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LANDSCAPES OF PUBLIC VALUE: A STUDY OF PUBLIC SPACE AND
PUBLIC SAFETY IN A NEW YORK CITY PLAYGROUND

by

JULIA R. NEVAREZ DE JESUS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York

1999

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4/26/99
Date

Ann G. for Carlos Katz
Chair of Examining Committee

7/24/99
Date

[Signature]
Executive Officer

Prof. Leanne Rivlin

Prof. Gary Winkel

Prof. William Kornblum

Prof. Setha Low
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

LANDSCAPES OF PUBLIC VALUE: A STUDY OF PUBLIC SPACE AND
PUBLIC SAFETY IN A NEW YORK CITY PLAYGROUND

by

Julia R. Nevárez - de Jesús

Adviser: Professor Cindi Katz

The West 110th Street playground located at the northwest corner of Central Park, bordering the Harlem neighborhood was the site for this study. The playground and its surrounding landscapes were addressed as a text from which to read parents' perceptions of safety embedded in their discourses and practices. In order to understand this space as relational and not an empty void or container three scales of analysis were developed and studied theoretically and empirically: the playground itself, the area of the park where the playground is located, and the adjacent neighborhood of Harlem. Interviews were conducted with parents who use the West 110th Street playground, parents who do not use the playground but instead use the Dana Center playground (the closest playground to the West 110th Street), and managers and staff of playgrounds in Central Park and in the Harlem neighborhood who work for The Central Park

Conservancy and the Department of Parks and Recreation. The relativity of perceptions of safety in the West 110th Street playground was evident when parents perceived it to be less safe when compared to other playgrounds in Central Park, but safer when compared to other playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood. Even though individual, the strategies deployed by parents helped them negotiate safe journeys through the neighborhood and the area of the park to the playground. Structural forces such as economic restructuring, and public disinvestment were also considered as they affect the socio-spatial organization of the urban environment. The consequent polarization of income and resources largely affected by these structural forces produced an uneven socio-physical geography in New York City: the glitter and development of areas like Times Square vs. the deterioration and lack of development in Harlem. Public safety, its perceptions, and the strategies deployed by urban residents were embedded in: the physical context (the conditions of the neighborhood vs. other neighborhoods in the city), the historical context (of Harlem's 'ghetto'); the institutional context (agencies and institutions that manage services in the city); and the economic context (the global economic restructuring and the simultaneous production of spaces of progress and decay).

During the long hours throughout this journey, between the summers, autumns, winters, and springs, the beauty of the research site, the evasively serene atmosphere of my apartment, the support of the university and its people, the search for peaceful spaces in my mind and the excitement of new thoughts, feelings, and ideas, I remember the strong sense of care, respect, and good nature that accompanied me. That was provided by people who were close and there, despite the interruption of distances. They supported and encouraged me. I am grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I began this study interested in exploring how a relational notion of space could be empirically and conceptually developed in the evaluation of the uses of a physical setting. I thought that for the Social Sciences in general, and for Environmental Psychology in particular, such a notion of space could provide a comprehensive theoretical framework from which to understand people and their environments. A relational notion of space takes as a given that space is socially produced and that socio-economic factors are an integral component for understanding people and environment relationships as well as people's negotiation of these factors in their everyday lives. These relationships do not occur in a vacuum and even their most concrete expression, those inscribed in the physical environment, are not isolated and disconnected from one another nor from the larger socio-economic context that produce them. With this theoretical interest in mind, and after unsuccessful attempts to develop a working site in Cuba, I encountered -- with the help of some friends -- the West 110th Street playground in Central Park. Little did I know then that this was going to be such an intense and enriching intellectual and personal journey.

Studying a playground in a public space represented for me the opportunity to address both a physical setting based on democratic ideals for access to a diverse constituency as well as a politicized territory of contestation. I drew on and tried to develop the notion of landscape as a text to be read, explored and problematized through the discourse and actions of individuals. The playground I studied was a borderline space at the edge of the well manicured spaces of Central Park and contiguous to a landscape of unsettling deterioration -- that of Harlem. As such, the playground was a way to look at how other spaces and spatial scales were related to people's actions as well as to address the structural forces and institutional practices relevant to safety.

Living and doing research in the nearby area for some years previous to beginning my dissertation research, I discovered that safety was a strong concern for residents in the vicinity of the playground. However, acknowledging the concern for safety expressed by residents was only the beginning of what became a search for contextual issues that would shed light onto why safety was a concern there and, more specifically, how social and physical factors affected the perception of safety in the West 110th Street playground. In the relational notion of space that I followed, context became a key aspect in understanding the use of the West 110th Street playground and the perceptions of safety there.

Safety issues in the playground could not be fully understood without taking into consideration broader issues that affected the social and physical conditions of the neighborhood or such things as the local topography of the playground's location: sunken in a ravine. Thus, understanding the context also implied a critical reading of the production of both the physical and social environment from a political-economic perspective as well as from an individual perspective. These concerns translated into the following general research questions: 1) how does the physical and social context help to explain perceptions of safety in the playground? 2) how is public safety perceived in the West 110th Street playground by parent users and non-users and by the managers and staff of Central Park? and; 3) how were safety concerns and issues negotiated by parents' practices of use and avoidance of public space?

Physical and social factors were addressed and articulated in the respondents' accounts of their perceptions of safety and delimited by specific spatial scales of analysis: the West 110th Street playground, the area of Central Park where the playground is located, and the adjacent neighborhood in Harlem. These scales were simultaneously inserted within an analysis of the global and local scale in an attempt to illustrate the correspondence between the economic structure and the physical and social landscapes that it produces. More specifically, I am

interested in Harlem's landscape, where public disinvestment has led to the poor delivery and maintenance of services, including public spaces and playgrounds. Likewise, the maintenance and operations of a landscape such as Central Park are also affected by these larger political-economic issues. The increasing intervention of the private sector into public space and the privatization of services once provided by the government, accentuates the contrast between the condition and maintenance of public space in Harlem and those of places like Central Park.

Many parks and playgrounds in New York City are still maintained and operated by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, despite the neo-liberal trend to privatize public services including the management and maintenance of public space. Others, like Central Park, have developed public-private partnerships such as the one between The Central Park Conservancy and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. The Conservancy, which was formed at the beginning of 1980s, has raised funds from private individuals and organizations to restore Central Park landscapes. These funds have come to cover most of the maintenance and operation budgets for Central Park. Alongside broader shifts in the role of the government and the insertion of the private sector in the provision of what were once considered governmental responsibilities, the latest trend towards privatization has consequences for public space

in general, and for Central Park in particular. The differences between the maintenance and operations of playgrounds in Central Park and those in the Harlem neighborhood, for example, are stark.

The overall perspective that shapes this dissertation focuses on providing an account of how a specific public setting functions in terms of perceived personal safety. The dissertation examined broader structuring forces that produce the circumstances under which particular socio-physical settings, such as an urban playground, come to exist as a necessary space for leisure. I also addressed individual concerns and expressions of agency regarding safety. The discussion of these perceptions and strategies is anchored in the broader structuring perspective that guides this work. In engaging in such an ambitious task, I have tried to examine what represents safety in a public space designed for children near Harlem as a highly complex phenomena. The process of doing this research also helped me to understand firsthand what the key safety concerns regarding public space are, as they also affect my everyday life in the neighborhood. The overall design, theoretical interest, and analysis are all guided by my personal and political perspectives. These are explicitly and implicitly present throughout this study. They are an integral part of what I consider the systematic and ethical study of socio-spatial phenomena requires.

The playground itself is marginal to and lies between the well manicured landscape of Central Park and the social and physical deterioration of Harlem. Critical interpretations of the structural issues that directly affect perceptions of safety are provided by the respondents. These include gentrification, surveillance, the role of the government in the provision of services, homelessness, and illegal activities (especially those associated with drugs). Even though Harlem's landscape is generally one of public disinvestment, deterioration, and social and economic problems, respondents developed strategies to maneuver through it and participate in some safe moments of leisure activities in the West 110th Street playground and elsewhere. These individual strategies are examples of the manner in which respondents appropriate public space in their checkered journeys through the neighborhood and northern parts of the park. For mothers, this appropriation of public space is somehow limited by the fear of crimes against women and by specific incidents in the northern sections of the park where women have been victims of criminal acts. The strategies also include the instructions that parents offer their children. The contents of these instructions raise at least two critical issues: 1) the ideology of fear of strangers for children, and 2) the social control mechanisms to which girls and boys are subjected based on preconceived notions of gender and fears of sexual molestation. The combination of strategies developed by the respondents depicts a picture of

how public space is appropriated despite the dangerous situations it may pose to respondents. It also depicts the landscape of concerns, fears, and apprehension associated with both social and physical issues. Such individual level of strategies seem to be the respondents' main means of negotiating safety in their use of public space in and around their Harlem neighborhood. Collective initiatives that deal simultaneously with structural and individual issues seem to be limited or unknown, since respondents only mentioned one.

This dissertation follows a multi-method approach focusing on the different scales of analysis to understand the complexity of social and physical factors that affect perceptions of safety at the West 110th Street playground. The methods included playground user and non-user interviews with African-American, Latino and White parents, observations in the playground, the completion of a playground design safety checklist for the West 110th Street playground, and a designer walk-through for the West 110th Street playground and the Dana Center playground nearby. Analysis of demographic data and archival research on Central Park and New York City public space and playgrounds also complemented the methods mentioned.

Chapter Two presents an overview of the relevant literature. The literature reviewed includes contemporary theoretical and applied work on public space from a variety

of disciplines. Literature that discusses privatization and the role of the government in managing public resources was also reviewed alongside discussions of structural processes within the urban context. The research produced by scholars from different academic disciplines such as geographers, planners, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, and environmental psychologists is included. Public urban safety and the treatment of this theme as it relates to children and women is also addressed.

Chapter Three presents the research design for this study as well as a detailed description of the methods and the process of data collection and analysis. Departing from, and, as a critique of post-occupancy evaluations, the research design and methods are geared to provide a comprehensive analysis of context when studying a physical setting. The main objective of the research design is to develop a framework of analysis for the study of contextual factors as they affect perceptions of safety at the West 110th Street playground. User interviews with parents were conducted at the West 110th Street playground, non-user interviews with parents took place at the Dana Center playground (the closest playground to the West 110th Street one). Interviews were also conducted with managers from The Central Park Conservancy and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

Chapter Four provides a structural perspective for the study. It addresses the broader context for understanding socio-economic and spatial issues that affect New York City, Harlem and the playground. The literature examined includes urban restructuring and public disinvestment at the global and local scales. This chapter also includes demographic analysis of 1990 Census Data on New York City as a whole and the 1990 Census Tracts of the three blocks contiguous to the West 110th Street playground in order to provide a demographic profile of the neighborhood adjacent to the playground and compare it to New York City as a whole.

Chapter Five offers an examination of the institutional, historical and physical context for the West 110th Street playground. It includes a description of the institutions and organizations that manage Central Park and playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood: The Central Park Conservancy and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. In addition, this chapter provides a comparative analysis of the operating budgets for each institution's management of public spaces and playgrounds in Central Park and Community District 9 in the Harlem neighborhood. The chapter also includes a discussion of the historical context for the development of parks and playgrounds in New York City, including Central Park and the West 110th Street playground. The chapter concludes with a brief history and physical description of the West 110th Street playground. Physical descriptions of

the Dana Center playground, the four nearest Central Park playgrounds to the one at West 110th Street, and four public playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood are also included.

Parents' -- users and non-users -- as well as managers' perceptions of safety in the West 110th Street playground, the surrounding area of the park, and the neighborhood are analyzed in Chapter Six. This chapter also includes a discussion of structural issues that affect parents' perceptions of safety in public spaces. As such it provides a synthesis of individual and structural issues that affect the perception of social and physical safety at the three scales of analysis from the respondents' perspective.

Chapter Seven provides an examination of individual and collective agency in coping with questions of safety. These strategies include parents' safety instructions to their children and the strategies that parents themselves develop to traverse the neighborhood and the park to reach the West 110th Street playground safely. Following this discussion of individual strategies, the chapter concludes with a couple of examples of collective efforts developed at the community level to deal with children's safety in public space.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1- Public Space

Public space is an elusive concept; a referent with complex and multiple meanings. Public space has evoked different notions at different historical junctures and in different geographic settings. One of the most important conditions for the successful use of public space is that of safety. The literature on public space and public safety -- theoretical and applied -- is vast and diverse. Among this literature, studies usually emphasize only one component of the public space equation, some addressing public safety aspects. They tend to focus either on the spatial aspects -- particularly physical elements of the environment -- or to emphasize conceptualizations of the meanings and significance of what constitutes "public" in public space as a matter of access to diverse constituencies. These two approaches, however, tend to revolve around issues of use, access, ownership, and control. Indeed, embedded in the two approaches is the sometimes implicit, other times explicit assumption that both physical elements of the environment and issues of use, access, ownership, and control are preconditions to safety. However, these two approaches, the spatially-sided as well as the public-sided approach to public space lack in providing an understanding of how

physical elements of the environment, and the meaning of those elements within the context of the public, are inserted within the logic of broader structural processes. Therefore the understanding of how the conditions of the physical elements of the environment and the access, use, ownership and control in public space are also produced by socio-economic circumstances that bear upon real and perceived safety in public space seem absent. A few authors, discussed below, combine the two approaches and address spatial and structural issues in relation to urban public safety.

2.2- Spatially-sided approach to public space

Most research that focuses on the spatial aspects of public space tends to emphasize a functional notion of space where the different design elements of the environment are evaluated based mainly on use and safety (Chapin, 1991; Dunn & Marans, 1997; Egan, 1991; Project for Public Space, 1988, 1995; Storey, 1991; Wekerle, 1991). The undergirding assumption that guides this approach assumes space as a typology of elements in the physical environment. The various studies in this realm address the way these spatial elements function in encouraging and/or deterring the safe use of public spaces. The manner in which the design of the physical environment affects use, access, control, and safety is emphasized in these studies.

The spatially-sided studies of public open spaces often use a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques, largely due to the complexity of issues addressed. The methods and techniques used under this approach to public space include, but are not limited to, participant observation, surveys, interviews, checklists, behavioral mapping, behavioral records, analysis of demographic information, and descriptive statistics (Chapin, 1991; Dunn & Marans, 1997; Egan, 1991; Project for Public Space, 1988, 1995; Storey, 1991; Wekerle, 1991). For instance, the organization Project for Public Space (PPS) (1988, 1995) has produced work that focuses on evaluations of plazas, neighborhood parks, and other public spaces all over the United States. Their main purpose is to provide design solutions and other practical responses to public space issues such as those concerning safety, use, access, and functionality. Even though PPS has contributed to translating social issues into design concerns, their approach does not pose a theoretically coherent platform from which to understand how structural forces shape the socio-physical environment and affect its use. Most applied studies of public open spaces include plans for the improvement of the physical and social environment through design (e.g., Katz & Hart, 1991; Low & Milan, 1992; Millstein, I, Lacovara, M., Barry, T., Bernard, L., Harris, K., Redd, J., Kennedy, L., Kramer, O., 1990; Nager & Wentworth, 1976; Project for Public Space; 1995, 1988).

2.3- The 'public'

From a broader theoretical perspective, public space usually implies a physical and discursive space or public arenas of citizen discourse and association (Fraser, 1990) that warrants the democratic practice of access to all. Altman and Zube (1989, p.1) state that "the term 'public' connotes the idea that these settings are accessible to everyone - people of a community, state, or nation, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, physical handicap, or other characteristics. " In this context, "public" does not imply ownership but use or the potential to use (i.e. access). The definition of public space is further developed to accommodate a sense of legitimization of the quality and importance of communal practices. Carr et al. (1992, p.ix) define public space as "the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or in periodic activities." This approach suggests that possibilities for alternative meaningful uses of public spaces can be created by communities and users. It shifts the focus of attention from structuring processes that affect public spaces within the urban environment to an emphasis on the agency of individuals and collectivities instead. The "public" as envisioned in this perspective, is based on the provision of a platform for democratic discursive and spatial practices.

Public space, therefore, is the physical and social space for democratic practices since it entails broad access and provides the opportunity to deal face-to-face with diverse people in a civil manner, broadly understood as "civility" (Brill, 1989; Sennett, 1974) or "publicity" as a discursive arena (Fraser, 1990). From this perspective, the term "public" in public space stresses a fundamental democratic tolerance for others and the possibility of a sense of ownership by all. Public space, also represents a terrain for contestation. From the perspective of a political and power analysis, public space should provide a "safe" locale -- physical and social -- for the expression of a wide range of views and behaviors. The construction of common ways for safe uses of public space is a negotiation between: 1) people's desires and preferences enacted in public space through behaviors and activities, and 2) the possibilities allowed in public spaces according to the institutions that create and manage these spaces and other users. Both components are embedded within socio-economic circumstances, altering the meaning and safe use of public space under different historical and geographic circumstances.

Across time the use and management of public spaces have changed. While the "pleasure grounds" (Cranz, 1982) of the last century offered a public space for relaxation and the possibility for the enjoyment of nature in the city, parks nowadays not only offer the possibility for relaxation but

often offer more active events as well (Carr et al., 1992). During the Progressive Era at the beginning of this century, the creation and management of public spaces were viewed by Reformists as a governmental responsibility (Boyer, 1978; Caro, 1974; Cranz, 1992; Goodman, 1979). Currently, with the neo-liberal trend that characterizes contemporary urban politics so widely in the US and elsewhere, there has been a shift in the role of the government in the provision of public services (Ambrose, 1994; Rouse, 1995). Consequently there has been an increasing involvement of the private sector in the delivery of what once were considered governmental responsibilities, including those associated with the provision and maintenance of public space (Ambrose, 1994; Katz, 1995).

The importance of public space lies in the opportunity for democratic practices in a physical setting that offers a safe arena to which a diversity of people have access, and where diverse views can be expressed. In this regard, public spaces, and more specifically parks, are simultaneously social institutions as well as city spaces (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992). Various authorities agree that the opportunity for democratic practices that a public space should provide, encompasses what is broadly understood in the literature as "public life" (Brill, 1989; Carr et al., 1992). As a function of public space, however, public life and the opportunity for democratic practices it should foster, are

usually conceived as counterpoised to work or paid employment.

Public life associated with leisure is set up outside the boundaries of what constitutes work. Even though leisure activities in general, and those that occur in public space in particular, are set outside the work context or at most connected to the journey from or to work, in capitalist societies leisure is very much interconnected to the logic of capital. Despite the fact that leisure spaces provide the opportunity to free the mind and body and to escape, they complement the daily routines of work, by providing a "safe" environment where people (and workers) can replenish their energies and reinsert themselves in the work rhythms. From a critical perspective, leisure spaces -- as complementary to the work routine -- are also affected, negotiated, and in conflict with hegemonic practices of the ruling classes (Goodman, 1979; Lefebvre, 1991; Rojek, 1995). Moreover, the perception of how safe a public space is very much influenced by the conditions of leisure spaces in areas where work and labor are spatially segregated in the city. The general conditions of working class and poor people's neighborhoods are emblematic of the conditions of public space there accompanied by a general perception of those places as unsafe. Leisure, then, mirrors those aspects prevalent in a society stratified by class, gender, and ethnicity.

