Sam thought the bylaws were useful, rather like the Bible. He thought that people were scared of them. He said

We got bylaws. I can look at the bylaws and tell you a whole lot cause see that’s the thing, I think a whole lot of people don’t want to get involved in it cause when you say bylaws you see what I’m saying when bylaws they think you talking about the law. See it’s just like that for instance if I tell them to read the Bible see the Bible got laws in there and everything like that you shouldn’t do.

At the same time Sam is aware of the need to understand the bylaws because, as he stated, “It’s a whole lot and they said it changes all the time.” He added:

They got to read the bylaws and understand what they reading see. Now I can read a whole lot of stuff to somebody until they understand what it’s saying it’d be like I can talk to that wall right there I’m not gong to get no response. Maynard’s got to come in here and explain it to, what things are about.

When I asked Jessica what would have helped her with the council, she told me that she “wanted someone to go over the bylaws with her.” She said, “Yeah, go over the bylaws. Yeah, it was useful, but some of it went right over my head . . . the bylaws and stuff.” When I asked her if she knew what constitutes an official resident council she said, “No, not really. I know you’re supposed to have stuff.” Even though Linda

explained certain elements of the official documents to Jessica, she said it still went over her head.

So it appears clear that while council members realized the importance of HUD bylaws to the governance structure of the meetings and to council activities, they did not always understand the laws themselves—a situation which could have contributed to council ineffectiveness. Additionally, meeting requirements at times affected the council's ability to accomplish goals.

8.4 Meeting Dynamics

As noted previously, in addition to their own meetings, resident council members also had to attend other meetings held by the Housing Authority. For some council members, attendance at other required meetings proved difficult. Jessica never went to the Joint Resident Council Meetings because of childcare issues. She said, “No, that was a childcare situation, too. Maynard said he'd see about getting me transportation because that was a problem.” When I asked her what happened, she followed up by saying: “There was no way I'd take my kids to that. I wouldn't get anything out of it. Having to watch my kids in a place that they've never been, they'd be runnin' wild.”

Some council members did not believe the other meetings to be helpful. For example, when I asked Linda if going to the Joint Resident Council meeting was helpful, she told me that it was not. I asked her why she attended if she did not believe the meetings were helpful. She responded: “See, it was required that we attend those meetings. Somebody from each council had to attend those meetings.” When I asked her if it was in the ByLaws, she said

It's in the bylaws. And then they changed the bylaws and we didn't have to attend that meeting unless we wanted to, so after that I more or less stopped attending

most of them because there was no need for me to take two hours out of my time on Thursday night. And I had to take the children with me. And to accomplish nothing.

Linda did not find the joint resident council meetings useful at all. She further elaborated by saying, “Well, they’d talk about putting new roofs on the houses or how maintenance was doing. I didn’t see things change.” Clearly, then, the meeting requirement suggests another level of disjunction between the goals of the resident council and the expectations placed upon them by the Housing Authority. Similarly, the two groups did not always see eye-to-eye regarding the implementation of HUD policies and laws.

8.5 Resident Council Members and Laws and Policies

In general, the council members believe the overarching HUD rules and policies with which they must abide are indeed fair. While Linda said she did not pay too much attention to them, Jessica expressed her opinion that the laws were pretty neutral and treated everybody fairly. “I think everybody is pretty much treated equally,” She said. “Unless they’ve come up with somethin’ I’m not aware of.”

There is at least one notable exception to the general consensus that the laws are fair. Sam, the only African-American on the council, has lived in Rivertown the longest and believes firmly that the laws are discriminatory, that they benefit those in power. He laments the fact that people do not have a choice or voice in making the laws. “It’s discriminating,” he said, “because everywhere else you go you don’t have to find nothing like this [such laws] here. That’s discriminating.” Sam tries to bring to residents a stronger awareness of the laws and policies that govern the community. “That’s why I tell the people—I said you all know what you all doin? And they looked at me and said

what you talking about,” He said. “I said do you listen to the people what they tell ya? I said you don’t listen, you don’t listen. They could pass you anything through there.”

One of the rules that provokes the strongest response is that of the Community Service Requirement.

8.6 Community Service Requirement and the Resident Council

The Community Service Requirements affects council members differently. Linda and Sam are both exempt from it: the former, because she is on disability; the latter, because he works. While all members of the council agreed that the new policy was a good idea in theory, they did not think that it would encourage residents to volunteer. Enforced volunteerism, they agree, is not happy volunteerism.

The only thing Linda really knew about the new lease requirement was that able-bodied and non-working residents are required to perform eight hours of community service a month. She thinks the program provides a chance for non-working residents to give something back to the community. She said:

I’ve heard about it, but I don’t know. I don’t know anything about it except that you’ve got to do 8 hours of community service a month or something. That’s about all I know. I think it’s good. There’s a lot of people that live here that don’t have to live here. I have to live here. And there’s a lot of people here that don’t do anything all day, you know. They have people living in with them and they don’t do anything. And the people that are on the lease, they don’t do anything all day. So, you know, if they was asking you to do a lot of hours I would object. But eight hours a month, no, I wouldn’t object to that. You know, some of the people don’t have cars. They don’t have any way of getting anywhere to do any kind of community service. If they give them something here to do and our community service consists like if Jessica needed to go do eight hours somewhere, I could watch her children for the eight hours and then I would have my credit for watching her children. You know, I don’t really think that’s a big deal. You know.

Jessica thinks the requirement is a good idea but she also believes it will not do anything to alter the residents' scope of involvement in the community. "I think so many of the residents have got away with doing so much that they're not supposed to do that it's not gonna really change anything. Stuff goes on around here that shouldn't," She said. "I'll do somethin' easy. Like animals. You're not supposed to have animals, unless it's on your lease to have 'em. And people have pets and it is not on their lease. And a lot of this the landlord has known and chose to overlook it. A lot of stuff has been overlooked that's going on."

Jessica thinks that the requirement will be overlooked and the residents will not be held accountable for their flouting of the rule. She does not think the new policy will convince people to join the council or help with the community. "I'd be surprised," she said, "because you know some people in the neighborhood just aren't gonna care."

Sam does not think the new requirement is fair but he understands the complexity of the new requirement and how it could hurt some and benefit others. He said:

Well you know it's not fair but let me tell you like if they getting a check from downtown right and they're supposed to be going to some kind of school or class—they don't do that. They set around and get a whole lot going on and some peoples coming down there have to go to these classes and things through social services see. That's why these social services got involved in a whole lot of this stuff. That's why all that's changed. See social service is involved and they got changed.

Well see if you tell, if you tell all these people down here to volunteer for something that's okay you don't volunteer for something and time for the do it nobody's gonna show up. Nobody's gonna show up I'm telling you now. Nobody's gonna show up. Now if it's in the lease and they got to do it you gonna have somebody—they gonna show up or they gonna be out their place.

But so what if people would ah move out because of that. I won't move because of that. The reason I think, the reason I didn't challenge it is because for one reason ah you got a whole lot of peoples here on a welfare. And see and ...now

that is gonna hurt them (the new requirement) and it's not gonna hurt me because see in the long run I'm in the process of looking at a house and I'm exempt.

Like Jessica, Sam does not think the new requirement will increase resident council membership. "No, because see they, they can volunteer some time," He said, "but they may not volunteer for the resident council."

In general, the council members believed that while it has its positive points, the new policy also stigmatizes Rivertown residents as lazy and having nothing to do; therefore, they must be *made* to be active. "Forced volunteerism," again, "is not happy volunteerism." Even the council members themselves do not fully volunteer their time, as some monetary compensation does exist, but it is not enough to separate them philosophically from those who would be forced to volunteer under the new requirement.

8.7 Funding and the Resident Council

One incentive for joining the council and helping the community is money: council members do receive a small stipend for serving and they receive money for planning various activities and programs to help their communities. Regardless of the fact that it helps some, money alone is not an incentive to get residents to join the council. If money was indeed a deciding factor, then one could expect residents in the community to fight for a place on the council. In actuality, however, in recompense for its time and efforts, the council receives only \$100 a month⁴⁵, which active members then have to split among themselves. Members do admit, though, that even this small amount proves vital at times. "It was \$100 a month and we divided it evenly among all of us," Linda said. "Yeah. It helped. Well, it helped (the stipend money she got from the

⁴⁵ The Councils are also allocated funds for community building activities, which is separate from the money they get when they volunteer.

council). I did rent credit and got most of my rent paid by getting rent credit. And then I got, what was it, \$30 or something.”

When it comes to dividing the money, council members do not quibble over amounts. Linda told me about how members strove to divide the money evenly:

All the time that I was on the council we agreed at the beginning that ... they said we could let Sam do something, we could give him \$50 and split the rest of the money. Like if I did something, I could take the whole \$100 for that month and vice versa. But we didn't want to do that because it was, we didn't want to have a conflict with each other about “I did more than you” and stuff like that. It was easier to split even if somebody didn't do anything, we still went ahead and split the money with them because that was what we agreed on to keep from having conflict with money.

In addition to receiving this small monetary compensation, council members can apply for grants or are automatically eligible for public funding of self-improvement projects. However, Vanessa commented that the council often overlooks or ignores opportunities that would help them advance individually and permit them to better assist residents. For example, she recalled how the council did not take advantage of available monies with which they could purchase a computer and obtain computer training. She indicated that Linda was the only person to use the money for computer training. For various reasons—work, transportation issues, child-care responsibilities, scheduling—Sam and Jessica were never able to undertake the training. Linda was placed in charge of buying the computer and getting things organized, then each of the council members received \$200 worth of training. Although Linda did participate in training, her experience suggests that she received few benefits from it:

We had money left over from our computer training. I went ahead and took my \$200 computer training and I forgot everything. I don't even know how to get back in. I forget....I learned how to load a disk and get it off on it and save it.

Nobody else took their training. We had \$1000 for council training. And nobody else took their training. I went ahead and bought a new computer with the money that was to buy the computer and then I bought a disk and another book. It's still here. Nobody's asked for it, so I haven't taken it down there (Resident Council Office).

The failure of some council members to undertake free computer training suggests that members often have goals far different from those expected of them by community workers and Housing Authority officials, who see them as the mechanism by which improvement can be brought to all community members. While Housing Authority officials and community workers sometimes see the council as less than effective, members of the latter group often view those from the former two groups in the same light. Clearly, the groups have different perspectives on a variety of issues. The next chapter will compare areas of disjunction between the groups that may act as obstacles that prevent council members from fulfilling HUD's expectations for them as community builders.

CHAPTER NINE: DISJUNCTIONS IN RIVERTOWN

Thus far, I have provided a historical overview of housing inequality and HUD's response to set the context for this current study. After being briefly introduced to the individuals whose views are the center of this work, I addressed my first and second research questions:

What are the HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?

and

How do the managers, Rivertown Resident Council members, housing authority officials, and community workers interpret HUD and HA laws and regulations that govern the community building responsibilities of the resident council?

In this chapter, I turn to the first part of my third research question.

Are there areas of disjunction among the interpretation of various constituencies, the practices of the resident council, and the HUD and housing authority written policies that govern the community building activities of the resident council? If so, how can they be explained?

The explanation of these disjunctions will be addressed in the chapter that follows.

After observing and participating in meetings and activities with the Rivertown Resident Council for over two years and conducting extensive conversations and interviews with its members, managers, housing authority officials, and community workers, my analysis revealed that multiple areas of disjunction existed between the Resident Council and the policies and housing authority officials. Some of the disjunctions were visible in the previous chapters. Chapters 7 and 8 made it clear that Resident Council members and HUD officials do not see most matters "eye to eye." HUD officials believe they are fulfilling their job responsibilities to the council because

they follow the CFR, but they argue that the council is not meeting HUD expectations. Some of the reasons given were that the Resident Council members are not motivated, they don't take advantage of resources, and they fail to communicate with residents. On the other hand, Resident Council members believe that they are working toward their goal of improving the lives of children in the community, but they argue that Housing Authority officials, manager, and community workers ignore their responsibilities, fail to attend meetings, and do not explain the CFR and other housing laws and regulations with clarity. Clearly, disjunctions exist. These disjunctions were sometimes obstacles that the Resident Council could not overcome.

I now elaborate on those already mentioned and describe more disjunctions that have become obstacles for the Resident Council.

9.0 Disjunctions

Both SAA and Critical Race Theory guide me to seeking disjunctions by centering the world-views and life experiences of those involved. In addition, asking housing officials and resident councils to describe what they do, should do, and would like to do is consistent with what HUD has said is the purpose of resident councils. Resident councils were created to include residents' voices and life experiences in the local decision making and community development processes in public housing communities. The hope is that including residents and resident councils members in the creation and dissemination of public housing laws and policies would promote self-sufficiency and community empowerment. In other words, resident council policies are supposed to include and reflect the life experiences of the residents of public housing. I argue this is not the case.

The detailed description of some of the disjunctions that exist between what the Rivertown Resident Council is supposed to do, as stated in the policies and the views of housing officials, and the views and activities of the members of the council lend support to Critical Race Theory's claim that often policies that are supposed to do one thing often do something else. If, Critical Race Theory argues, we can illuminate these disjunctions through research such as this, it is a first step in moving toward positive change. Thus, I now turn to detailed descriptions of some of the disjunctions identified during the course of this research.

9.1 Focus on the Children

The resident council's emphasis on children is one of the major areas of disjunction between its members and community workers. The council members wanted their activities to be children-centered, but the community workers and housing authority officials conceived of a far different focus for the council. For example, Maynard believed the council should move beyond its focus on children. He saw the council as a resource for tackling major issues in the community, not just those related to children:

Well, in communities where I hear "Let's focus on the kids," is because the adults don't want to deal with adults. The children are easy to control. The children don't bring the issues that adults bring. But really if you deal with the adults you are helping the children. If you deal with the adults, you are benefiting the kids. But with me right now dealing with the adults, there's far more success in those communities than when I was just dealing with the children. But in some communities the parents don't want to get involved, so that's who you're left to deal with is the children. And that may be what the Rivertown council has found, that you can't get the parents involved. So they have to deal with the children.

In spite of Maynard's implication that the resident council focused on children because adults would not attend activities, the residential council's focus is consistent with a need identified by Krivo and Peterson (1996). They noted that in poor communities there were few community-based institutions to supervise youth

activities. Further, “families, neighbors, and other primary groups” were less likely to interact with youth in-group activities. They argue that the lack of community and institutional involvement with youth increases the likelihood of delinquency and crime. The residential council’s activities for the community’s young people could be interpreted as rudimentary delinquency-prevention programs.

Focusing on “just the kids” is a complex issue. The council members had on numerous occasions attempted to involve parents in activities for their children, but they experienced little or no success. For example, the council members held several meetings to consider planning a summer trip for the children during Summer 2002. They planned on taking them to a state amusement park, Kings Island, four hours from the city of Ridgeway. Council members had worked with the Housing Authority and received funding for transportation, lodging, and admission fees into the park. Of the parents, they asked only three things: that they volunteer to help plan the activity, chaperone the trip, and pay \$15 to help fund the venture. As Sam later told me, “we couldn’t get the parents to volunteer to help out. Like, you know, we would give some money to help out and they didn’t want to give their share to, you know, pitch in to help out and make [the plan] more feasible. . . . They wanted us to support the whole load. See, we were going to volunteer to give \$500 dollars toward King’s Island and they [would] pay like \$15 dollars per child themselves. They didn’t want to do that. They wanted us to take on the whole thing and chaperone the kids, too, and that was too much.” Since this would have been a weekend trip, it might have been difficult for parents to take off work or even find the monies to pay \$15 for their children to go on this trip. Sam, might have lost sight on the

fact, that parent(s) are working two to three jobs or have a limited income. So, they may not have the finances or time.

At the time of planning the trip there were four active council members: Sam, Linda, Tiny, and Pebe. Tiny would not have been able to go on the trip because of his chemotherapy. That would have left Sam and Linda (both of whom are in their 50s) and Pebe (who was in her late 20s) to watch between 20-35 kids. Without question, they needed physical help in addition to the support, funding, and partnership they received from the manager and the housing authority.

The failed King's Island trip represents just one example of the difficulties the council has faced when it attempted to involve parents in its activities for children. In fact, when activities are planned for children in the community, it is the children themselves, rather than the parents, who most often volunteer to help.

9.2 Enforcement and Implementations of Policies

Another area of disjunction entwined with the council's focus on children is the enforcement and implementation of housing policies. Since Alvin also believed the resident council's focus should move beyond just children, policies were created to enforce his "difference in focus of the resident council." Alvin believed Rivertown Council's primary roles should involve informing the manager about illegal activities, improving the neighborhood, and reporting lease violations. According to Alvin, "if people come to a meeting and they say apartment 305 is selling drugs and it happens between eleven pm and three am, yes, the resident council is going to take that information to the manager. Now the persons that are in that apartment, will they perceive the resident council as snitch?⁴⁶ Oh sure. And it comes up in many of our communities. But that's [just] one of those things if the resident council is to improve

Snitching will be discussed in further detail in section 9.2.1.

the neighborhood.” Alvin also indicated his belief that the council should focus some of its attention on preventing lease violations:

And if there’s somebody violating their lease, it’s up to the resident council, if they have that information, to share it. Not accuse, but to share what they’ve been told and to go from there. And that is one of the most difficult things of why some people choose not to belong to the resident council, because that’s what they perceive as their job. And that’s only one small part. But it is about a relationship because we don’t want anyone in our communities, if someone is selling drugs or doing something that they shouldn’t be doing. Someone living in an apartment and they’re not on the lease. Those are some of the things that the council has to deal with.

However, HUD rules do not state that it is mandatory for councils to report lease violations and police the community, unless its members *want* to. Moreover, neither the CFR nor the Ridgeway Housing Authority mission and operations statement states that resident councils must report lease violations and police their communities.

Even though one can interpret that in their focus on improving the neighborhood the policies of the CFR and the Ridgeway Rivertown Housing Authority encompass having the council serve as a police agent; after all, the specific methods by which resident council members achieve community improvement are not dictated specifically by any law. However, Rivertown Council members did not define their role(s) to be that of *policeman* or *authority*, although other resident councils have incorporated “community policing and safety” into their purpose statements. Instead, Rivertown’s council members made it clear that the community’s children would be the vehicles by which they worked to achieve community improvement. Since Alvin developed his own definition of the Rivertown Resident

Council's purpose, his focus differed from theirs and resulted in a breakdown in cooperation.

In short, when he perceived the role of the council to encompass policing the development, Alvin did not fully comprehend or consider community dynamics. The emotional backlash council members could have confronted and the potentially physical threats they could have faced as a result of reporting lease violations and illegal activities made the role of policing their community unwise. Besides, reporting and dealing with lease violations is the manager's responsibility—not something for which council members are held accountable. Managers are fully aware of such responsibility. When I asked the three managers of Rivertown to describe their managerial duties, Dixie said, “to make sure people aren't in violation of their lease”; LaTonya said, “I was responsible for the full property management of the property”; and Vanessa said she was “responsible for lease violations.”

If it is the manager's job to report lease violations and Alvin thinks that reporting lease violations is something the Resident Council should do, then his focus differs from that of the council members. Alvin did not even consider the laws involving lease violations or the repercussions that council members could face if they take on the roles of police agents.

There are specific CFR laws, supported by the Supreme Court, which address lease violations in public housing. The Supreme Court ruling in *Rucker v. Davis*, 1998 solidified HUD's policy on lease violations. In 2002, the United States Supreme court sided with the Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) and its zero tolerance eviction policy, which allows for eviction of public housing tenants if

relatives or visitors are caught with drugs on the premises or other public properties even if the tenants in question did not know about the illegal activity (Rucker v. Davis, 1998). This case involved Danielle Rucker, a 63-year-old grandmother who lived with her daughter, two grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter in public housing in Oakland, California. Her daughter was caught with cocaine three blocks away from their home, while her son, who does not live with her, was caught using cocaine eight blocks from her home. Rucker had no idea about her children's drug usage, but regardless of this fact she was evicted. According to this ruling, any use of drug activity in the home or near the home will lead to tenant eviction, a policy indicated by Title 24, Subsection 966, which addresses *Dwelling, Leases, Procedures, and Requirements*. According to this policy, OHA includes in its leases the obligation that a tenant must assure that any member of the household or another person under the tenant's control shall not engage in

(i.) Any criminal activity that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other public housing residents or threatens the health and safety of the housing authority employees . . . or (ii) Any drug-related criminal activity on or near the premises (e.g., manufacture, sale, distribution, use, or possession of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia, etc.) (24CFR966).

In the Rucker case, there were several senior citizens who, as leaseholders, were evicted from their apartments because the children or grandchildren with whom they lived sold or used drugs. For residents of public housing, such a policy holds dire consequences. According to the 1997 United States Census Bureau, 3.9 million grandparents are raising their grandchildren (Glass and Huneycutt, 2002). In 2000, a quarter of a million of those grandparent-caregivers were living below the poverty

line (Fuller-Thomson and Minkler, 2003). In Rivertown, too, twenty elderly residents live with their children and/or grandchildren.

The example of *Rucker vs. Davis (1998)* is used here to illustrate the difficulties that would be inherent in demanding that council members assume the responsibility of reporting lease violations or illegal activities. Rivertown is a community of strong personal relationships. Residents are known to one another. Reporting a violation could cause a friend or someone the council knows who is elderly, poor, or ill to be evicted from their home and the grandchildren that they care for to be displaced. Hence, if they are expected to act as “police,” Resident Council members face a double bind: by reporting violations, they knowingly bear responsibility for destroying someone’s home, even if the person in question was not engaging in illegal activity, and in doing so they likewise become “snitches” who turn on their neighbors, the very individuals they were elected to help.

Additionally, there is no getting around the fact that reporting lease violations or illegal activities involves the real threat of danger to council members. For instance, one night Linda called the police about a domestic violent situation in the community, and within a short amount of time the word was out that she had reported the incident. The next day, she found 16 nails driven into one of her car tires.

Obviously, Alvin’s focus extended beyond what the council itself wanted to do. But the matter does not end there. Since Alvin's conception of the council’s focus was different, his expectations of the roles and responsibilities its members should adopt also differed. Given that Alvin thought the role of the council should be to report lease violations and police the community, then his conception of their responsibilities might

not have involved any children-centered activities or programs. So there is a disjunction between the council's chosen focus on children and external demands that they focus on enforcement and implementation of policies. As a result, Alvin's evaluation of the council could be tainted by his assumption that they "shirked" their real duties to plan programs for children.

To reiterate, according to policy, housing authority officials are supposed to do their best to create the sort of strong partnership with council members that will help the latter achieve their goal, however they define it. In fact, each person involved with the Resident Council has a specific responsibility for helping the group achieve its goal. If housing authority officials and community workers differ in their opinion regarding what the Resident Council should do, then they will also differ with regard to the activities they expects its members to undertake.

9.2.1 Snitching

Alvin brought up the issue of snitching, which is another area of disjunction. Snitching (even the perception of it) not only puts the Resident Council members at risk, but it affects the ability of the Resident Council to recruit new members and have residents actively participate in the community. In spite of the activities, funding, and advertising of the council, the Resident Council is perceived by some in the community as negative rather than positive. Notions of negativity stem from the recruitment practices of the manager, the relationship between the manager and the residents, and the rules and federal policies by which the residents have to abide,⁴⁷ which states what they can or cannot do and who they can or cannot have living or visiting them.

⁴⁷ All these issues are discussed throughout this dissertation.

Sharon realizes that if you are on the resident council you are perceived as being the manager's pet. Hence, that may be why residents are afraid to join the council. She said:

Um, I think that many of them don't want to be seen as ah "Ridgeway Housing Authority pets" you know (*laughs*). I think they're afraid that their neighbors may look at them as snitches or you know somebody that's watching them all the time so they just don't want to get involved in it.

To verify this assumption regarding public response, Manager Vanessa related a story about a woman who was on the council, but resigned after being labeled a snitch. At the time, Vanessa couldn't understand what the fuss was about since participation on the council is strictly voluntary rather than paid. She attributes the false perception of council members as snitches to simple ignorance of the group's role. She said

Sometimes being on the resident council in public housing, you get labeled. As a resident you get labeled, labeled as a snitch. Labeled as somebody telling all the business of other neighbors.

Several of the resident council members spoke forthrightly about how being on the council gets them labeled as snitches. While talking to one of the residents in the community, for example, Jessica found out firsthand what the residents thought about the council. She said:

I don't know, just talkin' to some of the residents here, with them not knowing I was on the council and for them to sit there and say that, you know ... I was talkin' to somebody and they didn't know I was on the council. I guess because there wasn't an election and I haven't talked to many of the residents around here, not that many people knew. So they were just talkin' about how they felt that resident council was a snitch and just a gossip session and all we're there for is just to look out and be nosey and run back to the property manager.

In Jessica's opinion, the fear of "snitching" and of being labeled a snitch prevents many individuals from volunteering to assume positions on the council. She expressed

her belief that the council wanted to do a lot of things but couldn't get help for that simple reason. She said:

Well, they (resident council members) meant well and they wanted to do a lot more than what actually got done. There just wasn't enough help there from the community, volunteers and stuff. I just think a lot of the people out here think that being on the council and helpin' them do stuff, they're considered snitches and they think of the council as people who are nosey and they go back and tell the landlord what's going on around here.

When the council does attract new members, they tend not to stay very long.

Linda told me how one of Jessica's friends moved into Rivertown and was initially excited about being on the council and helping out. After talking to the residents in the community, however, she changed her mind. Linda said:

I don't have any ideas on how to do it (change the image of the council as a snitch) because Jessica's neighbor ... a friend moved in down there. I don't know if she's still down there or not. But, anyway, before she got moved in she told me she'd be on the council. So when she got moved in, then she came up here and was talking to us and said, "Well, I decided I don't want to be on the council. It's too much hassle and I don't want people mad at me." See, if you're on the council here, you're an automatic snitch. If you go to the office, if I go down to the office today, I went down there to tell the manager something. If something happens up here that the manager finds out about, I told her. And I said, I just went ahead and let it go, you know. I said, well, I don't really care.

Like Vanessa, Sam thought the residents were ill informed for thinking that all the council members do is gossip to the manager. He said:

I think it's like this here they are dumb to the fact that you know if they come down here and set in on a meeting—if they can give—like we come in here from an hour if they can give us an hour of their time and we sat in here and explained to um what they be doing I think they'd have more understanding.....

Well like I think the um the people we had on there and the residents down in Rivertown they thought that the peoples on the resident council was going back and telling —going on to the ah managers...yeah, it wasn't like that. See what we do is don't have no baring on management at all. Yep, cause they thought that they ah residents—the council members was telling stuff to the office. Do you know what I always tell them? I says just tell them were're the

resident council and that's whatever you do is not involve the management because it's a whole different, it's a whole different thing.

In an attempt to explain why the community thought the council members were snitches, Sam offered the simple verdict that people often have a guilty conscience. He noted:

People have got a guilty conscience themselves, see. It's as simple as that. If they got a guilty conscience they gonna have to blame somebody, and so I guess what they did see they blamed somebody else see then the residents we had on the council they get in and argue with the kids and stuff like that there and they end up quitten.

There is something to be said about the "guilty conscience." Because the housing authority and HUD have strict leasing rules regarding pets, guest, and employment (the more money a person makes, the higher their rent will be), a lot of rules get broken in secret. And there are a lot of rules to break. For instance, the June 2003 Public Housing Occupancy Guidebook offers over 200 pages detailing rules and information for living in federal housing, such as income rents, qualifications for admissions for living in public housing, civil rights and nondiscrimination requirements, occupancy guidelines, community service and economic self-sufficiency, domestic violence, and grievance procedures. The 13-page lease that residents have to sign gives further detail about what residents can and cannot do and defines the punishments that will be imposed if they violate any of the rules. For instance, if unsatisfactory housekeeping conditions are reported to the housing authority, the manager will inspect the apartment. If the problem is not resolved, the resident will be given written notice of the violations, which must be corrected within 21 days. If after a second inspection the violation is not corrected, the tenant will be issued a 30-day moving notice. Or if a tenant wishes to have a "guest" stay longer than 14 days, he or she must receive permission from the housing authority. The

housing authority has strict rules in their lease about household composition, what constitutes a guest, covered person, or other person under the tenant's control.

Since adherence to the rules become a crucial component of being allowed to remain in public housing, residents in violation are often fearful and distrustful—and they often lash out against Resident Council members who have done nothing. For example, when Linda's neighbor had an illegal number of people living with her, she confronted Linda, who she thought was “snitching on her.” Linda said:

Well, you talk to somebody, when it gets back to you it's five times different than what you said, and they're the only person you said it to, so you know they said it to begin with, or the other person wouldn't know it. And then it's just made up into a big tale that I told. And so just don't talk to me no more. Phyllis come runnin' up here and asked me why I went down to the office to tell that her daughter was living there. And I said, “Look, you having 14 people in your house doesn't bother my household at all. I don't care if you've got 25 in there. I really don't care.” And I said, “I'm not on the council anymore. I'm not tellin' nothing so y'all can just shut your mouths and just leave me alone.”

Because of the changes in management and the overarching rules and regulations that residents have to adhere to, getting chummy with the manager is perceived as snitching. That the Resident Council members do not want to be perceived as snitches by the community's residents is consistent with the larger literature on snitching, whistle-blowing, and “codes of silence.” Once a group or individual is labeled as a snitch or tattle-tale, they lose the respect of their peers (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright, 2003). Thus, the pressure put on the Resident Council to “snitch” and the perception that they do “snitch” is an obstacle for council participation and support.

9.3 Role Strain: Housing Authority, Community Workers, and Manager

Another area of disjunction involves the roles and responsibilities of the housing authority officials, community workers, and managers to the council. A role is an expected pattern or set of behaviors associated with a particular position or status (Major

2003). When multiple demands are placed on individuals, and they have “difficulty in fulfilling role obligations” (Goode, 1960: 483) or they are forced by circumstance to adopt multiple roles, the result is *role strain*. Role strain is made up of *role overload* and *role conflict* (Siber, 1974). Researchers have devoted consideration attention to role strain, particularly that involved in the relationship between household division of labor and marital satisfaction (Stohs, 2000; Pina and Bengston, 1993), aging and mental health (Edwards et al., 2002), and caregiving (Rozario, Morrow-Howell, and Hinterlong, 2004). Since there are multiple demands and responsibilities placed on the HUD officials, role strain can affect their interactions with the council and interpretations of housing laws and policies.

Among the examples of “role strain” experienced by members of the housing authority, community workers, and managers were (1) abiding by the CFR and not having the manpower, financial support, or time to carry out the laws and policies, (2) taking on more responsibilities to help the residents and Resident Council members, and (3) conflicting views between personal assumptions and beliefs of the Resident Council and structural organization and policies of HUD/ HAs. The multiple roles the housing authority, community workers, and managers undertook came from structural changes imposed by the housing authority and HUD,⁴⁸ that affected their job responsibilities to the Resident Council. The role strain of job responsibilities led to several areas of disjunction, including not meeting responsibilities, unclear responsibilities, and blurred responsibilities.

⁴⁸ Since the housing authorities receive federal monies, changes in federal laws and policies have an affect on the manpower and monies that the Ridgeway Housing Authority receives.

9.3.1 Responsibilities and Structure

The job responsibilities of the housing authority officials, community workers, and managers are entwined with the structural dynamics of HUD, such as federal funding, restructuring of the agency (HUD and Ridgeway Housing Authority), and laws and policies that have to be enforced and implemented. For example, because of limited resources, both Maynard and Alvin are responsible for all the resident councils in the all the public housing communities in the city. Thus, due to the demands placed upon them, it becomes structurally impossible for them to achieve their job responsibilities.

The council members want someone to come to the meetings, help them get organized, and explain all the laws and by-laws that they need to know. The Resident Council members felt that the housing officials were not fulfilling this responsibility. When I asked Alvin and Maynard about their lack of interaction with the council, they identified several reasons why they were not always around, and they also shared their opinion as to why council members would perceive them as being ineffective. Alvin and Maynard both said that one of the reasons they have not been to Rivertown Council meetings or more involved with the Resident Council is due to the organizational structure and responsibilities of their positions: they must attend meetings and work with over ten different public housing communities and resident councils. Needless to say, they are extremely busy and are pulled in multiple directions. Alvin acknowledged the difficulty of attending every meeting:

That is one of the most difficult things that I have to deal with and that is we have over ten communities and on a monthly basis if we had a resident council at all ten that would be 27 different meetings. A resident meeting, a resident council meeting, and a site-based meeting. It's impossible for me, right now, just with the councils that are active for me to attend every meeting because many are held at the same time, some are held when I'm at another meeting

Maynard expressed his frustration: he realizes he is just one person and that he often can be difficult to reach (even trying to interview him was a chore):

I mean, I'm dealing with over ten neighborhoods. So I am a very hard person to get a hold of. I can't guarantee that every time you want me to come that I'm going to be able to come. If my schedule is already ... I mean, you know, just trying to do this interview you know how hard I am to get hold of. So ... I am very busy and I am a very hard person to get a hold of, but if there's an issue that needs to be resolved, you know, one of the other communities, Anderson Hills, I did a workshop they weren't able to attend. They called me back and I rescheduled that particular workshop just for them. The workshop was for all of the communities. They couldn't make it, so they had some legitimate reasons. I rescheduled it. And I'm going back into their community and I'm going to hold it for them. So I may not be able to do it when you want me to do it, but I am available to do it for you

Maynard's role is to empower the Resident Council members by making them aware of their rights, the code of federal regulations, and any other laws and policies that govern the resident council and public housing. However, because Maynard does not regularly attend meetings or return phone calls (for reasons explained above), the council members do not see him as effective. As a result, he is not able to carry out his role or fulfill his responsibility to them. Therefore, the council does not know its rights or fully understand the laws and policies that govern the council and the community. The Resident Council members interpret Maynard's perceived lack of action to indicate that he does not care for or respect the council members. On the other hand, Maynard thinks the Resident Council members themselves are responsible for empowering the community. In his opinion, they should take action and not be "lazy."

Alvin stated that he is hindered from doing his job for three reasons: (1) Resident Council members generally do not have telephones, (2) the past "history" between the council and

the former Resident Coordinator has tainted the relationship, and (3) three people now do the job of the Resident Coordinator. According to Alvin:

I'm hindered for a couple of different reasons. Number one, many of our resident council members do not have telephones. So if I have a conflict in just being able to call someone to say I won't be at the meeting, sometimes I can't. Sometimes I'll call the property manager to get a message, but then again the property manager isn't just sitting there waiting for me to take a message to someone else. So we find a lot of barriers that are there.

This may have been a problem with past Resident Councils, but the current council members of Rivertown all have telephones. They may not have an answering machines or message services, but they do have phones. A second barrier, according to Alvin, involves dealing with the history of the past community coordinator, Jane. Alvin elaborates:

And we're also dealing with what happened in the past before I came on board and before Maynard and Sharon came on board. Jane Adams was the previous coordinator and she pretty much juggled the whole thing by herself. And I look back on that experience for Jane and I wonder how she was able to do what she did. Because with me, Maynard and Sharon it's tough for us to get everything done. And we do a pretty good job coordinating. Maynard and I meet every Friday at two o'clock here and we talk about what happened that week. Then we look at our calendars for the following week so we can just get adjusted. And that's been challenging for Maynard and I to go to as many meetings as we can along with the other job duties that we have. So we're juggling that day by day. And it's really hard to win over some of our residents because once they have just one negative experience, it's hard to win their trust back. It's very hard. And for some they say, "I'm sorry but you blew it." And sometimes they'll tell you that and in other ways their body language will tell you that.

In the opinions of many Resident Council members, Jane was a one-woman army, and while it is true that now three people perform the job that she once did by herself, Maynard expressed the belief that she hindered the councils from being self-sufficient because she did everything for them. Discussing Jane, Maynard said

The council members that are on that council, the person that was before me, you know, in many ways she hindered a lot of the councils in that things that the council should have been doing to be more self-sufficient, she was doing for

them. If they wanted to do a program, she would go out and make the program happen and say that the resident council did it.

For three years, the Resident Council members had a chance to become used to and comfortable with Jane's strong "hands-on" approach. As a result, when Maynard took his position, he faced some difficulty because his primary goal was to make the council more self-sufficient, a position directly opposite to the direction in which Jane took the group by, in his terms, "enabling" them:

I don't work that way. If they want to do something, then I will give them the contact information, I will let them know who to contact, who to call to make it happen. If they need my help somewhere along the way of doing that, then I will be there for them. But they will never learn how to hold an election for their resident council, they'll never learn how to get a neighborhood watch started, if they don't do that themselves.

The third hindrance identified by Alvin involved how residents perceived the council, as well as previous negative experiences:

Before I took this job I was a case manager here at Rivertown and we tried to partner up with the housing authority to help promote the resident council. And we used to go knocking on doors at least once a month. And many people would look at us and say, "Don't even mention the resident council." And some would explain and some wouldn't. Some would go into "I took an issue to them before and they never helped me" or "They snitched on me" or all kinds of stories. And what do you do when someone says that to you? It's hard to say, "Well, come on back and give 'em another try." They would say, "No, that's okay."

9.3.2 Unclear Responsibility: The Grass Incident

What in my research I have identified as the "grass incident" exemplifies what happens when the housing authority official and community worker are unclear about the responsibilities of the Resident Council regarding maintenance issues. My field notes from the April 23, 2003 council meeting record the following incident:

An issue that Linda brought up after the council meeting was the grass not being mowed. I'll admit, the high grass makes this place look worse; it's not very

attractive at all. Personally, I can't understand why it isn't cut. At the meeting today, Linda discussed how snakes can and do hide out in the grass and that kids who have bad allergies, their allergies start to act up. For some reason, Rivertown was not getting the grass mowed by the maintenance staff, which is operated by the housing authority. Linda was getting upset that the grass wasn't being mowed and she didn't want her grandchildren playing out in the grass. Besides her personally wanting to do something about the grass situation, other residents in the community were coming to her complaining about the grass.

Being fed up with the grass not being mowed and concerned for her grandchildren's safety, Linda organized a petition demanding that the development's grass be mowed, and soon thereafter the task was undertaken. As Linda described the situation:

They (residents in Rivertown) knew that I could do something about it. But they didn't want to go to any meetings to say, well, you know, we need to do this. But when I took the paper around to get people to sign it. "Oh yeah, we'll sign it so this grass can be cut." They voluntarily signed the paper. They were willing to do that.

Sam suggested that the grass incident was a maintenance issue rather than one that should have been sent before the council. He indicated that

the resident council didn't have nothing to do with grass cutting. She (Linda) been saying for [awhile that]--she wanted her grass cut because she was a resident. She just wanted her grass cut, period. Our job is to make sure that it's (resident council) for the kids and their families. Now the grass is a maintenance problem. Yeah, that's for management and them to work through with that when they stepped over bounds and they got in hot water and the issue got out of hand.

For Sam, then, the mowing of the grass is something for which the housing authority rather than the resident council should be responsible.

Unlike Sam, both Alvin and Maynard thought the grass incident was a resident council issue. According to Alvin,

And if the people in Rivertown at a certain point in time say "We're not pleased with the way our grass is being cut or the way that it looks" that is a resident council issue because the resident council can work with the housing authority to

say, “What is the policy? How often should the grass be cut? And come on over here and look at the grass? And are you saying that this is acceptable?”

In fact, Linda did call the housing authority and talk to the manager about the grass situation. When she did, however, the manager did not respond as though the issue was an important one, so Linda sought assistance elsewhere. She explained

I’m not satisfied with the manager. I’ll call up to the housing authority and explain what I’m in the process of doing. This is wrong. I think this is wrong. My manager says that it’s not wrong. Or I want to speak to someone that is over her to see exactly where we stand on this.

The grass incident became a concern for Linda because of her young grandchildren, and in turn she brought it up in a council meeting as a result of the members’ long-standing concern for children in the community. On the one hand, then, it seems the issue was one that could easily have been within the scope of the council’s responsibilities. However, Sam did not perceive the issue in the same way, and his perception likewise has some grounding. All community maintenance issues are, in fact, tied to the funding and organizational structure of the housing authority. Discussing a grass incident that happen at another public housing community Alvin said: “What I had to do was let the folks know about the current changes that took place on the maintenance crew which changed from somebody being on the development and cutting their grass every week to a team being formed which travels federal around to each site. And we had to educate them on the reasons why the changes occurred, which basically dealt with federal money being taken away.”

Maynard expressed his belief that the role of the resident council should be extended beyond the narrowed definition assigned to it by its members. Discussing the role of the council and the grass incident, he said

The resident council should have been on it (grass situation) before the residents ...issues like that, those are small issues. Issues of the grass not being cut, those are obvious things that the resident council should be on top of. But when a resident feels that their rights are being violated or the resident is having some personal issues. They just want to know what some resources are ... I need computer training. Where can I go to get computer training? Those are the type of issues that residents should be coming to the resident councils about. You know, the grass, everybody can see that. It's a shame that a resident even has to go to a council member in order for them to do something about it. They should have been doing something about that already.

For Maynard, two issues emerged from this incident: (1) Resident Council members should be in tune with everything that goes on in the community and (2) they should be empowering the residents on a larger, life-altering scale. Once again, however, one must remember that the council itself established that its mission was to help the children in the community. In addition, because the council is small, with rotating members, it does not have the resources or the time to concern itself with everything that occurs at Rivertown. Perhaps if the council was bigger, the members could concern themselves with all facets of community life, but under the present circumstances that is impossible.

In Maynard's opinion, the primary role of the council should be to empower the community and, as a result, all of its efforts should focus on developing empowerment strategies and promoting self-sufficiency regarding such issues as life skills, job skills, and resource development. Once again, however, the council's members do not see that as their role. Coming from New Orleans, Maynard has seen numerous examples of severely distressed public housing, characterized by the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing (1992) as possessing violent crime and drug problems, high vacancy rates, physical deterioration, and high rates of unemployment and poverty. Rivertown does not fit the definition of severely distressed housing; hence Maynard's expectations for what should be accomplished by the council to empower

their community is affected by his previous understanding and assumptions about public housing.

Empowerment can mean different things to different people. Foster-Fishman, et. al stated that (1998: 508) “empowerment assumes divergent forms and meanings across people, is contextually determined, and changes over time”. Who ultimately was responsible for getting the grass mowed if ultimately unknown. However, Linda’s concern with the safety of her grandchildren, consistent with the Resident Council’s focuses on children, demonstrated that she was empowered, not lazy or unmotivated, and her actions led to getting the grass cut.

9.3.3 Blurred Responsibility: No Information—More Control

The last area of disjunction caused by role strain is blurred responsibility. Even though Jane was the Resident Council Coordinator, a position that on its surface involves helping the council help the community, in actuality, as she indicates, her “real job” was to make sure the councils never knew the extent of their power.⁴⁹ Jane told me that her job was to keep the council members in the dark and never let them know how much control and power they actually have. She said:

so a lot of the effectiveness of a resident council depends on the relationship—the Housing Authority has all the power. The residents don’t—they have one little quarter of power and that’s their rent and they can put their rent in escrow and that kind of gets the Housing Authority’s attention, but that’s about the only leverage that they have. Other than that the Housing Authority has all the power and, and the extent to which they communicate to someone is uh is their choice.

Jane gives little credit to the residents for having the mindset or power to control their own situations or understand the HUD laws and policies that were established to give the residents a voice, a stake in the decision-making process in their communities.

⁴⁹ Chapter 10 will discuss social control through government laws and policies.

Besides putting their monies in escrow, in Jane's perspective, they are powerless. As she continued describing the power of the housing authority, she discussed the former executive director of the agency and how he controlled everything:

I mean what's the alternative between the Housing Authority saying look and the previous—the executive director previous two previous to Tom Henderson, Herb McBryde, that was really the big issue that got him ousted was he had no interest in resident organizations and many people will tell you that things were much better. He made sure that everything was—he ran a tight ship and he was in control he was a benevolent dictator. Employees if you talk to the right ones the employees loved him the residents loved him um and um you know he ran a tight ship. Made sure the fellows had the tools they needed and so on and houses were kept up to code and um but he didn't want anyone telling him how to do the job or what was needed or whatever he decided what was needed and what was good and what was right. Um so it was more efficient. It's messy now I mean its there are all these mixed messages and who you know whose in charge here and uh can we control our neighborhood and so on but it—as with all government it's you know one of the things that's going on

In telling the story about how her job was created she informed me that because the resident were unhappy and they took a stand, the housing authority paid dearly. She said:

Basically, my job was created when—does the name Wilson Thomas mean anything to you? Wilson Thomas is the director of the Legal Aid Society in Ridgeway. And, Wilson Thomas argued a case against the Ridgeway Housing Authority before the Supreme Court Henry Higgins um and it was an issue that had to do with utility bills um excess electricity or something. Um but it was Herb McBryde was the executive director of the Housing Authority who I referred too earlier. There was this deep resident issue, dissatisfaction; residents went to Wilson Thomas at the legal aide. Wilson represented them up through the courts and eventually to the supreme court and the Housing Authority wound up having to pay uh a lot of residents a lot of money. I mean no individual resident got a lot of money, but the Housing Authority had to give back a lot of money to residents past and, and current. And, at that point HUD said that it was mandatory that every Housing Authority have a resident council coordinator and that's when resident councils kind of came in. The idea was will never get caught again not knowing what's making your residents unhappy. You got to—so that's basically what my job was, was to make sure the Housing Authority never got sued again. I mean nobody ever said that to me, but I happen to know of Wilson Thomas for one thing so the idea you know the ideal is self-governance and all that crap, but the bottom line is get out there and listen. Find a way to hear what people are

concerned about and make sure because as I say the one lever that the residents have and nobody ever tells them this or very few or them are aware that if, if they have rodents in their apartment and the Housing Authority isn't taking care of the problem. They've complained and the rodents continue and their house keeping is—it's their neighbors who are the problem. It's not their house keeping they can take their rent down to the Clerk of the City Court and have it put in escrow The Housing Authority can't get it and they put it with them with a complaint that the Housing Authority is not meeting the demands of the lease uh they are not providing a safe and sanitary home for the resident.⁵⁰

She went on to say that the residents did not know about this:

Very few, that's why I say it's not an option that's spelled out for people. So the Housing Authority can't get money until they—the problem is corrected—now one individual resident can do that and it doesn't hurt very much but if every resident in Rivertown said until you give us trash can on the curbs so that we can keep the litter under control and our kids aren't picking up dirty needles and that kind of thing, um none of us are going to run over pay our rent to the city court house.

And her job was to make sure that the resident council never knew what a powerful tool

it could be:

Yes and my job was to make sure that never happened. My job was to be in there—nobody ever told me this, but I learned it over time—my job was to be in there and listen and figure out is there an organized effort to make something happen and is it a good thing or is it a bad thing? And um I mean you know I mentioned this escrow thing to Daniel Harrison once and he said if you I, referring to himself, or anyone else ever hears you talking like that to any

⁵⁰ Jane is referring to the case "Wright et al. v. city of Ridgeway Housing Authority in which the tenants alleged that the housing authority illegally imposed a surcharge for "excess" utility consumption.. They brought suit in the United States District Court for the Western District of "THE STATE" under 42 USCS 1983, alleging a violation of their rights under the Brooke Amendment to the Housing Act of 1937 and the implementing regulations of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Brooke Amendment provides that a low-income family living in a public housing project shall pay as rent a specified percentage of its income. HUD regulations consider "rent" to include a reasonable amount for the use of utilities. The District Court granted summary judgment for the housing authority on the 1983 claim, holding that a private cause of action was unavailable to enforce the Brooke Amendment (605 F Supp 532). The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit affirmed, holding that tenants' rights under the Brooke Amendment are enforceable only by HUD (771 F2d 833). On certiorari, the United States Supreme Court reversed. In an opinion by White, J., joined by Brennan, Marshall, Blackmun, and Stevens, JJ., it was held that the tenants had a private cause of action under 1983, since (1) the Brooke Amendment and its legislative history are devoid of any express indication that exclusive enforcement authority was vested in HUD, (2) congressional and agency actions have indicated that enforcement authority is not centralized and that private actions were anticipated, (3) the remedial mechanisms provided in the Housing Act are not sufficiently comprehensive and effective to raise a clear inference that Congress intended to foreclose a 1983 cause of action, (4) the possibility that tenants could enforce their Brooke Amendment rights by suing in state court on their lease was not a reason to bar an action under 1983, which was adopted to provide a federal remedy for the enforcement of federal rights, and (5) the provision in the HUD regulations for a "reasonable" allowance for utilities was sufficiently specific and definite to qualify as an enforceable right under 1983.- Retrieved from Lexis Nexis Academic December 10, 2004.

residents at any resident you lost your job. And, I mean I clearly was not supposed to toss that option out.

In reality, Jane and the Ridgeway Housing Authority made sure that the Rivertown Resident Council never knew how much power and influence they had. Jane's interpretation of Resident Council's laws and policies and her role responsibilities to the council contradicts: 1) the purpose and goals of the resident council's laws and policies to incorporate residents' participation, empowerment, and decision-making abilities; 2) the role and job responsibilities of Jane and the Ridgeway Housing Authority to support and fairly implement the CFR; and 3) the established policy of helping the resident council with community-building activities.

9.4 Power Position of the Housing Manager

An area of disjunction related to the manager involves the dynamics of power. The housing manager⁵¹ possesses the resources and influence to help the council achieve its desired outcomes and goals for the community. In essence, the manager is in a position of power "to make decisions having major consequences" (Mills,1956) for the council, in both positive and negative terms. Even with all the laws and policies that empower the resident council, the relationship between the manager and council still is power-dependent. If council members do not know how much power they have or even what their rights might be, they can be pawns for the manager. As Emerson (1962) stated, "power resides implicitly in the other's dependency." Addressing the issue of power, Critical Race Theory stress that without taking into account the lived experiences of individuals to ensure equality in the law, the construction and implementation of laws and

⁵¹ I use housing manager and property manager interchangeably.

policies are appropriated as “hegemonic devices” that in essence protect the power of the dominant group (Jay, 2003).

Alvin, Sharon, Dixie, and Maynard describe the effect the power of the manager can have on the council. Alvin agreed that managers have a powerful effect on the resident council. He said:

I’ve seen some communities that don’t have a resident council. The impact is because the manager has not pushed it. When I came on board in June, there were three councils that were considered inactive. So somewhere along the way that manager has either verbally or non-verbally given the impression that if you have one it’s great, if you don’t have one it’s great.

Sharon also agreed that the manager’s support can shape the inactive or activity of the council:

I think that any resident council needs the support of the manager—needs to have the manager’s backing and support, if they have a manager. Like, for instance, like there’s several maybe two communities that I can think off top that the manager is not very supportive of the resident council and they actively work, not against them, but they don’t do anything to help them so they have really been struggling for a long time.

In other words, not having a council or supporting a council that does exist is a way a manager can maintain control over the community. Sharon continued with her point:

I know another community that the manager is not very active at all in trying to get the resident council started. It’s a struggling community. They have never had a resident council that’s been really effective. Its always been struggling whenever they get like one or two people on it, but I think that’s because the manager doesn’t really ah—I don’t know if they want a resident council in that particular community, because then its going to put pressure on them to do the things that they need to do

Dixie and Maynard report having witnessed incidents where managers have taken control, dominated the council, and then used it for their own personal gain, instead of for the betterment or the “enhancing” of the community it was meant to represent.

Discussing examples of how managers have run resident councils, thus defeating the very reasons for their existence, Dixie indicated that

management has run the resident council meeting and that's not what its meant for it's meant for them to run and we need to just get their input and be of assistance if I can. But, its not, you know—the site-based meetings to run and handle what goes on there but the resident council meeting is the resident council meeting it's for residents.

Maynard suggested that while overly-controlling managers can prove detrimental to resident councils, those who practice a “hands-off” policy and withhold support can be equally problematic. If threatened, a manager can keep resident council members and residents in the dark about the council or use it to his or her benefit, which flies in the face of CFR regulations, the mission and operation statement of the housing authorities, and the role of the manager to (as the job description indicates) “work closely with resident councils as an advisor on housing matters.” Instead of having an active council, such managers create what Maynard calls a

Mannequin Resident Council:

We have neighborhoods that have property managers that support their resident council, because they understand that an effective resident council is in fact a help to them. We have other property managers who are not doing what they're supposed to be doin', so they don't want a strong resident council to pull their coat tail and tell them, look, you're not doin' what you're supposed to be doin'. So, you know, some of them have what I call Mannequin Resident Councils. You know, it looks like a resident council, you know, it wears clothes just like a council would, but it's not functioning. It's just a window dressing. And the managers manipulate those councils to either get back at certain residents they don't like. They use those councils to police the neighborhood. They use those councils to do things they're not comfortable doing. And a lot of the things that some of these councils are doing it's not their responsibility to do. Its' the responsibility of those property managers. Um, and then you have property managers that don't want no form, shape, or fashion of a resident council to take place. Just because they don't want them to even trip up on their rights. They don't want them to stumble upon their rights as a resident council.

The managerial position is such a powerful one that the individual who assumes it can, if he or she chooses, control and exploit council members. Under such circumstances, the function of the council can often be distorted: as previously noted, its members can be viewed variously as snitches, police agents, or “manager’s pets.”

Alvin noted that there are no policies, evaluations, pay increases or repercussions in place that would influence the manager to create, maintain, and support an active resident council. He indicated:

There’s nothing major that would cause or influence a manager to say, “I’m going to get five people and go ahead and get a resident council goin’ because if I don’t my pay or my evaluation is going to get deducted ten points.” No. But what I try to sell the managers on, look at our communities that have what I consider to be effective resident councils.

Alvin’s assertion is supported by the managerial evaluation. The eight-page performance evaluation form provided by the Ridgeway Housing Authority for management personnel to complete in does not address the manager’s support of the resident council. The topics for evaluation include *Program activities/Budgetary Development & Control Activities and Investigation and Evaluation Activities; Supervisory/Managerial Activities, Operational Awareness Activities, Policy Formulation Activities, and Cooperative Activities*. The support and involvement of the manager with the council could possibly fit under managerial activities, policy formulation activities, or cooperative activities, but information regarding such is not asked for overtly. In effect, as a subject, resident council involvement is missing from the evaluation form. Since the CFR and HUD strongly encourages and supports resident councils, one would think that manager’s involvement would be a category for evaluation.

9.4.1 Manager and Housing Authority: Difference in Enforcement and Implementation of Policies

Another area of disjunction involves the enforcement and implementation of policies. In the beginning, the Housing Authority supported the managerial style adopted by Vanessa, but as policies and rules changed, so too did the authority's approach to the residents and council members. Vanessa made the following comment regarding what she perceived as a change in the direction of the housing authority:

I think that the housing authority, their goal changed within my tenure with them. At one point we focused a lot on resident relationships and building the communication with residents. And then towards the end of my tenure we focused on office management and meeting the paperwork deadlines. And counting up, letting the residents go as far as assisting them with overcoming some of their barriers. Supposedly there were other resources in the community available for these residents, but the problem with that, with my type of management style, I was more of a people-oriented type of management style.

Vanessa has been with the Ridgeway Housing Authority for over ten years, working for an agency that is directly affected and monitored by government policies and laws and budget cuts. In her time with the housing authority, she witnessed the election of two presidents, the 1993 passage of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) requiring all federally-funded agencies to develop and implement an accountability system based on performance measurements, the development by HUD of a new strategic goal and planning objectives, and the enacting of public housing reforms laws, such as the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (QHWRA). As the Ridgeway Housing Authority experienced changes due to these factors, so did Vanessa—and by necessity she was forced to change her managerial style. For instance, the informal practice of having teenagers or residents volunteer in the office was against

policy, so it had to be abandoned. According to Dixie, “the information in the office is confidential, so they cannot be going through the filing and work with it.”

One of new strategic goals enacted by HUD is designed to help families and individuals become economically self-sufficient. Programs, grants, and policies supported and strongly encouraged by HUD and the housing authority include the Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSSP), Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency Program (ROSS), and the Welfare to Work Voucher Program (WTW). Vanessa supported these programs, but she was also aware of the barriers, stresses, and emotions that individuals go through trying to “get on their feet.” In her time as manager, Vanessa saw her efforts to get to know residents and to provide them with someone in whom they could place their trust as a method of helping the whole person. Stressful environmental conditions, such as living in public housing, influence parenting strategies (Ceballo and McLoyd, 2002; Hashima and Amato, 1994), social support (Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, and Westfall, 2004), and mental and physical health (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2003), and these factor in turn affect people’s ability to leave public housing or deal with the barrage of social service agencies. By turning a sympathetic ear or providing a friendly face, Vanessa attempted to overcome these problems and connect with the residents. She made this assessment about people living in public housing:

Unfortunately in public housing your residents aren’t working. They don’t have careers. They don’t have jobs. So they are at home and they have serious barriers that they need to discuss with someone and if you are calling them, talking to social services, and you don’t have anybody on the phone to speak with concerning your problems, then you’re somewhat limited. So if there was an opportunity for them to come and discuss some of their problems with me, then that’s what they did in order to even get the rent. So I was accustomed to that style of management and had difficulty with trying to meet the paper deadlines that were constantly put on property managers. We didn’t have any clerical

assistance in the offices and the work just kept building and building and building and it became overwhelming.

From the first time I met her until the day she left, Vanessa always had piles and piles of folders stacked across her desk. These piles never got smaller. I would wonder how she ever got the paperwork done because she was always helping the residents. At one point, I asked her if she had an office manager, and she said that she did not. I later found out that Dixie used to be her office manager but that she was, in fact, stationed at a location away from Rivertown. Currently, Dixie, the new manager, has an office manager with her at Rivertown. Dixie has, in fact, said she would get killed by the paperwork that Vanessa passed along to her.

Since Vanessa focused on the residents more so than her other managerial duties, she did not always have the best evaluations. Reflecting on her evaluations she said:

It was divided into different portions. And my evaluations were different each year, depending on who that supervisor was. I never really had any positive, maybe one or two really good evaluations. But they weren't always bad, either. Maybe one or two in the 10 years I was there. Maybe one or two stinky ones that I didn't particularly care for.

Despite not always having the best evaluations or receiving "rewards" from the "company," she still persisted in her efforts to do things for the residents. It was from the residents, in fact, that she received her biggest rewards and greatest satisfaction:

Yeah, but, you know, you really don't get your rewards from the company, from the housing authority. It depends on your supervisor and towards the end we had a pretty decent supervisor who understood what we did and how we did it. She actually did the work that we did as a housing manager. But you got your appreciation from your residents when you succeed the results of something you helped assist them with. For instance, applying for a scholarship with the authority and with the state. A couple of the high school kids applied and they got the scholarships. And one of my Vietnamese children, she went down to the state level and she won another scholarship. And then I also brought ... now in the high schools, they have a program called Upward Bound for first time students who have no college degree. Well, that information is available at the

high school level and on some middle school levels, but believe it or not, I even serve on the executive board of the PTA here now. We don't have anything about that program at the school that I serve on for the PTA. And so since I knew about the program I was able to call them and tell them to send me brochures to my office and I believe we had three kids, or four kids, to go to the Upward Bound program.

Without question, Vanessa had passion for her job. She realized that in order to be an effective manager, one must balance working with residents and maintaining managerial duties but she refused to compromise her "motherly" managerial style.

With regard to this style and to other managers, she noted:

That's where the management style comes in. If you're good at doing office management, pushing the paper, then you're not gonna be equally as good at working with residents. So you gotta understand, what would be your role? My role was working with people. I'm a people-oriented manager, not an office manager pushing paper. And that's the style I chose to keep. So I mean you can't expect some like Dixie to come in and manage... her expertise is not in property management. She's an administrative assistant. She's always done paperwork. Can you imagine? She has no personality at all with people.

Giving his assessment of the three different managers, Maynard indicated that

I'm not very familiar with Dixie.....LaTonya, I think would have been a very good manager there, I think that she has a sincere desire to help the community, that she serves. Vanessa, a very good person, a lot of good ideas, I just think her approach wasn't the best for that particular community.

When I asked Maynard to explain Vanessa's approach, he said:

I don't think it was structured enough, that community needs more structure and Vanessa was very fluid in her approach to thing, she would...there wasn't enough structure there as far as constraints, she has too much of a big heart I guess, that's what I'm saying, she has too much of a big heart she needed a little more of a level of professionalism in order to get the job done there, rather than being a people person, she needed too have a little bit more of a professional level with the residents.

Perhaps the best type of manager must be able to balance heart with managerial effectiveness. Every manager, however, is different and possesses his or

her own unique style. Whatever style of managing is chosen, however, will inevitably influence the operation and goals of the resident council.

9.4.2 Vanessa and the Rivertown Council: A Difference in Responsibilities

Since Vanessa was a people person, she was extremely involved with the Resident Council—so much so, in fact, that her overzealous passion often lead her, perhaps unintentionally, to become controlling and dominating. In her opinion, it was her job to bring the council together, to be its leader, and to recruit members to it. Doing so, she believed, would make the council more effective and help bring about positive change within the community. As stated in the CFR, Ridgeway’s mission and operation statement, and even in her job description, though, this level of interaction with and control over the council were beyond the parameters outlined for her role as manager. Even having the best intentions for the council can lead to disjunction if the manager’s focus is not centered on the council’s desires and if policies for assisting the council are ignored. Her passion for the people and helping the Resident Council became a motive behind her drive of leadership and power over the council (Fox, 2000).

In the discipline of business and management, Vanessa’s adoption of a “leadership role” would not be acceptable because she not was trying to integrate and balance the needs and goals of the “stakeholders” (Jaffee, 2001; Lloyd, 1996). Her methodology seemed to involve an exertion of superior force rather than a true leadership approach that would motivate, inspire, and stimulate constant improvements (Bryman, Stephens, and Campo, 1996; Avolio and Bass, 1995).

Yet, people at the housing authority were surprised that when Vanessa left Rivertown, the formerly active, strong council basically disintegrated. Dixie reports her

own response: “I was really surprised; because . . . it was my understanding that Vanessa was really strong at keeping these people involved in their community.” Even Vanessa had trouble understanding why the council fell apart after she left:

Well, it was effective. You were there long enough to see that it did work. And it shouldn't have fallen apart when I left. It should have stayed there. It should have stayed together. That's why you try not to have one person in charge. And they didn't have a president per se. When you volunteer to do something, every group has a leader. Somebody to lead and guide them. That's just the way life is. I had a wonderful resident council and I kept them together when there was a conflict. We tried to work those things out. Tried to work those things out. And it just saddens me that we don't have a council there now. But that doesn't mean that the next person coming along won't be able to get a council together. People's needs and priorities change. Councils come and go. But you have to constantly be out there to get at least two or three reps on your property.

In fact, Linda herself joined the council because Vanessa talked to her about it.

This example indicates that the manager's efforts at recruitment can be positive.

However, the experience can turn out negatively as well. For example, Vanessa also recruited Lucy, who later turned out to be a bad fit for the council and council members. Because Vanessa was more persistent with some of the people she recruited than with others, primarily due to skills they possessed that she imagined could be put to use by the council, rumors began to circulate that the council members were being hand-picked by her. Somehow, this rumor spread to other housing authority officials. Dixie told me that some residents “were told they couldn't be on the resident council.” I cannot, however, verify this, as during the time I spent at Rivertown, I observed only that Vanessa attempted to get people involved and to assist them in any way she could.

How councils were formed in the past also might have affected recruitment efforts over time. As Vanessa noted:

Well, at one point in time we had a department whose position was specifically designed to form resident councils. However, people are creatures of habit and if

they don't really know you, you've got to have a winning personality to get people to give their time as a volunteer to be a community leader. That takes a lot of work. A lot of work. But as property manager, I knew the people, you know, who was working and whose not working and you just know these things that other folks don't know, because it's like a big family. You know everything about these people. And so it was easy for me to formulate resident councils. It just took a little bit of town when I got to Rivertown because they didn't have a council. They had some people who thought they were on the council, and they weren't. And then they had some people who thought they were not on the council, but they were actually still active. So we gathered all of those folks together and we met and things started to work really well. But working with resident councils, you do have to work relatively close with them because they have a lot of, if they're not working they're on disability, or disability pending. And they have a lot of barriers, and you have to be understanding and open-minded and culturally competent because they're all different. And it takes a little nurturing on your part, as property manager, to bring them together. The property manager is more or less the facilitator, keeping them together.