The role of the state as provider of the conditions for social reproduction, and more specifically that of the government as a mediator between public and private interests, is crucial in articulating mechanisms of social control, including those that fall within the realm of leisure and more specifically that of public space. More specifically, safety plays an increasingly relevant role in public spaces for leisure. As a mechanism of social control, safety concerns or fear of crime trigger responses that sometimes directly, other times indirectly point at the role of the government. Issues such as control, access, and even the mere existence of public space are directly linked to these interrelated aspects: 1) the notion of the public sphere, and 2) the role of the government (the state) in the provision of basic social services.

2.4- The public sphere

Given my interest in public space, public safety, and the definition of what an ideal public space should provide such as the safe context for the democratic ideal of access to all, it is important to understand public space within the context of the public sphere. In contrast to the private sphere of household and market economies, the public sphere usually involves three analytically differentiated referents: public discourse arenas, the official economy of paid employment, and the state (Fraser, 1990). Conceptualizations

of the public sphere however, usually lack an analysis of its spatial qualities particularly its most concrete spatial component of which public space could be an example. Public space is one of the crucial sites for public life and the public sphere. At least two of the conceptualizations about the public sphere are relevant to this study of public space -- that of the state and public discourse arenas. In what follows emphasis is placed on the notion of the public sphere as the arena for public discourse(s) as democratic practice. The notion of the public sphere as the state will be discussed later in the next section.

Fraser's (1990) formulation of the public sphere is useful because it allows a critical understanding of Habermas' notion of the public sphere (1989) as the arena for public discourse. According to Fraser, Habermas' definition of the public sphere "designates a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk" (Fraser, 1990, p.57). It is an arena where all members of the society can exercise the democratic practice of expressing their opinions publicly and "safely" without retaliation, outside the boundaries of the state. In fact, the public sphere provides a space for discursive interactions that could be critical of the state. Fraser's critique of Habermas' conceptualization of the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere is that it is an historically specific and limited conceptualization. According to Fraser,

Habermas' conceptualization of the public sphere is based on an ideal that does not take into account the fact that in a society polarized by race or gender, for example, and stratified by class, there is unequal access for its members to fully participate in public political discussions. Different and alternative discourses, such as those based on gender, class, and ethnicity, are molded to fit into an historically determined ideal of bourgeois public discourse. Habermas' conceptualization, according to Fraser, does not recognize that different groups, due to their unequal positioning in society, have different access to participation in the public discourse arena. Therefore participation is based on struggle for access, resulting in sometimes blatant, other times subtle exclusions from participation. The exclusionary practices are enacted when the public sphere is assumed in a way that the search for the common good can only be obtained by 'bracketing' social status differences, a form of social control based on fear of dissimilar views and discourses. Hence, in this ideal bourgeois public sphere one general public is preferable to multiple and different competing publics. Habermas' idealized conceptualization of the public sphere as a democratic platform where public discursive interaction takes place, lacks in acknowledging that the actual practice of public discursive interaction is mediated by the social and economic conditions that affect unequally constituted segments of the society, differently. Based on a liberal model of political

theory, Habermas' conceptualization assumes an ideal of democratic political life where the boundaries of social and economic inequalities are blurred or in Fraser's terms, 'bracketed.'

Fraser's rethinking of Habermas' public sphere suggests that for the public sphere to be truly democratic, it should be conceptualized as multiple arenas for diverse publics to voice their concerns and opinions rather than a single, almost universal public. In Fraser's view citizens' private interests, which under the liberal bourgeois ideal of the public sphere should be kept separate from 'true' public participation, are an integral component of what characterizes "subaltern-counter publics" or alternative discourses (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). Subaltern-counter publics is the acknowledgment of juxtaposed discursive platforms from which different groups in society express their interests in tune with their gender, class and culture. In a liberal conception of the bourgeois public sphere, this unequal positioning is neutralized through forms of communication and the structure of the participation process. For instance, the structure of participation in the public sphere has historically been masculine and rational. Conforming to these forms of discourse has the effect of silencing dissidence that may be expressed in a different form or language. The form of these public sphere structures mirror the political exercise of control and domination from one group in society

over others, based on fear. Therefore, for Fraser it is positive for counter-publics -- such as those constituted by women, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians as well as class -- to proliferate in a stratified society. Alternative publics or subaltern counter-publics,

...signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs (Fraser, 1990, p. 67).

The feminist discourse can be considered an example of a subaltern counter-discourse as a critical interpretation of the public and private sphere (Fraser, 1990; Franck and Paxon, 1989; Rouse, 1995, Pain, 1991). Women's unequal positioning in the labor force and their subsequent limited participation in the public realm has been the point of departure for their subaltern counter-discourse. Given that public space is one of the concrete sites where participation in the public sphere should take place, the ideology of women belonging to the private realm of home can limit their actual participation in public life and use of public spaces. Women's participation in and use of public space, and their visibility in public spaces, is limited mainly by an ideology of fear. This might be conceptualized as a sort of spatial

silencing, resulting in a discursive silencing of oppositional or alternative presences and opinions in public.

On the other hand, a critical reading of the public sphere, more specifically the notion of subaltern counter-publics can have particular importance for public space, since public space could be identified as a concrete space inhabited by the public sphere as discursive arena. The spatial territories of the public sphere include parks, playgrounds, and plazas but they also include streets, sidewalks, other public spaces where discursive interaction takes place such as shopping malls (Jacobs, 1961; Shields, 1989), and even the internet. These specific sites also provide the platform for official discourses as well as those of subaltern counter-discourses. Access, control and ownership are officially defined and also contested in public spaces. There, in the streets, on the sidewalks, in parks and in shopping malls, private interests, public concerns, and individual desires are expressed. The conceptualization of the public sphere as discursive interaction grounded in specific sites such as these public spaces, helps to identify intersections between the realm of the state, private interests, and civil society. There the notion of the state as the protector of the common good through the provision and maintenance of public services including public space is of particular importance .

2.5- "Public" as government: shifting trends

One approach to the term "public" in public space is constituted by the division of governmental and non-governmental affairs in which the role of the "state" or "government" is that of providing for the welfare of its people (Bluestone, 1994; Hsia, 1995; Harvey, 1990; Madriz, 1997; Smith, 1986). Within the "welfare state mass democracy" (Fraser, 1990) the government functions as a mediator between the public as civil society and the private interests of the market economy. Based on the liberal economic model, the "welfare state" created and managed the provision of basic services that contributed to social reproduction and the maintenance of physical infrastructure. However, as part of the current 'neo-liberal' trend -- rooted in the global economic restructuring of the last two decades -- the role and responsibilities of national, state or provincial, and local governments have changed. The recent restructuring of the economy at the global level has shifted the organization of the economy between and within countries. Economic restructuring has involved the shift from a manufacturing to a service-oriented economy with emphasis on finance as the main economic activity in 'First World' cities such as New York City. Throughout the world, economic restructuring has been aided by the deregulation of economic activities and advances in technology that allow a faster movement of information, people, raw materials, capital and other

resources, among other factors. This orchestration of factors has diminished the role of national governments in regulating the economy. Under neo-liberalism as an economically based political model, the welfare state is in the throes of being dismantled. National and state budgets for the provision of public services in many places have diminished simultaneously with increasing participation from the private sector. The state in most industrialized economies is no longer the warrantor of public welfare and has reduced its role in the provision of basic needs considerably (Piven & Cloward, 1982). According to Ambrose (1994) the current role of the "enabling state" is to warrant the proper function of the mechanisms that regulate the production of goods and services (p.151). This change in the role of the government has affected state-managed redistributive capital policies (Ambrose, 1994; Rose, 1995). Moreover, not only the traditional services governments used to provide but the infrastructure they have created such as streets, highways, housing, hospitals, schools, universities, and power grids -- utilities, land, and buildings are for sale to the private sector (Ambrose, 1994). Public services, then, -- including the maintenance and operations of public space -- have been affected by governmental retrenchment and budget cuts. This fiscal crisis has also been accompanied by a tax rebellion in which tax payers are holding the government accountable for tax expenditure and resentful of government "overspending." The retrenchment in the services formerly provided by the

government has been substituted by a stronger role from the private sector (Ambrose, 1994; Smith, 1998). Privatization in the United States was encouraged during the Reagan administration and by the public's demand for a higher level of services without increasing taxes to cover the cost of those services.

Privatization, therefore, is the involvement of the private sector in financing and operating businesses, industries, and services that were once largely the government's responsibility. In the US, the trend towards privatization has included selling, contracting, and leasing various kinds of services and production facilities to private groups by the national, state, and local units of government. On the one hand, there are those who support the trend towards privatization -- the "new right" -- and in an almost Darwinian way, see capitalism's full potential threatened by a welfare state mediating between public and private interests (Ambrose, 1994). Opponents of privatization, on the other hand, consider that the ownership and operation of basic services by the government is essential to protect the public's interest and ensure social justice (even though some would argue that the government failed to reach this ideal and further that the failures were systemic). Changes in the way the role of the government is defined continue to affect what constitutes "public." Moreover, the simultaneous privatization of the services once

provided by the government and retrenchment in the public sector have left an empty space for the protection of social justice. Currently funding and other support for mechanisms that warrant social justice and the protection of the common good outside the sphere of the state have been reduced within the public sphere of the states. Within the realm of the private sector concern for social justice often seems absent.

2.6- Privatization of public space

New trends in the transformation of public space, such as the influence of the private sector, often limit the uses of and access to public space (Carr, Rivlin & Stone, 1992; Project for Public Space, 1988). Increasingly, as public retrenchment has resulted in budget cuts for many government operations, including the management of parks, the conditions that make a public setting safe such as the maintenance and management of public space are increasingly becoming the responsibility of the private sector. The insertion of the private sector as responsible for the maintenance and management of public space is evident in the proliferation of business improvement districts and public-private partnerships that have flourished in specific areas of New York City. Business improvement districts (BIDs) are usually composed of private businesses in the vicinity of a specific urban area which often includes a park, a plaza, a transportation terminal, or a green area. These businesses

assume responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the area including cleaning, aesthetics, and surveillance by means that can compromise access in order to provide what they consider safe and clean common public space. Security guards are hired in many business improvement districts to oversee the functioning of public spaces designed to attract consumers to neighboring businesses (Times Square and Metro Tech in Brooklyn are examples of BIDs). Private security guards and the explicit and implicit regulations affecting the use of public space can deter and control people's behavior there.

Public-private partnerships, on the other hand, are usually alliances between not-for-profit organizations and the public sector. With regard to public space, public-private partnerships often involve department of parks and recreation and not-for profit organizations. The Central Park Conservancy in New York City is an example of such an alliance. As a not-for-profit organization it oversees the management and capital projects of Central Park in liaison with the Department of Parks and Recreation. Public-private partnerships do not provide private security guards but do, in concerted efforts with governmental agencies, regulate and define the uses of parks and other public spaces. The Central Park Conservancy originated from the initiative of wealthy neighbors to the park which was dilapidated as a result of New York's fiscal crisis in the 1970s which had

affected the maintenance of Central Park, and led to its deterioration. Even though the improvement of Central Park's landscapes accomplished by The Central Park Conservancy is obvious, presenting it as a model to be followed by other city parks seems imperfect when other neighborhoods might not be able to respond with the economic resources that favored Central Park. In this regard, the privatization of public space has had at least a double effect: 1) privatization is a limited option since not all public spaces can be privatized with equal success, and 2) privatization of public spaces such as Central Park largely implies the private management of public space.

Privatization is not an option for all public spaces. Government budget cuts have had especially negative consequences for the provision and maintenance of public space. Particularly in poor neighborhoods, fewer possibilities for privatized reinvestment exist (Katz, 1995). In other words, not-for-profit organizations such as the public-private partnerships under which many urban parks are currently managed, can not be expected to grow in urban enclaves where neighborhoods have a low tax base, low income, high poverty levels, and high levels of unemployment. The additional capital necessary to improve and maintain public spaces in such neighborhoods is hardly available through individual contributions.

Another concern about privatization addresses the regulation of behavior, on the other hand, even though people's behavior in public space was regulated when the provision and maintenance of public space was largely a government responsibility, the trend towards privatization has reduced the space for questioning the private sector's practices in their management of public spaces. Practically speaking, there is no clear definition -- known to the public -- about the responsibilities, limitations, and jurisdiction of the private sector in the management of public spaces. Moreover, the commercialization of public space has had the effect of transforming public space itself into a consumer good, which includes, but is not limited to, the commercialization of entertainment in public space, advertisements and corporate sponsored market for goods and products. Reformists at the beginning of the century regarded commercial activities in public space as a reminder to the workers of their low wages. Commercial activities in public space were then opposed because they were in conflict with the sense of escape and relaxation outside of work that a public space, particularly a park should provide in the Reform era. Presently, public space provides an increasingly commodified experience within a culture of consumption. Private interests are often overtly inscribed in the uses, regulation and experience of public spaces. For instance, Bryant Park benches are inscribed with the donors' names, public concerts there are funded by private businesses who

frame events within the context of advertisement strategies, and sometimes the whole park is closed for private corporate use.

Brill (1989), Davis (1992), Low (1996), Sorkin (1992), and Zukin (1995), among other scholars, have documented the fact that corporations are increasingly taking over the creation and management of public spaces for leisure. These corporate groups tend to base their notions of public life and public space in idealized and nostalgic constructions artificially manufactured. The "new urbanism" is a case in point. New urbanism is the latest trend in urban design that explores alternative living possibilities to those imposed by suburbia and the car. Neighborhoods such as "Seaside" and "Celebration," both located in Florida, have been built around nostalgic and idealized notions of community life and public space, where for instance, preference is given to pedestrians instead of cars, and community life and encounters with neighbors are encouraged through design. Exclusionary practices are also implemented by regulating who lives there. However, the degree of control based on rules and regulations for the residents in these communities jeopardizes the spontaneous arrangements necessary for a true sense of public life based on the empowerment that ownership and control of the environment might otherwise provide to the residents (Sorkin, 1998). Gated communities are also examples of the spatial manifestations of privatization and its

effects on public life and public space. Middle class and upper middle class urban neighborhoods have turned increasingly toward confining their residences and themselves in gated communities "because they desire peace and they can afford it" (Low, 1996, p.397). For others who can not afford to control their immediate environments with such precision, a peaceful and safe environment is a volatile luxury. The most striking feature that symbolizes a 'peaceful' environment in neighborhoods that are not affluent is often that of the police presence, but the peace and surveillance provided are often seem as if they are intended more to protect outsiders rather than lower income urban residents. One can easily read a social logic of class segregation between the spatial lines inscribed in the urban landscape based on levels of access, control, and security of public space.

Privatization in another sense is also treated by some scholars from a perspective that focuses on the negative effects of modern living on the individual. Accordingly, the need for community life and civil contact with others can be enhanced with the provision of opportunities for leisure activities in public spaces. Francis (1989) states that:

Public life is evolving as part of a growing reaction to the privatization of American life. The isolation of suburban living, impersonal work environments, and the

increased stress of modern life all contribute to an increased appetite on the part of many people for public space. The park or the mall becomes a retreat, a form of refuge from the hectic daily schedule of appointments, faxing, car pools, and deadlines (p.149).

The retreat and refuge that these public spaces provide -- often just as much as parks do -- are very much organized within the capitalist logic (Harvey, 1990; Lefebvre, 1991; Rojeck, 1995; Zukin, 1991). Leisure spaces -- and within those, public spaces -- are spaces of social reproduction, and increasingly, spaces of consumption: the consumption of goods, services, and escape. With privatization, even the definition of what public space should provide is constructed from the perspective of either the market economy or private individuals who have the resources to affect how public space is defined, used, controlled, and accessed. Examples of alternatives articulated and often developed outside both the public sphere of the government and the private sector of the market economy, are, for instance, community gardens and community playgrounds. These public spaces are developed from community initiatives, but oftentimes these alternatives are spatially limited and depend on the government and the private sector -- especially the real estate industry-- for their existence i.e. they are on 'vacant' lots but with potential for development. However, discussions about public space, the role of the government in the provision of

services, and privatization need to be inserted within the literature that addresses broader conceptualizations of space as a social and economic product. This framework helps contextualize the discussion of the local effects on urban public space and safety from the perspective of recent global economic restructuring processes.

2.7- Public space from a socio-spatial perspective

Space with its environmental, cultural, and economic qualities is produced by social actors as well as by the structuring forces of society (Harvey, 1990; Lefebvre, 1991; Smith & Katz, 1993; Soja, 1989; Zukin, 1991). This notion of social space rests on the assumption that the physical environment and its social context simultaneously influence each other (Harvey, 1990; Rivlin & Wolfe, 1985; Soja, 1989; Wicker, 1987). Much recent literature concerned with the production of space has addressed the relationship between physical settings and social context by explaining the effects of recent trends in the economy, on space and spatial practices (Harvey, 1990; Smith, 1996). It is not the purpose of this discussion to present an all-encompassing critique regarding the "local-global" relationship. However, as with any metaphor used to describe social and spatial reality the "local-global" relationship sometimes lacks a clear, direct connection when the magnitude of the levels involved is so complex. Interpretations on the link between the large scope

of the global scale and the specificity of the local are oftentimes challenged, the link is not so clearly visible and could be approach from varied perspectives. At other times when this connection is successfully and clearly established it can present a false causal, deterministic proposition that suggests that local phenomena are a result of global trends or vice-versa. My intent here the attempt is to show the interactive nature of this relationship. In most cases the connection between local and global takes on a more discursive rather than empirical bent. Despite the possible limitations of the "local-global" approach, it still offers a platform to analyze current trends that affect the way urban space (including public space) is produced and defined at all scales, as well as our perceptions of it. As Saegert (1993, p.81) points out:

Structurationists, feminists, and marxist environmental design researchers remind us that existing environments emerge from much larger historical patterns of social relationships. Examples of environmental design research that explicitly and successfully focus on changes in the larger social, economic, and historical contexts are rare ... For example, the function of schools, hospitals, workplaces of particular kinds, etc. should be placed within a historical analysis that takes into account both local and more distant social, economic, and physical dynamics.

One of the contributions of this dissertation is to provide such an account of both the local and more distant social, economic, and physical dynamics of the playground under study in order to understand respondents' perceptions of safety there and in adjacent spaces. There are two basic reasons why it is important to incorporate the relationship between the local and the global in the analysis of social phenomena, particularly of space as a socio-economic product. First, such an account will provide a better understanding of how a setting operates, who visits the setting, how the setting is used, and how the setting is perceived in relation to other spaces and settings that also affect its functioning. In other words, how the setting is influenced by contextual structural forces. Second and more specifically, by understanding the effects of global economic trends and their impact on urban restructuring, we will be able to study and discuss indicators that affect and are related to public safety in the playground's neighborhood, Harlem, which is the subject of this dissertation. Income level, occupied housing units, poverty level, race, and ethnicity are some of the indicators that depict a profile of Harlem that is distinct from other neighborhoods and New York City as a whole. As a low income urban enclave, Harlem has particular demographic characteristics that can be explained drawing on a framework that accounts for the way in which the economy is organized at the global level and its effects at the national, state and local levels.