The example of Vanessa indicates the degree to which opinions and responses are divided with regard to the degree of involvement even a relatively successful manager—one with clearly-evolved people skills who cares for the members of her community—should have with the council. Since the manager assumes a level of power within the community, to have that individual participate in the council is to alter its potential dynamics.

9.5 Broken Communication Bridge

Another area of disjunction with respect to residents becoming involved with the Resident Council deals with how information about the council meetings is communicated and advertised to the community. Having regular and open lines of shared communication and information is essential for the empowerment and self-sufficiency of the resident council and the public housing community as a whole.

It is the responsibility of such individuals as Maynard, Alvin, Jane, and the managers to keep such lines to the council open and unimpeded by bureaucratic “red

tape.” Information has to be understood and communicated not only to the council members themselves but also to the residents of Rivertown, managers, housing authority officials, and community workers. In other words, all channels of communication—both to and from—must remain open.

9.5.1 Communication

One definition of communication establishes that it is “any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person’s needs, designs, perceptions, knowledge, or affective status. Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes” (National Joint Committee for the Communicative Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities, 1992: p. 2). Communication is imperative for transmission of thoughts, information, and feelings from one person to another. It is the process of sharing meaning by sending and receiving symbolic cues (Grice and Skinner, 1998). Through communication, we make ourselves understood by others and, in turn, we can understand others (Jacobson, 1998).

Clearly, then, if a message—whether verbal or written—is not understood by the receiver, then true communication has not occurred (Jacobson, 1998). What results is a disconnection between meaning and symbolic cues of information that is passed on. How people interpret those meanings and symbolic cues determines the assumptions we have, and much of this interpretation is based on our race, gender, class, and location in society (Collins 2000). One of the tenets of Critical Race Theory stresses the importance of intersectionality for understanding people’s life situation and how outside forces (laws and policies) impacts how those laws are interpreted. For instance, in determining how to

appropriately communicate with residents, the Housing Authority should consider such factors as childcare, work, health issues, and residents' accessibility.

Whether intentional or not, a communication breaks existed between the Rivertown Resident Council and housing authority officials, managers, community workers, and the residents of Rivertown. This proved extremely problematic, because HUD and the housing authority stress self-sufficiency and the empowerment of the resident council, which depends on a strong line of "communication [that] must deal with the real needs and desires of their [the council's] audience."

Given that the managers, housing authority officials, and community workers often hold pre-determined assumptions regarding residents of their communities and that they often communicate in large part based upon those assumptions, they might or might not be effective communicators. For instance, when Vanessa left, some of the council members did not know she had gone, and the residents in general had no idea about the change in management. When LaTonya came in, she sent out letters to inform the community that she was the new manager. Then without notice, LaTonya left, and Dixie came in. Although LaTonya made an attempt to announce her assumption of the position of manager, by and large, such changes in management are not communicated to the residents as they should be.

9.5.2 Communicating to the Community

Of course, not all communication should occur between "officials" and Resident Council members alone. An essential component of the communication structure that governs any housing complex should be the one between Resident Council members and the residents themselves. Councils members, HUD, and HA want residents to participate

at meetings and in their community, voice their concerns, and be informed about issues that affect them. At Rivertown, although attempts were made to encourage participation by residents—for example, council members would routinely send out flyers about meetings and events in the community—the majority of the adult residents did not attend meetings or participate in community events.⁵² The council members have even tried such “gimmicks” as having free food and prizes to entice the adult residents to come to meetings, but nothing seemed to work. In fact, in the over two years I studied Rivertown, I can count on one hand the number of times residents attended meetings at which I was present. Although the Resident Council had attempted to announce events via flyers, the structure of the meetings themselves and the relationship between the council and the manager also contributed to the miscommunication that prevailed in the relationship between council members and residents. Yet council members persisted in their attempts to communicate.

9.5.3 Knocking on Doors

In the absence of a more effective mechanism, one quick way to communicate information to residents is through flyers, although the method has its drawbacks. Information is always posted in the community room about events but unless a resident actually visits the site on a regular basis, this line of communication breaks down. Regardless, since some residents work irregular hours or they may not have phones, passing out flyers and knocking on doors still proved the best communicative options open to council members—but not the most simple acts to achieve. Flyers can be passed out until the cows come home but if people cannot read what is written on them, or if

⁵² Although the focus of the council was on the children, they still wanted the parents and community members to be involved and get suggestions for having activities and events for the children. They also wanted to know of any concerns of the residents, and they wanted them to come to the meetings.

they are not interested or enticed to attend the advertised community activities or events, then communication was not successful.

Those involved with the resident council (whether members or “officials”) often hold disparate views about these two methods of communicating. For example, Alvin believes that knocking on doors is not always the most effective thing to do. He said:

The mistake we’ve made in the past is knocking on doors just asking the basic question, “Are you interested in being on the council?” and then throwing people into a pit where they didn’t realize all the things that were expected. So I hope that by this summer that we have a minimum of five people who are willing to work over in that community. I hope. Everyday my phone rings and it’s always something with the council. It’s, “Alvin, I just lost my job. I can’t do it.” “Alvin, I just cursed so and so out. I quit.” Sometimes it’s Jerry Springer. It’s the unexpected. Something comes right out of the blue that you didn’t see and, um, you grin and bear it and just move on.

Likewise, Vanessa admits that passing out flyers can sometimes amount to information overkill. She said:

Um, the residents has had so many flyers stuck on their door they probably did know what was going on half the time. The kids would take the flyers away. It takes talking to other neighbors to let ‘em know what’s going on. It’s really difficult to get somebody out of their comfort zone and step up to being a council member when they’re not just representing their neighbors right there. They have to go up to the main office. They have to meet with other people. And some people are just shy and they don’t want all that. They just want to keep very simple and very local.

On the contrary, Sharon thought the council could improve its effectiveness if its members conducted a door-to-door campaign seeking to meet and assess the needs of individual members in the community. In her words,

Yeah. I think—um—I think if they went around and maybe polled the community to find out what they—what the community wants, what types of activities or events or benefits the community needs and wants—if they asked them and got some of their input and also ah and maybe had ah resident meeting where people could come out and learn about a resident council and why have a resident council in the community then maybe they would get some understanding of why they have a resident council and at that same

meeting they could find out what the residents want and then I think they should actively and aggressively move forward to try and make those things happen. And, I think once the residents see that then they'll probably—it will help build faith in the resident council.

Unfortunately, the opinions of the managers, community workers, and housing authority officials do not tally with those of council members, who can speak from the perspective of once having been only residents. For example, Jessica indicated that when she first moved to Rivertown and would receive flyers about resident council meetings, she had no idea what that meant. “Well, I mean, I got the flyers and stuff,” she said, “but I really didn't, you know, really understand there's a resident meeting, you know?”

Through personal interaction, Linda and Sam have informed their neighbors about events and activities that are going on in Rivertown, but this method, too, seems rather small in scope. Sam expressed frustration about trying to get residents more involved. He compared it to pulling teeth:

We sent out—every time we tried to have a resident council meeting we sent out a hundred fifty letters. If they have a problem, come to the meeting and put it on the table. We knock on the doors—ask the same thing. We come down here at 10:30 and sit in here sometimes at two o'clock maybe we may have two or maybe three and they come here then cause the doors open—they see the door open—but they don't come in here for the meetings and we've been trying

The council members consistently experience difficulty getting the adult residents involved in activities—and meetings themselves are an entirely different ballgame. The only time the council meeting was packed with residents was when the housing authority officials sent out a mandatory letter telling the residents to come to the council meeting so that issues involved with a new policy could be discussed. The housing authority sent out a flier that said:

Dear Residents:

A resident meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, October 1, 2003 at 5:30pm in the Community Room of Rivertown. This is a mandatory meeting for any household member that is 18 years of age or older. You will be receiving up to date information concerning the Resident Survey you may have already received from HUD.

We will be providing you with a package on **Community Service Requirements that requires your signature**. In addition, you will have the opportunity to here about a new Family Self- Sufficiency Program (FSS) that can help you save money that you can take advantage of right now.

This is a Mandatory meeting. Please make every effort to attend this meeting. If you fail to appear for this meeting, you will receive a letter from you manager requiring you to report to the Property Managers Office. Failure to comply will result in a lease violation

We are looking forward to seeing you there.- Tina McVey; Housing Operations Director

Sam noted that at this meeting, with all residents present, the Resident Council took the opportunity to explain what the council was about. In preparation for recruiting new members or for simply cultivating volunteer help, he had even created a sign-up sheet. Some of the residents signed the sheet, but no one came to subsequent meetings. Sam said he eventually realized that the residents signed the form simply because Housing Authority officials were facilitating the meeting. He said:

—like that night we helped ah when all them ah everybody had to come over here cause HUD required it to sign them things so they got a community plan...
...and when I had them here then I asked everybody before everybody left all in here if anybody was interested in joining the resident council to put their name on the paper. We got a table over there and people lined up and people filled the paper—I even turned it over to the third page. And then we—I told them what time we had a meeting I said if you need—if you workin and you get off at five o'clock you put the time down that suits you. Each one of you all put the time down that suits you. Then we'll make a meeting.
Nobody showed up.

I asked him if he thought people showed up solely because they thought it would look good to the officials who would be present. To this question, Sam replied:

Yeah I told them I said you gonna put your name on the paper—don't just do it because you cause we got you here now cause I'm gonna be coming back and looking at you when they gone and I said put the time you need the meeting to suit you and if its not gonna suit you put down a time you think you can make the meeting.

Nobody showed. Brunette that old lady she did it. That ah pagan woman she did it and then the other lady over here and ah Irma now they came to the meetin you know the last time...

9.5.4 The Flyer Experience

Although the task of disseminating flyers would seem to rather simple, that has not proven to be the case with the resident council. Determining who is going to create the flyer, agreeing to what information will be put on it, making copies and distributing them—each one of these steps has become part of an increasingly lengthy process that at times has been fraught with informational confusion. For instance, prior to Easter 2003, the council was supposed to send out flyers advertising a community Easter Egg Coloring and Hunt. At the April 19, 2003 resident council meeting, however, I informed Sam that such flyers did not go out. Vanessa had told Linda that she would create the flyers and then have one of the local girls distribute them, but she did not do it. Sam said the council should not worry about it—that he had been telling the children about it for awhile and had asked them to pass the word along. Regardless, Linda was upset at Vanessa for not getting out the flyers and made the comment that the resident council needed to do things for themselves. At one point in the meeting, Jessica and Linda volunteered to go door-to-door to tell residents about the event. When the day of the event arrived, more eggs were present (24 dozen cartons, or 288) than were children (eight).

On another occasion, the council members decided to make flyers and put them on residents' door to remind them about the role of the Rivertown Council and to inform them about the upcoming resident council elections. As I was present at the time, I volunteered to assist in this endeavor. Passing out flyers ended up being a traumatic experience, as my field notes from August 9, 2003 recount:

After our council meeting Jessica wanted to put out fliers about the council meeting because no one comes and everyone is welcomed to come. She asked me to type up the flier and I did. It was quick and simple, with the basics: time, location, where- about the resident council meeting. The council just got a new computer and Jessica was just starting to learn how to use it. We had to make 150 a piece of those two flyers. Jessica wasn't sure what was going on with the back to school event. She wanted to make flyers for that as well, but she thought she would wait and see.

Then we went to the office to ask the new manager, LaTonya if we can use the copy machine for the flyers. Of course she said yes but she was in a hurry because she had to pick her daughter up from school- she was sick. Now the council members have a copy machine in their office but it's an old school printer. The printer in the manager office collates and prints a lot faster. Its more appropriate for mass copies.

BACK TO THE COPIES

We had 3 flyers to make. As we were making copies of the second flyer, the machine ran out of paper. As the manager went to get some more, I read the flyer. CRAP, CRAP, CRAP!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

After making 50 copies, I read the flyer and it said: What to voice your concerns? Then come to the Resident Council Community Meeting.

It should read " WANT TO VOICE YOUR CONCERNS". Man I was pissed and embarrassed. I double checked and spell check what I read before I printed it off. CRAP!!!

I gave the flyer to Jessica to read and I said, " oh my god, read this, do you see my mistake". She read it 3 times and she couldn't find were I messed up. Then I pointed it out to her. I gave it to Sam to read and he also read it several times and he couldn't find any thing wrong with the flyer until I pointed it out to him.

Jessica asked me what I wanted to do? I had to throw it back to her. I told her that it didn't matter to me because this was their thing. They could do what they wanted.

Side Note: Wait, was I pulling a Jane? UGH!

Jessica didn't want to waste paper. Alvin, said that if he couldn't get it, the residents couldn't get it either. Jessica went back to the computer and made the corrections.

Side note: She knew, after I showed her, how to go into the file folder and retrieve the flyer to change it. Personally, I was embarrassed by the mistake. In my mind the flyer represents the organization and if the flyer is not spelled correctly, messy, and or unorganized what does that say about the council members. I didn't voice my concern or opinions to Jessica or Sam

PASSING OUT.

Now Jessica and I had 450 flyers. She kept asking me how should we distribute the flyers. I was wondering why she was asking me because I had never done it before and I was pretty sure she had a systematic way of doing things.

Instead of organizing all three flyers together- like a pack, I thought it might be quicker just to take them and re-arrange them as we distribute them (that was a mistake). Jessica had left her kids at home alone and I know she wanted to get back and check on them. We had to be quick because she left her young daughter in the house by herself.

WE START WITH THE GHETTO

Being in Rivertown the last 3 years I come to see the great divide in the community. There are the people on the hill and the people on the bottom of the hill. It is the " us vs. those other people".

When Jessica asked me where we should start, I suggested the bottom of the hill. Jessica said " oh you want to start wit the Ghetto". At the bottom of the hill, I have heard residents and the council members refer to that part as the "Ghetto". All the council members live on top of the hill. Even within this " poor community" there is a class division. I have to investigate that further. I was intrigued by her commitment . And we started.

RULES FOR FLYERS

Jessica told me that we were not allowed to put flyers in the mailboxes because it's government property.

She usually rolls up the flyer (like a newspaper) and puts them in door (on the door handle). She told me that if I didn't see an air conditioner and if the blinds were closed then that unit was vacant

OK, so with that in mind we were off. Jessica had originally suggested that we split up, to make things go faster. I told her that since I didn't know what I was doing, it would be best if we did it together.

SIDE NOTE: to be honest, I didn't want to be left alone. I didn't want people to think of me as some outside person (which I am), Having Jessica would legitimate me. Then again maybe not since the council members don't do anything and they are all snitches.

OFF to the GHETTO.

As we started walking and it was around 11: 45am. I saw kids running around outside, and 2 people sitting outside. As we started I saw *Jesus loves ya, Jesus saves* bumper stickers on almost all the door in the ghetto. I wonder why residents or the Rivertown management have not taken them off . Isn't that some violation of separation of church and state?

To me the buildings in the ghetto were horrible. Paint coming off, things written on the outside walls, People didn't have grass, they had mud and water would make little lakes in front of people's front doors. I just felt dirty and to be honest I wanted to hurry up in leave.

For the first time I saw a HUGE difference, at least structurally where the people that live on the bottom of the hill as compared to those that live on the top of the hill. This was place that I didn't want to live.

OUTSIDE/ INSIDE

Several of the houses, people had their door open but their screen door was closed. For the houses with the doors open, we would put the flyers in the door and as soon as we left the person would get the flyer. One lady, open her screen door and we were able to hand the flyers to her. Another lady was sitting outside and we handed her a flyer. As she read the flyer, I heard her laugh and say, " they want people to join the council but they fuckin don't know how to spell"- Ouch.

I asked Jessica if she knew anybody that lived down her and she didn't. Meanwhile, I'm not rolling up the flyers correctly, I'm sweating, I'm jumping over the motes of dirty water, and I'm scratching myself because I feel as if something is biting me. It was horrible.

So I was thinking, this is hard work. Just getting information out to the residents. Some one has to physically go to all 150 units an distribute information to the residents to keep them informed. I got tired, so I wondered how Jessica does it.

But the key is kids. Her children love to help out and be with mommy, so they don't mind going and putting the flyers on people's door.

Not being able to communicate with the residents in the community is an obstacle that in many cases prevents the Resident Council from doing part of their job—getting the residents involved. Thus, the inability to communicate effectively with the residents results in a disjunction between what is expected and what is possible is .

9.6 Location, Attention, and Funding

The lack of attention and funding Rivertown receives from the housing authority is another source of disjunction between expectations and realities. I posit that the reason for this lack of attention, relative to some other public housing communities in Ridgeway, derives in part from the location of Rivertown but also from its failure to receive a HOPE VI Grant.

9.6.1 HOPE VI Grant

There are numerous laws, policies, programs, and grants to help resident council members and residents of public housing improve their living environment and assist individuals and families in achieving economic self-sufficiency. One such grant is called HOPE VI. Since one of the other local public housing communities, Quebec Gardens, received this prestigious grant, Rivertown did not receive much attention or funding in comparison. Due to fact that the housing authority was focused on implementing the HOPE VI grant, the focus on Rivertown changed. Since Rivertown is located away from other public housing communities rather than in a “stereotypical” chaotic public housing

neighborhood, it does not have the reputation of being an eyesore, nor is it thought of as a “pain” by housing authority officials. However, these positive assessments have done little to help residents and serve, in fact, as a double-edged sword in the game of funding and assistance. Ironically, perhaps due in great part to its positive attributes, Rivertown has been largely overlooked by officials, who have been focused on renovating severely distressed local housing. Extant public housing policies have not provided Rivertown with the support of other public housing communities, such as receiving a Hope VI grant. Given that such an influx of funds and attention can be energizing for resident councils, then conversely, the lack of these may have contributed to the inertia demonstrated at times by the Rivertown Resident Council.

What is HOPE VI?

In 1992 the National Commission on Severely Distressed Housing submitted a report to Congress that determined that “ 6 percent of the 1.4 million existing public housing dwellings (about 86,000 units) were in severely distressed conditions.” To assist in these communities, the Commission recommended the removing and replacing of such units; the revitalization of the community in three general areas (physical improvements, management improvements, and social and community services to address residents needs); and funding of over 5 billion dollars, carried out over a ten-year period (HUD, 2004).

As a result of the report, in 1993 the Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program (URD)—which is also known as The HOPE VI Program—was created by the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act (Pub. L. 102-389). Under this act, housing

authorities can apply for two types of grants: *HOPE VI Revitalization Grant* and *HOPE VI Demolition Grant*. The revitalization grant funds the “capital cost of major rehabilitation, new construction, and other physical improvements, the demolition of severely distressed public housing, management improvements; planning and technical assistance, and community supportive services with the skills and support they need to become self-sufficient.” The HOPE VI demolition grant provides funds to demolish obsolete public housing units.

When the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QWRA)⁵³ was passed in 1998, funding requirements were amended to include this act. Through the QWRA, public housing communities that receive HOPE VI grants also have to prove that support and social services exist that can help residents make the transition from welfare to work and become self-sufficient. After receiving this grant, the community goes through both physical and social changes.

In March 1998, HUD received 101 applications from severely distressed public housing communities requesting \$1.9 billion in assistance. Only 20 HOPE VI Revitalization grants were given that year, which totaled over \$507 million (HUD, 2004). One of the 20 housing authorities to receive grant funding that year was the Ridgeway Housing Authority, which received over \$15 million to renovate Quebec

⁵³ Public housing reform is represented through the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (QHWRA). QHWRA was signed by President Clinton on October 21, 1998 and is found in Title V of HUD’s FY1999 appropriations act (P.L. 105-276).QHWRA is landmark legislation which will make public housing reform a reality by: Reducing the concentration of poverty in public housing; Protecting access to housing assistance for the poorest families; Supporting families making the transition from welfare to work ;Raising performance standards for public housing agencies, and rewarding high performance; Transforming the public housing stock through new policies and procedures for demolition and replacement and mixed-finance projects, and through authorizing the HOPE VI revitalization program. Merging and reforming the Section 8 certificate and voucher programs, and allowing public housing agencies to implement a Section 8 homeownership program Supporting HUD management reform efficiencies through deregulation and streamlining and program consolidation.

Gardens. The total cost of revitalization of Quebec Gardens was \$45 million, with the remaining \$30 million above and beyond the Hope VI grant to come from the city, county, and private donors.

With the grant, the Ridgeway Housing Authority was able to “demolish 126 units and replaced them with 34 lease/purchase units for public housing residents (24 on site and 10 off site), 24 market rental units, and 44 market rate homeownership units off-site. The remaining 174 public housing units will undergo extensive rehabilitation. In conjunction with the HOPE VI activities the housing authority established a one-stop-shop Opportunity Center to further revitalize the surrounding community” (HUD, 2004).

Receiving this grant meant tremendous media attention, as well as a lot of involvement from the city of Ridgeway, the resident council, and the residents of Quebec Gardens, was necessary for all the changes that were to occur at the community—and it definitely occurred. One of the reasons that the grant prompted additional involvement is that embedded in the rules for receiving it is a requirement for active involvement of the resident councils.⁵⁴

Besides looking better structurally, it now has an on-site day-care facility, provides job training, and offers other services for people who live in the new community—all features of the HOPE VI requirements.

Needless to say, Quebec Gardens received a lot of attention, invested monies, and benefits. Sharon commented on this:

⁵⁴ In contrast, resident councils sometimes become involved in their communities when their homes are being affected by demolition or environmental issues. Examples of active resident councils would be the St. Thomas public housing community of New Orleans. Also, several lawsuits have been filed from resident council members to stop the physical threat to their homes such as: Little Earth of United Tribes, Inc. v. United States Dep't of Housing & Urban Dev, 1983; Cabrini-Green Advisory Council v. Chicago Housing Authority, 1997; Resident Council of Allen Parkway Village v. United States Dep't of Housing. & Urban Development 1993, Alexandria Resident Council, Inc. v. Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority, 2003.

Quebec Gardens[is] where they have the self- sufficiency program where people um once you join this program you have to work you have to get a job you know and it helps you ah you can stay in the community for like five years and they give you assistance with childcare and different things like that. So, you have a group of people living in this community that's more progressive in their lives and the community looks like it too. You see the community there's no trash and it looks nice. They already put a ton of money in it to refurbish it, to make it look nice they're keeping it up though. They're keeping it looking nice it's not going back down so I think because of the program that's put in place, it makes the people think more progressively and their community reflects that.

Sharon also admitted, that maybe in the next year or so attention can be focused on Rivertown. She said:

Um...I just think there community has lots of potential and ah maybe within the next year sometime um we're gonna try and focus on Rivertown and hopefully we can search the community and find it's a potential. You find people who are willing to help it to get to its potential—its fullest potential and make it a better community. But, I think it could be really great over there.

Daniel said that he would like the other public housing communities to be a part of the self- sufficiency program now in operation at Quebec 2000. He realizes that monies and resources will make a big difference. He noted:

Oh, it would be nice if they could be. It would be nice. It would take a lot more staff to try to push a program like that. You know, most housing authorities, right now, because of budget cuts and things, most housing authorities have on staff property managers. People can manage the development. But as far as doing other programs, you have to kind of depend on other agencies you can refer people to. But in Quebec, we have staff over at Quebec that specifically work with self-sufficiency. Which makes a differences.

As of now, however, the housing authority cannot afford the monies or resources that would be required to help Rivertown.

Resident council members Jessica and Sam expressed their beliefs that in the wake of the grant, Quebec Gardens received all of the housing authority's benefits and attention, while Rivertown continues to receive little of either. For example, Jessica said she wishes her community at least offered childcare services for working mothers. "I'd

like to see Rivertown have like a little childcare center and, like, that's over there in Quebec Gardens. That'd be great. This community is so big, I don't see why they don't have one." Likewise, Sam expressed the pangs of feeling personally ignored: "Well see I guess when they started on Quebec 2000 everybody went to Quebec 2000 they forgot about Rivertown they forgot about Winton Hills they forgot about West Chester, forgot about all the other developments." He added: "See and now and the thing about that I was telling the manager over here we need some of the same things that Quebec 2000 has."

9.7 Top- Down Policies from HUD

The agency itself adds to the disjunction between the Resident Council and housing authority officials. The role of HUD in relation to housing authorities is to administrate federal aid, set income limits, and furnish to the housing authorities technical and professional assistance involving planning, developing, and managing (HUD, 2004). Most importantly, HUD ensures that federal laws and regulations enacted by the U.S. Congress and the Department of Housing are implemented (HUD, 2004). If housing authorities are not in compliance with the rules and regulations, they could be severely penalized. In contrast to HUD, housing authorities own, operate, and manage public housing. They have the power to acquire, lease, and improve property, make loans or provide grants, and carry out redevelopment plans in cooperation with local government (HUD, 2004). Ultimately though, it is HUD that creates and enforces the laws and policies that all housing authorities have to follow.

The Structure of HUD

HUD is a large organization, which is structured in such a way that facilitates and impedes the work of the housing authority officials and resident councils, and lives of the residents. Alvin, Jane, and Daniel all commented on how the organizational structure of HUD impacts the housing authority and the residents. With such a large agency, the number of policy changes can become overwhelming at times. For example, when HUD required a change in accounting procedures, the Housing Authority had to change their procedures, causing confusion for the residents, which in turn made their rent payments late. Commenting on this change, Jane said:

The Housing Authority trying to get—make their accounting procedures more efficient and so um they started some yeah that's our—something where rent money was sent to a post office box in Ridgeway and then forwarded to somebody in Wilmington, Delaware an accounting firm that uh posted it all and then sent reports to the Housing Authority about who it paid and who it hadn't paid and um then the Housing Authority—I can't remember how it all work the but the end result was people who had mailed their rent on time were getting late payment penalties.

Daniel remarked on the changing structures of HUD when he said:

See HUD switches around so much. You've got Philadelphia ... See what you've got is for our accountant purposes we deal with Baltimore. Okay? The field office where we do all our contact is in Atlanta. There are some programs where we have to report to Ohio. See, it used to be Washington and you had all your field offices. It ain't like that no more. They're turned around and made different centers. And Baltimore is the financial center. That's our field office. So all of them are different now.

While Resident Council members have to deal with the trickle-down effects of structural changes within HUD, they also must attempt to understand their own roles within the agency's larger organizational framework. Daniel commented on how Resident Council members often do not know their role/place within the structure:

I think that some of them understand it and some of them don't. And the ones that don't understand, they're the ones that have a problem. Okay, I'll give you a prime example. When HUD tells the residents that they need to be involved in be involved in it. What HUD means to be involved in it, they're not involved in writing the plan, they're involved in the different pieces that go into the plan. Alright, I'll give you a prime example. Let's say that in the plan you're going to put in the council improvement that you're going to do at each one of the developments. They need to be involved in the council improvement piece, and have meetings with the housing authority to determine what needs to be done. Then after that, then after that it's put into the plan. Alright? Let's say it's a policy. They're going to have input into the policy and then once the policy is complete it is put into the plan. And they think they're going to sit down with you and I and help write the plan. That's not the way it goes. So it's kind of hard sometimes to actually explain how involvement is actually done. See what I'm saying? Because out there collecting rent. That's not a resident issue. They're not involved. They're involved to say, "Okay, this is what we should do to help collect rent and stuff." But not involved in the rent itself. You can't send them out and say, "You go tell Jane she needs to pay her rent." It's confidential. See what I'm saying? It's something we need to deal with.

Resident Council members themselves are not responsible for keeping up with the myriad changes that occur involving HUD policies. Instead, it is the job of Maynard, Alvin, Jane, or the managers to help the Resident Council members know their roles and responsibilities with the council and as defined by HUD. As noted in the previous chapter, the Resident Council members did not think, and some housing officials agreed, that those with the responsibility to do so were helping explain the rules.

9.7.1 Complex Laws and Policies

Another area of disjunction between what was expected of and what was being done by the Resident Council involves the Resident Council's capacity for understanding the rules and policies. To ensure the community-building activities of the Resident Council, HUD has enacted several laws and policies. While the number of laws is itself daunting, their complex legal language is more problematic: it can be extremely confusing to Resident Council members and residents—even to housing authority

officials. As Alvin indicated, information has to be “spoon fed” to the Resident Council members because they have a hard time reading the documents for themselves:

I think it’s intimidating for anyone, especially persons that struggle with reading. Many of the people that are on our councils would struggle just reading a newspaper, so when you throw terms like Code of Federal Regulations and Congress it’s intimidating. And for the short span that I’ve been here I have to catch myself as I pass out information because for my other work environments, if I would pass something out, I wouldn’t have to read it because everybody in the setting could read. But here I can’t assume that. And many of the people that work on our councils have a hard time reading. So all of the laws and the codes, it’s a hindrance. But as long as we’re going to be governed by the federal government, I don’t see that going away anytime soon. So one of the things that Maynard and I try to do, in some cases, we try to spoon feed. We try to take information and break it down to the point where, number one, we’re not embarrassing people, but we’re helping them understand the information. And it’s a balance, because sometimes for the people that read very well, they’re look at us like, “Why are you treating me like this?” But for the person sitting next to them that struggles with reading, they say, “Okay, I’ve got it and I understand.” I struggle with certain things. Yeah. There are cases where I’ll get something and I’ll have to say, “Melody, what is your interpretation of this?” Oh yeah. There are not too many things where I’ll read it the first time around and say, “I got it.” I struggle quite often.

Maynard concurred with Alvin’s assessment:

Many of them have that information and it was just given to them. And they didn’t know, it’s like okay, we’re giving you a 400-page book of information telling you, okay, these are your rights. Go on and good luck. And some of them suffer from illiteracy, they don’t know how to write, I mean how to read, so that was another hindrance that impeded them. And both I and members of the housing authority have been working with them to correct that.

Likewise, Sharon commented that “I don’t even think the resident councils even know these policies. I don’t think they understand them. They may have heard them in a meeting or something like that maybe, but um if its not really broken down and explained to them then its like Greek, you know. So, I don’t think it really effects them ah in a positive way, because they don’t understand them.

Vanessa followed suit when she said:

It depends on the resident. Some of the residents have disabilities and they don't read as well as we do.....That's part of our job to make sure they understood those regulations. I know. It makes things too complicated. Everybody knows, it's low-income to moderate-income families. And if you have a college degree you may not be in public housing. I mean, most newspapers put information in the paper on an 8th grade level. Why do we at public housing have graduate level literature for everything? The way that it's put out, you know, you really can't understand what it is they're trying to say. You had to really work with it. You really have to know how to interpret. And if you didn't know then you would ask, what do they mean by this?

9.7.2 Politics and HUD: The Community Service Requirement

As a governmental agency, HUD is not immune from politics. Some laws and policies that affect public housing residents do indeed seem to be more political than need-based. Depending on whether it is an election year or how voters feel about people who live in public housing, laws get formulated and implemented. The link between politics and rule formation rankled some of my interviewees. One particularly problematic policy in this regard is the Community Service Requirement. As noted in the previous chapter, the appropriateness of the Community Service Requirement met with mixed reviews. Those interviewed also commented on the politic behind the Community Service Requirement.

Although Daniel appreciated the goal of the Community Service Requirement, he finds problematic the fact that HUD did not give clear directions regarding how the policy should be implemented in the "real world." He said:

That's something that probably is something that I can come out and say that I believe in, but I'm hating the idea of, what do you call it, implementing it. Implementation of it is atrocious. Now think about it. If you've got all these people in public housing. I don't know what the intent is here. You've got all these people in public housing, and all of them except the elderly and disabled, tell all of them that they have to do 8 hours of community service. How many are going to do it? But guess what? It's a mandated requirement. That means you've got to do it. So what's going to happen a year from now?

Two years from now? You're going to have people that didn't do it. Then you're going to have people who've got to move because you didn't do what? Fulfill your requirement. Okay? What do you do?

Even through some managers have tried to market the requirement to residents as a positive step toward self-sufficiency and community development, many residents still perceive it as a punishment meted out to them because they live in public housing. Alvin said:

Some managers have tried to sell it. I was at a meeting with Maynard ... today is Tuesday ... last week and one of the managers sold it just like that. She said, "Look, with the new community service requirement, if you don't have an exemption you need at least eight hours per month. Working with the resident council can satisfy those hours."

Daniel acknowledges the amount of paperwork that managers will have because of this new policy. He thinks the whole thing is an inducement for people to get job, and adds:

It's a lot of work for them, but the key to it is it's not their job to go around and perceive. It's up to you to go out and find your 8 hours and bring the paperwork back each month to the manager. You follow what I'm saying? That's your requirement. It ain't gonna happen. It's not going to happen. I think it's going to be one of these things where, what you gonna do, put everybody out of public housing? Because they didn't do community service? And you've got all these vacant apartments. That ain't going to happen. I think the requirement came and then left. I think the whole idea, and this is my personal opinion, that is to see how many people are actually going to do it. And I think it's more of a ploy, where if we tell everybody they've got to do community service, what percentage of them get a job and aren't going to fool with community service? See what I'm saying? That's what's going to happen. You're going to have a lot of people who've never even thought about a job. Before I do eight hours of community service and don't get paid, I'm going to get me a job.

For Dixie as well, the community service requirement is a good idea but the implementation of will most likely be difficult. As she noted:

I honestly think it's a good idea. I think it's a really good idea. Unfortunately I think HUD should have thought it through and developed a plan on a better way

to monitor it because you know unfortunately with the workload we already have we only have to verify it and monitor it—we have to monitor it each month, they have to bring in the documentation on a monthly basis, but they're going to created a problem come re-exam time cause that's when we have to go through and make sure they're in compliance with it cause you know if their missing one month or they didn't bring the paper in one month that's going to show that they're not in compliance with the whole program and so we walk a fine line well okay they've obviously done community service every month so we're missing one paper, you know and so it's just—there's some gray areas and I think a lot of it's because its—I think it should have been probably done as a will give you the option to do this, this year but next year understand this is a mandatory requirement.

Sharon recalled being at the meeting wherein the housing authority learned from HUD that they would have to implement the community service requirement. She said:

Yeah, I remember when this was put into effect. We had a meeting about it and ah the Housing Authority came to Maynard and I to ask us to help them to come up with some ideas or wait—they got information or they got word from HUD and um they said they told them like maybe a month or two before this needed to go into effect that they needed to come up with some type of community service ah program for all the residents that live in public housing. And, when the Housing Authority got this information they were kind of weary about it. They were like “ah man look they're telling us this at the last minute and the residents—I mean how are they going to take this?” So they were kind of forced—their hands were forced actually to put this into effect

Yeah, they were forced to do something like this so we're trying to find out—ah—they were asking us different ways to bring this to the residents and give them a community service requirement that wouldn't be too stressful on them. Something that they can do—I think they have to do like eight hours a month.

Dixie made reference to “top-down” policies. She said:

It's not something that we just all the sudden decided one-day we wanted to do this. It's coming down from the federal government saying it's a requirement for these people to be assisted in federally funded housing and they have no choice and that's why we decided to go ahead and revamp the lease and make sure that it was strictly in there, because that's one of the things that the judges look at too. They go, “Well is it stated exactly in your lease?” And, so what we did is we went to bat and took all that information that we've had issues with in the past and put it in there to be court proof so that way...

So that yeah...when we go we can say, “Well here's are new lease and it does state that in there and it's clear and it's concise and it's to the point and there's no

gray area where you can go over it with another interpretation. It's a matter of black and white. It's there and either they're doing it or they're not, so.

The ramifications of Community Service Requirement and other such policies are complex and have strong effects not only on the residents and resident council members but the housing authority officials, managers, and community workers.

9.8 Meetings

As noted in the last chapter, organizing and attending meetings were a major job requirement of the Resident Council. Meetings are stressed in the Code of Federal Regulations, by-laws, and the Green Book. The policies articulate how the Resident Council members should have control of the meetings, how they should meet regularly, and how they should involve the community. Nonetheless, the requirements and expectations of meetings and the reality of them were another area of disjunction. Numerous factors contributed to this disjunction.

One factor is a disconnect between who the rules state should be running the meetings and who actually is. As noted in the previous chapter, various rules specify that the Resident Council members should be in charge of their own meetings. However, the members were often divested of their promised "ownership" in the meetings. When housing authority members or managers attended meetings, the council members' voices tended to get silenced. Another factor is the frequency of "extra" meetings. The housing officials wanted council members to attend meetings and be a part of the decision making process. They wanted them to be involved; therefore, regular attendance was urged, both at the Resident Council meetings and at others. Consistent with this view, the Resident Council members usually have no problems attending their own council meetings. However, attendance at other meetings was more problematic for them. Resident

Council members often felt that at such “extra” meetings as the Joint Resident Council meetings, nothing gets done, so they resent having to take time off from work or find a babysitter in order to attend. Finally, not being able to communicate effectively with residents has hampered the council’s ability to engage in community building. These and other problems are described in more detail below.

9.8.1 Who’s Running the Meetings

One area of disjunction between the stated policies and the realities of the Resident Council is the answer to the question “Who’s running the meeting?” Although the Resident Council members are clearly supposed to run their own meetings, this was not always the case. My observations at Rivertown indicated that the structure of the Resident Council meeting would vary depending upon the presence of individuals who were not members. There is nothing in the Green Book on rules to indicate that the structure of a meeting should vary as a result of non-Resident Council members being present. Being self-sufficient involves taking ownership of one’s own meeting, even with housing authority officials in attendance. However, such was not the case with the Resident Council meetings I observed. I noticed major differences when the regular meetings were run by the Resident Council members without Jane or Vanessa being present, as compared to when they were there.

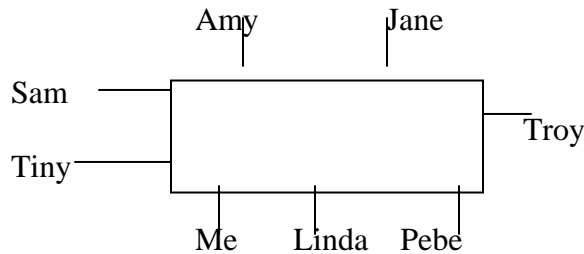
The following example is taken from my field notes about the October 15, 2001 meeting, which was attended by Jane and Amy, a Community Health Volunteer. At this point in time, I had been attending Resident Council meetings for nine months. I knew that these meetings were supposed to be run by the Resident Council members and that Jane’s job was merely to help them get organized, but this was not the case. It was easy

to notice a discernible power imbalance. When she was in attendance, the meetings were not run by the Resident Council members but by her. As my field notes indicate:

Meeting

I've noticed that the two women-Jane and Amy, were conducting this meeting. With them leading the Resident Council meeting, the feeling of the meeting is a lot different. Just with the seating arrangement, and I don't know if its on purpose, but Amy and Jane spatially positioned themselves on the same side of the table and everyone looked at them.

See Figure 9.8.1a:



The topic of this meeting is planning recreational activities for the kids for Halloween.

One of the suggestions was having a Halloween party at the community center, instead of having them go door to door to trick e' treat. They (Jane and Amy) thought the big kids might take candy away from the little kids. Having it in the community room, everybody would get candy.

Jane and Amy debated about the candy issue: what to do about it- how to distribute it, where to get it, etc.... None of the council were saying anything. The two outside women were having their own conversation.....

Once again Jane and Amy are having their own conversation. None of the residents are speaking.....

One of the residents (Pebe) had an idea of having the kids dress up and having a little parade that will lead to the community room and having a movie for them.

Another resident (Sam) made a suggestion about having candy donated.....

I thought the council members made some good suggestions but, no one is following through or sticking with an idea. No one is making any concrete decisions.

None of the council members are saying anything, Jane is kinda calling all the shots.

Again, Jane and Amy are having their own conversation again. After Amy's pre-conversation with Jane, she asked "what do ya'll think"

I guess we are going to have a Halloween party in the community room. Amy said she will bring flyers by next week, with all the information about the party on it, so it can be passed out to the residents.

Jane is aware that the meeting is being run and dominated by her. She made the comment "We don't set the policy, it's your meeting"

Side note: I find it so hypocritical that Amy and Jane, who dominated this meeting, kept telling the residents "it's their meeting, they need to be more vocal and involved."

Jane stressed the idea that "at any given moment, she'll back off. She said "this is your meeting. The point is, think about this, the same way you raise your children. This is your organization, you don't need our permission for anything." And she said this is "Your organization and my advise is don't bite off more than you need"

Needless to say, as my field notes indicate, I was frustrated with the fact that Jane and Amy were running the meeting. Even though the Green Book stresses that "resident council should be run by the residents," that obviously was not always the case. At council meetings not attended by Jane or Vanessa, there was an equal distribution of power among members.

Typically, if Vanessa was at the meeting, then she and Jane would have been engaged in conversation. To her credit, though, Vanessa would talk *to* the council members and not *at* them. As discussed in Chapter 8, she still saw her role as their leader, but one that tried to do everything in her power to help them succeed.

Jane's interactions with the Resident Council were more complex. As the Resident Council Coordinator, it was her job to attend all council meetings and support the Resident Council in their activities, but no one actually trained her for her position. In

her own words, she indicated that “No, nobody trained me. I trained myself—that’s what’s crazy.”⁵⁵ In addition to wanting to help the council, she also expressed that she did not want the Resident Council to know how much power they had. While she recognized her dominance at the meetings, and said that she would stop, she continued to dominate.

Jane admits her own assumptions had an impact on her role in facilitating meetings or giving the Resident Council members information. She said:

given my personality I went really wanting to just sit in the background (laughs), but I’m not a background kind of person and that was really hard for me because I knew that by jumping in I was trampling on people who needed, I don’t know a series of five meetings with nothing happening in order to uh you know finally say well she’s not going to take over if anything gonna happen we got you know to do it, but on the other hand I had the feeling that if nothing happened they’d just quit. You know what’s the point. So I’d go around and I’d knock on doors and I’d say did you forget there was a council meeting and finally everybody would drag themselves over and sit down and say well what are we suppose to do and uh (laughs) so I had to kind of jump in and say well here’s what you’re suppose to do and well how we gonna do that. So for me it was get over involved and have nothing happen or get over involved and have it all be me or get be under involved and have nothing happen cause they, they didn’t really care.....

And that goes back to what I was saying in there the more I helped the more dependent they were and I suspect that’s what the others have found too is that they can do it, but their level of self-confidence is really, really low and they’re used to having people doing things for them um.

⁵⁵ Jane did not have to know the CFR rules and all the other policies that surround the council. She was just aware of the proper/legal procedure that needed to be done to elect a resident council. Maynard on the other hand, job responsibilities specifically requires him to know all the CFR and policies that pertain to the resident council.

9.8.2 Meeting Without Jane

Meetings with Jane there and without her were considerably different in how they were run. The following example provides a glimpse into a Resident Council meeting not attended by Jane. When a housing official was not present, meetings were usually longer in duration and *Roberts Rules of Orders* were followed only loosely. Such meetings had a “different feel.” During them, council members were able to really network and bond. They worked on their own time not someone else’s. The following example is edited comments from my September 24, 2001 field notes. I quote in length to provide a better description of the meeting than could be capture in a shorter excerpt. My notes read:

Meeting

7:00pm, the meeting gets started. At this meeting, council members, **Linda, Tiny, Alvin**, were at this meeting and **Russell (Rufers)** who was a resident.

Side note: Rufers was new. I had never seen him before and he was younger than the rest of the council members. He is a tall African American man, that has lived in the community for a while. It was a nice surprise to see a resident come to this meeting.

Linda, as usual is getting the meeting going. She passed around the sign in sheet and she became our note taker. There was no agenda, at least not a formal written one that was passed out.

The first issue that was discussed was the safety issues of the bridge, which is behind the community center which lead to the mini shopping center.

Linda said was going to talk to Food lion and the Food Bank about the bridge situation.

Side note, Linda brought her grandchildren to the meeting. Because they were acting up, Linda had to remedy the situation

Addressing Linda’s grandchildren got the residents to talking about the children in the community.

At this meeting the residents were talking about children. How children use to be respectful and now they are not.

Tiny the older white male, with cancer, stated that he saw some kids on the roof the other day. He said “ I may be white and they may be colored but I’m going to smack him in the face;” he was referring to bad ass kids that were on the roof and didn’t listen to him

Also Recon said that “ kids have guns but they don’t know what to do with them”

At the meeting Tiny, wasn’t feeling well because he had his Chemo treatment today and he’s in bad shape. He said he was not feeling well and that he is not scared of it (not scared of dying).

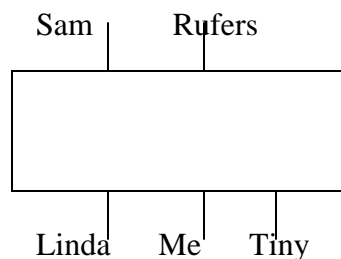
Somehow, the conversation switched from children to Stem-cell research and the good it can do for people with cancer and why the government shouldn’t ban it. Everybody had a comment about this hotly debated political issue. The stem-cell research conversation transition to cancer and the family members the council members had lost to the disease.

Linda lost her daughter to cancer 4 years ago. She takes care of her children. Recon said his mother died of cancer when he was 15. When she died he said he lost it and went to prison.. Sam’s sister died of cancer and he takes care of her kids.

Side note : as they were talking they said how they know other people in Rivertown that had cancer or had someone in their family that had it.

At this meeting we talked a lot about cancer and the impact that it can have on a person, family, and a community. The council members are aware of the research and the information about cancer.

See Figure 9.8.1.b:



At this meeting, members did discuss some business (the bridge) but most of the time they opened up as individuals, discussing such issues as loss, cancer, and children.

This was a conversation that they would not have been able to have if Jane or Vanessa

had been in attendance because they would have had to follow a strict agenda. Even though the bridge was only mentioned briefly, the council members were able to network and discuss meaningful issues that directly affected their life chances and experiences. The content of the discussions also give insights into some of the difficulties members have that prevent them from doing all that they might want to do otherwise. The impact of issues such as childcare, illnesses, and other problems from the Residence Council's daily lives are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

This excerpt from my field notes presents a typical example of a council meeting held without officials attending. At other such meetings, council members shared recipes, talked about good mechanics in the area, touched on church and God, discussed the police, and commented on children in the community. During such meetings, members were able to build social ties and network among each other. They were, in essence, their own support group that sometimes provided resources and links to a larger network . The importance of social ties and networking as a necessary ingredient for people to work together toward a common interest is well established (Lin, 2001; Portes, 1988; Coleman, 1988; Putman 1993, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986). Furthermore, researchers indicates that social networking and community involvement and the social interactions resulting from groups and associations improve levels of life satisfaction, increase personal health, and generate societal and government trust (Hawe and Shiel, 2000; Kaase, 1999). What Resident Council members lost in efficiency may well have been a fair trade for what they gained.

Although the council members at times faulted Maynard or Alvin for not attending meetings regularly, it does appear that they enjoyed those meetings most

that were unattended by any “officials.” At such meetings, they were able to relax and be themselves. Moreover, although they did not follow strict parliamentary procedures, on such occasions that council members got down to planning activities on their own, they seemed more empowered and capable.

9.8.3 Site Based Meetings

Site-based meetings occurred once a month in the Rivertown Community Center and involved the Resident Council, manager, maintenance personnel, and any outside community workers who had been invited and chose to attend. During such meetings, issues, questions, and concerns of the community were to be addressed.

Recounting the things that property managers should be doing, Maynard told me that one of their duties is to hold such site-based meetings. He said:

There are things that property managers should be doing that they’re not doing. Each month, every property manager is supposed to hold a site-based meeting. Which include community service providers, the resident council, and maintenance to address issues in their communities.

When I asked him if the managers have to do it, he responded:

Yes, “ it’s a requirement from HUD. And that’s the area in which the residents councils will tell either maintenance or the property manager or both of them, the residents are having these issues. I have residents that put in a work order to have a window fixed three months ago and, you know, it hasn’t been fixed yet. What’s going on? But because the property manager isn’t holding that meeting, then the residents don’t have a venue to inform them of the concerns in the community.

Dixie informed me of her role at the meeting and the importance of site-based meetings in general when I asked her about them. She said:

We need a site based meeting date so that I can do minutes, we can hash out any issues that I need to be addressed with at that meeting and then the resident council if that’s a good time for them they can keep having it. But, the other three meetings in the month are for the resident council and I’m not going to be involved in those, but what I’m going to do at that point is take those site based

minutes and also let Alvin look at those and see if anything he needs to address and help with too.

And then what they will do is um they keep minutes they discuss things about the property what's going on, on the property any questions they have that have been addressed at the resident council meeting and then they'll address those to the manager and the manager will um usually come back with their reply or if its something that needs to be addressed they'll address it and handle it and get back to them at the next site based meeting.

The First Site –Based Meeting

The first site based meeting I attended occurred on Valentines Day in 2001. It soon became apparent that from outward appearances, there was little difference between a site-based meeting and a regular Residential Council meeting. After all, Jane and Vanessa often invited outsiders to attend the regular council meetings. Sometimes maintenance staff would show up as well. However, the number of outsiders relative to the numbers of the Resident Council members was greater, and those invited had greater authority over the Resident Council in many cases. For example, at the September 13, 2002 site-based meeting, seven people in positions of power arrived for a discussion with only two Resident Council members. At this meeting, one of the housing authority representatives, Jane, had issues with a situation that occurred involving the Resident Council. She wanted the Resident Council members to write a letter to express their anger for not receiving proper services. With seven people in positions of power at this meeting, the two Resident Council members did not indicate if they agreed or disagreed with her dictate—they basically said nothing.

The following account of a site-based meeting is taken from my slightly edited field notes from that day. Notice how these notes reflect how Vanessa dominated the discussion and agenda:

The Meeting

At the Site-Based Meeting there was Vanessa, Jane, Linda, myself, Tiny, and Alvin.

Issues that Vanessa brought up:

They (housing authority) have two new people to drive vans and assist with programs. They have guidelines for van drivers. If there is a housing authority event/meeting. That takes first priority. If the residents wanted the van to get together and all go to the movies that 's a big no.

Vanessa said the exec board member wants Resident Council to be more active in resident activity. The site-based meetings get \$100 a month to use and if they don't use it that money goes right back to HUD. In order to get the money the housing authority requires that Resident Council members attend 5 meetings. Some of the Resident Council members did not feel they should be there. Members of the council get \$100 to reimburse them for their time and expensive in assisting in the decision making process. Also another requirement is that the maintenance men need to be at these meetings.

Vanessa stated that she doesn't think it's fair because people here need that stipend money and they aren't getting it. She wants to make sure that resident council members are included in the housing authority decisions but they shouldn't have to attend a set number of meetings. Some people have other commitments.

Some of the council members agreed to this.

Vanessa informed the council members about policy changes that was going on with the housing authority and how that affected the council.

As of March 1st, HUD is changing its policy. When someone wants to apply for HUD housing, it would all go to the Main office (the Ridgeway Housing Authority) and from there be sent out to the 10 communities (it was centralized). As of March 1st everything will be decentralized. If you want to apply to a certain development a person has to apply on site of that development.

The meetings current goal is to try to have something for the youth as well as some type of health fair for all the residents in April. Vanessa stated the main goal is to get activities going for the spring and summer. She also stressed how she was going to be busy with PAPER WORK and the president of the resident council needs to start taking charge and organizing a committee to get things together for this event in April.

At this meeting, Vanessa took care of everything herself. Although she said that “the president of the resident council needs to start taking chare” she basically took over the organization of the Health Fair Event: she called social services, organized participants, and planned the date and time of the event. Compared to this, the role that was delegated to the Resident Council members was small: they used their funds to purchase food and beverages.

As stated in the CFR and by Maynard and Dixie, site-based meetings are defined as those occasions during which the manager comes in and informs the Resident Council members about things that are going on with the housing authority, HUD, or any else that would effect the Resident Council members and the community. The meetings also were supposed to be a time for the Residential Council to share its concerns. As illustrated above through my field notes, the meeting was informative, but unidirectional, allowing little input from the Resident Council. I attended other site-based meetings which were also informative, but without input from the Resident Council. At such meetings, someone other than a member of the Resident Council dominated.

9.8.4 Joint Resident Council

The third type of meeting the Resident Council is required to attend is the Joint Resident Council meeting. This is a meeting where the Resident Council members from the different public housing communities meet at the same time with housing officials and other key personnel. Although I just said that the Resident Council members are required to attend, this may or may not be the case. Below is an excerpt from my slightly edited field notes of a Joint Resident Council meeting that occurred on June 13, 2002. At this meeting, 13-15 Resident Council members from different communities, five housing

officials, the “safety man,” and I were in attendance. The first two issues discussed at the meeting were renters insurance and the need to get everyone involved in seeking a Hope VI grant. My notes continue:

The third issue discussed at the meeting was funding and rules.

There had been some confusion. Jane Adams for the longest time told the resident council members that they have to attend the Joint Resident Council in order to receive their stipends. But in the HUD rule book, it says that “residents **may** come together to

If Jane felt that an important requirement for council that needed to be met to receive their stipends was attendance at the Joint meetings, it is surprising that she did not include this on the flier.

Resident Council members expressed good reasons for why they wanted to know if the meetings were required. One such reason was that they felt they were a waste of time. Again I quote from my notes:

As we were talking about the rules, and money, etc....

One woman, a resident council member from another public housing community said that “ nothing gets done “ She said “ We don’t see the results”, Issues “come up, they come up, then it goes away. Nothing gets done”

Side note : that just started to get everybody talking and going. Another council member said “the residents come and come and nothing gets done.”I asked the lady to give us an example because the housing authority officials were here. She said how you can’t see the numbers on the mailboxes and another lady talked about the refrigerators, another person brought up the street lights and how they are not working, etc...

Mr. Cook and Daniel Harrison started taking notes and they promised to get those things fixed. Then everybody was really talking. Mr. Cook made the suggestion that people go to their resident councils and work on getting issues/ problems fixed then at the next meeting tell him what got done and what didn’t. One resident told me “ you get tired of asking for things to get fix and nothing happens, after a while you just stop asking”

As these fieldnotes—and others herein recounted—indicate, situations of disjunction often arose between Resident Council members and Housing Authority and community officials as a result of the power imbalance explicit in the relationship among

the groups. Too often, the Resident Council was silenced by members of authority groups or ignored altogether. While my fieldnotes from the Resident Council meetings indicate that the members got off target when managers were not present, this is not to say that they wouldn't have found their way back to their designated tasks if given time and support rather than domination.

Moreover, the Residential Council often did not understand the very regulations by which they were to operate due to such things as the complexity and changing nature of the rules and the lack of those charged with the task to help them understand them. Was divesting the council of vocal power and failing to keep them fully abreast of changing regulations accidental oversights or deliberate mechanisms by which the Housing Authority and community workers withheld power from the council? Jane's interpretation of her own position might suggest the latter to be the case, but other officials and community workers expressed frustration as well that the Resident Council was not able to do what they were expected to do because of obstacle. The rules and requirements were not the only problems. Even when they had activities planned, the Resident Council was were hobbled by other factors, such as the lack of an effective means of communicating with residents.

Given this description of disjunctions between what is expected and the reality of the Resident Council's ability to work toward community building, how, then, can we explain such disjunctions? From what sources do they arrive? Chapter 10 examines the disjunctions apparent in Rivertown through the lens of Critical Race Theory.

CHAPTER TEN CRITICAL RACE THEORY

10.0 Using Critical Race Theory

This chapter is going to tie the work together theoretically by returning to the concept of community, first addressed in chapter two as shared morals and values, connections of common bonds, social interactions and networks, geographical space, and shared history, networks, and emotions (Bender, 1982; Chaskin, 2001; Stone, 1986; Bellah, 1985). As stated in chapter two, for this study community is defined as “we-ness” with a “group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it.

Critical Race Theory will be used to explain the various disconnects between the resident council and HUD because of its emphasis on the importance of the relationship between a groups lived experience and the development of social policies designed to improve their lives. However, if one was interested in the impact of impression management/changing cultural dynamics to further expound on issues of power, oppression, and control other explanations could have been used.

Impression Management

Impression management, coming from Symbolic Interaction tradition, could have been fruitfully employed in places throughout the dissertation. For example, the manager Vanessa worked hard to be seen as the mother figure that went out of her way to help the resident council and the community. In contrast to this impression, the resident council interpreted her behavior as controlling and ineffective. Impression management theory refers to “any behavior that has the purpose of controlling or manipulating the

attributions and impressions formed of that person by others” (Arndt and Bigelow, 2000:496). Bolino (1999) identified different strategies that individuals use such as ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation, self-promotion and supplication to influence how others see them. Despite the negative racialized image of public housing, which CRT allowed me to understand, the council members did not see themselves like the rest of the community. CRT could not explain reasons and the dynamics of why the council members did not see themselves like the rest of the community. They were not like “those people” living in public housing.

Changing Cultural Dynamics

The changing cultural dynamics of the community might have been some of the reasons why residents did not participate with the council. Using more theories of intersectionality, gender, age, and spatial context for example gendered racism, Marxist feminism, black feminist thought, life-span theories, and cultural competency could have explained disconnect between young vs. old, people that live on top of the hill vs. people that live on the bottom of the hill, location and attention of the community, and why HUD rules for micro-managing the resident council activities rather than providing agency. However, neither of those areas of study was the focus of this dissertation. Therefore, this study will use CRT as its theoretical guide.

When I started my research, the Rivertown Resident Council had three active members (out of the elected 5 members that is required by the Code of Federal Regulations) who, along with a supportive manager (Vanessa), routinely organized events for their community. During my research, council members have come and gone. Despite some minimal funding and resources that have been available to the council, it is

virtually inactive. Periodically a resident would show up at a meeting seeking assistance only to find that none of his or her representatives was present.⁵⁶ Two-and- a-half years after the start of my research, the council has only one active member and no planned activities for the community. Given the focus of my research, I cannot help but ask if the disjunctions that I have identified in this research may have contributed to the councils' demise. Before I attempt to explain reasons for such disjunctions, I will briefly summarize those identified in previous chapters by the resident council and HUD officials.

10.1 Identifying Disjunctions

As stated in previous chapters, HUD and HA rules and regulations exist that govern the community-building responsibilities of the resident council. These rules and regulations (1) define the role of the resident council to the community, (2) define the role of the housing authority officials to the council, (3) determine the structure of the council meetings, and (4) indicate the amount and type of funding they receive. The policies and regulations of resident councils exist to support the effectiveness of the resident council in creating and implementing community-building, self-sufficiency, and empowerment activities and goals in the community.

Despite the federal rules and regulations and the Green Book, the Resident Council was not meeting the expectations of housing officials. Nor were the housing officials doing what the council expected of them. Disconnections existed between the resident council, managers, housing authority officials, and community workers which

⁵⁶ Also within that time frame, Vanessa resigned from her position as manager, and two others have taken her place. Jane, the resident council coordinator with the housing authority left, and three new people (Alvin, Maynard, and Sharon) took her place.

may have lead to system failure. The disjunctions were not discrete, but rather overlapping and interwoven into each other.

Chapter Nine identified seven areas of disjunction between and within the housing authority, community workers, managers, and resident council members of Rivertown. The seven major areas of disjunction in Rivertown I identified were: (1) Focus on children, (2) Leadership, (3) Snitching, (4) Responsibilities, (5) Manager/ Managerial Styles, (6) Meeting Dynamics, and (7) HUD Structure and Priorities.

As stated in Chapter 9, the main area of disjunction for the Rivertown Resident Council involved its chosen focus on the community's children. While HUD policies and laws gave the council some autonomy and provided them with some financial assistance to accomplish their goals, those goals differed markedly from the ones housing authority members, managers, and community workers believed they should be pursuing—hence, their efforts were thwarted. Those in positions of power thought the resident council should be consistently on top of widespread issues going on in the community and that they should police the community for lease violations and crime.

Snitching was another area defined as a disjunction. Some of the managers, housing authority officials, and community workers thought a role of the council should be “to snitch.” Because housing authority officials defined the role of the council to be the community's “in house” police force, this view became accepted by residents. Once the Resident Council members were seen as snitches, the residents of the community no longer trusted the council members to represent their views. The negative view of the council may also have accounted for the difficulty the council had in getting help with and attendance at their events.

Another area of disjunction involved policies and resources. Since there was a lack of funding and manpower, some of the housing officials and community workers were so overworked they could not meet their job responsibilities. Because they were overworked, they could not come to meetings and help the resident council. As Maynard demonstrated, his job responsibility was to assist the council so they could empower the residents in the community. He was supposed to “translate” all the laws and policies for the council, so that the council could know what was expected, how to do what was expected, and pass information to the residents as needed. Since he was one person working in several communities, he had difficulty attending meetings. As a result of Maynard being unable to perform his job successfully, the council was unable to receive the information it needed in a timely and efficient manner.

Chapter 9 indicates how the manager also plays a pivotal role with regard to the resident council. The manager’s style, enforcement of rules and policies, and interactions and duties with the council serve as other potential areas of disjunction. For example, Vanessa’s overzealousness with the council translated into her domination of its proceedings. One can see in her self-proclaimed “mothering” of the council an ironic form of infantilizing, rather than empowering: because she did almost everything for the council, they were not given the chance to become self-sufficient and self-governing.

Chapter 9 also focused on disjunctions in the meeting dynamics. HUD and HA laws and regulations require that council members attend a certain number of meetings beyond their regular council sessions. Such laws and policies also dictated the proper way of electing an official resident council and established the form a resident meeting should take. The council members thought there were too many meetings, and they

agreed that they often felt they received nothing from attending the extra ones, during which they generally did not speak or participate fully. Advertising and communication of meeting information not only to the council but to the residents was another problem with the meeting structures. The resident council members were not able to get the residents involved in council meetings or activities, despite their hard work to inform the community. Methods of communication were affected by the predetermined assumptions of managers, housing authority officials and community about the council and residents and the policies and actions of management.

Chapter 9 also posited that the location of Rivertown was directly connected to the attention or lack thereof its residents and council members receive, whether monetary or programmatic. Its semi-rural location, away from more urban housing developments, and its reputation as a relatively peaceful community also—quite ironically—have made Rivertown (and thus its needs) less visible to housing officials. In an odd sense, Rivertown has been penalized monetarily and programmatically for not being a stereotypical public housing community.

In addition, the policies created to “assist” the council in helping its community have done more harm than good. Some members of the council, as well as managers and community workers, thought the policies were discriminatory and sexist, and treated the residents unequally. Others members believed the housing authority really had all the control and that council members did not have any control over the communities they were chosen to serve. Policies designed to promote and encourage self-sufficiency actually meant more work for the managers, HA, and community workers, which in turn meant such groups would be unable to help the council. As a result, the policies

themselves have created a vicious cycle. While HUD wants to promote self-sufficiency and encourages residents to join the council, many of the very policies they have enacted to achieve these goals have caused that council to be less effective.

This chapter of the dissertation focuses on explaining and understanding why multiple areas of disjunction exist between HUD's expectations for the resident council as an active agent for community building and the actual practices of the resident council. To explain the disjunction—in fact, to determine if such disjunctions identified by Rivertown council members are real—I will use Critical Race Theory. Using the tenets of Critical Race Theory allows us to understand what forces—either real or imagined, structural or cultural—prevent the resident council from being an effective agent for change in the public housing community.

10.2 Critical Race Theory

In this chapter I address the second half of my third research question:

Are there areas of disjunction among the interpretations of various constituencies, the practices of the resident council, and the HUD and housing authority written policies that govern the community building activities of the resident council? If so, how can they be explained?

I rely primarily on Critical Race Theory for explaining the disjunction identified in the previous chapters, and I begin this chapter by explaining how this theory served as an effective perspective by which to examine the disjunctions.

There are many theoretical lenses that I could have used to explain the disjunction between the resident council and HUD's expectations and actual practices for community building. My paradigm or purpose of sociological investigation is guided by goal to work toward eradicating social inequality. To do so, I work toward making a contribution to understanding the construction and maintenance of social inequality. I have a specific

interest in the social construction of laws and policies on which inequality rely. In this case, I am interested in how the laws and policies that govern public housing and the resident council affect the residents' quality of life and life experiences on both structural and cultural levels.

Sociology has long been interested in the reciprocal relationship between social structures (macro-level phenomena: institutions, economy, educational system) and social processes (micro-level phenomena: individual, cultural experiences, behaviors, and attitudes). A way to understand the bi-directional link between micro and macro level phenomena is through laws and policies, both of which impact how people experience their lives. At the same time, they can be shaped by individual life experiences. For example, the overt racism that African-Americans experienced in employment, education, and housing shaped Civil Rights laws and policies of the 1950s and 1960s that legally prohibited discrimination in these areas.