Mollenkopf and Castells (1991) note that global economic competition, technological revolutions, the formation of a new international division of labor, the growing power of finance relative to production, and migration from "Third World" industrializing nations to the core cities of the "First World" -- among other factors -- had strong impacts upon space and place:

The magnificence of the Manhattan central business and shopping district and the resurgence of luxury residential areas may be juxtaposed to the massive decay of the city's public facilities and poor neighborhoods (Mollenkopf & Castells, 1991, p. 80).

Global economic restructuring, or the movement of capital away from traditional sites of investment such as manufacturing in New York City, creates differentiated areas within urban landscapes. Some see this process of uneven development as an inherent part of capitalism and not unique to "restructuring" (Harvey, 1990; Smith, 1991; Soja, 1989). Zukin (1991) studied the effect of such economic trends in the creation of landscapes of corporate power. Landscape, Zukin pointed out, "represents the architecture of social class, gender, and race relations imposed by powerful institutions" (1991, p. 16). Zukin's intent in using the concept of landscape was to portray spatiality as an outcome of both integration and disruption in the world economy

expressed in the physical and social environment, and to indicate the socio-structural forces that present the city as a site for consumption. Global economic processes in relation to urban growth and decline, integration and disruption, have particular spatial consequences in the local landscapes that they create, change, or abandon. This process is easily identified in Harlem which represents a landscape not of corporate power but of disinvestment. Baldassare (1984) states that key indicators of decline include enduring problems of housing abandonment and the loss of jobs. Despite recent initiatives -- such as empowerment zones for economic development to attract private businesses into areas such as Harlem -- there has been a decline in revenues which constrained the improvement in the social and economic conditions of the inner city in the recent past.

The movement of capital both in and out of large US cities in recent years has transformed New York City from an industrial, shipping, and financial center to an administrative, service, and financial center that requires a different employment base than in the past (Mollenkopf & Catells, 1991; Sassen, 1991). Because of the flight of manufacturing jobs, this transformation has placed increasing pressure on blue collar neighborhoods, particularly Black or Latino ones -- the "inner city." As part of the inner city, contemporary Harlem is an area beset by disinvestment, poverty, decay in housing stock and other infrastructure, and

threatened by gentrification that was stalled with the collapse of the stock market in 1987. According to Soja (1989) the differentials in the uneven development of recent urban restructuring, have been maintained through the uneven allocation of capital investment and social infrastructure in urban geographies and sectors of the population. Moreover, Lawson and Wilson (1995) compared the "new poverty" conditions between Europe and North America and found the restructuring of the economy at the global level and the rearrangement of the economy within the urban context are among the factors that along with social and political forces affect inequality. The new poverty is based on changes in the size and composition of economically marginal groups, the deepening of racial differences between the marginalized groups in addition to limited life chances and increasing social and political isolation. Lawson & Wilson(1995) state that after the late 1970s, urban black poor people have been the group most severely affected by deindustrialization, lack of employment opportunities and cuts in the budget for public programs. Massey (1993) agrees indicating that Black residential segregation has the effect of isolating a large segment of the population through institutional actions that constrain Black people in a social and physical environment where poverty and unemployment are abundant, many families receive welfare assistance, the educational system is not effective and the physical infrastructure is deteriorated. These circumstances have an effect on how safe areas and

neighborhoods are perceived to be. Moreover, institutional programs and agendas have a strong effect in allowing these conditions to continue in lower income urban enclaves.

The shifts in aims and policies of governmental institutions, also affected by changing trends in the economy, have various effects on the quality of life for local residents, just as changes in the local social base, shaped by -- among other factors -- disinvestment and reinvestment processes, influence the development of local institutions. As such, public parks and playgrounds are susceptible to investment-disinvestment patterns at the neighborhood and higher levels. Indeed, the relationship with the immediate neighborhood and the perceived quality of the physical environment is said to be critical for successful urban parks (Hayward, 1989). Moreover, the social profile of a neighborhood strongly affects safety statistics and the perception of safety. From exploratory research (Nevárez, 1995) in the Frederick Douglass Circle area in Harlem near the West 110th Street playground I studied, poor and deteriorated areas were usually perceived as unsafe equally for both residents and non-residents, users and non-users. The manner in which a neighborhood is perceived also affects the way contiguous spaces -- public space in general and specific settings such as playgrounds -- are perceived (Blakely, 1993).

2.8- Urban Public Safety

The opening theme in Jane Jacobs' (1961) splendid book, The death and life of great American cities could be considered a treatise on safety in public space. She argues that public safety is one of the most important requirements for the successful use of a public space. Safety in public is accomplished through an orchestration of elements that include physical and social components. Architecture, urban planning and other disciplines that address the built environment focus on the physical elements that are key to improved safety in public spaces such as lighting, visual access, cleanliness, surveillance, and aesthetics (Nasar, 1989). But social elements are equally important, as Jacobs notes, "the sight of people attracts other people" (1961, p. 37).

Oscar Newman (1973) makes a similar argument when referring to the concept of "defensible space" to deter crime from neighborhoods. For Newman, crime deterrence and neighborhood safety require at least four aspects: 1) involvement of individuals as a community to define their territory; 2) design configurations that ease surveillance such as windows overlooking exterior and interior public areas; 3) avoidance of signs that present the space as vulnerable and isolated for the residents; and, as Jacobs also states, 4) communal activities to attract people. For

Newman, the places most in need of the creation of defensible space are residences in poor neighborhoods. He states that the middle and upper middle classes tend to organize resources to provide private surveillance for themselves in what have become known as "gated communities" (Newman, 1973). In gating, access to private residences is limited but so is the access to public space in these areas. While the middle class can obtain a high degree of safety through the control of access to their residential areas, the poor remain in enclaves that are often racially and spatially segregated, their safety concerns met largely by police deployment if at all.

To Davis (1992), the proliferation of gated communities and the segregation of the urban poor signals the end of the "Olmstedian vision of public space in America" (p.156). As social safety valves, the landscapes and parks designed by Olmsted and others provided people from different class and ethnic backgrounds the opportunity to socialize with each other. Davis mentions that this reformist ideal of public space has been extinguished and substituted instead by "the social imprisonment of a third-world service proletariat in increasingly repressive ghettos and barrios" (p.156). Even though Davis' analysis is based in Los Angeles, there are similar trends present in the disappearance of public space in other American cities such as New York and the consequent social isolation of urban enclaves based on class and

ethnicity. Many leisure spaces such as parks and playgrounds end up being largely segregated because of racialized and class residential segregation. Safety and the consequent concern with surveillance has increased the social and physical polarization of the middle class from the lower class. While the middle class protects their areas of dwelling and leisure with private surveillance and other strategies, poorer people remain in spatially and socially segregated neighborhoods with increasing levels of police surveillance. Under the current New York City of the Giuliani administration, for instance, the emphasis on improving the "quality of life" is based mainly on safety and cleanliness concerns (Smith, 1997). This "quality of life" has not arrived yet in Harlem in the same way that it has been implemented, for instance in Times Square and more visible and wealthy areas of the city. New York City as the 'entertainment capital of the world,' represented by such things as the Disneyfication of Times Square, is not the same city found in the deteriorating infrastructure and erratic public services of Harlem.

2.8.1- The perception of safety

Besides the aforementioned social and political aspects of public safety, the perception of safety also plays a key role in the public safety equation. While statistical accounts might reveal patterns in criminality, it is

ultimately a personal decision to estimate the level of danger in a situation and the amount of risk a person is willing to take in a threatening situation (Blakely, 1993; Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1995), and this is often a question of perceptions. For instance, Project for Public Space (PPS, 1995) did a study of public safety on Colorado State Trails. The purpose of the study was to determine what effect if any, the presence of urban trails has had on public safety among property owners who live adjacent to a trail, and on the property values of homes located within one block of a trail. However, PPS staff, basing most of their analysis on statistics, found that even when the statistics indicated criminal events taking place along the trails, residents did not feel the trails were the cause nor did they feel unsafe by living near the trails. Perception of safety was more important to residents and users in determining the safety of this public space than statistical accounts of crime incidence or elements of the physical environment. Likewise, Nager and Wentworth's (1976) evaluation of Bryant Park found that physical aspects such as visual access into the park and social issues such as criminality had strong effects upon the uses of the park and perceptions of safety there.

Broader in their scope, Williams and Kornblum (1995) include perceptions of safety and community organization in their study of adolescents in Harlem's public housing. They recommend the creation of safe niches for adolescents in

public housing projects through the participation and involvement of neighborhood residents. In their study , they state that participation and involvement of residents in the affairs of the project are crucial to the development of safe environments. Some of the strategies documented include the assignment of captains for each floor, control over who becomes a tenant and who remains one, and the development of friendship and kinship among neighbors. Others have reached similar conclusions on the importance of participation and community involvement for successful children's play areas (Hart, 1986; Martelli, 1995; Moore, 1974, 1989).

As previously discussed, the issue of safety is composed by a structural socio-economic aspect mirrored in the socio-physical environment, as well as individual perceptions of safety. In between these two aspects, however, there is another layer of meaning for safety. At the interstice of these layers of meaning lies the ideological construction of the discourse on safety. This discourse mediates people's perceptions and the structural conditions that foster safe or unsafe environments. The actual separation of structural forces and individual perceptions at the level of meanings and actions, functions as a deterring mechanism for specific groups such as children, women, minorities and "others," from a fuller appropriation of public space. The use of and access to public space and the discourses about safety developed by ruling classes translated into actions by governmental

institutions largely limit the use of public space to those official activities and actions that are considered to be safe (for instance, barbecue -- an activity in which participants are usually African-American and Latino -- is prohibited in Central Park). Even though seemingly necessary in practical terms, the construction of ideological discourses on safety that accompany institutional practices are an aid in the deployment of other mechanisms of social control. Regarding public space, these ideological discourses particularly relevant for women and children, among others.

2.8.2- Women and safety

Franck and Paxson (1989), Katz (1993, 1995), Madriz (1997), Pain (1991), and Valentine (1989), among other feminist scholars, agree that for women, the issue of safety determines, to a great degree, the quantity and quality of their use of public space. Women use public space at a disproportionately lesser rate than men. Women's fear of crime is significantly different from men's fear and reflects actual risks more realistically than men's fear (Pain, 1991). For instance, women's fear of crime leads them to develop spatial strategies that delimit their geographies through the avoidance of areas that they perceive as unsafe or that could make them victims of sexual abuse or violence.¹ Pain (1991)

¹ It should be noted that statistics show that most sexual abuse is caused by men that are familiar to their victims and/or within the private realm.

suggests that there should be a wider analysis of women's fear and its connection with women's limited access to the public domain. She states that, "just as the threat of rape deters some women from being out on the streets at night, sexual harassment at work functions to deter some women from the public domain" (p. 417). Again socialization plays a key role in the geography of women's fear and the strategies favored by official channels to prevent crime against women reinforce the idea that women are the ones responsible for preventing such behavior. This attitude, according to Pain (1991), imposes a code of unspoken rules about dress, behavior, lifestyle, sexuality, and female loyalty and passivity in relationships. The message: women remain safe by not crossing specific social and physical boundaries. The result of this ideological discourse is that women's limited access to the public sphere goes unchallenged, when their access to public life and public space is regulated by fear.

2.8.3- Children and safety

The ideology of fear also has consequences for parents in determining the children's public safety and use of public space (Blakely, 1993; Valentine, 1995). Katz (1995) calls this ideology and its various manifestations, "terror talk." For Katz, this terror talk victimizes children by restricting their access to public space, which corresponds to the way the ideology of fear works on women. Similar to the case of

women, statistics show that children are more at risk in private space and from people that they know (Bjorklid, 1994; Martelli, 1995). Hillman & Adams (1992) show that the major threat to children's safety in public space is traffic. However, in the ideology of what Valentine (1995) calls "stranger-danger," a strong message remains that children must be protected from strangers more so than from physical risks that are more likely to harm them.

Socialization plays an important role in the way women use public space. According to Saegert and Hart (1978) girls' play involves less active manipulation than that of boys and the range of physical activity beyond the home is more limited for girls than for boys. Girls are also discouraged from activities usually considered masculine such as exploration and manipulation of the environment. It has been documented elsewhere (Blakely, 1993; Hart, 1979; Katz, 1993; Valentine, 1995) that parents usually impose more restrictions on girls' use of public spaces than boys'. This is reflected, among other things, in the younger age at which boys are allowed outside the home by themselves compared to girls, and boys' wider spatial range than girls at all ages (Tindal, 1971). This tendency is reinforced and internalized throughout adult life, resulting in women's greater apprehension and fear in the public environment than men (Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1995).

In the safety equation, fear plays a large role. Accordingly there were a series of circumstances that prompted the creation of playgrounds as safe environments for children. With the advance of railroads, streetcars, and automobiles in the early twentieth century, anxiety about young people's safety in public spaces was widespread (Cahill, 1990; Goodman, 1979). Young people then were gradually pushed out of the street into schools, households, and public settings specifically designed for their use -- such as playgrounds. The safety of children was one of the main aspects considered in the construction of early playgrounds.

2.9- Playgrounds

The history of playgrounds in the US dates back to the early twentieth century with the Reformist Movement. According to some scholars, the creation of playgrounds and recreational facilities was used ideologically to transmit ruling class American values to new immigrants living in poor urban neighborhoods (Boyer, 1978; Goodman, 1979). Rosenzweig and Blackmar (1992, p. 392) explained that:

As the park system expanded, the parks and playground movement, led by progressive reformers, pushed for new organized facilities and supervised play programs for children within the city's public spaces. As was true

for so many progressive efforts, recreational reformers initially focused their attention on children.

Drawing on new theories of child psychology, progressives saw play as essential to human development. But to encourage the skills and values necessary to cope with modern society, play needed structure, supervision, and special equipment. In New York, as elsewhere in the country, playgrounds had appeared first under private auspices, but in the early twentieth century the Board of Education and then the Parks Department began to take charge.

The design of playgrounds is usually a compromise between providing play opportunities for children and satisfying adults' concerns with children's safety and with monitoring their activities. From a critical perspective, playgrounds regulate children's activities. Playgrounds and the play opportunities that they offer, simply stated, are often designed based on adults' concerns for the control and supervision of children, more than on children's play preferences and developmental opportunities (Blakely, 1994; Hart, 1978; Moore, 1989). According to Moore (1989), Hayward, Rothenberg & Beasley (1974), and others, playgrounds are not the favorite places of choice for children compared with more adventurous and less regulated play areas such as streets, parks, forests or the beach. For younger children, however, playgrounds still provide play opportunities in a "safe"

urban social context. Despite their disciplining aspect, playgrounds nowadays offer urban children at the very least a place to gather and play off the streets and in the urban context, outside their apartments.

The developmental advantages of play for children, are well documented (e.g., David and Weinstein, 1987; Moore, 1989; Noschis, 1992). These advantages include the development of social skills, a sense of autonomy, self-esteem, and motor skills (Moore, 1989). Noschis (1992) analyzed children's imitation of adults through play, a process that helps the development of identity in the child. Play is important for the child's cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development. Through play the child learns to know about her(him)self and the world: physical and social. Play, moreover, provides the child with the opportunity to have initiative and further develop a sense of autonomy and identity (Hayward et al, 1974).

While children are the principal user group of playgrounds, parents and guardians hold the power to decide which are adequate public places for their children, and city planners and administrators tend to delineate the contours of what is available to them. Playgrounds can foster children's play in the urban context, only if children have access to them and if caregivers know they are safe places -- physically and socially. This access is often compromised by

the unavailability of adult supervision and safety concerns about children playing outdoors unattended by an elder.

Safety has always been one of the most important aspects in the design and construction of playgrounds (Blakely, 1993; Frost, 1986; Katz and Hart, 1991; Moore, 1989). At the beginning of the century playgrounds were created in an attempt to remove children from the streets because of the growing concern with their safety there (Cahill, 1990; Berg & Medrich, 1980). However, there were concerns for children's safety in playgrounds as well, and guidelines were developed over the years for the construction of equipment to ensure durability and safety (Frost, 1986). Generally speaking, concerns about the physical conditions of playgrounds covered two aspects: 1) the kinds of equipment, materials, and playground surfaces used; and 2) their maintenance. According to Frost (1986), these concerns affected the development of playground equipment, guidelines for its construction, maintenance requirements, and the supervision of playground activities. For instance, many swings made out of wood were replaced by sole leather in the early 1900s and specific measurements were to be taken into consideration to provide enough space for different equipment. Later on standards were developed for playground design and construction by the Committee on Standards in Playground Apparatus of the National Recreation Association in 1929. In addition to specifications for playground design and construction, the

guidelines included specifications of the equipment appropriate for different age groups, supervision, regular inspection, and instruction for use of equipment, among other factors. Nowadays, the standards for playground design and construction are determined by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. These evolved further in recent years, when law suits from private individuals involving playground accidents started threatening the institutions that manage and maintain playgrounds.

The previous discussion addresses physical issues of playground safety. However, social aspects also affect safety. Blakely's (1993) study of parents' conceptions of urban dangers and their relationship to children's access to their neighborhoods, states that, "also evident in public play areas is a social reality of behaviors considered unconventional, deviant, or illegal, such as drug trafficking, vagrancy, robbery, sexual molestation, etc." (p. 18). She adds that some of the specific qualities that are important in the use of play areas include the location of the playground and the socio-economic characteristics of the users. Even though comprehensive, the focus of Blakely's work is on the users and not on the social, economic, and spatial conditions of these urban neighborhoods.

Public space implicitly refers to a physical locale or setting, which in itself is not apart from the influence of

social life and social and economic processes that shape its uses and production. According to the literature reviewed and the principles that guide this project, in order to understand public space and public safety it is necessary to understand and account for how both the physical elements of the environment and its meanings are produced simultaneously by structural forces as well as by people's everyday uses. Urban restructuring and the role of the government -- among other aspects -- in the production and maintenance of public spaces have direct consequences for urban public safety. Given these concerns, determining how social factors affect perceptions of safety in the West 110th Street playground is related to how the physical and social context affect perceptions of safety in the playground.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1- Research questions

My assumption in this dissertation is that if the West 110th Street playground is perceived as safe it will be used more by parents; however, parents may develop strategies to appropriate the playground through use despite negative perceptions about its safety. The research questions that guided this empirical study were:

1- How is public safety perceived in the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park?

(a) How is safety in the playground perceived by the users, non-users and managers?;

(b) What safety concerns foster or limit the use of the playground?;

2- How does the physical and social context help to explain the perceptions of safety of the playground?

(a) What social and physical factors influence concerns about public safety?;

(b) Are safety concerns about the playground different or similar to those about the neighborhood?;

(c) How are these concerns negotiated and articulated in people's practices of use and/or avoidance of public

space in general, based on the their perceptions of safety at the three scales of analysis?

In an effort to ground and focus the direction of the research agenda for this dissertation, I have limited the scales of analysis to concrete places to be studied empirically. However, the basis for the selection of the three levels of analysis is rooted in the theoretical definition of space I have adopted: a notion of space as socially produced and relational, not as a given vacuum or container. Each of the three levels of analysis -- the playground, the area of Central Park where it is located, and the surrounding neighborhood -- could be separately delimited. However, at a conceptual level and at the level of people's perceptions, the boundaries between the scales are interrelated and porous. The study of the relationships or networks along the different scales can help us to understand each of them in a more encompassing way. Relevant broader economic and social issues that connect these concerns with New York City as a whole and its positioning in the global restructuring process will also be considered as part of the broader context that affects the playground's use and perceptions of safety there.

I examined the links between the perceptions of safety in the playground, the area of Central Park where the playground is located, and its adjacent neighborhood by

parent users and non-users of the playground, and by the personnel responsible for the playground at both the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the Central Park Conservancy. This question is further explored at a theoretical level by addressing safety issues as they intersect with discourses on public space. This research documents not only what kinds of concerns different groups expressed but what strategies they use to feel safer in public spaces. Demographic information is also incorporated into the framework from which larger socio-economic patterns are identified as they relate to issues of safety in the neighborhood near the playground and New York City as a whole.

Space is a set of socially produced relations that are inscribed in the physical environment (Foucault, 1986; Lefebvre, 1991). This notion suggests that a study of public space must include the physical environment and broader contextual issues that help explain safety from a socio-cultural and political-economic perspective. This study undertakes a socio-spatial analysis at three scales: the scale of the playground, the area of the park where it is located, and the surrounding neighborhood. Questions concerning the combination of physical and social attributes of the playground and its contiguous areas, especially as they influence perceptions of safety, will be addressed across these three scales which provide the immediate context

for this study. Exploratory research in the area has suggested a number of questions regarding the ways the setting might be understood by focusing on the context and how it affects perceptions of safety (Low & Milan, 1992). While context is commonly addressed in studies of this kind as the history and demographic information related to the setting in question, this study focuses on the context more broadly and addresses how people in their act of perceiving and interpreting decide to use or avoid a setting, while also incorporating physical and social contextual factors. Methodologically, this study expands the definition of a setting and its study from that normally associated with post-occupancy evaluation by including these broader contexts. In this way, my project offers a critique of the notion of space from which post-occupancy evaluations usually depart. Post-occupancy evaluations have tended to address understanding the setting in a limited way: the object of their concerns as only the setting itself and excluding other social and political-economy aspects critical to the setting's functioning and people's perceptions and uses of it. Usually post-occupancy evaluations limit their scope to cover only those issues that are strictly related to the setting's design and functioning. Even when they do recognize contextual issues and factors, they fail to include them in the research.

The rationale for studying a specific site, the West 110th Street playground in Central Park, is that it provides a forum to discuss theoretical and empirical aspects of safety simultaneously. At a theoretical level, issues concerning what constitutes safety in a public space are examined. At an empirical level, the goal of this dissertation is to systematically address the physical and social safety concerns people have in the playground and its immediate socio-physical context. I focus on safety as an issue that links the different scales of analysis. During my initial exploratory research in the area, safety was one of the most salient problems for residents and other users of public space in the area of the playground bordering Harlem. I analyzed the uses and descriptions of the physical attributes of the setting as components that produce and are produced by socio-historic circumstances. Thus, safety is addressed in relation to physical features, socio-economic circumstances, and theoretical concerns associated with urban restructuring and governmental disinvestment while people's agency is taken into account through examining their perceptions, use, and appropriation of public space, individually and collectively.

3.2- Research Design

3.2.1- Post-occupancy evaluation

The overall process of data collection falls within the realm of post-occupancy evaluation (POE). This approach deals with the notion of how a setting "ought to work" for different people (Preiser, 1992; Winkel, 1993). Because the manner in which multiple realities configure a setting varies, there is no single way of interpreting how a setting should function. The term evaluation should be understood broadly as the documentation of the processes that inform the ways a setting is used and valued by the different groups concerned. Therefore, the different interpretations of safety in the playground and contiguous scales were assessed. The researcher's values can be assumed from the theoretical framework that informs this study. My theoretical approach is based on the notion that socio-spatial relations need to be explored, accounted for and problematized when studying the environment. Social and political-economic issues also shape relations in space and the contours of particular spaces. Within this approach, space, besides its physical components and elements, is also an economic and political phenomenon, produced socially. In assuming this position I address the structural forces that produce the conditions of a neighborhood like Harlem and explore alternative interpretations and strategies for change as part of POE.

Post-occupancy evaluation and environmental design research are both terms that deal with the evaluation of physical environments. More commonly, POE has focused on the analysis of a setting's operations according to the guidelines from which it was created. This emphasis on the setting per se provides only a partial, functional understanding of how a setting 'works' by focusing solely on the manner in which it is used. Such an evaluation disconnects the setting from the larger socio-economic context as it is experienced by people in the present. In other words, the end result of traditional POEs is a description of the setting viewed as an independent entity from its context, or as Wicker (1987) notes, "The lack of emphasis on setting contexts has led some observers to infer that settings are rather closed systems" (p.637). The setting as well as its context informs how a setting is used and 'ought to work.'

3.2.2- Context in Post-occupancy evaluation

Even though an examination of the ways a setting is used remains an important practical task, settings nonetheless have to be placed within a broader context to provide a more encompassing view of why they operate the way they do. For instance, the staff of Central Park Conservancy considered the West 110th Street playground to be used less successfully than other playgrounds in the Park because its location in a

ravine tends to make people feel unsafe (Personal Communication, Central Park Conservancy - Terry Johnson, Laura Starr, Dec. 15, 1994). Research there (Low & Milan, 1992) has shown that the area of this playground was perceived as unsafe both by users and passersby. The playground is located in a ravine and visual access to the area is limited. In addition, the adjacent corner entrance to the Park is used by some people who engage in illegal activities such as drug dealing and there is prostitution in the most secluded areas of the northwest ravine. Assaults and other crimes against persons and property also occur there. In the summer of 1995 a well-publicized attack and homicide of a woman jogger occurred in the Park near the playground. Moreover, the adjacent neighborhood has drug problems and a deteriorated physical infrastructure. All these factors and threats to safety also help to illustrate the way space is linked into a set of relations that account for the way safety is produced and perceived there; a "skein" (Foucault, 1986). In regard to the West 110th Street playground and the purpose of this study, the playground is linked to the other contiguous spaces in the manner in which the elements of the physical and social context affect perceptions of safety.

In order to delimit the contexts studied, I drew empirically from exploratory research in the area, and theoretically from the work of Alan Wicker (1987) and others who have developed the notion of context when studying

behavioral settings. The context of the playground as a specific behavioral setting (along with its internal dynamics) includes the following three aspects: (1) the larger social world as a combination of cultural, political, legal, economic, technological, and demographic components; (2) the history of the setting; and (3) the network of other settings in which a particular setting "is tied by resource or social influence linkages" (Wicker, 1987, p.636). In the present project, these aspects correspond respectively to: (1) the economic restructuring of New York City and its effects on demographic patterns and political economic relations that affect social and physical safety in the Lower Harlem neighborhood; (2) the playground's history; and (3) the role of Central Park Conservancy and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation in managing safety in the playground.

In a manner similar to Wicker's understanding of relations among settings, Lefebvre's (1991) and Foucault's (1986) notions of space as relational and socially produced also insist on the importance of the spatial relationships within and outside the setting for a better understanding of the setting's functioning and meaning. As such, socio-spatial practices at different levels -- from the global to the local -- of the economy, politics, and cultural forms and practices, are significant for understanding space and particular settings from a social science perspective. The way these components relate in the physical organization and

conceptual interpretation of a setting linked to other settings in terms of functions, uses, and perceptions contribute to deconstruct the setting as a rigid and limited space and as an isolated physical structure.

From an anthropological perspective, Andrew Vayda's notion of "progressive contextualization" also informs and complements the empirical study of people-environment interactions where context is a relevant focus. Vayda's idea of progressive contextualization is based on "focusing on significant human activities or people-environment interactions and then explaining these interactions by placing them within progressively wider or denser contexts" (Vayda, 1983, p.265). I used this approach as a conceptual tool to place people-environment interactions in the playground within progressively wider and denser contexts. As such, this approach helped to select, define, and delimit the scales of analysis relevant to personal and public safety in the present study.

3.3- Respondents

There were three groups of respondents: the playground users, the non-users, and managers² from the Central Park

² For purposes of this study 'manager' was created as a general category to include all the occupations of the staff who were interviewed including landscape architects, horticulturists, a planner, a maintenance worker, to name a few of the occupations.

Conservancy and the Department of Parks and Recreation. With the exception of the managers, all respondents were parents who take their children to the playground. The sampling of respondents was based on observations of playground use and the ethnic background and gender of playground users was taken into consideration when developing the different group samples. Every attempt was made to have the sample reflect the gender and ethnicity of the population of users of the West 110th Street playground and the Dana Center playground. The sample of participants interviewed in the West 110th Street playground included African-Americans (53%) -- the group that uses the West 110th Street playground the most -- Latinos (32%), and Whites (16%). The non-user interviews, which took place in the Dana Center playground included, Latinos (45%) -- the group that uses the Dana Center playground the most -- African-Americans (42%), Whites (10%), and Asians (3%).

The managers interviewed were chosen according to their availability and their occupation in the institutions that manage the West 110th Street playground, Central Park, and Morningside Park. In addition to being interviewed about the West 110th Street playground, playground workers were also asked to fill out a playground design safety and physical safety checklist (which reflected the standards set in the Annual Book of American Society for Testing Materials, Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for

Playground Equipment for Public Use for Playground Construction, 1995). The checklists focused on the safety standards of the equipment and other elements of the physical environment in the playground. Three playground design safety and physical safety checklists were completed along with two design walk-throughs.

3.3.1- Users

A total of 38 playground users (parents) were interviewed (21 women and 16 men) between June and September 1996. Interviewees reflected the racial and ethnic composition of the area surrounding the playground (see Table 1).

Table 1: Ethnic composition of users by gender

Ethnicity / place of birth:	Gender Female:	Male:
African-American/African-Caribbean (New York, South Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Caribbean/Jamaica, Belize)	12	8
Latino/Hispanic (New York, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Mexico, Dominican-Arab)	6	6
White (New York, Ohio, Connecticut, France)	3	3
Total: (38)	(21)	(17)

The average age of the women who used the playground was 33 years old and the men, 38 years old. All respondents lived in Harlem and neighborhoods contiguous to Harlem. The respondents have lived in the area an average of twelve and a half years though some had been there as briefly as three weeks and some as much as their whole life (48 years). Most of the respondents were employed (65%) while 34 percent were unemployed or not in the labor force. All of the respondents' occupations were in the service sector (see Table 2).

Table 2- Users' employment status and occupation (n= 32, based on respondents who provided this information)

Employed	Women (11)	Men (10)
occupation	daycare director licensed nurse registered nurse assistant programmer baby-sitter real estate market research interviewer secretary HIV educator waitress textile designer	clerical work garage attendant superintendent NYC housing waiter/nursing student hospital police registered nurse businessman handy-man buildings maintenance painter chauffeur
Unemployed	Women (6)	Men (5)
occupation	pension administrator security officer student business/accounting student/advertising & computer graphics vocational training	construction/carpenter /maintenance custodial engineer student lumber-yard social worker

Most respondents (48%) had two children . The average age of the children brought to the playground was six years old. Their ages ranged from 2 months to 9 years old.

3.3.2- Non-users

The non-user category refers to parents who have passed by or been to the West 110th Street playground but do not use it as often as the Dana Center playground nearby. The non-user interviews took place from June through September 1996 at the Dana playground. A total of 31 non-users were interviewed, 15 women and 16 men. The ethnic composition of those interviewed reflects that of the area where the Dana playground is located (see Table 3).

Table 3: Ethnic composition of non-users by gender

Ethnicity / place of birth:	Gender	
	Female:	Male:
African- American/African Caribbean (New York, Philadelphia, London, Jamaica)	6	7
Latino/Hispanic (New York, Puerto Rico, Cuban, German- Spanish, El Salvador, Honduras)	7	7
White (New York, Italian- American)	2	1
Asian (Bangladesh)		1
Total: (31)	(15)	(16)

The average age for the women was 32 years old and 34 for the men. Most respondents lived in Harlem, with the exception of two participants, one who lived in the Bronx but

often visited the area and one respondent who lived in Long Island and was visiting the Dana and the West 110th Street playgrounds for the first time. The respondents' had spent an average of 11 years living in these neighborhoods. Some had lived there as little as one and a half years while another was there for 43 years. Most non-users were employed (61%), and the rest were unemployed or not in the wage labor force. Their jobs were in the service economy (see Table 4).

Table 4- Non-users' employment status and occupation (n=31, based on respondents who provided this information)

Employed	Women (6)	Men (13)
occupation	management consultant clerical worker elementary public school/ teacher housewife secretary hair salon manager/ receptionist housekeeper computers	NYC policeman music producer para-legal data-processor computer telemarketing maintenance worker/Columbia University doorman electrician junior accountant artist & businessman hospital maintenance insurance claims representative taxi driver
Unemployed	Women (9)	Men (3)
occupation	home-maker (3) student/business advertising technician housewife/daycare disabled/secretary housekeeper computers	disabled childcare worker & youth counselor studying to be chef

Most of the non-user respondents (86%) had been to or knew the location of the West 110th Street playground. Most of them (42%) had visited this playground within the past year (1995). Twenty-six percent of the respondents visited the West 110th Street playground as recently as a month before the interviews took place. Most non-user respondents had two children (43%). The average age of the children brought to the Dana playground was seven years old. Thus the user and non-user profiles were largely similar in terms of age, number of children and employment.

3.3.3- Managers

A total of 11 interviews were completed, as well as designer walk-throughs with managers, at each of the two playgrounds (West 110th Street and Dana Center). The manager category includes respondents who work for the institutions that manage the maintenance and operation of playgrounds in Central Park and Morningside Park. The managers interviewed were respondents with different professional backgrounds who worked for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and/or The Central Park Conservancy (see Table 5). Two respondents worked for both the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and The Central Park Conservancy, two worked for the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, five were employed by The Central Park Conservancy, and one respondent helped both institutions on a volunteer basis as a playground captain. The playground captain lived in the neighborhood and had been involved in the operation and maintenance of the West 110th Street playground since 1993. The professionals interviewed included those whose responsibilities encompassed the whole area of Central Park and those whose work was specifically delimited to the area of the park near the playground.

Table 5: Occupational profile of managers from the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and The Central Park Conservancy.

Profession:	Institution:
Central Park Planner (1)	The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and The Central Park Conservancy
Director of Governmental Affairs and Community Relations (1)	The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and The Central Park Conservancy
Chief of Landscape Architecture (Landscape Architect) (1)	The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and The Central Park Conservancy
Landscape Architects (2)	The Central Park Conservancy
Playgrounds Project Coordinator for Central Park (1)	The Central Park Conservancy
Maintenance workers/ (3) Assistant Gardener (2) Playground Operations Worker (1)	1- Assistant Gardener - The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation; 2- Assistant Gardener - The Central Park Conservancy; 3- Playground Operations Worker - The Central Park Conservancy
District Supervisor of Maintenance and Operations (District 9, includes Morningside Park) (1)	The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

3.4- Methods

This study involved a multi-method approach that included observations of the playground and its users, interviews with users, non-users, and managers of Central Park from both the Central Park Conservancy and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, designer walk-through, and design safety checklist for the West 110th Street playground. The 38 user interviews were conducted in the West 110th Street playground which is at the northwest

corner of Central Park, between 110th Street and Central Park West (See Appendix 1, Map # 1). The 31 non-user interviews were conducted at the Dana Center playground located at the north end of Central Park on 110th Street between Lenox and Fifth Avenues (See Appendix 1, Map # 1). The 11 managers' interviews were conducted at the Central Park Conservancy headquarters on 104th Street and Fifth Avenue, at the West 110th Street playground, and at the headquarters of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation at Morningside Park on 123rd Street. The playground design and physical safety checklists of the West 110th Street playground provided information on the condition of the playground's equipment and other physical infrastructure. Two designer walk-throughs -- which entailed observations of the playgrounds' equipment coordinated with interviews of landscape architects while in the playground -- were conducted at each playground: the West 110th Street and the Dana playground. A total of 79 interviews were completed including the users, non-users, managers, and landscape architect interviews and the design safety checklist. In addition, I collected demographic information and conducted archival research on the Harlem neighborhood, and studied graphic and visual material that included maps, photos, and slides.

The interviews included questions regarding the perception of safety at the three scales specified above --

the West 110th Street playground, the area of Central Park where it is located, and the surrounding neighborhood for users, non-users, and managers. The non-user interviews also included questions about the Dana playground. Both interviews -- with users and non-users -- included questions regarding safety strategies respondents used. The observations, conducted informally over four months, helped document activities and particular events or situations taking place in the site during each of my visits there. Maps, plans, and slides were also gathered to produce visual documentation of the West 110th playground and its surroundings, the Dana Center playground, as well as other nearby playgrounds in Central Park and in the Harlem neighborhood. The playground design safety interview along with a physical safety checklist helped me to evaluate the design and physical aspects of the playgrounds with an emphasis on physical safety issues. The designer walk-through informed design issues and the process of re-design of the West 110th Street and Dana Center playgrounds. The analysis of recent demographic information and archival research offered a complementary profile of the constituency of the playground and the neighborhood and allowed the development of a critical perspective on New York City's positioning in the global economy, the current urban restructuring processes, and fiscal disinvestment.

3.4.1- Interviews

The user interview (see Appendix 2) was intended to provide information on the respondents' overall use and perception of the playground, its physical attributes, and the social factors that raised safety issues for the participants and their children. The interviews dealt with safety issues in the playground, the park, and the adjacent neighborhood. They included a total of 45 questions and lasted from 20 minutes to an hour. The interviews were tape recorded. I also took notes of the responses during the interview. After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed verbatim, and content analyzed for themes.

The non-user interviews (see Appendix 3) took place at the Dana Center playground and were intended to provide information about the non-users' perceptions of the West 110th Street playground, the area of the park contiguous to it, and the neighborhood adjacent to the playground. The interviews included sections that compared the West 110th Street playground and the Dana playground in terms of safety and other factors. The non-user interviews also dealt with safety issues for the respondents and their children. The interviews included 48 questions and lasted from approximately 20 minutes to an hour. The interviews were tape recorded and while being conducted I also took notes of the

respondents' answers. These interviews were also transcribed verbatim and content analyzed.

Interviews with various professionals involved with the playgrounds were also conducted. The purpose of the manager interviews was to better understand the management and maintenance of the West 110th Street playground (see Appendix 5). The manager interviews included questions about the respondent's responsibilities and the organization for which the respondent worked. The interview also dealt with the history of the organization and safety issues at the three scales of analysis: the playground, the area of the park, and the adjacent neighborhood. The manager interview included a total of 32 questions and lasted from 30 minutes to an hour-and-a-half. I also took notes of the respondents' answers besides tape recording the interviews. These interviews were also transcribed verbatim and content analyzed.

The playground design safety and physical safety checklist was a kind of structured interview that provide an evaluation of the physical components of the playground (see Appendix 6). The design safety interview and the checklist, both developed by Rohane (1983), summarize the most important aspects of playground physical safety, also specified in the Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use (Annual Book of American Society for Testing and Materials, 1995). The playground

safety checklist complements the information from the managers' interview in that it provides information about the design and physical safety conditions of the playground. A total of three design safety interviews and the checklist were completed with the Playground Project Coordinator for Central Park and two maintenance workers.