How was Critical Race Theory developed?

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged during the 1970s and 1980s in response to civil rights laws and Critical Legal Studies (CLS) (Crenshaw, 2002; Bell, 2000; Crenshaw, et al. 1995; Lynn, 1999; Andrews, 2000). Critical Race Theory was developed by several law students and scholars of color who became distressed about the slow pace and in some cases, the erosion of civil rights reform that occurred in the post-civil rights era (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Schur, 2002). In the late 1970s, civil rights lawyers were “fighting and losing reargued attacks” (Crenshaw, et al., xvii) that they had used a decade before against anti-discrimination legislation (Crenshaw, 2002).

Critical Legal Studies was developed by law students and scholars who were “neo-Marxist intellectuals, former new left activist, and ex-counter culturalist” (Crenshaw et al., 1995: xvii). They were committed to studying the applicability of law in the real world and to exposing and challenging how law produces and is the product of social power and illegitimate social hierarchy in the American legal system (Scheppelle, 1994; Crenshaw, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Seron and Munger, 1994).

Although valuable, CLS did not offer a method for addressing issues of racial inequality directly, nor did it provide insight into the role race played in the construction of the legal system. Critical race theorists still needed a framework that deconstructed racial power in society and the law. Matsuda (1991), one of the founders of Critical Race Theory, highlights how the new method derived from just such a multi-theoretical framework:

It was critical both because we criticized and because we respected and drew on the tradition of postmodern critical thought then popular with left intellectuals. It was “race” theory because we were both personal circumstances and through our understanding of history, convinced that racism and the construction of race were central to an understanding of American law and politics. As a legal theory, critical race theory uncovers racist structures within the legal system and asks how and whether law is a means to attain justice. (47)

In addition, CRT included a more developed analysis of race and racism in the law than did critical legal studies. Since CRT insists that the law only perpetuates racial power, the next section focuses on understanding the purpose of laws and how they are racialized. As noted early in this dissertation, Critical Race Theory argues for placing the study of race and the law within a historical context. Thus, the next sections provide a historical background for the laws that currently affect the Resident Council.

10.2.1 Purpose of the Law

Embedded into our historical legal doctrine are principles ensuring the protection of individual rights and equality (Friedelbaum, 2003). Summarizing the purpose of the law is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I must agree with CRT assertions that laws 1) cover every facet of our existence, 2) protect all individual rights and freedom, 3) should be equitable for all citizens, and 4) ensure that justice will be carried out. One could sum up the main tenets of law as protecting all citizens from injustice and ensuring that justice will be carried out equally to all citizens (Green Jr., 2000). Clearly, protection and equality are virtues highly regarded by our society.

Despite the legal guarantee of equal protection and justice for all citizens, and the fundamental rights of equality, race long has been an obstacle for African-Americans. Slavery, the so-called Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, “three-fifths a person” in the US constitution, even lynching have served as methods by which equal protection and justice have been circumvented and denied (Bell, 2000; Crenshaw, 1995). Critical Race Theory asks why and in what ways have laws and policies which are supposed to ensure equality and protect all citizens from injustice often treat African-Americans and other racial groups unjustly and unequally and withhold from them the protection they are constitutionally guaranteed.

10.2.2 Racialization of the Law

Race is an important feature within the legal landscape. Since we are a society that is governed by laws, we need to understand how race is constructed within the social context of those laws (Coates, 2003). The historically, politically, and economically-constructed meanings of race have determined how and why certain citizens are

“protected” while others are not. Many scholars—such as Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Martinot, 2003; Neubeck and Cazenave, 2001; Lipsitz, 1998; Omi and Winant, 1994; Winant, 1997; Green Jr., 2000; Condit and Lucaites, 1993; Bell, 2000; and Crenshaw et al., 1995—have argued that the premise of the American legal system was based on a racialized social system in which race and racist ideologies have been so ingrained into the American psyche that these ideologies directly shaped the formulation of laws and the meaning of racial categories.

Racialization refers to “a representational process whereby social significance is attached to certain biological (usually phenotypical) human features, on the basis of which people are designated as a distinct collectivity” (Macleod, Catriona, and Durrheim, 2002:779). This process takes place within a racial hierarchy (racial order) at both macro and micro levels and involves what racial categories mean and what effect they have on people’s life changes, experiences, and opportunities (Lewis, 2003). Using Racial Formation Theory, Omi and Winant (1994:55) demonstrate how racial order is “organized and enforced” through the reciprocal relationship between micro-level expressions of race and macro-level social structural formations. They expound on their argument by noting that

The micro- and macro-levels, however, are only analytically distinct. In our lived experiences in politics, in cultural, in economic life, they are continuous and reciprocal. Racial discrimination, for example, considered as a “macro-level” set of economic political, and ideological/cultural practices- has obvious consequences for the experiences and identities of individuals. It affects racial meaning, intervenes in “personal life,” is interpreted politically, for example. Another example, racial identity—considered as a “micro level” complex of individual practices and “consciousness”—shapes the universe of collective action. The panoply of individual attributes—from one’s patterns of speech or tastes in food or music to the economic, spatial, familial, or citizenship “role” one occupies –provides the essential themes of political organization, the elements of economic self – reliance, etc.

For example, immigration laws and policies fuse legal status with racial and ethnic categories. Hence, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 tragedy, people of Middle Eastern descent were often suspected of being terrorists. If left unchecked, this treatment can regulate the lives of all individuals of Middle Eastern descent, whether they are born in America, are naturalized American citizens, in the country illegally, or merely visiting on a student or travel visa.

10.2.3 From Biological to Cultural in the Laws and Policies

The historical dynamics of racism and race can be traced to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period marked by the development of the scientific revolution, the expansion of colonialism, and rise of capitalism (Essed, 1991, Barot and Bird, 2001; Smelser et al., 2001). At this time, racial categories and racist ideology blossomed into biologically “real, natural, and unalterable” constructs of racial meaning (Takaki, 1993). Based on biological differences, racial groups were organized into certain racial hierarchies (racial order) which ranged from biologically superior to biologically inferior (Smelser et al., 2001). Laws and policies reiterated, shaped, and organized the meaning, experience and conditions of race, which hinged on biological differences. For instance, the racial category of *black* became synonymous with racial slavery, economic inferiority (Martinot, 2003), and property (Wilson, 1980; Omi and Winant, 1994). And, in the 1640s, the colony of Virginia enacted a law that demanded “masters should furnish arms to all men, except Negroes” (Takaki, 1993:56). In 1662, Virginia statutes banned sexual relations between Negroes and Christians, and in 1723 the right to vote was withheld by law from blacks. Additionally, the naturalization law of 1790 excluded non-white people from citizenship (Takaki, 1993).

The construction of “blackness” does not stand independently of the construction of “whiteness,” which became synonymous with Christian (Martinot, 2003), as well as the concepts of freedom and full citizenship (Winant, 1998). The racial hierarchical structure created racial disparities and reinforced the power and privilege of white hegemony (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Massey and Denton, 1993; Neubeck and Cazenava, 2001; Roberts, 2002). Since non-whites were considered biologically inferior, equal protection under the law did not apply to them. Therefore, laws were constructed to benefit the dominant (white) majority and maintain their dominance and privilege in society (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado, 1995; Harris, 1994).

To remedy and redress the legal imbalance of “equal protection and rights,” civil rights legislation of the 1950s and 1960s was supposed to eradicate unequal protection by ensuring that all laws be de-racialized—in effect, that they become colorblind. Yet, over 40 years after the passage of these laws, the American legal system has failed to live up to its promise of equality, equal protection, and social justice, which was originally stated in the Bill of Rights (Andrews, 2001). Some laws often neglect African-Americans and other marginalized groups, often by ignoring the implications of the laws on these groups, and racial inequality continues. CRT states if laws and policies were equal, fair, and just, they would take into consideration the lived experiences of individuals and directly address race and racism.

10.2.4 Tenets of Critical Race Theory

My analysis demonstrated how the over reliance on rules, which may sound on the surface to be benign prevented the resident council from controlling their own council. My work supports Critical Race Theory. In their search for an answer to the

subordination of individuals in the social structure of the law, critical race theorists have identified the following tenets and goals:

1. Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life. Thus, the question for us is not so much whether or how racial discrimination can be eliminated while maintaining the integrity of other interests implicated in the status quo such as federalism, privacy, traditional values, or establishes property interests. CRT allowed me to ask how the interpretation and enforcement of resident council laws and policies served as vessels of racial subordination
2. Critical Race Theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy. These claims are central to an ideology of equal opportunity that presents race as an immutable characteristic devoid of social meaning and tells an ahistorical, abstracted story of racial inequality as a series of randomly occurring, intentional, and individualized acts. My analysis of Rivertown chose the rules that govern the resident council as intentional and persuasive. The lack of racial inequality exemplified by “ the grass incident” is one that is structural not randomly occurring.
3. Critical Race Theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law. Current inequalities and social/institutional practices are linked to earlier periods in which the intent and cultural meaning of such practices were clear. More important, as critical race theorists we adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage along racial lines, including differences in income, imprisonment, health, housing, education, political representation and military service. Our history

calls for this presumption. Therefore, part two of this dissertation provides us with a historical understanding of the ramifications of housing in regards to race, economics, and policies.

4. Critical Race Theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society. This knowledge is gained from critical reflection on the lived experience of racism and from critical reflection upon active political practice toward the elimination of racism. For instance, I could have read Code of Federal Regulations and the Greenbook a thousand times, but without the guidance of CRT and after talking with the resident council, community workers, and housing officials, I would not have notice the embedded racism.
5. Critical Race Theory is interdisciplinary and eclectic. It borrows from several traditions, including liberalism, law and society, feminism, Marxism, poststructuralism, critical legal theory, pragmatism, and nationalism. This eclecticism allows critical race theory to examine an incorporate those aspects of a methodology or theory that effectively enable our voice an advance the cause of racial justice even as we maintain a critical posture.
6. Critical Race Theory works towards the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. This is germane to my work because in addition to racial oppression that public housing is embedded in, there was also an oppression of class, and thou not expressed explicitly gender, age, and location both within Ridgeway and Rivertown. Critical Race Theory measures progress by a yardstick that looks to fundamental social transformation. The interests

of people of color necessarily require not just adjustments within the established hierarchies, but a challenge to hierarchy itself. This recognition of intersecting forms of subordination requires multiple consciousness and political practices that address the varied ways in which people experience subordination (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw; 1993:6). In this research I found hierarchies. CRT helped me understand this hierarchy through multiple levels of oppression. It is insufficient to talk about this as one class against another. I see now that even within this one community, which is from the same class there are extensive hierarchy – such as young /old, black/ white, and people living on top of the hill vs. the bottom.

In brief, Critical Race Theory posits that embedded in legal discourse are hidden racialized assumptions that shape laws and policies. Those assumptions develop because of stigmas and stereotypes about race, which affect one's understanding of class and gender. CRT insists that including the lived experiences of individuals and directly addressing race in the construction, enforcement, and implementations of laws and policies will provide true “equal” protect and social justice to all citizens under the law.

Critical Race Theory helps us understand the disjunctions found in Rivertown by illuminating how the laws and policies that govern the resident council, (1) minimize the experiences and knowledge of individuals who live in public housing and (2) do not take into account race, or the intersection of multiple status characteristics, which creates a false assumption of colorblindness and maintains a system of racial inequality. To challenge and critique existing legal discourse, race and racism must be recognized and used as the center of analysis to eliminate all forms of oppression and inequality. Without recognizing race and racism in the narratives and knowledge of groups who experience

the law, inequalities in the law will remain hidden and persist. In our case, disjunctions will be maintained between the HUD officials and the members of the Rivertown Resident Council.

10.3 Historically Understanding Racialized Assumptions

In this section I argue that the reason why laws and policies and the interpretation of them (1) minimized experiences and knowledge of individuals who live in public housing and (2) do not take into account race and the intersection of multiple status characteristics, which creates a false assumption of colorblindness and maintains a system of racial inequality is perpetuated by the housing authority officials, community workers, and managers because of 1) negative assumptions and stereotypes that surround public housing and the people that live in public housing. The negative assumptions and stereotypes exist because of the connection between race and public housing; 2) because of the negative assumptions, the intersectionality of people's lived experience are ignored. In order to make my case, I first will set the groundwork by providing, as CRT would suggest I do, a brief historical overview of how negative assumptions of public housing have been re-enforced through laws and policies and the media.

10.3.1 Stigmatized and Stereotypes

Even though social stigmas and stereotypes are related, each one has its own unique qualities (Rush, 1998). Before someone can be stigmatized or stereotyped they have to bear a mark, a characteristic that can be either physical or embedded in behavior or group membership (Bunting, 1996). In writing about such stigmas, sociologist Goffman (1963:3) defined them as:

[that] attribute that is deeply discrediting in the sense that the attribute makes the bearer different from others in an undesirable way. He suggest three types of

stigmas: physical stigma deformities, tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion; and blemishes of individual characters perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs and dishonesty, these being inferred from a known record of, for example, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts, and radical political behavior”.

In the popular conception, a person to whom such a stigma is attached is often considered less than whole (Goffman, 1963). Stereotypes can be justified through such stigmas and through intersections of race and poverty.

Laws and Policies

Until the mid-1960s poverty was seen as a “white problem” because racism excluded African-Americans from aid and access to programs (Slessarev, 1997; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Roberts, 2000). Migration of African-Americans to the north, desegregation, and the Civil Rights Movement changed the racial composition of programs such as Aid to Families and Dependent Children (AFDC). As the numbers of African-Americans receiving aid increased, however, the racial ideology did not decrease. Today, race still serves as a factor for sanctioning poor individuals that receive government assistance.

Additionally, differences exist in attitudes expressed toward white women vs. black women who receive welfare. As Dorothy Roberts (2002: 207) explained, welfare became stigmatized as “dependency and proof of black people’s lack of [a] work ethic and social depravity. The image of the welfare mother quickly changed from the worthy white widow to the immoral black welfare queen”. Furthermore, Gooden’s (1998) research found that black welfare recipients reported lower levels of support from their caseworkers than did whites for services such as education and transportation. Vale (1998) noted how public housing and welfare programs were stigmatized by race to the

degree that support for them was undercut. Stigmatizing poverty through race shields the majority of the population from the reality of the poor in the United States. In 2002, there were 34.6 million people living below the poverty line. The poverty rate for whites was 8.0%, which was a lower statistic than that of other racial and ethnic groups. Yet the majority of poor persons in 2002 who were white represented 66.8% of the 34.6 million poor (Proctor and Dalaker, 2003). The rates of rural poverty (in which the majority of individuals are white) are higher than those in urban areas (14% compared to 10%). Unlike poverty in the inner cities, rural poverty tends to be more persistent and long-term (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2003).

Still, the face of poverty is black. For example, media images of the “welfare mother and welfare queen” in public housing have long been used to demonize black women and men and to show their dependency to welfare and the backdrop of public housing (Zukin, 1998; Crump, 2003). President Ronald Reagan further perpetuated the stereotype of the welfare queen when he said “[The] Chicago Welfare queen has eighty names, thirty addresses, twelve social security cards and is collecting veteran’s benefits on four nonexistent deceased husbands. . . . Her tax free cash income alone is over \$150,000.”⁵⁷

Media

To add to the "black problem," the news media also has contributed to racialized perceptions about the poor. For instance, between 1993-1998, Clawson and Trice (2000) conducted a study of how news magazines and television portrayed poverty. They found that African-Americans were disproportionately depicted among the poor. In an analysis

⁵⁷ Quoted in Lou Cannon (1991), *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p.518 (cited in Albelda et al., p.92).

of economic textbooks, Clawson (2002) found that 60% percent of the poor people pictured were African-Americans and that 58% percent of the welfare recipients in the text were black (whereas in reality they make up just 37%).

Despite the fact that African-Americans make up less than a third of the total population that live in poverty, there is still a stigma attached to them. Poor African-Americans are depicted as culturally dysfunctional. Images of poverty are usually set against an urban backdrop, such as cramped, crowded buildings in the inner city that are falling apart, unclean, and in the worst neighborhoods (Flynt, 1996). The image of poverty-stricken inner-city residents was predominately African-American. Many were depicted as drug kingpins, violent criminals, and welfare queens (Collins, 2000; Romer, Jamieson, and deCoteau, 1998).

Public housing itself is racially stigmatized. Stigmas associated with the poor who live in public housing are reinforced through the media's misrepresentation and the actions of the dominant (white) hegemony that uses racial politics to reinforce and shape laws and policies (Keiser, Mueser, Choi, 2004).

I now argue that the second explanation of the disjunction: ignoring the lived experiences of people in public housing, which is inextricably linked to the first, does not take into account the intersectional lives of individuals who reside in public housing.

The stigmas, stereotypes, and assumptions associated with public housing and the plight of the poor are incorporated in the historical, economic, political, and racial dynamics of the community.

When individuals already have preconceived assumptions about each other and then they interact with those individuals about whom they hold such assumptions,

inequalities can be reproduced at a fast pace. Race itself is treated as an organizational principle of social relations, which shapes both identities and institutions in significant ways. Race also intersects and occupies multiple identities that operate differently “across the social lines within both black and white America. Likewise, class-linked phenomena will often vary according to race” (Pettigrew, 1981: 244). By not understanding racialized stereotypes of the poor, we ignore the complex lives of such individuals.

Race, gender, and class have their own unique histories and social processes which “create certain formal organizations of interest, histories of policy making, and popularized ideologies that influence the allocation of resources and benefits” (Ferree, et al 2000: xvii). To state it another way, Collins (2000) uses the term *matrix of domination* to refer to the interactive, multifarious, and reinforcing processes of gender, race, and class that exist only in relation to and cannot be considered separate from each other. For instance privileging gender marginalizes issues of race and class (e.g. Lober, 1999; Goldin, 1990), just as privileging race has the same impact on gender (e.g. Omi and Winant, 1994; Thomas and Hughes, 1986; Feagin, 1991) and class (Grusky, 1994; Fantasia, 1988). People experience inequality not just as one or the other. Imagine life as an female African-American construction worker or as a white male nurse. Critical Race Theory insists that we cannot ignore the intersections of people’s lived experiences.

10.3.2 Intersectionality of Race and Class

One cannot ignore the roles that race, racism, racial ideologies, and racialization have played in reinforcing social, racial, and economic inequality. Yet at the same time class cannot be ignored, either. For sociologists, the conception of class goes beyond just strict

economic categorizations (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999, Kerbo, 1996). Sociologists have defined class in terms of economics and power (Domhoff, 2002; Mills, 1956); occupation, education, and income (Vanneman and Cannon, 1987); and economics, gender, and race (Rothman,2002; Weber, 2001). I use the term *class* to define groups or individuals who are in similar economic and occupational positions within the social stratification system (Kerbo, 1996).⁵⁸

Inequality, in general, denies individuals and groups access to valued resources, rewards, and services, which in turn impacts their quality of life (food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, etc.). By eradicating the barriers of economic inequality, other forms and consequences of inequality (such as racial inequality) will be taken care of automatically.

In 1980, in the groundbreaking book *The Declining Significance of Race*, Sociologist William J. Wilson argues that class, rather than race, was becoming a more powerful determinant of the life chances and experiences of African-Americans. He stated that the African-American community was dividing in two. As the black middle class grew and improved their economic positions with whites, poor blacks were becoming poorer and more disenfranchised from the rest of society. Wilson's book sparked debates about the widening economic gap and increasing class differentiation between middle-class and poor blacks (Hochschild, 1995; Dawson, 1994). Despite African-Americans achieving economic inequality, however, they still experience various

⁵⁸ There is some ambiguity with class categories. It's hard to disguise class from being intertwined with economic and power relations and the social lifestyle and situations within class groups. Also economic and social classes can have different operational meanings because it varies from place to place.

forms of racial stratification and inequality (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999; Oliver and Shapiro, 1995).

Reaching economic and social class status similar to their white counterparts, middle-class blacks are evaluated and discriminated against based on their racial identity. In the 1994 book, *The Rage of a Privileged Class*, Cose described how despite increased numbers of African-Americans graduating from colleges and reaching middle-class social and economic status, for such individuals race continued to present a barrier. As Cose states, his educated friends were still put into “black jobs.” Studies by Fegain (1991) and Feagin and Sikes (1994) also demonstrated that middle-class blacks were denied access to restaurants, harassed by whites on the streets, and received poor service in stores. Class status alone cannot account for the stigma or allow blacks to escape the stigma of being black. How individuals experience race and class can happen simultaneously and also separately (Cole and Omari, 2003). A person’s class status (however it is defined) cuts across lines of gender and race solidarity and identity (Johnson-Bailey, 1999). Race must still be considered with regard to structural, cultural, and power relationships and practices (Lewis, 2003). One tenet of CRT insists that we must understand the intersectional lives of individuals and how such intersections impact laws and policies.

In the next section I begin to present a theoretical explanation for disjunction in Rivertown.

10.4 Explaining Disjunctions

There are seven areas of disjunction that have prevented the Rivertown Resident Council from achieving HUD’s expectations that it serve as an active agent for

community building: (1) Focus on Children, (2) Leadership, (3) Snitching, (4) Role Responsibilities, (5) Manager/ Managerial Styles, (6) Meeting Dynamics, and (7) HUD Structures and Priorities,

Critical Race Theory suggests that the disjunctions exist, in part, because of the assumptions that housing authority officials, community workers, and managers have about poverty, race, class, and public housing. Further, the community workers, managers, and housing authority officials do not seem to have taken into consideration the life experiences of the Rivertown council members. Those preconceived assumptions and failures to recognize members' life experiences have guided authorities' interpretations of what the council "should be doing."

10.4.1 Racialized Assumptions of Poverty, Race, Class, and Public Housing

Critical Race Theory admonishes us to look for how racialized assumptions associated with race, class, poverty, and public housing manifested themselves in Rivertown. Despite Maynard, Alvin, and Jane agreeing with the CFR, they held their own stereotypical assumptions about public housing and its residents. For example, Jane stereotyped and stigmatized the residents in public housing. As a resident council coordinator, her assumptions shaped how she interacted with the members of the resident council and the community in general. According to her, all such individuals are depressed and come from "bad situations." She said:

Now from the Housing Authority's perspective you're dealing with people who, going back to depression again, depression makes you apathetic and indifferent, and you don't care. There their because they don't care uh their self-esteem is low, their resources are low, their, um their, their many of the folks there have gotten there because they've, they sold out a long time ago to a boyfriend, to a pimp, to a the school system you know they just said okay you know I'll do whatever you want me to do I can't make decisions for myself so you tell me what to do. And, it's just you know they've gotten tossed aside and now their

here and the Housing Authority is saying here are the rules. So, for the Housing Authority to expect that this population is going to suddenly be able to advise them on neighborhood issues and that they should take the advise of this community seriously a little absurd too, but what's in between?

Since I did not interview all the residents of Rivertown, I can vouch only for the Resident Council members and some of the residents that I have gotten to know: no one sold out to a boyfriend or pimp. Domestic violence, and economic hard times were some of the reasons why the council members and some of the resident were forced to in public housing. Additionally, Jane believes people are “depressed.” Mental illness was a factor that lead to and staying in public housing, but in context, Jane’s discussion of depression sounded more like she was referring to an attitude, not an illness. Even though she hints at structural factors such as schools or other systems that have “tossed [them] aside,” she leads to the incorrect conclusions that it is absurd for the housing authority to let “these people” address community issues and give advice to the housing authority. Perhaps that is why Jane felt it was her responsibility to lead the council—she considered them incapable of thinking for themselves. Her internalization of stereotypes and stigmas regarding the poor shaped her assumptions about the residents of public housing, which affected her ability to act as a support mechanism for the council.

Maynard made the assumption that by focusing solely on children, the council was taking the easy way out because children are easier to control than adults. Instead of sharing their focus and helping them work toward improving the lives of the children, Maynard tried to push the council toward his views. For him, the council should be “on top” of everything that goes on in the community. Because the Resident Council, for a variety of reason including not sharing this view, was not “on top” of everything, Maynard did not see them as effective. If he had shared the council’s vision of what was

best for the community, the council might have achieved more than it did. Rather than hearing the voices of the council members, Maynard focused on his own perceptions and assumptions regarding public housing and public housing residents that derived in large part from his experience with the severely distressed public housing communities of New Orleans.

Alvin also thought the purpose of the council should move beyond children. He thought the council should serve as a policing agent in the community and report lease violations and any crimes in the area. In spite of the relatively low rates of crime and violence in Rivertown, Alvin assumed, based on stereotypes and stigmas of public housing, that problems were so severe that they could get quickly out of hand if all agents of social control, including the Resident Council, were not constantly policing the community.

On the surface, the CFR shows no indication that it is anything but neutral, objective, and color blind. However, as Critical Race Theory would suggest, the individuals tasked with implementing and enforcing the rules and regulations are not neutral, objective, nor color blindness. Although the housing officials seemed to be well meaning, hard working, and caring individuals, structural limitations and their own stereotypical assumptions of public housing residents, led them to prioritizing their views over those of the council.

Although the housing officials may have been aware of many of the factors that led to the residents being in the community, this awareness was not utilized in their dealings with the Resident Council. Critical Race Theory suggests that when history and lived experiences of marginalized groups are ignored, then racialized interpretations of

the law are more apt to occur. Housing officials were almost silent on expressing sympathetic understanding of the problems in the lives of the Resident Council members. Jane tried to show, with mixed success, that she understood how the residents came to be in Rivertown, her analysis of their behavior once here was less than complimentary. The housing officials spoke of their own overwork; they did not speak of the hard work that the Resident Council members were doing given the difficult lives of the members themselves. They seemed not to be aware of the groups' lived experiences. It is not surprising then, that they did not appreciate the Resident Council members' focus on children. Granted, sometimes the Resident Council received assistance and money from officials, but my analysis revealed no indication that efforts were made to find out why the council prioritized the children. Not understanding the council members' experiences further perpetuated false, stereotypical assumptions made by the housing authority officials and community workers. CRT allows us to see how embedded in such assumptions are racialized stereotypes and stigmas about the poor and people who live in public housing.

10.5 Cultural and Structural Assumptions

The laws and policies, interpretations and implementations that surround the resident council should reflect the people's lived experiences. Public housing and resident council laws and policies were created to give residents a voice in the *local decision making and community development* practices. Including residents and resident councils members in the creation of public housing laws and policies aims to promote within the communities themselves a sense of self-sufficiency and empowerment. In other words, resident council policies are supposed to include and reflect the life

experiences of the residents of public housing. This conception is in keeping with the basic tenets or philosophical principles of CRT, which privileges the individual lived experience. Title 24, Section 964.1-964.430 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) establishes the rules for tenant participation, opportunities in public housing, and the purpose and rules of the resident council in public housing. According to Section

964.100 Role of the Resident Council:

The roles of a resident council include improving the quality of life for residents, increasing resident satisfaction, and creating opportunities for self-help initiatives that would enable residents to create for themselves and to their satisfaction a positive living environment. Resident councils may actively participate through a working partnership with the HA to advise and assist in all aspects of public housing operations.

According to the CFR, HUD and HA support any efforts by the resident councils to improve their communities, however they see fit. In addition, the partnership between housing authorities and resident councils is “essential and critical” for improving the quality of life in public housing communities, as stated in Section ***964.14 HUD Policy on***

Partnerships:

HUD promotes partnerships between residents and HAs which are an essential component to building, strengthening, and improving public housing. Strong partnerships are critical for creating positive changes in lifestyles thus improving the quality of life for public housing residents, and the surrounding community.

Scratch the surface of a well-intentioned policy to support and encourage a better living environment for residents of public housing, and one might find that the intention is not so “well-intentioned” after all. The ramifications of such policies are complex and have strong effects not only on the residents and council members but also on the housing authority officials, managers, and community workers.

Yet, because of the history of public housing, race, and class stigmas, these rules were only partially followed. Instead, they were followed in a way that gave power to the housing authority officials, managers, and community workers and ignored the resident council members. The racialized assumptions the managers, housing authority officials, and community workers had explains why they will continue to ignore what the Rivertown Council wants. Those racialized, class-based, and stigmatizing assumptions are organized and reinforced through laws and policies and cultural attitudes. In other words, the assumptions are perpetuated and reinforced in the reciprocal relationship between macro-levels (social structures: laws and policies) and micro-levels (social process: cultural attitudes and beliefs), in which they feed off each other.

The impact of racialized assumptions structurally and culturally on the residents creates a complex interwoven system that minimizes the lived experiences and voices of individuals in public housing, providing space for a single truth to be heard. One of the tenets of CRT stresses the centrality of marginalized groups because the law is dominated by a single truth. CRT warns us against policies that are based on “single truths.” When there is only one “truth” then policies and laws are going to ignore the lived experiences of individuals and groups. When housing policies and laws ignore the lived experiences of the council members, disjunctions abounds.

Traditionally, the stories of those in power create the “natural, right and primary” discourse that dominates the bounds of the law and dictates how people should order their lives around those laws (Crenshaw, 1995). By accepting the law, people believe they are confirming to reality or to the “truth.” Montecino (1995: 293-294) explains how such “truth” in turn formulates the master narratives “that represent a group, which is bound to

the narrow depiction of what it means to be a Native-American, African-American, Mexican- American, etc. A master narrative essentializes and wipes out the complexities and richness of a group's cultural life... A monovocal account will engender not only stereotyping but also curricular choices that result in representation in which fellow members of a group represented can not recognize themselves”.

For CRT, the problem is not the story per se but whose story is being told (Peller, 1995). According to CRT, whoever is telling the story makes the legal decisions which shape the law and its application (Delgado,1989; 1990; Schur, 2002). If there is only a “single truth,” then other people's reality must by its very nature be considered wrong, suspect, or deficient. The next section will identify potential disjunctions and give a brief explanation for them.⁵⁹

10.6 Critical Race Theory Explaining Disjunction: Structurally

Structural assumptions about public housing have shaped the desire of some to overly regulate the poor who live there. Structurally, these negative assumptions have shaped the enforcement and implementations of laws and policies, meeting dynamics, community service requirements, dictated the job responsibilities of the housing authority officials, and generated the ideology of “snitching.” Moreover, such structural assumptions help create what I like to call the “social service carousel.”

Living In Public Housing

The term “public housing” has become synonymous with "socio-economic marginalization and behavioral depravity" (Purdy, 2003). According to Massey and Kanaiaupuni, public housing represents a “key institutional mechanism for concentrating

⁵⁹ Part of identifying the disjuncture will involve some critical analysis. Chapter 11 will have an in-dept explanation of the disjunction found in chapters 7,8,9, and 10.

large numbers of poor people within a small geographical space” (1993: 120). This small geographical space is represented largely by racial minority populations located in urban centers or inner cities. Several structural and cultural factors such as discrimination, housing policies, and spatial locations have fueled the conception that public housing is “exclusively the preserve of poor minorities” (Macionis and Parrillo, 2004). Without question, public housing has a negative reputation.

Despite all the laws and policies that exist to “fix” the negative image and the concentrated effects of poverty—such as the Fair Housing Act of 1965, the Government Performance and Responsibility Act (GPRA) of 1993, and HOPE VI Grants—the stigmas and stereotypes still linger. Housing authority officials, managers, community workers, and resident council members are aware of the stigmas and racialized stereotypes that are associated with living in public housing. Even though Rivertown is a diverse community and the majority of the council members are white, issues of race and racial dynamics, class, and the intersections of race and class are prevalent throughout the community. The assumptions the housing authority officials, community workers, and managers have about race, class, and the people in their community inevitably will affect their interactions and involvement with residents.

Different Rules for Public Housing

Public housing is severely regulated. The laws and policies, which housing authority officials must enforce, serve largely to stigmatize residents. Both Daniel and Jane are aware that residents of public housing live under a vastly different set of rules. When I asked Daniel why there is a different lease standard for someone who lives in public housing compared to someone who does not, he replied:

Because it's public housing. You're being subsidized. You (Tiffany) are not being subsidized. See the difference? This is government-subsidized housing. And, you know, it's like, I guess the government's saying if this is subsidized housing, if you enroll, you live here, you going to try to make yourself self-sufficient, but if you are living here, this is what you need to do. See what I'm saying? Think about it. Let's take for instance that you quit school in the 8th grade. They do 8 hours community service. You're somebody who don't even clean your house though. You're somebody that somebody had to help you pay your rent. I'm just using an example. So, what do you know about going to the agency, volunteering to do something for 8 hours, and keeping track of it. You're not going to do it, are you?