Two designer walk-throughs were completed (see Appendix 7). Designer walk-throughs were originated in the field of Architecture as a method to evaluate the functioning and design of buildings. Designer walk-throughs are commonly used in post-occupancy evaluations (Preiser, 1992) The designer walk-through involved a visit to the playgrounds with the architects who were involved in the re-design of the West 110th Street playground and another with the landscape architect who redesigned the Dana Center playground. Each visit to both playgrounds included direct observation of the playground simultaneously with questions asked to the architects about the playground equipment and changes in the playground layout and design. Both interviews were tape recorded accompanied by notes I took. They were also transcribed verbatim and content analyzed.

3.4.2- Playground observations

The formal playground observations were taken before or after the user interviews, in order to offer background

information about the people and the activities in which they were engaged at the West 110th Street playground (see Appendix 4). More informal observations were done while passing by the playground on my almost daily bicycle rides around Central Park during a period of four months which coincided with the user interviews. I also conducted more informal interviews while I have been living in the neighborhood and passing by the playground and the park for a period of over four years (between 1994 to 1998). The fieldnotes of the formal observations complemented the user interviews and helped me to document what was taking place in the West 110th Street playground over several months. The formal observations took place in 1996 during the months of June, July, August, and September. The observation periods lasted a minimum of half an hour and sometimes as long as two hours, and took place between 11:00 am and 6:30 pm. Even though observations were done during each day of the week, most of them took place on Saturday (the day when most user interviews took place). The fieldnotes focused mostly on incidents that involved physical and/or social safety for the children and adults present in the playground. They also provide information about the main activities taking place in the playground, the number of adults and children in the playground at any given time, as well as my impressions of the ethnicity, gender, age composition of the playground users, and the general atmosphere of the playground and its use.

3.4.3- Demographic information

The demographic information collected includes specific indicators from the 1990 Census covering the area within a one block radius of the playground, and from New York City as a whole. By covering a one block radius I was able to build a profile of the demographic composition of the immediate neighborhood of the playground. Additional demographic information and secondary sources were also gathered and analyzed. The demographic information for each block around the playground included the following: 1) total population; 2) its gender division; 3) educational attainment; 4) the number of children ever born per 1,000 women; 5) children under 5 by ethnic group; 6) nativity and place of birth; 7) race; 8) people of Hispanic origin; 9) language spoken at home; 10) income in 1989; 11) poverty status in 1989; and 12) gross rent.

3.4.4- Plans, maps, and photos

Maps and plans were collected for the West 110th Street playground and elsewhere in the park. These included a landscape map of the playground, a topographical survey of the portion of Central Park where the playground is located, and a copy of the Olmsted Greensward plan. A context map was also included to locate the West 110th Street playground and the Dana Center playground along with nearby playgrounds in

Harlem and elsewhere in central Park. Photos studied include those of the West 110th Street playground, the Dana Center playground, four playgrounds in Central Park near the West 110th Street playground, four playgrounds in the nearby Harlem neighborhood, as well as pictures of specific elements of the physical environment in the playground, the park and the neighborhood, mentioned by respondents when talking about safety. This graphic material was used to provide visual information about the physical characteristics of the West 110th Street playground and its location.

3.4.5- Archival research

The archival research included annual reports from The Central Park Conservancy and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation as well as other reports and sources related to crime and justice, surveillance, and housing in New York City. The archival materials were included to compare the budgets of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation with that of the Central Park Conservancy in terms of playground maintenance and operations. The Weapon Related Injury Surveillance System Update and the Vera Institute Atlas of Crime both provided information on the incidence of particular crimes in Harlem.

3.5- Procedures

The bulk of the data collection took place from January to September 1996. As a resident of the area for two years, I often visited or passed by the playground when riding my bicycle in Central Park. I did this every month of the year observing the West 110th Street playground. I observed that the West 110th Street playground was used largely, and almost only, during the Summer months. Thus I collected the use data primarily during the Summer. During my informal observations I also noticed that most visitors to the playground were African Americans and Latinos. I observed relatively few Whites there. Because the data collection took place during the Summer there were no obstacles in finding respondents from the different ethnic groups that frequent the playground. I conducted most of the interviews in English, the main language of most respondents, with the exception of six that were conducted in Spanish, when the respondent preferred that option.

The user interviews took place at the West 110th Street playground. Respondents were asked to comment on the physical condition and social aspects of the playground, mostly focusing on safety issues. The interviews also addressed safety issues in the park near the playground as well as in the adjacent neighborhood where most of the respondents lived.

The selection of the site for the non-user interviews was based on the proximity of the Dana playground to the West 110th Street playground and the contrasting characteristics of the Dana playground and its surroundings to those of the West 110th Street playground. The Dana playground is located in an open area accessible to the Dana Discovery Center³ which has restrooms, public phones, and constant police presence. These features are absent at the West 110th Street playground. At the Dana playground, respondents were asked to compare physical and social characteristics of the West 110th Street playground to the Dana playground. The non-user interviews also addressed safety issues at the three scales of analysis: the West 110th Street playground, the northwest corner of the park, and the adjacent neighborhood. Most non-users lived near the Dana playground on 110th Street between Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard and Lenox Avenue, a neighborhood with characteristics similar to the one near the West 110th Street playground.

The managers' interviews took place at: 1) The Central Park Conservancy Headquarters; 2) the West 110th Street playground, and; 3) Morningside Park. These interviews were conducted in English. All interviews were tape recorded, and

³ The Dana Discovery Center is located where the Harlem Meer Boat House used to be. It is operated and maintained by The Central Park Conservancy and provides cultural and educational activities free of charge. In addition to cultural events and educational activities, the Dana Discovery Center also has a fishing program in which the Center staff lend fishing rods and give bait so that young people and others can fish in the Meer.

I also took notes while conducting the interview. These interviews included information about the functions of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and The Central Park Conservancy functioning regarding the maintenance and operations of playgrounds in Central Park and in the Harlem neighborhood, particularly Morningside Park which -- according to respondents -- was visited by users and non-users alike. The interviews also focused on the managers' professional opinions about safety issues in the West 110th Street playground and other areas of the park.

3.6- Analysis

I transcribed each interview verbatim and coded and analyzed them with the help of a computer data-base program. I did an open coding initially to search for categories. Since the overarching theme and focus of the analysis was based on the social and physical aspects that affect perceptions and experiences of safety, I first searched for general categories provided by the respondents regarding safety. Some of the general categories developed at this stage included: people, activities, playground equipment, and areas of the park and the neighborhood. After identifying the main categories. I then did an intense analysis of the interviews focusing around one category at a time (axial coding). At this stage I started focusing on identifying and describing the relationships between the different

categories. For instance, the category of 'people' referred most commonly to the presence of different kinds of people engaged in different activities at different places within the context of the playground, the park or the neighborhood. After a set of related categories was completed, I did selective coding where I searched systematically for those categories that related to the core codes in a way that helped explain the conditions and consequences for the relationships encountered. At this stage I also introduced elements of the theoretical framework in which this study is grounded to conceptualize the relationships I found in the data between broader social, economic and political issues and individual perceptions of safety. The playground design safety checklist and physical safety checklist as well as the designer walk-throughs were similarly analyzed. The demographic information was complemented by archival research to establish patterns and/or trends that describe the social and economic context of the blocks contiguous to the playground and the Harlem neighborhood where it was located.

The coding process was also aided by my interpretation of Lefebvre's spatial analysis or spatiology. According to Lefebvre (1991) this analysis aids in the understanding of space as socially produced. The analysis is anchored in three aspects: 1) descriptive, 2) analytical, and 3) global. Applied to the study of the West 110th Street playground, the descriptive aspect focuses on a typology of the physical

features including the topography, vegetation and built forms of the playground, the surrounding landscape and the neighborhood. The second aspect, the analytic, focused on the rhythms of playground usage, the social conditions of the neighborhood and the strategies developed by respondents to traverse through it safely. The global aspect was addressed by a critique of space, including a theoretical conceptualization of public safety and public space across the three scales of analysis. These three components -- the typology, the analytical, and the global -- and their relations were included as anchors to the analysis of parents' perceptions of safety.

Through these methods I gathered information on safety concerns focused on the elements of the physical and social environment of the West 110th Street playground and its adjacent neighborhood. These methods helped to answer my research questions in that they provided information about the perception of safety among users, non-users, and managers; the safety concerns that encouraged or limited the use of the playground; and the physical and social factors relevant to respondents' perceptions of safety as well as the comparisons they made between playgrounds in Central Park and playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood in terms of safety. The methods used helped me to examine some of the broader implications of the uses of public space and specifically public safety within the broader context of urban

restructuring and public disinvestment, particularly as they affect the current conditions of Harlem's neighborhoods.

CHAPTER FOUR

URBAN RESTRUCTURING AND HARLEM'S SOCIO-PHYSICAL CONTEXT

Space is socially produced at different scales. One of the underlying threads that connects the scales of analysis and actually delimits their boundaries is the specific structural forces that shaped them. The processes associated with late capitalism and the uneven manner in which these processes affect different scales have spatial and social consequences. Due to a combination of factors, recent changes in the global economy have affected spaces and people locally, restructuring the order by which urban and suburban areas are organized: what is produced, where it is produced, and who works and lives where. These structural processes are filtered into this study as a way of providing an understanding of the social and economic context of the neighborhood contiguous to the West 110th Street playground: Harlem. Urban restructuring is one of the main aspects to be discussed as an urban effect of larger global economic processes. Even though global processes and the way they affect localities do not determine people's perceptions and behaviors, they do influence the options and choices that people assume in their behaviors. This chapter emphasizes an analysis from a structural perspective and its socio-spatial consequences in Harlem in order to provide an understanding of the socio-physical conditions of the neighborhood contiguous to the West 110th Street playground and its

relations to the place New York City occupies in the global economy.

4.1- Urban restructuring

Urban restructuring is the process by which changes in the economy alter social relations, political economy, and the physical landscape. The restructuring of urban space is a direct result of the restructuring of the economy at the global scale (Harvey, 1990; Soja, 1989; Smith, 1992; 1986). The way this recent organization of the economy affects cities results in particular spatial and demographic arrangements. Cities have always been affected by the economy. Generally speaking, one of the constant features of modernity has been that patterns of growth and development in the urban context have been in large measure a response to and reflection of the needs of the capital accumulation. The flexible character of this economic accumulation process in advanced capitalist countries entails flexibility regarding labor processes, labor markets, production, and patterns of consumption (Harvey, 1990). These changes are inscribed in the social and physical environment. The rapid changes in the evolution of new markets and financial systems also involves fast shifts in the shape of geographical areas. The flexibility and mobility characteristic of the latest developments in the capitalist economy have been aided by advances in technology that ease the movement of information,

people, and goods from one location to another in a shorter period of time.

The recent restructuring of urban space -- and that of New York City more specifically -- is a result of at least three simultaneous processes: 1) the characteristic uneven development of capitalism; 2) recent deindustrialization processes which have produced a shift from a manufacturing-based economy (or the production of goods) to a service based economy around services such as finance, insurance, and real estate; and 3) the flight of capital to suburbs and "edge cities," and the consequent devalorization of capital invested in the urban built environment during the 1980s (Smith, 1986). In the 1980s there was reinvestment of capital in New York City but the economic depression that followed the 1987 stock market crash and lasted until approximately 1994, halted investment and slowed further urban development there. More recently however, there has been a more selective investment that has altered the patterning of the urban landscape mainly to develop certain parts of the city into sites of entertainment for the consumption of leisure and culture. On the one hand, areas such as Times Square are being restored and transformed into entertainment and cultural centers. On the other hand, investment in areas like Harlem has been rather slow and not as comprehensive. This state of affairs has also been accompanied by the "neo-liberal" trend in politics wherein the government is changing

its role as enabling the movement of capital by decreasing national regulations in trade and commerce, and by encouraging the privatization of many goods and services provided traditionally by the state.

Prior to the recent restructuring of the urban economy and ongoing transformation of the physical environment, capitalist cities were marked by economic transformations at different points in time. During the middle of the last century, cities were transformed from mercantile-based economies into centralized industrial depots where basic entrepreneurial and competitive economic activities took place. After approximately the 1870s, capitalist cities were under the influence of more sophisticated financial and commercial activities in conveniently located central business districts. During the Great Depression and after World War II, well into the 1960s, cities were restructured according to the needs of corporate capitalism and finance acquired a stronger economic role when industry and manufacturing were decentralized. The result of this economic restructuring is still evident in the suburban sprawl and metropolitan expansion away from city centers. According to Harvey (1990) the democratic and capitalist agenda of postwar politics addressed the provision of decent housing and full employment, among other provisions to warrant citizens' welfare even if they did not succeed in providing it. Suburbanization was mainly underwritten privately but aided

substantially by government subsidized housing, mortgages, and various subsidies for veterans. In addition, public investments were made available for the construction of highways, roads, and other infrastructure that helped suburban development. With the flight of people and jobs to the suburbs, old city centers and the inner city infrastructure underwent rapid deterioration. In New York City Robert Moses mediated between private developers' interests and access to public funds and developed the New York metropolitan region's infrastructure; building highways, bridges, buildings, parks, and playgrounds. This work isolated some neighborhoods and helped sustain others. Many of the former were later affected by disinvestment, and deteriorated markedly (Caro, 1974; Harvey, 1990). Through government subsidized initiatives -- urban renewal -- old city centers and certain residential areas were then improved.

Current urban restructuring builds on the accumulation of changes from previous periods and has created a new role for major cities, such as New York City, in the global economy, as headquarter cities. A headquarter city is a command point that coordinates the economy at the world scale. Finance, which has replaced the manufacturing that now largely takes place where cheaper labor forces are available, is one of the principal economic activities of headquarter cities Harvey, 1990; Mollenkopf & Castells, 1991; Sassen,

1991; Zukin, 1991). The deindustrialization process -- the shift in the economy from manufacturing to finance and other services-- that has accompanied urban economic restructuring has produced competition between major cities in the advanced capitalist world as centers for finance, consumption, and entertainment (Harvey, 1990).

New York City has long been a leading financial center for the national and global economies, and currently is the "global city par excellence," the control center for the upper circles of finance and commerce, and the center that connects the American economy to the international, global economy (Sassen, 1991). Aided by communication technologies, modern transportation, and lax foreign capital investment regulations around the world, New York City, like other headquarter cities such as London and Tokyo, coordinates the movement of investment capital across national borders (Bluestone, 1994). However, the fast pace in which capital moves and the flux of its movement, leaves behind landscapes of uneven development and a restructuring of the physical environment to serve the needs of capital accumulation more than other aspects of urban social life. The pattern of the restructuring process and its uneven development is evident at different scales, those between nations and within nations, at the global and local level. The boundaries between and across the global and the local scales, however, are not mutually exclusive and in most countries there is

evidence of simultaneous production activities and/or industries (even when finance is the main economic activity, at a smaller scale there is also manufacturing and vice-versa), and in terms of the spatial arrangements that capital movement leaves in its path (progress and decay). At the different scales, capitalist production and the spatial arrangements that it requires, whether that of creation or abandonment, intersect. Globally, uneven development is expressed as a broadly conceived differentiation between advanced capitalist nations whose main - but not unique -- economic activity is finance and those whose main -- but not unique -- activity is manufacturing. However characterized by main economic activities, all countries have to a greater or lesser extent a combination of different economic activities including finance, manufacturing, and agriculture. A result of these economic conditions is the uneven control over capital and other resources, including labor.

The national scale, is divided into regions, and "the scale of locality" includes social reproduction -- primarily the geographical terrain of everyday activities (Smith, 1992). Overall, a hierarchy of nested scales may include that of the nation itself, and within the nation, cities and suburbs, and other scales such as neighborhoods. Capital trespasses and deploys itself throughout these scales unevenly. Hence, the geographical scales are produced by conflicts and struggles between, on the one hand, the

constructions of the logic of advanced capitalism, and on the other, the response from social actors to the uneven character of this capitalist logic. The flexible movement and accumulation of capital in the global economy is part of a pattern of uneven development in both, sectors of the economy and geographic regions, creating differentials in the experience of what these flows of capital produce to social actors (Harvey, 1990, Smith, 1991).

The deindustrialization process that has affected US cities is a result of the shift from a goods-production or manufacturing economy to one based more on services⁴. The flight of capital to other national regions or countries in search of a cheap labor force for the manufacturing industry has adversely affected New York City. There has been little incentive, until recently, for the investment of capital in the urban environment with the exception of areas with potential for the development of the entertainment industry and for up-scale residences. This recent investment in the city is largely due to the positioning of the city as a stronger competitor at the global level with other cities as markets for the consumption of leisure, culture, and entertainment. In addition finance as well as real estate and

⁴ The service economy involves a skilled labor force whose employment is mainly in occupations such as managerial, professional, research, clerical, and communications (Smith, 1986). But even within this economy there is a distribution of earning according to technology and skill level: high technology implies high skill level and high pay. Low skill level results in low pay.

insurance industries have become stronger. The building stock and land use affected by deindustrialization, accelerated the vacancy of former industrial areas and the flight of large sectors of the population to the suburbs. While the price of suburban land increased due to the development of industrial, residential, commercial, and recreational areas, the relative price of inner city land decreased and smaller amounts of capital were invested in the maintenance and repair of inner city building stock and infrastructure. This state of affairs contributed to a 'rent gap' in central and inner city property, and to the trend that since the 1970s rehabilitated sections of the inner city infrastructure for gentrification, a form of selective reinvestment (Williams & Smith, 1986).

At the scale of the city, and side by side with global finance transactions, sites of entertainment and consumption glitter. New York City's landscape was clearly affected by the deindustrialization process, and the exodus of capital to suburbs and elsewhere decreased the investment of capital in the urban environment, specifically the inner city. The subsequent deterioration of the inner city prompted capital investment in old city centers known in the 1960s as "urban renewal," which transformed downtown areas and old neighborhoods into increasingly gentrified zones where professionals found improved living areas near their places of work. These improvements of the urban infrastructure have followed a selective process. In areas such as Harlem, much

of the physical infrastructure remains in decay, and residents have fewer viable working options in high paying jobs in a service based economy steadily increasing gap in earnings between the well educated and the not-so-well educated (Bluestone, 1994). While the inner city building stock was devalued, gentrification transformed industrial infrastructure into residences for the expanding professional class (e.g. Mollenkopf & Castells, 1991; Zukin, 1982). In many areas of the inner city, gentrification translates into the restoration of deteriorated urban property in working-class neighborhoods for middle and upper middle class incomers. A common consequence of gentrification is the displacement of working class people and families from the inner city. Gentrification, from the perspective of urban restructuring is important as it relates to the conditions of the inner city infrastructure. Attempts at gentrification in Harlem will be discussed in a later section after addressing some issues regarding the public disinvestment that has accompanied the urban restructuring process.