Jane also offered insight into why the "rules" would be different for an individual living in government-subsidized housing. In her opinion,

.....Um I mean you're tax money is going to support Federal public housing....so yeah they're getting, they're getting a lot for free and the government they're saying what are you giving back? You gotta give back something you can't just walk through life saying oh I'm poor so take care of me. I think that's the rational, but I used to say too when, when I'd go to meeting at the Housing Authority and they would say you know "Why aren't these people involved?" "Don't they care?" I always said, "Does your neighborhood have an organization?" "No." "Well don't you care?" "Well?" or "Yeah, I think they do." "Have you ever gone to their meetings?" "I don't have time." "Well they don't have time either." I mean it is exactly the same dynamic.....

Sure and in my neighborhood we have a neighborhood organization we have monthly meeting and they're very sparsely attended until there is a neighborhood issue. Somebody murdered, man, everybody's interested in crime prevention, or you know a big pothole or something.

Jane mentioned very specifically that residents of public housing are indeed stigmatized. They are expected to be involved in their communities and will be forced to if they do not do so voluntarily, whereas the same expectations and rules do not apply to people who are not poor. In actuality, all of us receive "government handouts" of one sort or another: tax breaks, student loans, food. Critical Race Theory challenges the notions of universal laws to achieve equality. Though, residents receive "government handouts," they are required to follow a different standard of legal equality.

The laws that govern life in government housing can be viewed as a way to socially control or regulate the poor. The classic work of Piven and Cloward demonstrated how social control is used in government policies (particularly welfare policies) to maintain social order, regulate labor markets, and foster political alliance of the poor instead of improving their lives. They summarize this concept:

A key to an understanding of relief- giving is in the functions it services for the larger economic and political order, for relief is a secondary and supportive institution. Historical evidence suggests that relief arrangements are initiated or expanded during the occasional outbreaks of civil disorder produced by mass unemployment, and are then abolished or contracted when political stability is restored. We shall argue that expansive relief policies are designed to mute civil disorder, and restrictive ones to reinforce work norms. (xv:1993)

Under such a system, people can receive benefits (relief) only if they work and if they behave a certain way (Piven and Cloward, 1993). A social organization creates its own order by “channeling the behavior of its members into orderly relations” (Meier, 1987: 37). In general, poor people are treated the deviant “Other” whose behavior does not mesh with that of the dominant members of society (Gilkes, 1983; Becker, 1963). This entire concept relates to public housing because the residents cannot simply “live there.” On the contrary, if they want to reside in government housing, they have to comply with certain work and community service requirements because

simply providing aid to quiet the unemployment will not stop the disorder; it may even permit it to worsen, for although the remedy may prevent workers’ starvation the trigger that set off disorder is not economic distress itself but the deterioration of social control. To restore order, the society must create the means to reassert its authority. Because the market is unable to control men’s behavior, at least for a time, a surrogate system of social control must be evolved, at least for a time. (Piven and Cloward, 1993: 3)

10.6.1 Social Service Carousel

Resident council members have to deal with a bevy of issues beyond just living in public housing: money, child support, health, employment, and child care. As stated earlier, issues of economic inequality or poverty do not stand alone. The managers, community workers, and housing authority officials are fully aware of such issues and how they affect the council members and residents in general. Members of the council must deal also with the social service carousel in one form or another—public housing itself being one form.

In this section I argue that housing officials are aware of these problems, but ignore them in several ways. If council members' lived experiences were taken into consideration, then they would not have to adhere to a community service requirement or other restrictive policies that are deemed by some as "punishments." However, HUD officials are aware of the strains and stresses that residents have to deal with, they must still enforce applicable policies. The number of meetings and other requirements imposed by housing officials on the council members are another way they demonstrate their lack of sensitivity to the council. In addition, housing officials attribute the lack of effective community building activities as personal failures and not as a result of the problems encountered by the Resident Council members.

10.6.2 Alvin and Daniel

Alvin is aware of the range of multiple issues encountered by residents in public housing. He is not blind to the fact that joining a resident council is on the low end of the priority list for a lot of the residents. He said:

I think if Alvin stepped back and said “I’m just going to see what these folks are going to do” that nothing would happen. Absolutely nothing. And I say that because for every person, whether it’s two elderly sites or our seven family developments, there are so many other issues on their plate, this is for many just kind of like a hang nail. “I’ll get to it when I get to it.” One of the most effective things that I did before I came here, I used to be a food stamp eligibility worker with Ridgeway City, and most of my clients were black females and they would sit in my chair and sometimes just shed tears and tell me what they were facing. And it wasn’t that they just needed help buying food, but it was childcare, transportation, education. And it was just a laundry list of things that they were just facing today and many of those persons make up what is public housing. And when you say resident council, compared to all of those other things, it’s kind of like, “please, please”. And for many of our residents that’s the reality of it. Now can the resident council address some of those issues? Yes. But in order for it to be resolved, you’re talking about community agencies and the housing authority and everyone working together and that’s part of the rainbow struggle of addressing the needs of our communities. There are a lot of people that work with the housing authority that have never worked with our residents outside of this job. And if I can make them do anything, I would have them work on another service side so they can see just some of the struggles that our folks are dealing with. Because it’s huge. So many of my caseload families, the ladies weren’t receiving any help with childcare or with anything.

Alvin also noted that there are many demands and requirements placed on these people and that if they do not fulfill them, they could get sanctioned. He said:

And that is why, as good as the philosophy and the concept of the resident council is, I’ve just been a firm believer that if we are not meeting the needs of our residents and they’re dealing with those other issues, I mean, it’s ... There are a lot of things on my plate that I put at the very bottom because they’re not pressing needs, and our residents are the same way. And for many the resident council falls right at the bottom because of those other pressing issues that they’re facing. They don’t have medical insurance. They don’t have dental insurance. Their children are struggling in school. They can’t be an advocate because they’re uncomfortable talking to the teacher because they last time they went to meet with the teacher the teacher used education and talked down to them. I mean, it’s all of those things that they’re facing. So when they see a notice on their door that says, “Resident Meeting tonight at 7:00” they’re like, “Please.”

Alvin said that the living situation in Rivertown are not so bad, not so drastic—and that this fact itself might make membership in the council seem less important. Currently, there is not a “pressing need” in the community for people to take action.

“When people reach that point of ‘Hmmm, hmmm, hmmm’ then it’s just ... But when they hit someone or someone’s child is killed because of a drug deal, or a kid gets hit by a car because people are speeding through, that one issue is enough for people who get together to just say ‘enough’,” he noted.

Because of budget cuts, Daniel discussed how important it was for social services agencies to help residents in the public housing community. If the other agencies help, council members can become more self-sufficient. He said:

Oh, it would be nice if they could be. It would be nice. It would take a lot more staff to try to push a program like that. You know, most housing authorities, right now, because of budget cuts and things, most housing authorities have on staff property managers. People can manage the development. But as far as doing other programs, you have to kind of depend on other agencies you can refer people to. But in Lincoln, we have staff over at Lincoln that specifically work with self-sufficiency. Which makes a difference.

Despite being aware of the multitude of issues that individuals face in public housing, officials still require resident council members to attend several “outside” meetings and look down upon members when they are deemed to be less active in council activities. When individuals fail to become involved with the council, or when their involvement wanes, housing officials tend to interpret them as “being lazy or having a lack of leadership,” but the behavior might be caused quite easily by a number of divergent life factors: lack of child care, an inability to take a day off from work, and the like.

10.6.3 Manager- Vanessa

With regard to what I deem the “social service carousel,” Vanessa had a lot to say, particularly regarding the dynamics of living in public housing, the services that are in place to help, and the government policies with which individuals must deal. She

provided an interesting analysis of people's perception regarding the residents and the social service agencies with which they dealt, but her insight still labeled residents of public housing as children. She said:

People in public housing are far better than people out in the public sector because, if I lose my job first of all I have to hustle to find a job. I may not make as much money as I made before, I have a house note I have to pay, let's say rent because it's probably a big rent. So something is going to suffer. Will I know.. Will I lower my pride and come to the Presbyterian Center to get food? Will I go down and apply for food stamps? I don't think so. We would suffer, my children will suffer.

These people have resources available sometimes if you're caught between applying. So in order to meet that hunger need, they go to the local churches and communities to get food. If they don't, they rely on family and friends to give them food. We also have the food bank. The food bank comes here to disperse free food. They have an over an abundance of food they want to give out.

Let's say you live off child support, the next level is poverty. Woman will refuse to deal with social services and all the requirements that they have to give. So they will opt to live off a child support check. Still not going out to get any training, no school. Living off that check. And that hurts.

In order to get to the skill and know-how you have to have the will and determination that you want to do something better. That's where we need to start. Get them motivated to want to do it. To me... Yes, this is my job, to me, that is a God giving thing. That's something you need to ask God for. Ask God to give you a blessing to want to change your life. We just can't witness to people to do this job. We have to find other ways to give them that information. So you try to encourage them.

People who are poor are like children and you have to treat them like children. When you have your children you train them. You do your homework cause I would like you to go to college, so you start reinforcing goals for them.

I think a lot of young people have just have forgotten how to set a goal or they have never set a goal. So we start off with tiny goals. Go there and apply for Food stamps and TANF. Check out all the different programs. Try to take a class. GED through school process. You can use the Internet.

There are many ways to get training now days. It's different then it was 20 years ago. We offer the same services decent safe sanitary housing.

If you live in public housing you don't have to worry about heat, you don't have to worry about calling a plumber to fix your toilet. We have a maintenance staff here on site. You don't have to worry about the light bill being paid. People in section 8 can't make the bills and that's why they come here.

In 1996, President William Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWOR). This major reform bill replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF). TANF differed from AFDC in that it included a mandatory work requirement, provided time-limited cash assistance and offered incentives for remaining married, reducing non-marital pregnancies, and living in two-parent households (Fitzgerald and Ribar, 2004; Huang, 2002; Gooden and Bailey, 2001). Once again we see how racialized and class-based stigmas regarding the poor carry over into policies and laws.

As Jessica, Linda, and Pebe demonstrate in the following sections, the availability of social services is helpful and much needed. But the catch is that residents must qualify for the services and something as small as making too much or not enough money will disqualify them. Or the services may come with hidden requirements that individuals must meet. Even the name—"Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act"—implies that the individuals who most need to take advantage of it are forced to do so because they are not responsible to begin with.

10.6.4 Jessica

Public housing was meant to provide transitional housing, to temporarily assist individuals until they could move into a better housing situation. Jessica saw public housing as a step up from her previous situation, which involved living in a shelter. As

she keeps trying to do things to get ahead and better herself, however, she continues to remain stuck on the social service carousel. Jessica has neither a driver's license nor a car. Before she moved to Rivertown, she lived in a family shelter for women and children of domestic violence; in fact, in the space of a year-and-a-half, Jessica and her children lived in three separate shelters. Her main source of income comes from child support from her husband. When I asked her if things were moving for her family in the direction she wanted, she said:

Things are at a standstill for me because I'm stuck because of, you know, there's so much help out there but you have to be in the position to be able to receive help. Like I can get childcare for my children, but with no transportation it's too overwhelming for me to get out. First I'd have to find somebody to watch Angie because she has to go to school. To get up and get the kids ready to catch the bus, take them to childcare, wait for the bus, catch it, go to work, and then do the whole thing over after work. And then the time period doesn't work out for me. And with me having a limited income. It's too hard. There's somethin' always coming up that you need the extra money that you have saved. There's always something to take the little bit of money that I have.

When I asked her how she felt about living in public housing compared to living in the family shelters, she said that the former is "definitely a step up. I've been knocked down and now I'm trying to get back up, but it's hard." Since living in public housing was, for Jessica, an improvement and since there are several services and programs designed to help residents become self-sufficient, I asked Jessica if she had used or participated in any of the programs. She said:

See, everything just clashes. Like the time I got Alyssa in the Head Start, but the programs that I could go to I can't go to because of the time period. There's like childcare I could get, but there's the bus situation and it's so stressful. And I really don't think I could do that. Then I have a daughter going to school. I'd also have to find somebody ... but I did find out that *Sweet Tree* does come up here (Rivertown).

She explained that Sweet Tree is a child-care service. “They come at seven in the morning, but you’ve got to figure out how you can get on the bus and get to where you need to go and you have to find a job ahead of time to work around that,” She said. “It’s just too much.”

When I asked Jessica if she had a caseworker to help her, she said she had one but she was not good in the child care area:

They’re like, “You know you don’t have to go to work.” because she’s five (her daughter) and because I’m just receiving food stamps. But I want to work.

See, that’s the thing. I went from TANF to child support. So many dollars over the amount . They’ll help you with bus passes. They’ll help you with childcare. I mean, there’s a lot of programs but I can’t get it because their father pays just a little bit over that.....

I make a little bit too much. And then there’s another program I can get through the housing authority where your rent won’t increase for a year, but you have to be going through the *View* or something like that (another program. To receive benefits there are program and work requirements).

Jessica was also aware of the situations of other residents in the community, with regard to working, taking care of children, and their homes. She mentioned that, just like her, many of the residents think they will be in public housing temporarily. She said:

Um, it was definitely hard. Taking Michaela (her daughter) down there. Trying to pay attention to what they were saying and try to watch after her and make sure she’s not getting into anything..... I guess they just, I don’t know. I mean I understand some people work. It’s hard to work and then take care of your house, too. But there’s a lot of people here that don’t do anything. But they want to get what they can from it. I think a lot of people have the attitude that I’m not going to be here very long, so, you know, why bother?

10.6.5 Linda

Linda must deal with a much more complex situation: chronic depression, raising two grandchildren, and living on a fixed income. Being on the council was good for

Linda. In my tenure with the council, I witnessed Linda's health worsen due to the agenda and the added stress the position brought her; however, she seemed to relish her work. Regardless of how much her involvement helped her, though, Maynard thought that her illness was a hindrance to the council. He said "at Rivertown, their president suffers from panic attacks. She has a lot of issues with dealing with people outside of her comfort level. And it was very difficult. She resigned now, but it was very difficult."

One day Linda had a severe panic attack at a council meeting. After that she cut herself off from the council. She said:

After that one (panic attack), I don't think I went back to any more meetings. I told him (Sam), you know, I can't, I can't do this anymore. I can't think. You know, if you have a lot of paperwork to do, you have to have ... I can't read a book because I can't remember what I read on the other page. So if I try to read a book I have to read two or three pages and I have to go back and say, well, who was this person and you know. And I had cable took out, so we don't have TV. I don't listen to any kind of music or anything. And I just shut myself off from them, from the world. I don't have anything to do with the children anymore. If they want to come up here, they did come in the house, but they've stopped.....

.....They sit outside. If it's cold they can go home or go somewhere else. The children with their snacks, I did buy snacks at the store all the time and let them take them out and give them out. Then one day I went out there and grabbed the stuff out of her (granddaughters) hand and said, "Don't give these to the neighbors anymore. Don't give the neighbors anything." I just got extremely bad. I have problems with the sickness of depression.

Linda has both good and bad days. Her doctor explained to her the roller coaster ride of depression and dealing with life and her medication, but sometimes she can still be overwhelmed by life. She said:

I had to go see my doctor. And I just felt so down, so bad. And I asked him, I said, "Why can't I feel like I did yesterday?" If the medicine's working, why can't I feel like yesterday? And he said, "Well, I guess nobody has ever explained or said this to you." He said, "You're not on a rocket ship. You're on a roller coaster. It goes up and down. Sometimes it goes down a long way before it goes up again." And he said it'd be a long while before I would be, before I could

function again, dealing with people. And they want me to do some kind of crafts or something like that. And he suggested going down into the older section and getting some of those ladies together to do some quilting or something like that. And I said no, because I don't want to be around them old people. I don't want to hear them talk. I don't want to hear them knockin' what went on at the council. Nothing like that. Because it don't interest me anymore. I don't want to know nothin' about it. I could care less. If the people next door were hungry and they came over here and asked me for something to eat and I give it to them, but I probably wouldn't want to.

Because Linda lives on a fixed income, she must deal with social services agencies regarding her benefits and child support. These issues are always more complex in real life than on paper, and for Linda they present an extra burden. Discussing her experiences with Social Service, she recounted one particularly harrowing episode:

And I was able to go to the social services last Monday and I did a good job. I was able to answer all the questions and everything. But today the lady had an attitude, and when she started asking me why I couldn't take my check for \$254 and pay \$174 rent out of it. And I said, "Lady, can you live on \$254 a month with two children?" And she just looked at me. And she still didn't answer me. And I said, "I want to talk to somebody else." You know, I don't know how much I spend for my wash powders, my bathroom tissue, my shampoo, my toothpaste ...

She wants to account for everything. What I spend that money on each month. Okay. After I pay my rent and I pay my car insurance and I pay back the \$10, I have to pay \$6 late charge each month. I'm left with that little bit of money. You (referring to me) don't have a house. You don't have children. You know how much you have to buy to keep the house going.

I have to buy gas to get the kids to and from school. I've got to have gas to go to the doctors. I've got a \$15 parking ticket now because of her (social service worker). Well, where am I going to get the money to pay it? If you wasn't going to pay it last week while I was down here, then why didn't you tell me, then I coulda went somewhere else and got some help at church or somethin' to pay it. Now it's due. It has to be paid now. And I just told her to shut up and just leave me alone.

The woman never got her supervisor. Linda continued telling her ordeal:

She come back in there and slammed the guard down. "When you go pay your rent, call me." I wanted to take my purse and smack her in the head. I stood up and she said, "Get down." And I said, "No." And she said, "I would prefer that you sit." And I said, "I would prefer that I stand." And so she wasn't at a phone,

and she went over there next to another desk and picked up the phone. And she said, "I would prefer if you would sit in a chair." And I said, "I would prefer if I stand right here. I'm not sitting down anymore." And she said, "I'm going to go get the supervisor" and I said, "Go get her. I'm not sitting. I don't have to sit." I can talk standing up. I guess she thought I was getting ready to bop her in the head.

You know, if she would have just called me and started saying she needed all this stuff. Okay, I'll go home ... and she wanted to know where the paper was from the child support. And I said, "Home." "Why is it at home? You need to carry it with you."

You don't carry all those papers with you all the time? I said, "They told me to bring these papers down and drop them off." "No they didn't." "Okay, if you need something, you write it down on a little piece of paper here and I'll go home and get this stuff and bring it back down here." "Well, you can just tell me." "I'll go home and look at the price on everything I buy if it's still on there, or go to the store and look at it and bring it back down here and give it to you." I'll show you it's more than \$254 a month. I mean, I spend more than \$254 a month because I have to go to my son and my daughter and ask them for \$5 for gas because I'm out of gas. "Well how do you run out of gas?" They'd make a sane person crazy.

On top of that, Linda must work with agencies in order to receive child support.

The amount of rent that is owed in public housing is based on an individual's income, which includes employment, SSI, child support, TANF, and disability. The more money a person makes, the higher the rent. On paper, Linda gets money for child support from the father of her daughter's child, since Linda has legal guardianship of her grandson. She does not, however, receive the amount that is owed to her. Linda discussed her economic situation:

It was in December. And I asked her (Vanessa), "Can I skip payin' my rent this month without getting evicted so I can get my kids something for Christmas?" And she said, "Yeah, go ahead." And, um, so in January I had two month's rent to pay. I told her, "Don't ever do that again." I said, "If I ask you if I can skip, say no. Don't ever do that again. Because I don't have the money now to pay two month's rent." I wasn't thinking about that when I was wanting money to buy the kids something. And I've never missed a month. If I was late, but I don't get my check until the second Wednesday in each month. The rent is due the first. But I always pay my late charge. I never owe 'em anything. And then they want to come up and say I owe them 400 and some dollars back rent. And it's

court ordered that Lenny's dad (her grandson whom she has legal guardianship of) pays me \$143 a month child support. I don't get \$143 a month child support.

But they (housing authority) said they had judged that, so they raised my rent. Because it was court ordered that he was to pay it. And they checked through child enforcement. They know he's not paying it.

When I asked why they raised her rent, she said:

Because it's court ordered that he pays it. And this is not fair. This is not fair at all that I have to have my rent raised because the ordered somebody to pay. See, I owe you \$1,000 and you take me to court, you get judgment for the \$1,000. If I don't pay you I don't pay you. And then you still didn't get your \$1,000. He ordered me to pay you \$1,000, but if I didn't pay you, then you still don't have your \$1,000.

He was in jail in March. He didn't get out until August. And he sends me ... some months he sends me \$50 and some months he'd send me \$85. Last month he didn't send me anything. This month he sent me \$35. I got a letter from child enforcement and he's unemployed so I won't be getting no more until he gets a job. So they're raising my rent on something he's not paying.

And, um, you know, if you're drawing a disability check, it don't rise but \$3-4 each year. So, you know, nobody should have to pay what they draw. All of that is just so unfair.

A report from the U.S Census Bureau showed that in 2001, 45% of custodial parents received child support payments. However, studies have demonstrated that custodial parents who are at low-income levels receive the least among of child support (Rettig, Christensen, and Dahl, 1991; Pirog, Klotz, and Byers, 1998). With the change in the Welfare Reform Act (also known as PRWOR), custodial mothers who took part in federal aid had their benefits decreased from 26% in 1993 under AFDC to 6% in 2001 under TANF (US Census, 2002). As Jessica's case demonstrates, that decrease could be attributed to the new requirements imposed by TANF (Wolk and Schmahl, 1999; Hu, 1997; Gooden and Bailey, 2001).

10.6.6 Pebe

Pebe's life is similarly complex. She must deal with a disabled child who has been diagnosed as manic depressive. Part of her parenting job—which has now become full-time, leaving her no time to work—involves interacting on a consistent basis with school officials and counselors. Pebe said:

Yeah, I worked, but see like I said my son is disabled too and suppose to be manic depressive and it runs in our family real strong, mental illness do on both side on my mommy side and my father's side. And so with Maurice, the problem is--- to work and keep, keep from it coming (his episodes).

And then the doctor say, his doctor said I need to be home, I have to be home all the time for him and I think that's crazy because he goes to school from 8-3 he's fine. He's in the ED class, emotionally disturb children and they have counselors and teachers that specialize to handle them, but when they don't want to do their job, they'll call me. He's doing this and he's doing that. But they can never tell me what trigger it or what made him angry or whatever. They can't tell me that. All they want me to do is come and pick him up. But now its to the point where I won't pick him up unless, It's to the point where he's just really can't control himself. This school, hmmm Rosemount Park, I think they discriminate against him because of his case file. I think it's all the stuff that he used to do when they documented it. And now its like, if he goes off on anything, they are more hard on him.

It's like they don't try to work with him. They just put it to him. They more they put to him the more he puts to them. It seems like they don't work with him like the other schools did. Maurice always did good in private schools. This is the first time, this is the second year that he has been in regular fixed school with kids and stuff. He's just got to go.

HUD expects that resident councils will be active agents for community building.

The expectation stems from the past history of housing laws and policies that purposefully discriminated, segregated, and isolated African-Americans in housing and public housing. This history was further exacerbated by HUD's mismanagement of funds and poor construction of public housing. Adding to this mix were external structural factors that affected the African-American community: changes in the global community,

out-migration of middle class African- Americans to the suburbs, changing attitudes toward race and race relations.

Using CRT illuminates the historical context that shaped public housing policies. CRT also identifies that if we do not address the history of housing laws and policies, understand the assumptions or “single truths” behind the racialization of housing laws, and take into account the narratives of individuals who live in public housing, and comprehend how their realities are shaped by housing laws and policies, inequality and disjuncture will persist.

Resident council laws and policies do not take into account the community dynamics nor the bevy of social service agencies that have an impact, not only on the council members’ daily lives but also on how members connect and become involved in “the Rivertown Resident Council.” Resident council laws and policies also do not take into account the racialized assumptions and stereotypes that are interpreting, implementing, and enforcing those laws and policies.⁶⁰

10.7 Diversity and Racial Dynamics of the Community

Race and racialized ideologies also affect the dynamics and diversity of Rivertown. Rivertown is a diverse community, which does not jibe with the stereotypical perception of public housing. The managers and community workers wanted the diversity of the community to be reflected by the council. The stereotypes that people who live in public housing are usually Black or Latino trickled down to the manager and individual council members’ perceptions about the intersections of race, gender, and poverty, and ultimately affected how they interacted with the residents. Vanessa and Maynard explained how the intersections of race and age resulted in culture clashes

⁶⁰ managers, housing authority officials, and community workers.

among residents in the community. Maynard and Sharon both highlight how individual council members' assumptions regarding or uneasiness toward race affects how the residents perceive the council members.

Managers

LaTonya agreed that the council should represent the diverse community dynamics:

I think an effective resident council needs to be diverse—all ages, all colors, all nationalities. So, therefore you've got input from basically all kinds and I think it will be more stronger and more effective that way. You won't have as—you won't have a lot of concerns—um—from your resident body when you have a diverse mixture of a council.

As stated earlier, Vanessa had managed Rivertown for four years and had worked with the housing authority, managing other properties, for over ten years. As a result of working with largely black public housing communities prior to entering the diverse environment of Rivertown, Vanessa made a general assumption. According to her, the black communities seemed angrier. She said:

I worked in the all black properties. And I'll tell you, it's a different type of show. It's a different type of show. There's much more anger and hostility in the communities where there's mostly all black. And you know you have to have an even head when you're dealing with hostile black women and black men. Because their troubles and their barriers are so deep that they take a lot of their frustration out on their family, their neighbors, and anybody coming into contact with them when they're at home.

Vanessa's opinions about largely black public housing communities can be considered a "culture of poverty" statement. She realized that race and poverty are important factors in the life chances and experiences of African-Americans, but she also buys into the stereotype of the angry black person who takes their frustrations out on

everybody. Vanessa also commented on how differences between age and race can cause conflict in the community. She said:

I've had so many different scenarios. You might have an elderly white female who is put next to an urban black family. I say urban, loud music, like to hang out and party, young adults in the home, young black adults in the home. You have an elderly white lady and she doesn't live the way those neighbors live. What I try to do, if I find out there is a problem I try to come up with solutions for them. Quick solutions ok. Because most of the time they don't want to make a complaint because it will cause more problems. So what I did with one elderly lady, I moved her and she's doing a whole lot better.

Both Vanessa and LaTonya are aware that the diversity in the community should be represented on the council, but they note that it is not.

Community Worker

Discussing the diversity of Rivertown, Maynard also commented on the clash and indicated his belief that it often derived in the community as a result of the residents' widely differing ages and their racial diversity:

There definitely needs to be a balance in that community. You have a lot of...it's a very diverse community, you have some old white folks in that community that are used to things being a certain way, the old way of Ridgeway, but then you have these young 'hood brothers and sisters, you know, black folks that's in there that say "to hell with that, you are going to do it this way"

Misconceptions about age and race are also evident in the individual assumptions held by council members. Both Maynard and Sharon realized that an individual's assumptions about race can affect self-image but also might shape the responses he or she might have regarding the resident council. One example illustrates this. The council members held a back-to-school event for the community. (I was unable to attend.) Both Maynard and Sharon assisted at the event, during which food and school supplies were distributed. Maynard commented on how the community dynamics affect the resident council:

Right before school this year they bought a bunch of school supplies for the children there and they invited me to the meeting so I went out and when I walked in the room there were a bunch of old white women which comprises the majority of the resident council there, there's a bunch of old white women, sitting in a room with their grandchildren to get school supplies, so in my mind I'm like man there's no other people in the community to get school supplies, why isn't there no one else represented here, you know? And that's what I talking about, the council has to be willing to step out side of its comfort level to embrace the community as a whole, and not just the people you know, not just your friends that's been staying there ten years, but even the new residents, the people that don't look like you or talk like you or necessarily believe what you believe in, but they are still residents of that community and a strong resident council has to be willing to embrace them.

Addressing the same event, Sharon said:

There was one particular lady on the council who I know had a problem being around black people and um she just had other—she had all types of issues, but I know that was one of her issues. It's a very diverse community, but there was one particular event that was held to give students um supplies for school and she was I think responsible—she and another lady was responsible for getting the word out to the residents. But, on the day that they gave out school supplies, nothing but white residents came out and (*laughs*) we found out that many of the black residents and Asian residents didn't even know that they were doing this in the community. So, they had all of the white people and all their friends out to get things for their, their children.....

Now the community—looking at that their—looking at the resident council they're not looking, they're not looking at a particular person, they're saying the resident council did this so how does that make the community in general look at the resident council if something like this goes on?

10.7.1 On Being a Black Woman

Former managers Vanessa and LaTonya and community worker Sharon are all black women in positions of power. The convergence of race, gender, and class oppression has been noted to shape uniquely black women's relationships with one another, black men, black families, white women, employers, and their communities (Collins, 2000). Since these women are working with marginalized individuals (the poor and minorities), I wanted to know how they negotiate the fact that they are themselves

marginalized (having an *outsider-within* status) and stigmatized because of the intersectionality of their race, gender, and class. Their unique experiences as black women can influence how the residents, council members, and housing authority officials relate to them. It also shapes their own identities, values, and beliefs, thus affecting how they function (Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004) and how they meet their responsibilities to the council and residents.

I asked these three women if the intersections of their race and gender affected their interactions with the council members and the community. Sharon commented on how her ability to help the council is affected by her identity as a black woman:

I think um there's a level of trust that is built um, because I think I can speak their language, I can make them feel comfortable. Like I'm not someone there to judge them or look down on them cause they're not as um, um what's the word? Because they're poor. Um, so I think it does work in my benefit. I've been able to build some rapport with ah the residents I think because of that you know. They may look at you a little funny at first, but you're new to the community but I found different things and ways and tactics to kind of break down some of those walls. And I think...

....you've been dealing with residents, just my own personal take on psychology, but I know that ah lots of times poor people look toward television or they look at people with "nice things," nice clothes, dressed a certain way and they look up to that. They really want that for themselves, but at the same time if you come across like that and you don't have ah a warm a warmness about you they can look at you like you think you're better than them. So, what I try to do is come into the communities and dress nice to get their attention, cause I know it's kind of like a bait um to get people's attention. They don't want people who look like them, because then they won't respect it. They're trying to look they're looking at someone that's ah maybe in their minds, doing a little bit better. That attracts them. That draws attention. So, what I do is go there and try and dress and look my best, but then when I get there and start talking to them I get down I may sit down on a curb, I may sit down on their steps. They may offer me a chair and I say, "Oh no, I'm fine right here," sitting down on a concrete step and then it kind of makes them feel like wait a minute look at that she's dressed all nice and she sitting on my steps. And you know it kind of brings down walls. It breaks down walls. Cause it shows them that I'm real, that I'm not all fancy dancy I may look like it, you know I package myself like that, but really when you get beyond all that stuff its just a real sister that just wants to help you out and is really

concerned about you and I don't think I'm better than you I'm right there with you. So, I do that and you know it's not something that I consciously do, but I notice it in studying myself and um that's what I do and it helps, you know. I just sit down with them and ask them about their family or ask them about what's going on in their lives and hear what they have to say. It really not just constantly going in there and talking to them and telling them this is what you need to do, this is, you know, I'm here to do this for you. I'm here to hear what you have to say so I can help serve you better. So, I go to them as a servant. Not only in my speech, but in my actions.

Sharon identifies an issue that has been a constant throughout the black community: the intersections of race, class, and gender. The effects of class divisions on the African-American community have been widely discussed (Frazier, 1957; McAdoo, 1997; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999; Hughes and Hertel, 1990). Sharon is aware that she may seem odd, or not the like the "typical" black person, because of her position and the region of the country from which she hails. Despite the fact that she and her husband have lived through hard times, she realized she had to earn the trust of the residents.

Being a black woman also affects LaTonya's ability to manage Rivertown, she admits:

To a certain extent, however, I don't let it effect and I don't let other people try to stereotype it as a racial thing to effect anything that I do. Um, I think being a part of it is wonderful, because the people in the program can see you as being a young black Afro-American woman and that's a positive role model for them to complete their program so that perhaps maybe one day they could be going down the path that you're going and be in the management situation. So, I think it's a positive thing, because they see wow, you know, our people really can do it, you know, so we just gotta work the program, utilize everything that they're giving us and just make it the best that we possibly can.