4.2- Public disinvestment

Since the industrial revolution in the US, the government has traditionally assumed responsibility for the maintenance and development of infrastructure, health care, education, subsidizing research, housing, environment and welfare in order to maintain the reproductive forces for

production purposes. The definition of the role of the government and that of the private sector has also been affected by conflict, struggle, and negotiation between laborers/consumers, capitalists, and the private and public sector (Harvey, 1990; Smith, 1986). However, under recent neo-liberal trends, governments are increasingly leaving it to or working in cooperation with the private sector to provide optimal conditions for production and reproduction to fulfill contemporary economic arrangements (Rouse, 1995). The role of the government in the restructuring process is secondary to that of capital which translates into a trend that is increasingly directed towards governmental "efficiency," reduced government spending, and the privatization of public services. The large deficits and fiscal crises that resulted from the recession of the 1970s prompted governmental retrenchment and budget cuts in services traditionally covered by the government. The lack of private capital then invested in the city and the fiscal abandonment of the inner city have had a devastating effect on the maintenance and development of the city's infrastructure as well as in the provision of public services, particularly in areas that have not been the main focus of the latest reinvestment and development initiatives. The selection of sites for reinvestment within the urban context has been led by the development of sites of consumption and entertainment (e.g. Times Square, South Street Seaport, and other areas near central business

districts and old city centers), and less so into inner city lower income neighborhoods such as Harlem.

Soja (1989) states that there is a dialectic relationship between spatial segregation and social discrimination as well as between the spatial composition in the patterns of symbolic identity and cultural affinity. Groups that share the same culture choose their spaces as a defense and are also contained in specific spaces by discrimination. The urban landscape, then, simultaneously expresses and reproduces cultures based on differences in ethnicity, class, sexuality and age. Territories of people oppressed by class, race, and ethnic differences such as Harlem, are located in areas which lack economic opportunities due to the way racial discrimination, social stratification, and urban restructuring converge.

In the last decades, massive layoffs due to the shift towards a service economy, wage stagnation, and cuts in social services and programs have contributed to income polarization -- an increased gap between the rich and the poor (Bluestone, 1994). With an ever expanding labor reserve of unskilled laborers juxtaposed to a relative scarcity of well-educated, professional workers, the trend indicates continued wage polarization. The gap between well-compensated workers and those at the bottom of the compensation ladder

will tend to grow as it has for the last several years (Bluestone, 1994).

A helpful metaphor to express the way uneven development shapes the urban social landscape is the "dual city" (Mollenkopf & Castells, 1991). New York City is two cities: one rich and one poor. One can find high paying jobs, luxury consumption, and high society, but also urban decay, homelessness, unemployment or underemployment and the increasing growth of poor sectors in the society. Many neighborhoods in New York suffer chronic poverty with few connections to viable jobs. Harlem is an example of one such neighborhood, segregated from much of the city by sharp distinctions of race and class.

4.3- The legacy of urban restructuring and public disinvestment in Harlem

Harlem, located in upper Manhattan, covers an area of approximately four square miles. It extends north of Central Park for approximately two miles. On its eastern side the boundary extends south to 96th Street while on the West Side, 110th Street is the southern boundary. Harlem's total population is approximately 300,000 people (Smith, 1996). Harlem has been perceived for many years by the white middle class as a generally threatening and unsafe neighborhood with a strong political and social identity.

Settled by the Dutch in the early seventeenth century, Harlem was a self-governing and wealthy rural community by the early 1800s. In the 1830s Harlem's land "had given out, property values had fallen" (Vietorisz & Harrison, 1970, p. 5). In the 1880s New York's population was expanding rapidly. In the ensuing construction boom, the elevated railroad was extended to 127th Street in Harlem. Much of Harlem's current housing stock was built for the bourgeois population during the period from the late 1800s through the first decade of the twentieth century. When a subway line to run from one end of Manhattan to the other was proposed, Harlem underwent another period of land speculation and home building in the late 1890s. By 1904-5 there were a large number of unoccupied high-rent apartments because there were too many built at the same time. Perpetual vacancies led to falling prices with banks halting construction loans and foreclosing mortgages. In the midst of possible ruin, white landlords and real estate companies and owners opened their recently built housing to Blacks (Smith, 1986). This response to financial collapse made it possible for large numbers of Blacks then being displaced from "Manhattan's squalid San Juan Hill and Tenderloin districts, to obtain high-quality housing at relatively low rents in Harlem" (Vietorisz and Harrison, 1970, p. 4)⁵. The influx of Blacks from the Southern states

⁵ San Juan Hill was located on the West Side of Manhattan from 60th to 64th Streets, between 10th and 11th Avenue. After World War I its name changed to Columbus Hill. Access to better housing in Harlem, emigration into the city by Southern Blacks after the abolition of slavery, and the

also contributed to the increase of the Black population in Harlem during the early 20th century.

Alongside the migration waves to Harlem, the failure of Black and White landlords to improve and maintain property that was losing value and the problem of absentee ownership were all factors that contributed to Harlem's decline since the beginning of this century (Osofsky, 1966). In addition, private and public disinvestment in Harlem's housing stock was aggravated during the Depression years.

As more people moved into Harlem at the beginning of this century, the demand for living space outran the area's relatively fixed housing stock. Blacks found it increasingly difficult to find jobs in the urban labor market that would pay wages sufficient to cover their increasing rents. By 1927, the Urban League estimated that Harlem residents were paying as much as half of their incomes in rent. High rents relative to low salaries -- an increasing "cost of living" reinforced by continued population growth -- and financial institutions denying loans in Harlem to speculators and building companies, provided the conditions for a decline in the housing market that prompted the deterioration of Harlem's social and physical infrastructure (Clark, 1965;

deteriorating conditions of San Juan Hill's infrastructure contributed to the displacement of "Negroes" to Harlem. The Tenderloin District's boundaries are less clearly defined but it was located roughly within the now West Midtown Manhattan area. The residents of this area were displaced during the first decade of the 1900s when Penn Station was built.

Osofsky, 1966; Vietorisz & Harrison, 1970). By the late 1920s and early 1930s, a time also known as the Harlem Renaissance, Harlem was already transformed into a Black slum. According to Smith (1996) minimal private investment occurred in Harlem during the 1950s and 1960s (p.150). After having been afflicted by disinvestment for the most part of the twentieth century, Harlem currently has very low rents and low land values with the exception of very few areas most of them lying contiguous to Central Park and Marcus Garvey Park. Harlem is one of the symbols of social, economic, and spatial neglect in the United States.

One attempt at the improvement of dilapidated urban infrastructure has been gentrification. Gentrification refers to the process of investing capital in the renovation of housing in deteriorated urban neighborhoods with the purpose of attracting middle-class residents into the area, consequently often displacing working class families. Gentrification is usually accompanied by commercial revitalization as well as the development of facilities for cultural and recreational purposes targeting upscale markets (Smith, 1996). Smith (1996) calls the prospect of gentrification of Harlem a catch-22 situation. On the one hand, working-class residents, usually in economically deprived and decaying neighborhoods require capital investment for the improvement of their physical environment and social services. However, the prospect of gentrification

will consequently displace original residents to make way for the new middle-class dwellers. Usually under these circumstances, working-class and long-time residents of these areas end up in housing whose standards are not dramatically better and are sometimes worse than the ones they have left. Gentrification for them means displacement from their neighborhoods as the physical infrastructure is improved and growing numbers of professional middle-class people move in (Smith, 1996). Improvements in the immediate environment, such as those related to the restoration of the north end of Central Park and the future re-design of Frederick Douglass Circle, can also be considered partly linked to the development of Towers on the Park -- a middle class housing development -- as an improvement to the surrounding landscapes for newcomers. As will be shown in the following discussion, the impact of Towers on the Park has altered the demographic composition -- such as race, income, and educational attainment-- within the blocks surrounding the West 110th Street playground. These indicators are relevant to understand the relationship between social and class issues and the physical environment in the blocks surrounding the playground (See Map #1). The profile of the three census tracts considered here, depict a neighborhood where lack of educational, employment, and decent housing opportunities affect most of their residents with the notable exception of Towers on the Park (see Appendix 1, Map #1).

4.4- Uneven demographics: New York City and the neighborhood blocks adjacent to the West 110th Street playground

Harlem largely eluded gentrification until recently. One of the most concrete examples of development that might have spurred gentrification was Towers on the Park, built in the late 1980s and located at the northwest corner of Central Park. According to Smith (1996, p.154) "even the cheapest condominiums in this development were beyond the means of most residents of Harlem, where median per capita income was only a fraction of \$34,000" (the cost of moderate-income apartments in the development). This area is part of Community Board District 10, which stretches from 110th Street to 155th Street and from Morningside Avenue in the West to St. Nicholas Park in the East, and it is the area of Harlem with the most gentrification activity (Smith, 1996). Most of Harlem's housing units are owned, operated, or subsidized by the government. The condition of the housing stock in Harlem is generally poor. The prospect of development of housing there from the public sector seems distant, according to Schill and Scafidi (1997). Both New York City's recession of 1990s and the cutbacks in governmental capital spending resulting from the recession have significantly diminished any additions to the number of non-luxury housing units available in New York City, especially in lower income areas. Central among other lower

income urban enclaves, Harlem is considered, in absolute terms, to have the largest numbers of severe housing quality problems (Schill & Scafidi, 1997).

According to Schill and Scafidi (1997) housing quality problems in New York City are greater in low rent housing. The rate of dilapidation in apartments whose monthly rent is less than \$500 is more than double city-wide averages. Housing in blocks surrounding the West 110th Street playground have an average rent lower than \$500. Moreover, severe housing quality problems are most likely to occur in households comprised of a single person with children, the unemployed, public assistance recipients, persons in subsidized housing, and immigrants. This profile of housing dwellers fits the description of people who have severe housing affordability problems (Schill & Scafidi, 1997). Schill and Scafidi (1997) mention that severe housing problems are predominantly the problems of low income New Yorkers, but 37.4% of New York's population have very low incomes, thus problems are widespread. Some of the Census Tracts surrounding the West 110th Street playground have a combination of both lower and higher income levels within the same block. However, the tract north of the playground differs from the other two tracts bordering the playground. The tract north of the playground has a different demographic profile from the other two tracts where the two Towers on the Park developments are located.

Most Harlem residents are Black. However within the three tracts bordering the playground, only in Tract 193.00 -- which corresponds to the southwest corner block of Frederick Douglass Circle, the site of one of the Towers on the Park -- is there a significant representation of Whites (32%). The income level from the tracts where the development Towers on the Park is located (Tracts 193 and 197.02) is significantly different than the tract north of the West 110th Street playground (Tract 216) (see Appendix 8, Map #2). The per capita income for tract 193 is \$11,813 and for tract 197.02 is \$18,399. In comparison, the per capita income for tract 216, north of the playground is only \$7,370.

In terms of educational attainment, the tract north of the playground (Tract 216) has the highest number of people with no high school diploma (26%). However, in tracts 193 and 197.02 -- where Towers on the Park are located -- many residents 27.4% and 31.9% respectively have completed bachelor's degrees or higher educational levels. These percentages are even higher than those of New York City as a whole (23%).

The area near the West 110th Street playground is representative of Harlem in that in all three tracts surrounding the playground the poverty status is much higher than that of New York City (19.2%) as a whole (see Appendix

9, Table 8). In these three tracts, poverty status is higher than New York City, even though as stated earlier, the tracts that include Towers on the Park have higher income levels than the tract just North of the playground. One possible explanation is that the income of residents at Towers on the Park raises the income level for the whole block, but at the same time other residents in contiguous dwellings in the same block live well below the poverty level, therefore lowering the poverty indicator for the whole block.

Tract 193 has the same median rent in dollars as New York City as a whole (\$404) (see Appendix 9, Table 8). However, rent in Harlem tends to be lower than other areas of the city. Likewise, the median rent in dollars for the two Tracts next to the West 110th Street playground is lower than that of New York City: for tract 197.02 the median rent is \$316, and for tract 216 it is \$323. Again, this finding could be explained in terms of the deteriorating conditions of the housing stock contiguous to Towers on the Park. It can be assumed that many apartments remain under the rent control law, since most of them were built before 1974, when the law changed so that housing built without governmental subsidies or tax abatements was free of rent regulation.

Public disinvestment and the deterioration of the physical infrastructure in Harlem affects yet another indicator that is significantly different between New York

City as a whole and the three Census tracts surrounding the West 110th Street playground: the number of unoccupied housing units. In New York City, the percentage of unoccupied housing units is 6%, a small percentage when compared to those of the tracts bordering the playground: tract 193 has a vacancy rate of 10%, tract 216's rate is 14%, and in tract 197.02, 28% of the housing units remain vacant. Even though one of the Towers on the Park is located in tract 197.02 (the northwest corner of the Frederick Douglass Circle), this tract has the highest percentage of unoccupied housing units of the three. This is the block with the most contrasting conditions in terms of its physical infrastructure. Alongside the unavoidable visual impact of the 20 story Towers on the Park building, most of the remaining buildings on that block are abandoned and dilapidated totally. This area -- on Frederick Douglass Boulevard, between 110th and 111th Streets, and even further north -- resembles the ruins of a war zone.

In a similar vein, the conditions of the neighborhood infrastructure are juxtaposed to a depiction of Harlem as a place where drugs and criminality are rampant. According to The Vera Institute Atlas of Crime and Criminal Justice, the level of drug arrests in Harlem is high (Odubekun, 1993, p. 40)⁶. Madriz (1997) mentions that the fear of crime functions

⁶ Levels of drug arrests reflect the level of police activity. It could be interpreted that more than a higher level of drug use in Harlem, there is just more police enforcement there, which in fact, according to The Vera

as a social control mechanism in that it provides justification for regulating and disciplining different sectors of the population, particularly minorities, the poor and the unemployed. Despite the fact that most of the population in areas like Harlem live below the poverty level, more government initiatives are directed towards surveillance and control rather than housing and community development. Madriz (1997) reads the 'problem' of criminality and drugs in poor inner city areas as an ideological construction where crime and fear of crime function as a mechanism to deter attention from governmental inefficiency in addressing more relevant social and economic issues:

Powerful conservative politicians and groups -- such as the Heritage Foundation, the Urban Institute, the Center for National Policy and others -- have been successful in presenting Welfare programs -- and of course the poor, minorities, and immigrants -- as a major drain on social resources and as a major contributor to a variety of social maladies, from spiraling poverty to moral deterioration and from teenage pregnancy to crime and delinquency. The inability of American institutions to deal with these problems has provoked widespread cynicism in the population. During these times of crisis, crime -- and fear of crime -- channel the expression of public

Institute Atlas on Crime and Justice in New York City, is moderate to high.

anxieties away from the government's inability to deal with pressing social problems. (p. 22)

The discourse on crime simulates invisible walls in which whole segments of the population -- particularly minorities -- are kept contained. This mechanism of social control functions in a way that reifies the notion of space as a container. The use of a metaphor of space as a container and its concrete impact on people and the physical environment of Harlem, helps to socially isolate and alienate a whole geo-social area. According to Rouse (1995, p. 377) surveillance, and, more specifically, policing has been intensified with "imprisonment as an increasingly common tool of social control." Along these lines, the areas contiguous to the West 110th Street playground have a high level of community policing, more than in other areas in Manhattan (Odubekun, 1993, p.33). The Vera Institute Atlas of Crime and Justice in New York City shows that a high number of inmates (over 30 males and females) in the Rikers Island Jail System belong to those areas surrounding the West 110th playground in Harlem. Moreover, Smith (1998), points out that fear of crime has been used by Mayor Giuliani to deploy a whole disciplining campaign of order through his "quality of life" ideology. This quality of life initiative includes safety and cleanliness as its two major components. Safety has been articulated through the deployment and increasing presence of police in the city. Cleanliness has been articulated through

the "sanitization of public space." It includes not only cleanliness in its most basic form of garbage but also disorder. Within this category, the "quality of life" initiative identifies "homeless people, panhandlers, prostitutes, squeegee cleaners, squatters, graffiti artists, reckless bicyclists, unruly youth" (Smith, 1998, p. 3), and even street corner vendors, jaywalkers, and taxi drivers. However intense this initiative is in specific sections of Manhattan (e.g. Times Square), in areas like Harlem the only "quality of life" that has arrived is that of the police presence.

4.5- Concluding remarks: the filtering of structural dynamics through the world, the city, its neighborhoods, and neighborhood blocks

The conceptualization of space as socially produced entails understanding and questioning the effects of structural forces. Structural forces affect the production of space in an uneven manner, their deployment at different scales of the socio-physical environment pose issues of inequality. This analysis helped establish and qualify the connection between broader global aspects of the economy and the local landscape. This might be viewed as a unidirectional and deterministic approach to the production of space that neglects the more dynamic character where space is also an outcome of conflicts, struggles, and negotiation among social

actors and institutions, public and private. After all, social actors are not passive spectators of the changes that alter their everyday life and their environments. However, analyzing and qualifying the different scales -- the city as a whole and its neighborhoods -- affected by these structural forces can help us understand the conditions of the physical infrastructure and the social context produced by an urban restructuring that affects the city unequally. Progress and decay and the 'dual city' syndrome are the results of selective investment in the city's neighborhoods. Gentrification is also an indicator of the dissimilar levels of development of the city's infrastructure and the subsequent social issues that accompany it. Urban decay, homelessness, unemployment, underemployment, and the growing poor sector of the society are issues of concern when considering social justice in an urban context where large sums of capital flow in ways that improve the fortunes of some and overlook others. Harlem, however, has suffered from a long tradition of neglect from both the private and public sector that is still reflected in its physical infrastructure and social profile. Changes in the economy at the global and local level, the shift from manufacturing to a service economy, for instance, have had a strong, largely negative effect in the demographic composition and profile of a neighborhood like Harlem.

The structural forces that shape neighborhoods like Harlem such as urban restructuring, public disinvestment, gentrification, neo-liberal policies, drugs and criminality, and correctional systems pave a path that seems to lead the inner city population surreptitiously into spaces of extinction. Presenting these events in such a sequence might be considered simplistic but it responds to current inverse discourses on public space and public safety that offer a new definition of the city as an entertainment and consumption center with a clean, sanitized, and safe social and physical environments. Many efforts and resources are orchestrated to hide from view those social and physical urban elements or 'problems' -- decay, homelessness, minorities and 'others' -- that taint the 'official' picture of the city. The management of criminality with the deployment of the police force and other mechanisms of institutional control such as correctional systems, to name a few, are used as vehicles to establish order in public space drawing on discourses of public safety. People who live in Harlem are the most frequent users of the playground. The physical infrastructure of the area attest to the fact that there is an uneven allocation of resources in the area, particularly, in terms of public space between Central Park and the Harlem neighborhood. In terms of public safety, the conditions of the area, the demographic profile of the residents there, and the ideological constructions of criminality, unemployment, and race, all justify a rhetoric of social control that keeps

Harlem's residents and their physical surroundings at the fringe of the economic, physical, and capital development that some other areas of the city enjoy.

From an institutional perspective, public space -- increasingly at the juncture between government service and private sector responsibility -- is also affected by the unevenness of the urban restructuring process. At the scale of public playgrounds as spaces for children -- the West 110th Street playground, the playgrounds in Central Park in general, and those in the Harlem neighborhood -- another layer of unevenness unfolds.

CHAPTER FIVE
GROUNDS FOR CHILDREN'S PLAY: PLAYGROUNDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
AND IN CENTRAL PARK

In what follows, I will discuss the institutional, historical, and physical context of the West 110th Street playground. I depict the landscape of public spaces, specifically playgrounds near the West 110th Street playground in nearby parts of Harlem and Central Park from the perspective of the institutions that manage their maintenance and operations. After critically examining these organizations in terms of the emphasis towards institutional "efficiency" that public and private organizations are increasingly following, I will discuss the development of the playground movement from an historical perspective. The "efficiency model" of public expenditure has a long tradition with origins in the Reformist movement of the Progressive Era at the beginning of the 20th century. This chapter will examine organized play as an ideology produced by the Reformist movement to socialize new immigrants in poor urban neighborhoods into American middle class values. The legacy of the playground movement is evident in the transference of responsibilities for the creation and maintenance of playgrounds from private individuals to the government. Later, Robert Moses developed much of the contemporary urban and suburban infrastructure in the New York City area, and as part of his work created a number of playgrounds in Central

Park, including the West 110th Street and the Dana Center playgrounds. The chapter concludes with a brief history of the West 110th Street playground and descriptions of the West 110th Street and the Dana Center playgrounds as well as adjacent playgrounds in Central Park and public playgrounds in Harlem.

5.1- Playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood

The result of public disinvestment is clearly visible in the shortage of well maintained public spaces and playgrounds in Harlem. The neighborhood north of the West 110th Street playground is part of Community District 9. The district extends from 110 Street to 168th Street North between St. Nicholas Avenue and Broadway. Respondents mentioned that they visited at least four playgrounds located in this district. The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the maintenance and operations of public parks and playgrounds in District 9. Its headquarters is located in Morningside Park. Like Central Park, Morningside Park was designed by Olmsted but it has had a different fate in terms of maintenance and operations. The public playground closest to the West 110th Street playground is located in Morningside Park at Morningside Avenue and 123rd Street. Like most playgrounds in this District, the Morningside playground did not meet city safety standards (Personal communication, Department of Parks and Recreation, Park Supervisor for District 9). The

equipment there is metal and there are no shade trees. Therefore it is rarely used during the Summer when the sun heats equipment surfaces and the rubber safety mats on the ground. The safety surface itself is deteriorated. Similar conditions exist at the two Marcus Garvey playgrounds located in 124th Street between Mount Morris and Madison Avenues. All these neighborhood playgrounds were poorly maintained. Some of them had worn out safety surfaces, lack of cleanliness, limited numbers of trash cans, and the surrounding park furniture, such as benches were in need of repair and paint.

The maintenance and operations activities for the playgrounds in District 9 are performed by workers from the Department of Parks and Recreation, aided most recently by adults receiving Welfare who are required to provide community service ("workfare"). Parents who use the West 110th Street playground mentioned that some of the playgrounds in this district -- such as the Marcus Garvey playgrounds at Mount Morris or Marcus Garvey Park-- were unclean and vandalized. Moreover, some parents mentioned that the most important issue that deterred them from bringing their children to the neighborhood playgrounds was that drug dealers and adolescents with pitbulls had taken over these playgrounds. Parents did not consider these playgrounds to be safe for their children. One of the main reasons why the playgrounds in District 9 were less well-kept and maintained than either in the past or in other playgrounds has to do

with the insufficient budget that the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation allocates to this district and the lack of investment initiatives from the private sector or private individuals in the area. In many other parts of New York City, public shortfalls have been more than made up by private initiatives. Poor neighborhoods almost by definition lack the means to support such initiatives privately.

5.2- New York City Department of Parks and Recreation:
Budget for maintenance and operations of playgrounds and public space in the Harlem neighborhood, District 9.

5.2.1- General description of the New York City
Department of Parks and Recreation

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation is a governmental agency dedicated to maintain and protect public land and public facilities. The current emphasis of the Department of Parks and Recreation is to "maximize efficiency" similar to an overall trend followed by the city government in recent years (City of New York Parks and Recreation, 1996). One way the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation has tried to be efficient is through a conservative approach in the expenditure of tax dollars for the maintenance of parks and play spaces. Another way the Department has approached the "challenge" of maximizing

efficiency is through their managed competition model. With this model the Department of Parks and Recreation pursues more efficiency and effectiveness in the maintenance of city properties by implementing a competitive bidding process where contractors with the lowest bid are hired by the Department to provide maintenance and operation services as needed. Rather than assigning workers for the maintenance of entire areas -- and paying salaries even if there is no work to be done in these areas at a particular time -- the companies perform specific tasks for a specific length of time only as needed. These tasks include: cleaning, landscape maintenance, graffiti removal, general repairs, and furnishing all materials and equipment. The low bid competition has been an attempt to privatize public services but has been shown to lower maintenance standards in many areas. The use of private contractors to perform maintenance duties has proven to be less efficient and reliable than what was expected (Tally, 1997).

5.2.2- Playground Associates

The Department of Parks and Recreation has also created a new program called the "playground associates" (City of New York Parks and Recreation, 1996). Since 1994, 153 playground associates funded by City Council have been assigned to playgrounds citywide. This program has been designed to improve the involvement of park workers with the community.

Playground associates work on a full-time basis in community playgrounds. Their main responsibility is the programming of recreational activities such as day camps, recruiting volunteers, developing camp libraries, field trips, and organizing tournaments. This effort is accompanied by the attempt to increase the involvement of the community in these activities. Other responsibilities include performing basic maintenance and operations in the playgrounds. The playground associates are also responsible for the distribution and collection of play equipment. This program's goal is to unify the traditionally separated duties of maintenance and recreation. As such, it is an attempt from the Department of Parks and Recreation to improve and increase involvement from Park workers as well as to improve productivity.

5.2.2.1- Budget for maintenance and operations

Manhattan's share of New York City Department of Parks and Recreation budget for maintenance and operations was over \$17 million during the 1996 fiscal year. This budget, 22% of the total budget for the five boroughs, includes both personnel services and other than personnel services (see Table 6).

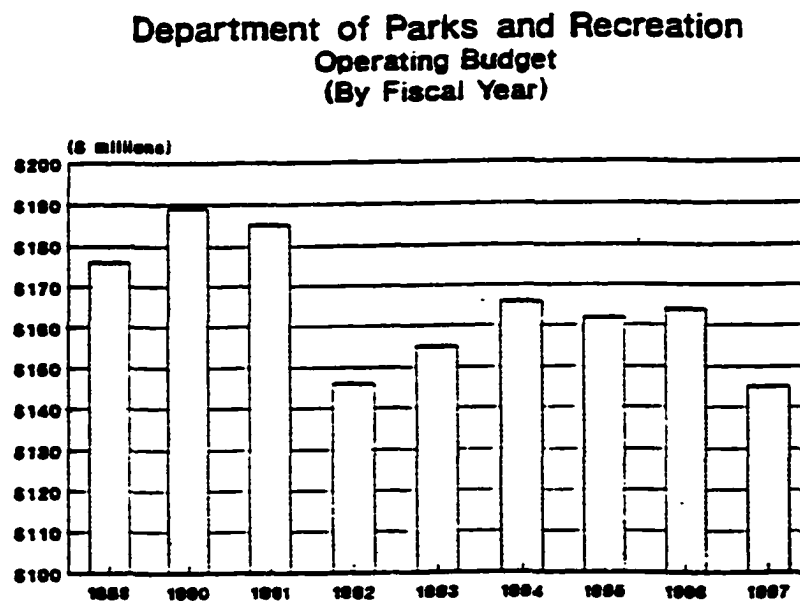
Table 6- New York City Department of Parks and Recreation
Budget for Maintenance and Operations, Manhattan, Fiscal Year
1996

	Personnel Services	Other than Personnel Services*	Total
Manhattan	\$16,283,884	\$959,649	\$17,243,533 (22%)
All Boroughs	\$72,258,821	\$3,217,345	\$75,476,166

* these figures include equipment, office supplies, furniture and any other expenses besides employees' salaries.

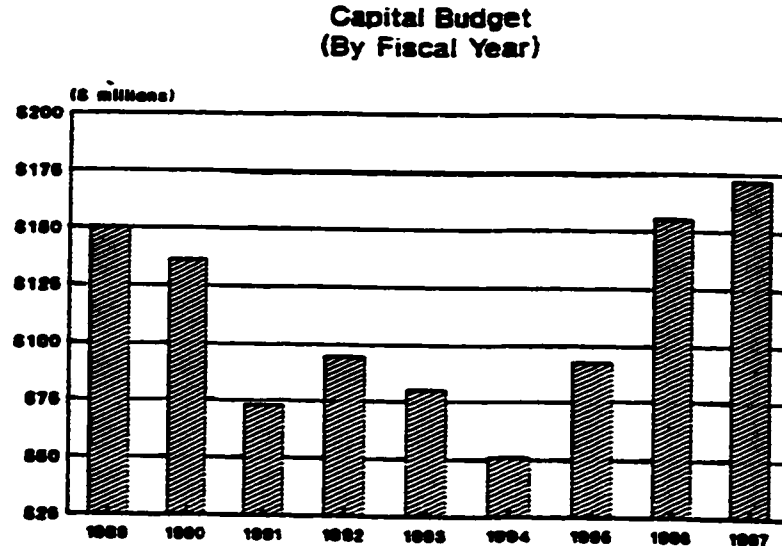
While the capital budget, which was \$17,243,533 in 1996, has increased during the last nine years from 1989 to 1997, the operating budget decreased significantly during the same years(see Figure 1 & 2).

Figure 1 - New York City Department of Parks and Recreation,
Operating Budget (By Fiscal Year)



Note: From "Dollars and sense: getting more green from our parks spending," by J., Tally, 1997, Report to the office of the Manhattan Borough President Ruth W. Messinger.

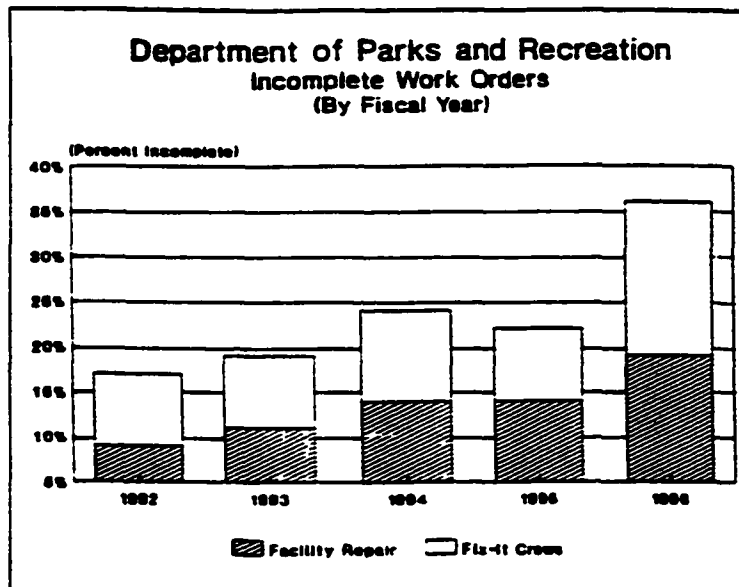
Figure 2 - New York City Department of Parks and Recreation,
Capital Budget (By Fiscal Year)



Note: From "Dollars and sense: getting more green from our parks spending, " by J., Tally, 1997, Report to the office of the Manhattan Borough President Ruth W. Messinger.

The main problem in the gradual decline of the operating budget is that it adversely affects the provision of adequate and consistent maintenance. According to Tally (1997), Parks Analyst for the Office of the former Manhattan Borough President Ruth W. Messinger, there are less than "1,800 full-time maintenance and operations workers currently responsible for 27,000 acres of parkland that include more than 1,500 properties, such as playgrounds, recreation centers, ballfields, skating rinks, swimming pools and golf courses. The agency must rely on just 18 plumbers citywide to maintain miles of pipe and thousands of fountains" (1997, p.4). The percentage of incomplete work orders for maintenance has also been on the increase the last few years (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Department of Parks and Recreation, Incomplete Work Orders (By Fiscal Year)



Note: From "Dollars and sense: getting more green from our parks spending, " by J., Tally, 1997, Report to the office of the Manhattan Borough President Ruth W. Messinger.

5.2.3- Park District 9 in Manhattan

The Department of Parks and Recreation oversees the maintenance and operations of Park District 9 which includes five parks, four squares, six playgrounds, and one recreational area. The operating budget for the maintenance and operations of District 9 for the 1996 fiscal year was minimal. The total operating budget for Manhattan as a borough was \$17,243,533, from that amount \$364,841 was

There are 22 playgrounds in Central Park. With the exception of the Heckscher playground which was the first playground in Central Park built at the beginning of this century, all the playgrounds in Central Park are located at the periphery of the park near the streets, and thus called "marginal playgrounds." Besides the Dana Center playground, the four playgrounds nearest to the West 110th Street playground at both the East and West Sides of the Central Park -- the Sandpark, the "Wild West," the Bernard Family, and the Robert Bendheim playgrounds -- are all in extremely good condition, well maintained, with many trash cans available in each playground. The equipment in each is in excellent condition. The benches and surrounding landscape of the playgrounds are also very well maintained. Some of the playgrounds were very large -- such as the Sandpark and the "Wild West" playgrounds -- with sophisticated and intricate designs. The Robert Bendheim playground even had a portable restroom near its entrance. All of the playgrounds in Central Park were up to Department standards, and were maintained and operated by The Central Park Conservancy.

The Conservancy's capital plan for the Park has covered the restoration and maintenance of the Park which began in 1980. The maintenance of the Central Park playgrounds is done mostly by workers whose salary and supervision are provided by The Central Park Conservancy rather than the Department of Parks and Recreation. Increasingly so, maintenance workers

hired by The Central Park Conservancy do not enjoy the benefits of the Department of Parks and Recreation workers Union. Only a few of the workers who maintain playgrounds in Central Park are paid by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The effect of this trend can be grasped easily from the analysis of the budget allocation for personnel services of the New York City Departments of Park and Recreation (see Table 7). As shown, the budget for those districts (4, 5, 7, and 8) that border the East, West and South of Central Park, had the lowest figures allocated to park personnel services. Comparatively, the budget that the Department of Parks and Recreation allocates to the districts bordering the North End of Central Park (9 and 10) was slightly higher. Totally funded by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, these figures suggest the lack of private sponsorship for maintenance there, unlike Central Park. Therefore the specific figures for those districts are higher since the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation has to cover all the expenses for the maintenance of public spaces and playgrounds in those districts.

Table 7- Manhattan Personnel Services by District/ Fiscal Year 1996.

District	Budget FY 96	Percentage
1	\$358,622	5.31%
2	\$326,491	4.8%
3	\$564,881	8.3%
4	\$142,276	2.1%
5	\$109,867	1.62%
6	\$331,673	4.9%
7	\$203,150	3%
8	\$174,128	2.5%

9	\$364,841	5.4%
10	\$352,403	5.2%
11	\$1,166,038	17.2%
12	\$633,289	9.3%
13	\$1,414,794	20.9%
14	\$607,377	8.9%
Total:	\$6,749,830	99.43%

Note: From New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of the Assistant Counsel, 1997.

5.4- The Central Park Conservancy: budget for maintenance and operations of playgrounds in Central Park

5.4.1- General description of The Central Park Conservancy

The Central Park Conservancy, Inc., founded in 1980 is a not-for-profit organization that works in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. The Conservancy is funded primarily through contributions made by private individuals, corporations, and foundations. The contributions are used to improve the physical structure of the park, for maintenance and operations, and to offer public programs to park users and visitors.

The Central Park Conservancy has focused on the improvement of widely deteriorated landscapes of Central Park, based on the original design of the Park: the Greensward plan (see Appendix 10, Plan #1). This effort

started with a restoration and management draft for the Park which was later concretized into a master plan that included capital projects for the design and construction of the Park's landscapes (Barlow, 1987). After almost two decades of continuous work beginning in 1980, the restoration of Central Park has almost come to an end, and The Central Park Conservancy has developed considerably as a not-for-profit organization. Its budget has grown significantly during this period and allows The Conservancy to provide for maintenance and operations comfortably as well as to fund a number of substantial capital projects. The fundraising of The Central Park Conservancy has been extremely successful, mainly targeting private donors, including individuals, organizations, institutions, and corporations.

5.4.2- Playground partners

For playground management, The Central Park Conservancy has developed a program called "Playground Partners." It is a similar program to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, "playground associates," but differs in that the "Playground Partners" are volunteers and not salaried workers. The program attracts volunteers from communities near the playgrounds in Central Park to help oversee playground use and needs. One of the playground partners program's goals is to strengthen the relationship between surrounding communities and the park. Nearby residents

volunteer to organize playground clean-ups, report problems, and raise funds for special activities in the playgrounds. Playground captains are community members in charge of supervising the functioning of the playground in their neighborhoods. Each of the twenty-two playgrounds in Central Park has a playground captain or playground partner.

5.4.2.1- Budget for maintenance and operations

The Central Park Conservancy's annual operating budget for 1996 was just under \$60 million. The expenses for horticulture, maintenance and operations (which includes the cost of maintenance and operations of the playgrounds) was \$3,464,000 (see Appendix 11, Table 8). This amount far exceeds what the Department of Parks and Recreation allocates in their budget for the maintenance and operations for all of District 9 (\$364,841), which includes the operations and maintenance costs of five parks, four squares, six playgrounds, and one recreational area. The budget for Central Park is limited to the maintenance and operations of Central Park only. There has been only one effort at expanding their reach North of Central Park, through the redesign of the Frederick Douglass Circle located at the northwest entrance to the Park on 110th Street and Central Park West.

5.5- Comparison between the playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood and Central Park

The Central Park Conservancy as a not-for-profit organization heavily supported by private funds has pioneered the "efficiency model," setting the trend towards the privatization of public space. This efficiency model is translated in the management and operation of Central Park and of the playgrounds more specifically. The results of the Conservancy efforts portrayed in the beautification of public space and the assurance of safety obtained through both equipment meeting safety standards and regular police surveillance in the Park are enticing to a public audience increasingly skeptical of government spending, governmental bureaucracy, and the lack of effective and efficient results in governmental services. The shortcoming of following the example set by The Central Park Conservancy as a partner to the Department of Parks and Recreation lies in the particularity of Central Park as an historical landmark and the particularity of The Central Park Conservancy's origins as an organization.

Funded mainly by wealthy neighbors of the Park since its inception, The Central Park Conservancy has a peculiar vantage point. Trying to reproduce a similar attempt in the Harlem neighborhoods nearby seems futile because there is not enough private capital available there to renovate and

maintain public space (Katz, 1995). On the other hand, there is an uneven allocation of resources to Harlem in terms of the overall maintenance of public space. Harlem has been subjected to the neglect and abandonment that accompany fiscal disinvestment, among other factors. However, the manner in which dominant ideologies and hegemonic practices meet at the intersection of governmental action and the creation and maintenance of public space has not always been expressed in the same fashion. For instance, even though the original organizers of the playground movement were a group of educated, middle class Reformists, the responsibility for the consequent construction and maintenance of playgrounds and recreational facilities for immigrant children in poor urban neighborhoods was later taken on by the government. Recent trends however, are just the opposite. Governmental retrenchment mostly affects poor urban enclaves since more affluent areas have organized private funds for the maintenance and provision of public spaces in their neighborhoods. The present ideology -- implicitly an absence of intention from the government to provide quality public spaces in poor neighborhoods -- is different from the legacy that has been left inscribed on the physical environment in the form of playgrounds built during the Progressive Era which championed government support for poor children's play and recreation.