When it comes to the residents, LaTonya is aware of the importance of her role. When she left Rivertown, she was moved to Lincoln Village, the public housing community that received the HOPE VI grant. She knows that people are constantly watching her, and she wants to portray a positive image.

When I asked LaTonya if her race and gender affected her relationship with the housing authority, she told me no. But when the tape recorder stopped, she told me of a couple of incidents in which she felt that because she was a black woman the housing authority officials tended to dismiss her or make racial or stereotypical comments to her. While I was at Rivertown, I knew of only three female black managers, including LaTonya; one retired, and Vanessa left.

Vanessa, being the first black manager to manage Rivertown, said of her experience:

Uh, I was the first black female manager on that property. And black period on that property since they had built it. So that was landmark for me. And I was accepted very well because of my personality. And because, you know, I've always experienced diverse cultures, coming from a criminal justice background and living in a different area where it wasn't only black. And not growing up living in a black community. It just makes you a little bit different. You yourself are a little bit different. You're not just pro black. You're pro this and pro that. And so you learn to embrace different cultures and diversity. And people may not be as educated as you are but they certainly know your character. What you're made of. So that made a big difference. One of the people on my council who wanted to give something, it wouldn't matter what their gender was or what their race was. As long as they weren't negative and didn't have any motives to bring about destruction. So I believe in diversity.

In response to how the housing authority treats her, she said, "Yeah, oh yeah. I think that maybe, perhaps, They won't see me being a black person, but I think that from the way that I've seen things in the ten and a half years I've been there, they certainly have a slight amount of discrimination or bias on color, skin color."

Despite Vanessa's attempts to be race-neutral or colorblind, she believes the housing authority does treat people differently based on the color of their skin. All of the women are aware of their racial identity as "black women in power," and they realize how that role affects their interaction with the residents and housing authority. Sharon is

sitting on the curb, letting the residents know she is “real” and she hasn’t lost her “blackness.” LaTonya knows she is a role model for the other African- Americans in the community and presents herself in a certain manner, while Vanessa tries to be race-neutral, at least with the housing authority, which means she is aware of her race and the importance of the designation as the first black person to manage Rivertown.

10.7.2 Division in Rivertown

The council members disassociate themselves from the negative stereotypes associated with residents of public housing through distance, separation, action, and physical location from those “other people.”

At first, the people who lived in Rivertown were, in my mind, universally the same: poor or low-income. They lived in public housing due to experiencing economic hardships. But what I soon realized was that the stereotypes that non-poor people have about residents of public housing were also internalized by the residents and council members of Rivertown. Research conducted by Gotham and Brumley demonstrated that “urban spaces shape and condition how individuals and groups think and conceive of themselves, cultivate and develop personal and collective identities and contest as well as reinforce prevailing meanings of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and other social inequalities” (2004: 269). The council members tended to distance themselves from the stigmatized “project identity.” Regardless of the fact that they, too, lived in public housing, they did not conceive of themselves being like “those other people” who do not care or “those people” who do not take care of their children or “those people” who are lazy and don’t work.

Negative or stereotypical images about residents of public housing impact people’s perceptions of the poor and public housing, which gets translated into laws and

policies. Public housing laws and policies “assume that it is possible to change the culture in public housing by changing both the physical space and economic mix... The image of community conveyed in the rhetoric of public housing reform presumes that sharing a physical space produces a common culture” (Smith, 1999: 2). The council members made it known that despite sharing a physical space, economic hardships (which were tied to other social ills such as mental health and domestic violence), and being in a place where the people are varied culturally, socially, racially, and by age and experience, their “culture” was different from that of the other residents in the community.

The following excerpts from my field notes focus on council members’ and residents’ conceptions of race and class. Whether anyone would realize it or acknowledge it, race, racial issues, and class dynamics were a concern throughout Rivertown. Trixie made a comment about the several cliques that formed and divided community. She said:

What I see is just like this fine divide and it- people have formed several cliques. They’re either friends with people or they’re not. They associate with- they won’t associate it with this end of the street but they’ll only associate with this part of the neighborhood. They don’t want to be involved with anybody up on the hill or they don’t wanna- you know they, they themselves tell me straight out, “I don’t wanna live in that part of the community because I don’t like so and so down the street,” and I’m like, “That’s not a choice and that’s not a reason, you know you need to learn to be able to live anywhere and get along”

10.7.3 Not like Them: Linda and Terri

On October 22, 2001, Terri, one of Rivertown’s residents, was scheduled to come to a council meeting to teach participants how to make a wreath. Since the holiday season was soon approaching, the council members thought this project would provide a fun activity in which the whole community might like to be involved. The council members thought that making wreaths would not be expensive and that children could give them away as Christmas gifts. In an effort to publicize the event, the day of the meeting, the

council members sent out flyers. When I got to the meeting, however, only Linda, Tiny, and Terri were present—although Tiny was forced to leave soon thereafter (he had undergone chemotherapy earlier in the day). None of the residents in the community showed up. The following excerpt is from my field notes:

Terri: An older white woman came down to the meeting. She's the craft lady and she brought all this stuff for making wreaths to show all the residents at the community meeting (but no one was there).

For 20 minutes I listened to Terri talk about how she made wreaths and she showed us her big box of supplies and tools. I was very impressed.

What I found out was that Terri had been in Rivertown for a month. She said she use to be a hospice nurse. I never did ask her how she ended up here.

Both ladies were talking about how there was "no sense of community." Hence no one came to this meeting.

Terri said "they" don't care and last Saturday night, she had to call the police on "them". Because "they" were partying until 2:30 am. She called the police, then people would go away and a half hour later, "they" would come back.

She said that some of "these" people live on the hill and "they" drive down to the bottom of the hill. Terri told me that there are a lot of "outsiders" coming into the community.

Then Terri said, she can't relate to "them" unless she gets a "joint and a icehouse"

She wonders how "they are living" because "they" don't work and "they" sleep all day all and party all night

When I asked Terri who *those people* were, she told me that she meant the younger people who lived in Rivertown, people under the age of 25. As Maynard and Vanessa pointed out, "older" generally means white while "younger" means urban black. Without overtly stating it, Terri was referring to the young black residents of Rivertown. Both women who were present at this meeting were older and Caucasian. In this same conversation, Linda also discussed her experience with dealing with "those people."

10.7.4 Linda: Race in the Community

When Linda first moved into Rivertown, she lived on the bottom of the hill, in the “ghetto” and she had problems with her neighbors. She describes the situation:

My problem was with my neighbors. Down there (lower part of the L). I was afraid to come out and get into my car if it got kinda dark then I didn't come home. Because I was scared to

We weren't getting along (African-American neighbors) and it was a racial thing going and then my daughter and her daughter (neighbor's daughter) got into a big argument down there and her daughter came out one day and her son said you need to put that shirt over the gun your carrying in your pocket. And I looked and she had a gun stuck in the back pocket and you know then, my nervous had got just really extremely bad again and I wouldn't come out the house at home.

When I asked Linda what specifically her neighbors were doing to her, she said:

They weren't really doing anything directly to me. But they were just talking more or less to each other and I didn't come outside. But I was cleaning the streets down there (community center) for rent credit and I don't know, everybody down there (Baywater) seemed to object to me doing that for some reason I don't know why. I never said anything to anybody, I've just been getting things cleaned up everything. I don't know I just couldn't deal with doing that , I couldn't deal with anything and I also just wanted to stay with my daughter and then when I came back. I went to ms evens and told her, you know I going to have to find a way to get out of here and then when I told her what happen, she said nah, I'm going to move you up on the hill, she asked me if I wanted to move up the hill.

I said if it's not going to be any different, no. I didn't want to move all my stuff but then up here for a while it was quiet, real peaceful and quiet (up on the hill). Then, the neighbors on this side of the street (referring to people next door) are ok neighbors, they are real good neighbors.

10.7.5 Sam and Pebe

As the two only African- Americans on the council, Sam and Pebe saw the racial dynamics in the community differently than did the other council members. In an effort to disassociate themselves from the “other” residents in the community, Sam and Pebe

have both mentioned to me that they were not like those “niggas” in the community. When they use this terminology, they are attributing to other African-Americans in the community “negritude traits they disparaged, including tardiness, dishonesty, rudeness, impoverishment, cowardice, and stupidity” (Kennedy, 2002:45). In his book *Nigger: The strange career of a troublesome word*, Kennedy also maintains that sometimes when blacks use the word *nigga* or *nigger* with reference to other blacks, it is “symptomatic of racial self-hatred” because they have internalized racial stereotypes. Sam and Pebe made it clear that they were not the stereotypical black people who lived in public housing. Pebe tried not to act in the stereotypical way because she thought that to do so meant fewer social services benefits and resources for her family. She did not want to be discriminated against because of where she lived, the color of her skin, and her sex. And because Sam considered Rivertown his home, he was offended by the terminology of the “projects”:

Everybody says the project is the project. When you living here that’s your home, that’s your home. See they gotta like you know like this is “just a project” and I says whoa you’ll got it mixed up you’ll know if you stay here two years or three months you got a roof over your head you’re blessed and that’s your home until you go somewhere else. I said you know you all think cause it’s the project you got to act like the project. It don’t work like that there.

Does Sam ever respond negatively to his own surroundings? Does he ever think to himself “Oh, no, I’m raising my kids in public housing!?” He replied:

I didn’t look at it that way. I figure like. I’m comfortable, I have a roof over their head and I kept them in school. That was my first priority. Make sure they have an education and a place to live and that they enjoy themselves in a safe environment.. Because other places, sometimes you can’t even go to the door. And everytime you go up to the door and you have to lock your door, that’s bad. Because you see I don’t lock my door when I go outside.

When I asked Sam why the residents do not join the council, he told me that in his opinion “they have a negative attitude toward it.” When I asked him why, he said that

“the people-naw the people in general in Rivertown because they didn’t want nothing to get up off the ground and work it. They didn’t try to help out. They tried to pull back and hinder every chance we tried to get going forward.”

I also asked Sam about what he thought about people saying things such as “you need to fix what goes on with the people internally like you can have pretty new buildings but that won’t effect if people will join the council or not it won’t effect um you gotta fix people’s insides first that’s what they were saying.” His response was:

They got a “Nigger’s” attitude behind that, because for one reason see they can fix their own self. See when I first come in to Jamestown I didn’t think I’d stay in Jamestown long. But see when I got to here, I always looked at it as my home I didn’t say it was the projects I looked at it as my home.

Pebe, a mother of three, joined the council to help the children. Even though she did not know or associate with the parents, she would help out with the children. Before coming to Rivertown, Pebe and her family had a house. Economic hard times and her husband’s illness put them in Rivertown. Pebe sees herself as different from the other residents in the community. She has said to me such things as “some of those people are beneath me”; “I’ve seen momma leave their kids for a porch full of niggas”; “They get checks, food stamps, and live better than me”; and "half of the people don’t pay rent." Pebe and her husband consider themselves hard-working people, not like the lazy “niggas” in the community.

10.7.6 Lucy

Although Lucy’s tenure on the council was short-lived, she did make some comments while there that prove useful to this study. In my June 2002 field notes, for example, I recorded the fact that Lucy made comments about how parents in the

community don't care and how they let their children run around. The parents to which she referred were African-Americans. I wrote:

Lucy also saw herself as different from the other residents of Rivertown. Lucy and I were setting up the community room for a movie day the council was having for the children. She was telling me "how these parents don't care about their kids" and they let them run around. She told me that her daughter wants to be like them. "Run around the street and such with out shoes on." I found her comment to be ironic sense the day before, her children were roaming around, while we were setting up the community room for today's event. I don't think she knew where her daughter and son were 24/7. Lucy did not associate her children's activities with those other children.

10.7.7 Safety, Police, and Community Relations in Rivertown

Just before Santa was due to arrive in Rivertown, Pebe and Linda were discussing safety issues in the community. As I observed their conversation, I took these notes:

Pebe and Linda were talking to me, and man, they had a lot to say.

Pebe told me that people don't care. It's not safe. Someone got shot on thanksgiving eve and the police didn't do anything. (This happened on top of the hill. Pebe lives on top of the hill)

Linda told me that a counselor told her to always keep an eye on her granddaughter in Rivertown.

Pebe confirmed this. There was an incident where two older white men, who had been drinking beer and had their shirts off, started walking down the hill and messing with some of the young girls. Feeling them up and fondling their ass and breast.

One of the girls told Pebe what happened, so she called the police. They didn't do anything. She told Vanessa, the manager, and she told her that if it didn't happen to her kids, then she needs to stay out of their damn business.

Pebe was upset by what the manager had said to her. She couldn't believe that she had said this to her.

Pebe may not like or be bothered with some of the resident, but she watches out for the kids.

I keep hearing, how people stay to themselves and they don't bother anybody, yet they know their neighborhoods. They know who to stay away from but both

Linda and Pebe knew about the lady on the hill that works 2 jobs to support her children. Both ladies commented on how well behaved her children are.

Sam and Pebe were talking about the police again. How the police don't do anything. 'They don't serve and protect, they just come. They treat people, as if they did something wrong'- Pebe is referring to when she calls the police; they treat her like the criminal. She would 'Try to act civil, but nothing happened, and that's when " Her color came out"'.

The cops don't listen, they dismiss the residents.

Sam and Pebe both questioned the motives of the police. They told me that girls would come up to the police car and ask, " Why didn't come by last night". Acting very friendly and flirty with the police. They think that some dirty, stuff is going on.

Pebe said that when she first moved to Rivertown, people would tell her that there was a fight every weekend. She never saw it because she was always inside.

Then one night she stayed outside and saw a fight. It was over a drug deal gone badly. She said that there were people standing on their porches watching all this happen.

You can see people sitting outside openly selling drugs.

Both Sam and Pebe told me " you can't say hi to nobody, that gives them grounds for 'Can I borrow or have' and "Don't speak or wave to anybody, that's only grounds for trouble."

Jessica also stereotyped the parents are in the community who did not have jobs.

She made it a point to tell her child, that because she cares about her, she will not let her hang around outside like those other parents who don't care. She said:

Yeah, the parents pretty much let the kids, most of the parents, just go outside. Most of the time the parents aren't even here. So. I have a hard time with Angie, getting her to realize that I care about her enough not to just go outside and let her do whatever she wants to do. And one day she'll thank me for it. Because a lot of these kids get out here, and I've seen kids get beat up and stuff and nobody's there. I've seen little bitty kids running around in the street.

When I asked her if she thought the parents were working when the children were out her response was a fast "no."

10.7.8 Let the N..... Come Over: Linda and Jessica

It seems clear that some of the adults in Rivertown hold firmly-established and deeply-ingrained attitudes regarding race. Some of those attitudes seem to have trickled down to the children. I do not know how it got started, but some of the African-American children in the neighborhood began chanting, like a half-time cheer, “Move over, more over, let the niggers take over.” Clearly, the cadence of the chant suggests that it is a variation on the old childhood game of “Red Rover.”

Linda was so offended by this that she complained about it to LaTonya. Linda said:

I said, “You need to do something about that (to LaTonya).” I said, “We have company.” Both my children have big sister’s, you know, through Big Brothers and Big Sisters. And I said, “Our company don’t want to hear that.” I said, “I’m used to the children being dumb.” But, you know, when somebody comes up here and hears them saying that, it’s terrible. And I do need to try to get that stopped. And she said okay. She didn’t know exactly what to do. She was going to set up a meeting with the parents and then set up a meeting with the children and, you know, try to get the thing resolved. She said that Sharon and Maynard were supposed to come and set up those meetings. They would never call her back.

When I asked Linda what happened after she reported the behavior, she said:

It just went away. I don’t know if she had the meetings with them or not. But it’s not happening now. But, if they stood out there and did cheers, that wasn’t bothering me. But when they started saying that, that bothered me. I have mixed grandchildren. My daughter lives with a black man and my son is gay and he lives with a black man. Colors don’t bother me. They did when I was growing up, but I found out that black people were people and, you know, it don’t bother me if I have a black friend or I have a white friend. But you know I wouldn’t want Kayla and Danny to get up on the sidewalk and say, “Move over, Move over, let the white people take over.” I would burn their behinds up if I ever heard them say something like that in the house, let alone them be out there on the street. Like I said, Maynard and Sharon, she said they never did call her back.

Jessica also found what the children were saying to be offensive. She could not understand why they would pick up on the phrase and repeat it like a cheer. She thought

that using such language was degrading and that the children should take pride in their race and ethnicity. She said:

Which I found not only offensive to me, but it should have been offensive to them. But I used to get out here, when I first started getting out, and I'd get together with the kids, play ball with 'em, talk to 'em and stuff and that was a bunch of fun. But sometimes they'd say something about a black person, they'd be like, "I'm sorry." And I'd be like, well, you know, "I'm proud I'm white. Aren't you proud of who you are?" So, you know, I'd like to see somethin' like that.

10.7.9 Jessica and Leaving the Council

Jessica became one of the most active members of the council and routinely organized events for the community's children. For example, on one occasion, she organized a slumber party in the community room for girls who lived at the top of the hill. (When asked why she did not invite all girls in the complex, she responded that "It would just be [her] watching all the girls and it was too much for one person.") Jessica had the girls fill out a permission slip from their parents, and she received funding for the event from the council, since it was considered a community activity.

Ten girls, aged 10-14, all African-American except for one, attended the event, as did I. (I was there to help out.) At the event, Sharon taught Afrocentric dancing and conducted a self-esteem exercise. After Sharon and I left, Jessica planned to make tie-dyed shirts, pop popcorn, watch movies, and create jewelry. She even had board games. When I came back the next day, Jessica told me how much fun the girls had and they stayed up late into the night talking. In the morning, the girls got to make their own pancakes and scrambled eggs. I was a bit perplexed, when I was helping Jessica wash the breakfast dishes and saw her jewelry — a ring, watch, and necklace—laying on the

kitchen counter. Jessica told me: “ it was a test to see if anybody would steal my things.”

Well, all the girls had passed the test.

I had assured myself that with Jessica the council was going to be in good hands. I was surprised, then, when the next time I came to Rivertown Jessica told me that she was no longer on the council. She told me that:

The whole purpose of me bein’ on the council is for the kids. And plus I wanted Angie to see me doin’ somethin’.. Basically when they (the children in the community) decided that they didn’t like her and all of ‘em got together and jumped on her, you know, tried to take punches at her and stuff. And then they were disrespecting me (Some of the girls were at Jessica’s sleep over). Then I tried to drag the manager up here to do somethin’ about it, and she wasn’t willing to do anything about it, then ...

When I went down there (LaTonya’s office) and told her that I wanted to go ahead and quit the council, she told me that if there’s anything she could do to give her a call. That day that they all, some of the girls in the community, there had to be about 15 of the kids out there, girls and boys, whatever. And they wanted to jump Shauna and I called her, she just came up here and told me to calm down which made me even madder.

She told me if she can pull Sharon up here and everybody have a conversation about it, would I be interested in staying on the council? And I told her no. And that definitely would have made matters worse. She(Sharon) tried to come up here. And I told her, “No.” I mean, I live here and I know how it works. You don’t get a member of the housing authority and make the situation worse. You know? And it would have. And it I knew it would blow over and it did.

Jessica could not get over the fact that, despite all of the things she had attempted to accomplish for the community’s children, these girls had disrespected her and threatened her daughter. That was her breaking point. In addition to the situation with her daughter, Jessica is fully aware of what happens when you “get the housing authority involved.” The situation with her daughter did blow over, but she remains off the council. Connecting the relationship between HUD’s laws and policies and the resident council as active agents for community building, Daniel, the Ridgeway Housing Authority

Executive said:

"I'll tell you, at one time, the best time of resident council's that I can remember having a strong council was about 15 years ago. There wasn't a whole lot of rules and regulations. We just had resident councils and we did what we wanted to do. Follow what I'm saying? I mean, they had parties, they had this, they had that. And it wasn't that HUD said you had to have a resident council. It's like we just all worked together. Now you've got all these rules that we need to do this, you need to do this, we've got to work on getting them stipends, they have to be involved in this. An I think , too, like I said, it's starting to be more and more and more and more..and people start to back away. See there's a difference between volunteering and coming to work. It depends on how you're doing it and I think some of the people may view it that way. I mean, why should I be on the resident council and do all this work. It's just like working. And I can go sit and listen, too, and just don't say nothing. So it depends on how you view it and where you heart is.

Since I have explained how negative assumptions about race and public housing and the lived experiences of people that live in public housing are ignored, which minimized the lived experiences of those individuals and do not take into account the intersectional lives of people, I move to the next chapter of this dissertation: Empowerment. Empowerment will provide us with tools on how to change those negative assumptions and stop ignoring the lived experiences of people that live in public housing.

PART VI: REDUCING DISJUNCTIONS

CHAPTER ELEVEN EMPOWERMENT

11.0 The Final Element

Since this project has identified, described, and explained disjunctions or obstacles that exist between HUD's expectations for the Rivertown Resident Council as an active agent for community building and the residents' expectations, it can now move to the subject of *Empowerment*, the final stage in the Scholar Activist Approach. This stage is vital to the process of reform. As Kershaw stated, empowerment "promotes research participation with the group in the development of tools/strategies that can be used to change negative conditions into positive conditions as they impact on the groups' life chances/experiences" (1992: 480). There are two interrelated questions that guide researchers through this part of the Scholar Activist Approach: *What tasks have been undertaken to eliminate those obstacles?* and *Have those tasks been successful?* My fourth research question is designed to reflect on possible solutions for either eliminating the disjunctions or at the very least closing the gaps that exist between them at present:

How could the daily lives and experiences of the Rivertown Resident Council members, in their interactions with housing authority, managers, and community workers, promote community-building activities?

My research shows that seven obstacles stand in the way of the desired relationship between the resident council and the HUD officials: (1) emphasis on children, (2) leadership of the council, (3) perception that the resident council members are "snitches," (4) responsibilities of the Resident Council and HUD officials, (5) manager/ managerial styles, (6) meeting dynamics, and (7) HUD structure and priorities.

Using Critical Race Theory to explain the seven disjunctions, we find that the interpretation, implementation, and enforcement of resident council laws and policies (1) minimize the experiences and knowledge of individuals who live in public housing and (2) do not take into account race and the intersection of multiple status characteristics. These two factors create a false assumption of colorblindness and maintain a system of racial inequality perpetuated by the housing authority officials, community workers, and managers. Such officials often hold negative assumptions and stereotypes about public housing and the people who live there, and because of these assumptions, the same officials tend to overlook, marginalize, or minimize the intersectionality⁶¹ of people's lived experiences.

Given the earlier discussion, two major tasks can be identified that would help reduce, and in some cases, eliminate the obstacles confronting the Rivertown Resident Council:

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Intersectional analysis now stands at the forefront of contemporary theory and practice in feminist cultural studies, critical race studies, racial/ethnic studies, and multiculturalism. As Dill, Nettles and Weber point out (2001), the systematic study of intersectionality is "flexible enough to consider large-scale, historically constructed and hierarchical power systems and the politics of personal interactions, including meanings and representations in the experience of individuals (p. 4)."

Legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, in "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," distinguishes structural intersectionality, in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender make experiences of rape, domestic violence and remedial reform qualitatively different from that of white women, and political intersectionality, in which antisexist and anti-racist rhetoric operate in tandem to marginalize the issue of violence against women. Philomena Essed develops intersectionality as a tool to identify intertwined gender, race, ethnic, gender, economic and educational factors in shaping specific expressions of everyday injustices. Intersectional analysis, and particularly Crenshaw's and Essed's work, has become influential as a policy framework in the arena of international women's rights. For example, various bodies and entities within the UN have to a certain extent recognized the intersectionality of discrimination in women's lives, that women do not experience discrimination and other forms of human rights violations solely on the grounds of gender, but also age, disability, health status, race, ethnicity, caste, class, national origin and sexual orientation. See Working Group on Women and Human Rights, Background Briefing on Intersectionality. From <http://www.crge.umd.edu/>.

- (1) Leadership development training must be undertaken for the managers, housing authority officials, community workers, and resident council.
- (2) Resource development must occur for managers, housing authority officials, and community workers.

In the next section I give a broad overview of the two tasks, then I discuss how the tasks could help reduce each of the seven disjunctions.

11.1 Leadership Development Training

Leadership Development Training (LDT) has been used in the fields of business, management, government agencies, health care, and non-profit organizations.⁶² As the name implies, LDT helps individuals develop leadership skills, which in turn help improve their organization.

Since residents and resident council members are meant to be valuable stakeholders and clients in public housing, then they must be treated as such. The fact that such individuals live in public housing and are often enmeshed in the social service system should not deter managers, housing authority officials, or community workers from treating them with respect and dignity—as all clients should be treated. Although housing officials no doubt have had training and experiences, I argue that more could be done to help them interact with this specialized clientele in ways that are free of negative assumptions about race, public housing, class, or poverty. Housing officials need

⁶² Leadership Development and Leadership Development training teaches individuals how to recognize what is and is not working in their organization and how to improve it by acquiring effective leadership skills—whether through communication, self-awareness, social awareness, or self-management. Mussig (2003) states that leadership is built on values, trust and credibility—factors that are reflective of the relationship as a behavior. Also see the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) on leadership. For example, Karlin Sloan and Company, one of many leadership development consultant firms, offers leadership training in the following areas: communication, decision making, delegation, continuous improvement, diversity awareness, listening, team work, managing meetings, thinking styles, and influence.

additional training so that they can conceptualize the personal experiences of the resident council members as valuable assets while being sensitive to the reality that these same experiences often present major hurdles for the members. Changes in job descriptions and additional and ongoing training for housing officials would be beneficial.

Specifically, HUD officials⁶³ must create and require attendance at various training workshops that address such issues as professionalism, leadership, networking, communication, and diversity/ cultural competency skills.

Professionalism

The housing authority officials, managers, and community workers face numerous demands that require for their successful completion a variety of complex and interrelated abilities and skills. For example, Alvin told me that his job specified a need for someone who works with the Ridgeway population but was also a service provider in the city. The job descriptions of Maynard and Sharon asked for individuals with excellent interpersonal and group process skills who could provide leadership, mentoring, and group problem-solving assistance. However, once hired, no on-the-job training was provided. For instance, when Jane was hired, she said she did not receive any training but had to learn by “just doing.” Dixie moved from office manager to property manager all in one year. This “in the trenches” style of learning the crucial skills associated with the job means that often individuals are not trained in the social science profession. To remedy this, the housing authority must hire more qualified staff to address the needs of the individuals who live in Rivertown. I suggest that a qualified, professional staff should have at least a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in a related field such as social work, sociology, public health, or human development. This individual should also possess

⁶³ Housing Authority, community workers, and managers.

other skills that would enable them to address efficiently and with particular insight the specialized needs of public housing residents. In fact, the moniker “professional” implies certain prerequisites for those who hold it:

- The provision of service affecting the health, well being and/ or safety of society,
- Appropriate certification or licensing,
- A rigorous academic background,
- Personal accountability to both the state and either national or statewide professional association performance standards, and
- A large measure of autonomy.

(McNamara, 2004)

If the Ridgeway Housing Authority cannot afford to hire professional individuals, then they should consider securing a consultant who will be responsible for training the managers and housing authority officials in the appropriate professional skills. In order to provide the best possible service to its clients, the Ridgeway Housing Authority should reevaluate the criteria and qualifications it has established for the various positions it oversees.

Develop Professional Guidelines

Currently there are no training manuals, workshops, or peer-mentoring guides in place at the Ridgeway Housing Authority. This suggests that the Housing Authority has not defined or established specific roles and goals for people who work under its charge. In fact, the role of the housing authority officials is loosely defined in the CFR. The Ridgeway Housing Authority does not have any specific manuals that address or define their role and job responsibilities to the council. By creating such a manual, the Housing

Authority could clarify its expectations for housing officials and then make sure that staff members receive proper training for their roles and responsibilities to the residents and the resident council. Just as HUD possesses a strategic plan for its agency, the Ridgeway Housing Authority needs to develop a similar plan, one that would focus on how its agents could better establish client relationships.

The content of the strategic planning process depends on the needs of the community and its immediate external environment. However, the resident council members, residents, and current Housing Authority staff should participate in developing the strategic plan. For example, in an organization whose services change rapidly, planning should be carried out frequently. Since there is a high turnover rate among employees at the Housing Authority and among residents at the complex itself, then the strategic plan should reflect such changes. The strategic plan for Rivertown might cover the following subjects:

1. Strategizing goals and methods/ strategies to achieve goals,
2. Identifying strategic directions,
3. Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT Analysis),
4. Developing/ Updating a values statement,
5. Action Planning: defining objectives, responsibilities, timeline,
6. Methods for writing and communicating the plan, and
7. Monitoring, evaluating, and deviating from the plan.

(McNamara, 2004)

The position of manager clearly seems to require service both as a social worker and a property manager, but these requirements do not come close to describing the multitude of tasks that such an individual must perform. A strategic plan could help provide direction and focus for the manager. Then, once the strategic plan is developed, more informed hiring decisions can be made and the appropriate training plans can be developed. For example, given the importance of grants described in this dissertation, hiring someone with grant writing ability might be a top priority. Alternatively, the Housing Authority must also determine whether it would be willing to train a particular individual for the position if that person lacks any of the prerequisite skills, such as grant writing, but is in other ways a “good match” for the job. Should the decision be undertaken to train the manager, Housing Authority officials must then determine the length of training, the funds required for such training, and how the delay caused by the training would impact residents.

In addition, professional development would require mentoring. Bowne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004:469) state that professional leadership “involves more than just recruitment, preparation, licensure, and placement. It involves an ongoing evaluation and supervision and coaching and continuous career long professional development”.

Outside Consultant or Facilitator

Perhaps the most certain way to ensure that changes occur at Rivertown is through the hiring of a consultant or facilitator from outside the organization—someone with no ties to HUD—who will assist in the establishment and meeting of goals.

Currently, Maynard and Sharon act as outside facilitators for Rivertown, but they are

funded through HUD grant monies and, as a result, have an obligation to the Housing Authority.

Several outside agencies could provide such a consultant for Rivertown. For example, such companies as Lominger Limited, Inc; Jim Kouzes; and Barry Posner specialize in leadership training and team building. Training could also come from the state. For example, the Department of Social Services has a state-trained coordinator whose position requires visiting various social service departments and assessing how they deal with difficult situations. It is this consultant's job to train state employees to deal with any difficult situation, whether internal, external, or both. The Housing Authority could request that a state coordinator for social services assist with on-site development of leadership, professional, and communication skills—in effect, to train HUD officials⁶⁴ so they can be more attuned to the lived experiences of the council members and residents of Rivertown. As a central part of their evaluation and assessment of services, such outside facilitators must include the council members themselves.

Managers

Since residents come and go, managers are supposed to provide the stabilizing force in public housing. This was not the case with the managers at Rivertown. Improved hiring decisions, as noted above, might help retention. Higher wages and decreases in paperwork and/ or office assistants to help with the paperwork might help retention. To increase long-term retention of managers and effective managers, they must be trained in leadership and communication skills so that individuals in the community can trust them.

While a thorough review of factors that impede the long-lasting success of managers is beyond this dissertation, there is a large literature that HUD could use in hiring and

⁶⁴ housing authority, community workers, and managers.

training. As just one example, the following have been identified as important considerations in hiring:

- 1) Intelligence quotient (how bright one is),
- 2) Technical/operational quotient (how capable one is of getting things done),
- 3) Motivational quotient (how driven one is to achieve and grow),
- 4) Experience quotient (how many requisite skills one possesses),
- 5) People quotient (how effectively one communicates and works with others),
and
- 6) Learning quotient (how deftly one adopts new skills, behaviors and beliefs).

(Lominger, 2004)

A well-established training program could help compensate for factors that were not sufficient at hiring.

Diversity and Cultural Competency

Managers, community workers, resident council members and housing authority officials need to be attuned to and understand the racial dynamics of public housing, as well as how those dynamics impact residents' perceptions of the Housing Authority and affect interaction between residents and Housing Authority officials. Cultural competency is defined "as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or professionals to work effectively in cross- cultural situations (Cross et al., 1989; Isaacs and Benjamin, 1991; Lee, 1997). In other words, knowledge about the group or individuals in question would help produce better outcomes for that agency or system—in this case, the Housing Authority. As a result of cultural competency training, HUD

officials could understand race, ethnicity, and power, factors that have been present throughout the history of public housing, that impact the lack of trust between residents and the Housing Authority, as well as the impact policies have on residents.

Again, the Housing Authority could take advantage of outside consultants and facilitators, such as the United Way, the NAACP, the state's civil rights commission, or the Office of Equal Opportunity. Such outside consultants or facilitators could also incorporate the experiences and knowledge of the residents in their training, a process is vital to bettering the degree to which Housing Authority officials serve the specialized needs of public housing residents.

11.2 Resource Development

The importance of adequate funding for Rivertown is self-evident. As stated earlier, depending on the political climate and economic stability of the country, HUD is vulnerable to government cuts—but it sometimes also benefits from increases in the budget. Having a limited financial budget from HUD prevents Rivertown and the Ridgeway Public Housing Authority from undertaking certain measures, such as hiring more people to provide services to the residents, increasing the pay of the current employees, and maintaining the buildings. With a stable or decreasing base of funding, the only hope of officials is to secure outside funding. The self-perpetuating nature of the resource problems further impedes action since the lack of funding and time makes writing a grant even less of possibility.

Thus far, Rivertown has not benefited from major government grants. Quebec Gardens, the only public housing community in the city of Ridgeway, received a HOPE VI grant that enabled it to make needed structural changes and maintain its buildings and

to provide on-site social service facilities that would assist residents. However, applying for grants takes a lot of time and effort. If each community had its own grant writer, they could search for and write grant proposals that would meet the specific needs of their communities and resident councils. While monies for such a position currently do not exist, building a strong network with other agencies could provide Rivertown and other communities with information about how to hire a grant writer who might also work for social service agencies.

Since money is tight for social services agencies and non- profits, a collaborative effort must be undertaken between the Housing Authority and private and public agencies to help secure funding or provide services that would benefit the resident council and council members. Again, hiring additional staff members with a background in fundraising, networking, and/or grant writing—or even providing sufficient training for current employees—would be extremely beneficial.

At this point, the chapter turns to empowerment suggestions specifically for the seven disjunctions.

11.3 Emphasis on children

The Rivertown Resident Council clearly articulated a focus on improving the immediate conditions of the community's children. According to the Code of Federal Regulations, the Housing Authority officials, managers, and community workers were suppose to support the council in achieving their focus, but that did not occur. Since the CFR indicates clearly that officials must prioritize the goals of the resident council, assurances must be made that such officials will indeed work toward fulfilling this mandate. However, this is more likely to occur if staff members come to their positions

with a solid background or are adequately trained. In order to help the council members better visualize their goals and work toward achieving them—whatever they are—the staff must undergo, as noted above, proper sensitivity and communication training. Moreover, the housing officials should be trained to make resident council aware of the fact that it does have power to “stand up to” officials who do not share its goals. Council members’ goals cannot be dismissed—acknowledgment and acceptance of them is, in fact, mandated.

Historically, the Rivertown Resident Council has been undertaking small activities—which is good—but if they had the support of officials, they might be able to do so much more, such as organizing a community day care center. Of course, the resident council could not create one on its current budget. Thus the earlier discussions are again relative. However, if Housing Authority officials and others were properly trained or knew how to assist in the pursuit of outside funding, budget woes could be lessened and more monies could be established for the creation of specific goals aimed toward bettering the community. In the meantime, more emphasis could be placed on meeting the Community Service requirement through a day care program. Additionally, safety concerns that affect children, such as the grass incident, should receive an immediate response by officials, rather than be embedded in discussions of whose responsibility it is. And managers should be willing to fill in-gaps when parents did not assist the Resident Council. For example, while the managers should be lauded for their financial support of the King Island trip, the trip should not have been canceled because of parental supervision. Community Workers, interns, or others should have been called upon to assist the council.

11.4 Leadership of the Council

According to the CFR and HUD regulations, resident councils were created to empower public housing residents—to, in effect, give them some autonomy, control, and leadership of their community. According to these regulations, the role of the Housing Authority officials is to support the council, not manage it or dictate its goals. Just as leadership is learned and takes training, the council members should also be involved in leadership training and workshops. In the workshops, the outside consultants/facilitators would train council members in various methods for empowering themselves and reinforcing the value of their input. Currently, council members do not feel that they are valued or that the authorities listen to their ideas. Such training could help managers learn to be good listeners and support council members. Programs such as Head Start which rely on leadership from parents might provide a model for HUD.

11.5 Perception that the Resident Council members are “Snitches”

The roles and responsibilities of the Housing Authority officials and resident council members must be more clearly defined. To begin with, Housing Authority officials must draft clearer guidelines delineating the parameters of their roles within the council and responsibilities to it. Likewise, council members must draft guidelines outlining their own roles and responsibilities. Such a process could be undertaken more effectively by an outside consultant with no ties to either group—someone who can objectively assess the two groups and offer guidelines based upon those interpretations.

Also, measures must be undertaken to dispel the conception that council members are “snitches” who report directly to the Housing Authority. Care must be taken to articulate clearly and strongly to all residents an awareness of the fact that the council is a

self-governing body whose sole responsibility is bettering the life of the community as a whole—not reporting lease violations, problems, or the sorts of activities best left to management. Only when all members of the community are made aware of this fact will trust build between all involved parties.

11.6 Responsibilities of the Resident Council and HUD Officials and Manager/ Managerial Styles

Again, no clearly defined roles and responsibilities exist for the resident council, HUD officials, and managers. When individuals work for the Housing Authority, they are simply thrown into the mix. I return to the grass incident as an example. This is unacceptable. A central factor in the role confusion among housing officials is that no one seemed to know what his or her role was to the council. By establishing clear guideline lines, having a training manual, and making sure managers and housing officials are properly trained, Housing Authority officials could ensure that each individual knew his or her role and responsibilities—and maintained them appropriately. Working in social services is a demanding and at times daunting task, so providing Housing Authority officials with peer mentors might also prove a worthwhile endeavor. The same is true for managers. In addition to getting feedback from the Housing Authority and residents, managers could work with their own private peer mentors. Whatever effort is undertaken, it must work toward ensuring a balanced relationship between managers, Housing Authority officials, and council members.

11.7 Meeting Dynamics

According to this research, resident council members feel that they are required to attend far too many meetings beyond their regular council sessions. Serving on the resident council is voluntary; HUD should consider changing its regulations to make participation a paid position given the huge demands on their time. Even if the council stays a voluntary organization and HUD expects residents to become more involved, then it might consider paying them at least paying them more that they currently are receiving. The financial remunerations were partly given the amount of work that was expected. This could have contributed as well to the lack of participation in the council. Alternative they could provide them with extra services as compensation for their time.

As it stands now, the CFR requires residents to attend a certain number of meetings, which council members believe did not work in their best interest. HUD could simply stop this requirement and allow residents to attend when they felt they had issues worth discussing.

While the current structure of the meetings of the Resident Council played important roles in developing social support, council members could still benefit from an understanding of more traditional techniques for running a meeting. If the council became aware that its elected leader was in charge of meetings, domination by the managers and others would be less likely to occur. Once again, an outside consultation/ facilitator or new hire (with specialized skills) could help train council members on developing effective meeting techniques. Housing officials would have to be more aware of their supportive role at meetings as well.

11.8 HUD Structure and Priorities

To establish a stronger and more trusting relationship with council members, HUD officials should perhaps reconsider certain laws and policies that many residents and their representatives on the council currently consider “hypocritical.” A few of these have been noted above. Rather than a “top-down” approach, a “bottom-up” approach might serve as a more logical paradigm considering the lack of trust and helplessness that has often characterized the lives of public housing residents. However, one danger with the “bottom-up” approach is the fact that council members—traditionally hesitant about exerting themselves—might tend to feel that, in truth, they and their efforts are subordinate to the interests, interpretations, and assumptions of the managers, housing authority officials, and community workers—in short, subordinate to everyone.

Again I mention the Community Service Requirement. The Community Service Requirement, which requires residents to volunteer eight hours a month to live in public housing, was created to encourage residents to become more self-sufficient and join the resident council. However, HUD officials did not consider the fact that managers are routinely overworked and that this requirement would simply increase their workload without really resulting in any benefits for the community as a whole. The lack of time for housing officials to help the Resident Council was a theme during the interviews. Deleting this one requirement would certainly help. If the CSR is not going to be eliminated, which is my main suggestion, then at a minimum, use it more effectively.

The situation of a housing development like Rivertown is not helped by HUD policies that tend to prioritize severely distressed public housing complexes or to highlight the stellar examples of positive, self-sufficient public housing communities.

Rivertown is neither of these, but is in fact what one might call “middle line.” Little attention, monies, or policies focus on middle-line up-keep. I recall the over-flowing trash bins that I saw upon my early visit as an example of one type of neglect. To be sure, Rivertown is all right—for now. It’s not severely distressed nor is it a stellar example of public housing. However, if support and up-keep are not given, it could eventually fall into one of the two extreme categories.

Moreover, when it comes to HUD policies regarding resident councils, some inconsistency exists between the ideal and the real. Although HUD policies and laws express explicit support for resident councils, the lack of enforcement, monitoring and training of HUD field officials often ensures that such policies are not maintained as they should be. As a result, the resident councils so heralded by HUD as providing a voice for the community often fall victim to the very policies that created them.

If an agency is truly dedicated to empowering residents and resident councils and giving them voice, it must realize that time, money, and energy must be spent toward helping these groups achieve their goals. Moreover, a truly concerned agency must develop a new way of thinking about policies, management, and the very residents of public housing itself. Such endeavors are not left to HUD alone, though. In fact, success depends on massive effort and dedication from HUD, Housing Authority officials, managers, community workers, and the members of the resident council alike.

If “bottom up” policies are to work in public housing, then the assumptions that HUD officials hold about the residents need to be altered dramatically: they must come to understand how lived experiences must be a part of any planning designed to impact community building through the work of the Resident Council.

11.9 Conclusion

This study investigated how, for a specific public housing resident council in the community of Rivertown in the city of Ridgeway, policies designed to enact community-building policies and give residents a stake in their world were failing. Critical Race Theory helped me to understand that part of the reason the resident council was ineffective because the lived experiences of the resident council members were not included in the laws and policies and there were multiple forms of oppression in which, at times the resident council engaged in the multiple roles of oppression.

Consistent with HUD, and Housing Authorities indicated that they support and enforce those policies they said that resident council members are meant to have an active voice in the decision-making process in their communities. At the same time, this study identified, described, and explained how the interpretations and implementations of laws and policies by these same individuals ended up not helping, and in some ways hindering, the ability of the Resident Council to fulfill its responsibilities. As a result, this council did not have an opportunity to improve the life chances and experiences of public housing resident.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Housing Officials

- 2a. How do you view the purpose and importance of what community building laws and policies are supposed to do?
- 2b. Do you know the various community building laws and policies? What do they expect from those laws and policies?
- 2c. How do you view your role(s) for implementing these laws and policies?
- 2d. From your perspective what are the role(s) of the Resident Council for implementing the laws and policies?
- 2e. How does the resident council build community?
- 2f. How do the laws and policies that govern the resident council promote community building?
- 2g. How do you define your roles in relation to the resident council?

Residential Council Members

- 3a. What activities have the Rivertown Resident Council undertaken in the past two years?
- 3b. How do you view what the role(s) of the residential council is?
- 3c. How do you view the role(s) and relationship with the housing officials with regard to community building and helping you implement your goals?
- 3d. How do the laws and policies for community building influence community building for the resident council?

These questions are illustrative of questions asked. See additional open-ended questions.

Open-Ended Interview Questions for the Members of Rivertown Resident Council

Background/Personal information

1. How long have you been living in Jamestown?
2. What were the circumstances that brought you to Jamestown?
3. What is your employment/income status?
4. Are you the primary caregiver in your household?
5. Have you ever lived in public housing before?
6. What do and/or don't you like about living in Jamestown?

Resident Council of Rivertown

1. How long have you been a member of the resident council?
2. What factors influenced you to join the council?
3. What did you know about the council before you became a member?
4. What's the purpose of Rivertown Resident Council?
5. How would you describe, in general, the role and purpose of resident councils in public housing?
6. How would you describe the role and purpose of Rivertown's Resident Council (RRC)?
7. What contributions has the Jamestown resident council made to the community?
8. Have those contributions or changes been effective in the community?
9. What contributions would you like to see the resident council make?
10. What is your role on the council?
11. What would you like your role on the council to be?
- 12.

Increasing Membership and Participation in the Council

1. Do you think it's important to have resident participation in the council? Why?
2. Is there a lack of resident participation with the JRC?
3. What obstacles do you think are impeding greater participation by residents?
4. What do you think can make RRC successful?

Role of Manager, Housing Authority and HUD

1. What is the housing authority's role with the resident council?
2. What do you think their role should be with the council?
3. Do you think they are helpful or harmful to the council?
4. What is the manager's role with the resident council?
5. What do you think her should be with the council?

6. Do you think she helps or hurts the council?
7. What is HUD's role with the council?
8. What do you think its role should be with the council?
9. Do you think it is helpful or harmful to the council?

Rules and Procedures of the Council

1. Do you follow the "Guide to building strong resident councils"
2. Do you know what constitutes an "official resident council?"
3. What are the rights of the council, which HUD has established?
4. Do you know the rules that federally govern the councils?
5. Do you know how resident councils got started/formed?
6. Do you feel that it is important to go to Site based meetings and Joint resident council meetings?
7. Do you like going to these meetings?

Organization of the Rivertown Resident Council (RRC)

1. Do you think the meetings are run in an organized fashion?
2. How often and long are the meetings?
3. Do you form committees to carry out different activities?
4. Who does the bookkeeping for the council?
5. Who is the secretary or minute/note taker for the meeting?
6. How often do you attend meetings? Why?
7. Do you feel you can exchange ideas and thoughts with the other members on the council?
8. Does everybody help out and contribute ideas and work load?
9. Do you influence each other? How so?

Final questions

- Do you feel that you are key stakeholders in the resident council?
- Is the RRC effective? Why or why not?

Open-Ended Interview Questions for the Residents of Rivertown

Background/Personal information

1. How long have you been living in Rivertown?
2. What were the circumstances that brought you to Rivertown?
3. What is your employment/income status?
4. Are you the primary caregiver in your household?
5. Have you ever lived in public housing before?
6. What do and/or don't you like about living in Rivertown

Rivertown Resident Council

1. Do you know about the RRC? If yes, how did you hear about it?
2. Do you know what the RRC does?
3. Do you know who's on the council?
4. Do you think it is important for developing and improving Rivertown? Why or why not?
5. What do you think the council should do? What would you like it to do?

Resident participation and the council

1. Do you want to participate in the council? Why or why not?
 2. Do you have the time to participate in the council?
 3. Are you aware of the manager, housing authority, and HUD's role/ involvement with the council?
 4. How would you describe things in the community?
 5. What would you want things like to be in the community?
 6. Do you see the resident councils as an obstacle in building community here?
 7. Do you even care?
-
1. Do you personally know anybody on the council?
 2. Have they offered information or helped you out in any situation?
 3. To you read the fliers or respond when council members knock on your door?

Open-Ended Interview Questions for the Manager of Rivertown

Background/ Personal information

1. How long have you been manager of Rivertown?
2. What are your duties and responsibilities?
3. How does being a black woman affect how you interact with the Rivertown community, resident council, and housing authority?
4. Are you the primary caregiver/earner in your family?

The council

1. What is the purpose of Rivertown Resident Council?
2. Do you think the RRC is achieving that purpose?
3. Are the residents in the community aware of the resident council?
4. Why do you think there is a low number of resident participation on the council?
5. What do you think the council needs to do to change it?
6. What is your role with the council?
7. What do you think your role should be with the council?
8. Do you think that RRC is helping or hurting the development of community in RT?
9. Do you think the resident council is effective?
10. What things need to be done to make it effective?

Rules and policies

1. Do you think the guidelines that HUD has established for building a strong resident council are being utilized by this council?
2. What is your role with the council? Would you like that role to increase or decrease?
3. Do you promptly response to their (council) request and needs to help them out?
4. Do you inform them or give them information about HA and HUD rules and regulations?
5. Do you feel that it's your job to do that?

Open-Ended Interview Questions for Executives At Ridgeway Housing Authority

Background/ personal information

1. How long have you been with the housing authority?
2. What is your title and what are your duties with the HA and public housing?

Resident Council

1. What is the purpose of resident councils?
2. Why are some resident councils effective while others are not?
3. Do you think RRC is an effective tool for improving community?
4. Do you think residents get a lot from the council?
5. What is the role of the housing authority in regard to Jamestown resident council?
6. What is the role of the manager in regards to RRC, HUD's role?

Rules and policies

1. How effective are the rules and regulations that govern resident councils, i.e. code of federal regulations, guide to empowering resident councils?
2. Do residents have an active role in the development of the policies and rules that govern their lives?
3. Do you think there are too many laws and policies that structure the resident council?
4. Do the residents adhere to them? How do they find out about them?

Appendix B

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS OF INVESTIGATIVE PROJECTS

Title of Project: Effectiveness of Resident Councils in Rivertown

Investigator: Tiffany Gayle Chenault

The purpose of the project is to understand the effectiveness of Rivertown's Resident Council. I will be interviewing resident council members, residents of Rivertown, and the manager of Rivertown, outside community organizers, executive members at the Housing Authority, and executive members of HUD.

The benefits of this study could help to enhance the effectiveness of Rivertown Resident Council. The risks to you are negligible, but if you feel uncomfortable, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time.

The interviews will be audio taped. The tapes will be kept under the strict supervision of the interviewer and will be transcribed by the interviewer as well. The tapes will be destroyed after final analysis and compilation of the research report. They will be retained for not longer than one year.

There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

Add improved confidentiality after discussing with the committee.

Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and by the University's Department of Sociology.

Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will meet Tiffany Gayle Chenault to be interviewed.

Subject's Permission

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Signature

Date

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact:

Carol A. Bailey

674 McBryde Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061

Phone:540-231-3860

Email: baileyc@vt.edu

Appendix C: Legal Cases from Resident Councils/ Community Groups against the Housing Authority and HUD

Issue	Case
<p>Homes/Community Being Threaten</p>	<p><u>Little Earth of United Tribes, Inc. v. United States Dep't of Housing & Urban Dev.</u>, Civ. No. 3-82-1096, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA, THIRD DIVISION, 584 F. Supp. 1301; 1983 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 14470, August 19, 1983. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from http://web.lexis-nexis.com</p> <p><u>Cabrini-Green Advisory Council v. Chicago Hous. Auth.</u>, No. 96 c 6949, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS, EASTERN DIVISION, 1997 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 625, January 21, 1997, Decided, January 22, 1997, DOCKETED. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from http://web.lexis-nexis.com</p> <p><u>Resident Council of Allen Parkway Village v. United States Dep't of Hous. & Urban Dev.</u>, No. 91-2454., UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT, 980 F.2d 1043; 1993 U.S. App. LEXIS 330; 24 Fed. R. Serv. 3d (Callaghan) 1100, January 13, 1993, Decided, As Corrected. Rehearing Denied February 26, 1993, Reported at 1993 U.S. App. LEXIS 4579. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from http://web.lexis-nexis.com</p> <p><u>Alexandria Resident Council, Inc. v. Alexandria Redevelopment & Hous. Auth.</u>, No. 00-2538, UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT, 11 Fed. Appx. 283; 2001 U.S. App. LEXIS 11865, May 7, 2001, Argued, June 6, 2001, Decided, RULES OF THE FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS MAY LIMIT CITATION TO UNPUBLISHED OPINIONS. PLEASE REFER TO THE RULES OF THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THIS CIRCUIT. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from http://web.lexis-nexis.com</p> <p><u>Alexandria Resident Council v. Samuel Madden Homes Tenant Council</u>, No. 97-2501, No. 97-2502, UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT, 1998 U.S. App. LEXIS 16749, June 3, 1998, Argued, July 22, 1998, Decided, RULES OF THE FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS MAY LIMIT CITATION TO UNPUBLISHED OPINIONS. PLEASE REFER TO THE RULES OF THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THIS CIRCUIT., Reported in Table Case Format at: 1998 U.S. App. LEXIS 26356. Certiorari Denied January 19, 1999, Reported at: 1999 U.S. LEXIS 624. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from http://web.lexis-nexis.com</p> <p><u>Bosely v. Euclid</u>, No. 73-1608, UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT, 496 F.2d 193; 1974 U.S. App. LEXIS 8825, May 3, 1974, Decided. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from http://web.lexis-nexis.com</p>

Informal Organizations Not Recognized

Jones v. Housing Auth., CIVIL ACTION NO. 93-0717-BH-C, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA, SOUTHERN DIVISION, 1995 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 13384, August 9, 1995, Decided, August 9, 1995, FILED Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>

Winter v. D.C. HUD Field Office, Civil Action No.: 00-2706 (RMU), Doc. Nos.: 3, 4, 6, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, 150 F. Supp. 2d 27; 2001 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 14881, April 2, 2001, Decided. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>

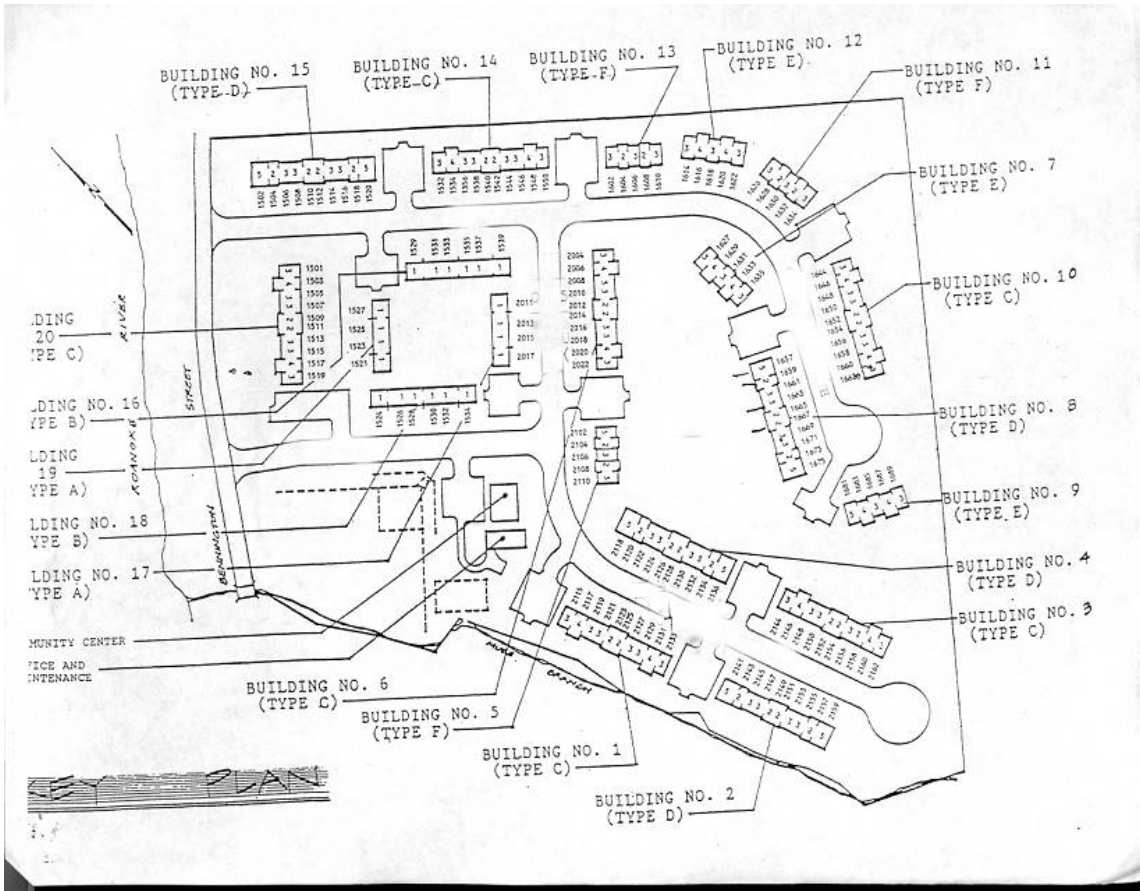
Concerned Residents of Taylor-Wythe v. New York City Hous. Auth., 96 Civ. 2349 (RWS), UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, 1996 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 11460, August 8, 1996, Decided, August 9, 1996, FILED FILED Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>

MUNGIOVI v. CHICAGO HOUS. AUTH., Case No. 94 C 6663, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS, EASTERN DIVISION, 914 F. Supp. 207; 1995 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 14008, September 20, 1995, Decided, September 22, 1995, DOCKETED. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>

Alazan-Apache Resident Ass'n v. San Antonio Hous. Auth., CIVIL NO. SA-94-CA-0106, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, SAN ANTONIO DIVISION, 885 F. Supp. 949; 1995 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 22288, January 31, 1995, Decided, January 31, 1995, Filed. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>

St. Bernard Resident Council ex rel. Leblanc v. Mason, CIVIL ACTION NO. 96-1698 SECTION "T"(4), UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA, 1997 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 12036, August 6, 1997, Decided, August 6, 1997, Filed; August 8, 1997, Entered. Retrieved on March 2, 2003, from <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>

Appendix D: Layout of Rivertown



Appendix D: Rivertown Flyers- Recruitment

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



- *Do you want to do something positive with your time?*
- *Do you want to have control over decisions that are being made in Rivertown*
- *Do you want to make a difference in your Community?*
- *Do you want to improve the current Council?*

IF you answered yes to any of these questions and are interested in Joining the Rivertown Resident council

Please call: 427-1288 or see one of the Council Reps.

Appendix D: Rivertown Flyer- News and Site Based Meeting

Rivertown

RESIDENT NEWS 4/04

CLEAN VALLEY DAY IS SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 5. WE WILL BE GATHERING IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM AT 9:00 A.M. RAIN OR SHINE.

We would like for all residents to participate by cleaning the area where they live such as the front and back yards, washing down the front and back screen doors, cleaning the curb in front of their buildings or around the dumpster.

I would like to thank all of you for the great work you did on the HUD annual inspections.

Just a reminder: Please do not sit out in public and drink alcoholic beverages or smoke controlled substances. Residents who participate in this activity will be sent a lease violation. You are responsible for your guest at all times and the activities that occur at your home.

It will be expected that you keep your yards clean and free of all items that are an eyesore. Please refer to your lease.

You are not allowed to make any alterations to the property. This includes fencing of any type, structures built onto the porches such as wood or lattice, chaining items to gas poles or clotheslines. Do not store any gas-powered items other than a lawnmower outside. Do not leave your clothing on the line longer than 8 hours.

LOUD MUSIC and LOUD NOISE that disturbs your neighbor could result in the police being called to settle the situation. Please respect your neighbors' right to the peaceful enjoyment of their home.

UNAUTHORIZED GUESTS WILL CAUSE YOU TO LOSE YOUR APARTMENT. PLEASE REFER TO YOUR LEASE.

Please do not allow your children to cut through the creek alone. There have been reports of crime occurring in the location.

A COPY OF THIS FLYER WILL BE PUT IN ALL OF THE RESIDENT FILES.

Rivertown PLACE SITE BASE MEETING AGENDA
October 9, 2002 AT 10:30 A.M.

Time: 10:30 a.m. in the Resident Council Office Area

Facilitator: **Vanessa** Property Manager

To: See Distribution List


AGENDA

- Welcome
- Introduction of New Resident Council Members
- Discussion of application process
- Activities update
- Housing Authority changes/updates

Thanking each of you in advance for your attendance

Cc: **Daniel Harrison**

Appendix D- Rivertown Flyer- Notice

 *Partners in Progress*

**IMPORTANT NOTICE
TO ALL RESIDENTS
MAY 10, 2002**

ON MAY 1, 2002, THE COURT PROCESSING FEE FOR UNLAWFUL DETAINERS WAS INCREASED FROM \$18.00 TO \$22.00. PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT BEGINNING MAY 2002 IF YOU RECEIVE AN UNLAWFUL DETAINER YOU WILL BE CHARGED \$22.00. TO AVOID BEING CHARGED THIS FEE PLEASE PAY YOUR RENT IN FULL BY MAY 25, 2002.

10.30.

Rivertown RESIDENT NEWS

Job Prep, a program designed to help you with job interview skills will have 3 sessions starting May 7, 2002. Transportation and childcare will be provided. Please see Ms. Evans for the applications.

The City Police Department will host a "Bike Rodeo" on June 8, 2002.

Even Start will have a clothing fair on Monday, April 22 in the community room.

Church of the Harvest will have a women's ministry program on Saturday, April 20 in the community room.

Apple Ridge Farm will have health screenings for summer camp on Thursday May 23, 2002 in the community room 4:30 to 7:00 p.m.

NEW POSTAL CHANGES ON SITE EFFECTIVE MAY 2002.
THE POSTMAN WILL NOT LEAVE ANY MAIL TO PERSONS NOT ON THE LEASE.

THE POSTMAN WILL PUT IN ALL NAME CHANGES.
PLEASE DO NOT TAMPER WITH THE PLASTIC NAME STICKER INSIDE THE BOX. MAIL WILL NOT BE DELIVERED TO ANY MAILBOX THAT HAS BEEN TAMPERED WITH BY A TENANT.

Children are not allowed to play on the rental office parking lot or enter the office premises unsupervised.

**HOUSING
AUTHORITY**
Partners in Progress

Dear Residents:

For the health and safety of all residents, and in an effort to maintain the housing developments in a safe and sanitary condition, the City of _____ and Housing Authority has put into effect a Housekeeping Policy.

The policy is directed to those residents who are in violation of their lease as the result of unsatisfactory housekeeping conditions which create fire and health hazards. Section 8 of your lease states:

"Resident agrees to...keep the premises free from all trash, ashes, garbage, rubbish and other debris by disposing of it in a sanitary and safe manner. Resident agrees to conduct himself...in a manner which will be...conducive to maintaining the Development in a safe and sanitary condition."

If unsatisfactory housekeeping conditions are reported to the Housing Authority, the Manager will inspect the apartment and discuss the problem with the resident. If the problem is not resolved, the resident will be given written notice of the violations, which must be corrected within 21 days. A second inspection will then be made. If the violations have not been corrected, a 30-day moving notice will be issued.

If the violations are corrected but similar violations reoccur within six (6) months, the resident will receive a 30-day moving notice. The resident will not be given another 21-day grace period during which to correct the re-occurring violations.

If you have any questions concerning this policy, please discuss them with your Manager.

I have read and understand
The above policy.

Sincerely,

_____, PHM

Signature

Date

May 2003

May 2003							June 2003						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
							29	30					

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat/Sun
April 28 8:30am CASA Training starts	29 9:00am REEXAMS-AUGUST	30 5:00pm Girl Scouts (Resource Center)		May 1 SCHEDULE INTERVIEW APPTS () 9:00am add calendar items 10:30am Resident Council Meeting (community) 3:00pm Employee meeting at Melrose Towers 4:00pm Boy Scouts	3
5	6 2:00pm Staff Meeting/COPE (Melrose Towers)	7 5:00pm Girl Scouts (Resource Center)		8 SCHEDULE INTERVIEW APPTS () 10:30am Resident Council Meeting (community) 3:00pm Quarterly Employee Meeting 4:00pm Boy Scouts (Community Room)	10
12 1:00pm Vickie Dalton/Rke City Schools (Community Room)	13	14 9:00am APPLE RIDGE HEALTH SCREENING 9:00am RENT CREDITS DUE ON 15 EACH MONTH 10:30am Site Base Meeting (Jamestown) 5:00pm Girl Scouts (Resource Center)	15	16 SCHEDULE INTERVIEW APPTS () 10:30am Resident Council Meeting (community room) 4:00pm Boy Scouts (Community Room)	17
19	20 3:00pm staff Meeting (Melrose Towers)	21 5:00pm Girl Scouts (Resource Center)	22	23 SCHEDULE INTERVIEW APPTS () 10:30am Resident Council Meeting (community room) 4:00pm Boy Scouts (Community Room)	24
26	27	28 5:00pm Girl Scouts (Resource Center)	29	30 SCHEDULE INTERVIEW APPTS () 10:30am Resident Council Meeting (community room) 4:00pm Boy Scouts (Community Room)	31 June 1

Maintenance 983-9212