5.6- The ideology of playgrounds: Reformist movement and the Progressive Era

5.6.1- The city, immigration, and the development of playgrounds

Play is one of the basic activities of childhood. In the last century when playgrounds were non-existent, much less the idea that specific sites uniquely designed to offer play opportunities were necessary, play occurred in open grounds, in rural areas or on the streets. It is not until the development of the industrial economies and the spaces that went with them, that play became an organized activity for city children, meant to take place in well defined, specific settings. Playgrounds as settings for organized play activities are very much of a modern urban phenomenon (Boyer, 1978; Goodman, 1979; Hart, 1978).

The massive immigration to the US and the resulting population explosion in the early 20th century alongside poor and deteriorated deteriorating conditions of the city's infrastructure, particularly in poor neighborhoods at that time, prompted the concern of ruling classes for immigrant children's play practices and safety. This concern turned itself into a social control mechanism which socialized immigrant children into American civic life. The Reformist movement associated with the Progressive Era of the late

1800s and early 1900s, focused on creating the conditions for the organization of play and recreation in poor urban enclaves of the US so that immigrants were socialized into middle class American values and culture.

Industrial cities became the center of the play movement in the US. By 1910, a large proportion of urban residents in the United States were immigrants and their children. Organized play programs were designed for the "foreign" populations in the city. The increasingly immigrant composition of cities, from the urban reformers' perspective, threatened to deteriorate urban civic life (Boyer, 1978). During the beginning of this century, reformers such as Riis, Curtis, Addams, Lee, Wald, Gulick and Taylor, pursued the goal of developing ways to socialize new immigrants into the "American" way of life. According to reformers, unrestricted immigration brought along social disorder and existential disorientation for both immigrants and longtime urban residents. Playgrounds and organized play activities were considered the vehicle to instill American values and cultural norms into the everyday lives of immigrants and their children. In the current period, similar shifts prompted by current migration waves which are part of the restructuring process of the global and local economy are met by a situation in which capital investment is lacking for the maintenance and improvement of public space and playgrounds in poor neighborhoods such as Harlem. The shift from

manufacturing to a service economy has had a concrete impact in these neighborhoods, affecting the demographic composition of the neighborhood in terms of possibilities for employment and the settlement of new immigrants. The restructuring of the urban environment prompted by changes in the economy have produced a space in Harlem where children's everyday lives are limited in their range of options and their ability to make choices: from play to education and employment.

Likewise, during the transition from an agrarian to an industrial urban society at the beginning of this century, cities were held responsible for all different kinds of social "maladies": fears about industrialization, immigration, family disruption, religious change and crevices in the class composition. US cities grew dramatically in a short period of time, and the physical space and the new people inhabiting cities were blamed for these social 'problems.' The history of "blaming the victim" (Ryan, 172) is still present in the stereotypes currently held against Harlem.

As a reaction to and result of concern about the 'urban situation' at the beginning of this century, the reformers of the Progressive Era embarked on a crusade to change the moral and physical landscape of the city. According to Rosenzweig and Blackmar (1992), Progressivism placed an extreme emphasis on efficiency and order, particularly as a reaction to the lack of governmental efficiency. The efforts towards

government efficiency remained central aspects of the Progressive movement. Increasingly so, the reformers demanded government intervention to combat the excesses of industrialism. The reform movement focused particularly in the cities where these problems were most obvious: those that had experienced an intense immigrant wave and lacked appropriate housing, schools, police and fire protection, traffic, and sewage disposal. All these services were required at a new larger scale which the municipal government were not prepared to handle. As a response to these conditions, reform movements evolved in almost every major city in the United States, and New York City was one of the areas in which Progressivism had a strong hold and pushed government to provide for these issues (Caro, 1974).

Thus, the legacy of the current emphasis on governmental efficiency can be traced back to the Progressive Era and the Reform Movement. A crucial difference however, is that, under the Reform Movement, private individuals organized play and play activities, propitiating the conditions for the government to assume the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of these facilities. Presently, however, governmental efficiency is pursued by the transference of governmental responsibilities to the private sector, otherwise known as 'privatization,' a trend that The Central Park Conservancy has helped pioneer. The political dimension to the increasing trend towards privatization lies in the

absence of an arbiter between the private sector's profit mentality and the 'public.' This role was expected to be assumed by the government as "welfare state." Particularly for public spaces, when conflicts about different interests and definitions of use emerge, the right of access to all may be jeopardized when the ultimate responsibility for the provision and definition of public space relies increasingly on the private sector. The most recent role of the government as an "enabling state" (Ambrose, 1994) under "neo-liberalism" facilitating the interests of the private sector, poses concerns for public space in that they might alter uses of public space to benefit certain constituencies and not others, while community initiatives are still emergent. There has been an increasing visibility of the private sector in, for instance, Central Park events, such as concerts, movies, and other activities. Public space reflects the political and social context in that it mirrors the manner in which access, control and uses are determined which could affect different constituencies unevenly.

Reformers of the Progressive Era, in contrast to political movements whose main focus was to influence individuals or groups of individuals, believed that the city's moral fate would be better led by restructuring the urban environment through a large selection of government sponsored programs. One of the main areas in which the urban environment was restructured included the recreation of immigrant children. Crime and pauperism, according to

Reformists, was caused by the lack of spaces for recreational and organized activities for immigrant children. Thus, for Reformers, playgrounds and recreational activities became a priority. This principle is a contrast to current times, when the public playgrounds and the recreational activities that should be provided are not a priority in the government's agenda. Instead, the government has disengaged itself from the provision of adequate play areas and public spaces as it has done with the majority of public services, while granting a major role to the private sector through the privatization of public services. The role of the government in the provision and maintenance of public spaces, particularly in lower income urban enclaves, has been one of disengagement reflecting a lack of concern for the conditions in which minority and immigrant children live in the inner city.

The restructuring of the physical environment or "urban awakening" was central to the Reformist movement of the early 1900s (Boyer, 1978). However, two opposing views within the Reformist movement included the positive environmentalists and the negative environmentalists. Both approaches had in common goals that focus on social control such as the improvement of immigrants' character and behavior to resemble those of the Reformers. These social control mechanisms also included an emphasis on collective and social responsibility rather than individual desire.

The negative environmentalist assumed more of a moralistic approach. However, the positive environmentalist tradition inherited a more visionary perspective from the late 19th century urban reformism. The social and moral control of urban masses, from the positive environmentalism perspective, would be pursued through the positive manipulation of the physical urban environment, rather than through repressive or coercive action such as those proposed by the negative environmentalist tradition (Boyer, 1978). For children, playgrounds and organized play were, then, a focus within the Reformist agenda.

Since the beginning of the Reformist era, there was an interest in the improvement of children's behavior. New child development theories were used to justify the need for play in the child's development (Carr et al, 1992). Moreover, play was considered a mechanism to help develop the necessary skills and values that a modern society required. In order to accomplish that goal play activities had to be structured, children needed to be supervised, and special equipment needed to become available. Street play and the spontaneous activities it encouraged was not considered sufficient or appropriate for these goals to be met, instead play had to be structured within the urban context.

5.6.2- Street play vs. organized play

Before playgrounds, streets were the common play settings of urban children. Disputes and arguments revolved around the adequacy of streets regarding whether or not they were safe places for children's play. Organized play was a way to provide safe play spaces for poor urban children. Reformers attributed poor immigrant children's lack of control and civility to their lack of safe spaces for play and their parents' lack of involvement in their activities. In districts that lacked playground facilities, Reformers recommended closing streets to provide safe play spaces for children (Rosenzweig & Blackmar 1992). This practice persists nowadays.

Playgrounds were originally a response to unsupervised street play in poor immigrant neighborhoods (Cavallo, 1981). Street games not only posed dangers to the players and passersby but they were also unsupervised by adults, which, as noted above, was a source of concern to Reformists. "Prisoner's base," tops, and marbles were games played on busy street. These games and others were controlled by a street culture where rules were considered by Reformers as arbitrary or up to the children who played in it. Children's play, according to them, was considered too strong a socialization mechanism to be left up to children.

According to Goodman (1979) working-class immigrants' street life in the Lower East Side of Manhattan disappeared due to the strong oppositional views Reformers held against street life and street play. Goodman points out that streets were the arena in which an immigrant culture of opposition was displayed and lived. This culture was a source of great concern to the native upper class already settled in the city. For Goodman (1979) the streets of the Lower East Side, for instance, staged Jewish immigrant culture in ways that were oppositional to the rigidity of the work rhythms, tight scheduling of time, and the compartmentalization of space associated with and demanded by the industrialization process. For children, the cultural life of the street offered them the opportunity to develop their own forms of social relations more spontaneously. It spurred their imaginations and allowed them to become explorers of their own neighborhoods' socio-physical organization. For the adults, the culture of street life helped them develop and control their own life rhythms and the social networks they belonged to in their communities. The upper class distrusted this level of autonomy among people who, from an upper class perspective, might display hostile and dangerous behaviors. Nowadays this "distrust" is still present in poor urban neighborhoods but it is accompanied largely by an ideology of neglect towards public space and public playgrounds, and by increasing surveillance from the police and others.

The arrival of asphalt and paved streets in NYC during the Winter of 1894 received the endorsement of Reformers. Asphalt streets were considered progress, they offered the lower class an infrastructure that helped improve their health habits, helped to control epidemics, allowed transportation that was faster, and made recreational opportunities more generally available. There were arguments against the streets being covered with asphalt. Some argued against the danger traffic posed for children's safety, while others considered the improved health and hygienic possibilities streets could bring. However, Goodman (1979) states that the main issue in the debate for and against asphalt and paved streets was the control of immigrant activities in public space by the control and definition of the streets.

Once the streets were covered with pavement, the development of playgrounds and organized play followed. According to Cavallo (1981), the Reform movement not only helped improve play facilities but also helped in efforts to "rescue" children from the dangers of work exploitation from unregulated capitalism, alienation, and the threats of an "out-of-control" youth street culture. In the early part of this century, all public and private groups who advocated for recreation agreed on the need to eliminate street play and games (Goodman, 1979). Instead gyms, leagues, vacation schools, and other forms of supervised recreational

activities were considered as alternative to those practiced on the street.

The word "organized" was used by play organizers in two ways (Goodman, 1979). First, it was used by Reformers wanting to develop and organize children's and youths' play experience in playgrounds which offered supervision, were specifically equipped, and were owned by the government. The other purpose of organizing play was, according to Goodman, to engage the state and government in assuming absolute responsibility to provide the structure and supervision of play. In addition to organized play, Reformers' efforts supported government sponsored programs for children's welfare and other non-governmental initiatives that were largely based on volunteer work including Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls. The government -- under the Reformers' influence -- built playgrounds where children's and adolescents' play activities were supervised. Child development theories that emphasized the effects of psychological and behavioral advantages of play for children were used to justify Reformers' lobbying efforts for organized play.

5.6.3- Child development theories

Reformers also used child development theories to justify their ideological manufacture of organized play as an hegemonic practice to assimilate new poor immigrants into mainstream American culture. Progressives such as educators,

social settlement workers, and child psychologists were among the professionals who studied children's play and considered play dangerous for children when it happened in the street. For them, play was an opportunity to develop and influence the moral and cognitive development of the child. As such, sports in which adolescents played in groups or teams became a socialization process that integrated youth from an early age in what was going to constitute future social demands and work rhythms of an increasingly complex urban and industrial society.

The psychological theories on child development to which Reformers adhered to were those of James Mark Baldwin, Edward L. Thorndike, G. Stanley Hall, John Dewey, and Joseph Lee. These theories proposed a strong link between structured or organized play, and physicalism, moral vitality, and cognitive alertness. Play advocates considered structured play not only to strengthen children bodies but also their moral fiber. Under this assumption, play advocates believed that play offered the opportunity to develop values and attitudes in the child that would help him/her to face city life challenges. Reformers believed that organized play and physical exercise facilitated stability in the child, thereby helping to reform American society. They even took it a step further by stating that a particular kind of personality could be molded from exposure to certain play activities and techniques (Cavallo, 1981).

According to Reformers, the social techniques employed in playgrounds aided in the development of a specific personality type. However, it was one thing to state that the transformation of public spaces was important for organized play, and another thing to prove how the behavior of immigrant children could be transformed through it. According to Cavallo (1981), Reformists and play organizers were certain that both supervised and structured play activities helped deter juvenile delinquency and Americanize immigrants. However, they lacked in providing a systematic and reliable connection between how socialization processes could be affected by supervised and structured play activities. The organized play movement weakened by 1905 due to a lack of resources to keep lobbying the government and a lack of a coherent theory to help explain and account for the significance of play activities for children. By then, however, play and organized play activities already constituted an important component in children's socialization process, particularly in lower income urban enclaves.

Apart from being a strategy to remove youngsters from parental supervision or to offer them the opportunity for healthy exercise, organized play also meant the conviction that each young person will develop a personality type that matched the ideal of 'individual citizen' prevalent during

the Reformist Era (Cavallo, 1981). Modern biological and psychological theories of child development provided explanations on how cognitive skills, motor skills and even moral and social values were developed through play. These nonindividualistic behaviors included cooperation, loyalty towards the group and the subordination of the individual to the social "whole." Accordingly, the best way to teach young people nonindividualistic skills and behavior was by exposing them to team sports.

According to play organizers, physicalism was also a vehicle that helped ease possible tensions between members of different ethnic groups. In subduing the importance of the individual to that of the group, culturally specific values were considered less critical. Physicalism was used to blur the cultural and ethnic boundaries between players. According to the Reformers, physicalism neutralized ethnic boundaries (Boyer, 1978). Following rules, getting along with other team members, and the player's visible behavior were considered more important than the player's cultural and ethnic background. Membership in a team and team games were considered to provide the necessary skills for a society becoming more and more corporate in its bureaucratic organization. Following the rules and regulations of the game and placing personal ambition aside, were key components to the team player ideology. This ideal personality type could

be seen as the moral legacy of the Progressive Era Reformers and their influence in the organized play movement.

The Reformists' initiative to organize play carried ideological contents and there was a complementary aspect to these contents in the transformation of the physical environment. In what follows I will present the historical trajectory of the creation of public spaces from 'pleasure grounds' to parks and playgrounds in New York City.

5.7- From 'pleasure grounds' to playgrounds: an historical perspective

5.7.1- The 'pleasure ground' (Cranz, 1982)

From 1850 to the early 1900s, according to Rosenzweig and Blackmar (1992), urban parks in the U.S. were built for the improvement of cities. The existence of parks was not so much based on European models where parks were integrated into the urban fabric but rather on an "antiurban" ideal. Parks were then considered spaces where one could escape the limitations of urban living: an escape to the countryside within the city. As such, the American parks system built during that period mirrored the image of countryside landscapes in the city, evoking those natural environments found in the countryside. Parks as "pleasure grounds" were

designed to offer the city dweller fresh air, lakes, sunshine, and meadows (Cranz, 1982).

The idea of pleasure grounds, according to Boyer (1978), was an outgrowth of the garden-cemetery, a popular trend during the end of the 1830s. Pleasure grounds were built in the United States during the decade of the 1840s largely influenced by landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing. He advised cities to assign lands for parks while this was still a viable option before cities' growth impeded the creation of parks due to lack of land. In 1856 New York City assigned 840 acres for parkland in Upper Manhattan. A design competition was announced in which Frederick Law Olmsted's and Calvert Vaux's design was the eventual winner. This design was later transformed into what is now known as Central Park. Olmsted -- Central Park's superintendent of construction from 1858 to 1878 -- constituted the main figure in what is generally known as the Gilded Age park movement. Other US cities followed the example, including Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston, where large-scale parks were built.

Frederick Law Olmsted designed and developed parks throughout the nation in a distinctive manner that portrayed the world view of an elite who had a particular sense of time where leisure figured as one of its main components. Moreover, according to Goodman (1979) this sense of leisure and the spaces created for this purpose, suited the sensibility of these classes and their preferred leisure

activities: they sipped tea, they strolled, they called upon each other. Frederick Law Olmsted's work alongside Calvert Vaux's, later developed into the field of landscape architecture and produced the notion of a park as subtle instead of vibrant, voyeuristic instead of participatory. According to Cavallo (1981) the pleasure ground evoked a contemplative and passive experience based on a design that emphasized the sensibilities of a privileged class.

Later during the Progressive era a different notion of urban parks started developing. Instead of a conception of parks as a space to relieve the tensions and decaying morality of urban living, parks during the Progressive era needed to be managed and administered. Consequently, the American Institute of Park Executives was founded in 1898. Afterwards the Progressive notion of parks as a social control mechanism was frequently translated into park design and programming. For instance, according to George Dunlap, landscape architect of public buildings and grounds in Washington, D. C., the design of the park should explicitly express in all its aspects, those symbols of control and power that the municipality should exert over its population in addition to those social values shared by planners and administrators.

In the 1890s a second need regarding public recreation emerged (Boyer, 1978). The overcrowding and congestion

resulting from city growth and expansion made municipal parks -- even large ones -- insufficient. Therefore the emphasis shifted to creating park systems that included small neighborhood parks in overcrowded areas.

5.7.2- The reform park (1900-1930)

At the beginning of the 20th Century, Reformers in New York considered parks to have a new purpose. Rather than just offer escape and relaxation, parks should be designed and equipped to accommodate recreational activities (Cranz, 1982). In the Reformer's vision of parks as accommodating active recreation, they transformed parks by easing the rules for their use and definition. Funds were then allocated for the construction of playgrounds and small parks.

Since park planners at the time considered urban masses to lack the skill to organize their own recreation, the most important aspect of reform parks was then to organize play activities for urban residents. These organized activities were in sharp contrast to the purpose of the pleasure ground that preceded the reform park. However, there is a parallel between the organization of activities and the function of natural elements in the pleasure ground as both were considered restorative in their respective historical periods. The restorative qualities of pleasure grounds were

kept when these were transformed into reform parks for organized activities.

Unlike the pleasure ground which favored family activities, the reform park and the organized activities it offered tended to segregate groups in terms of age and sex. Ironically, given that the reform park was a response to the routinization of work and its lack of creative satisfaction from an increasingly industrialized economy, play activities and more specifically recreational ones, were just as specialized. Instead of becoming an opportunity to reconcile paid work and play creatively, recreational activities were organized in a similar specialized way as work was. Just as children's schools were organized to replicate routinized work rhythms, play in schools also adopted this routine. This involved an orchestration of socialization activities for children outside the home that shaped their education and recreation. Children then became one of the main targets in park planning and reform programming. Since the reform movement was, in fact, prompted by the 19th Century playground movement, reform parks were usually called playgrounds, even though they also offered other recreational activities.

The programming of reform parks was different from its predecessor: pleasure grounds. Use of pleasure grounds was limited by natural elements such as nightfall and rough

weather. In the reform park, however, organized play and recreational activities led to park use during a wider range of hours but this flexibility was compromised with stricter scheduling and usage rules. This new wider availability of recreational activities brought recreation closer to the rhythms of urban life. Similar to work, play time was broken into segments based on seasons and weather and the schedules of children at school, workers, and mothers. All these factors contributed to a park life which replicated the pace of urban life. Reform programming widened the range of activities to be offered in parks. As part of park programming, recreational activities were divided into active, passive or social and these into physical, aesthetic, and civic areas.

With the increasing popularity of reform parks and playgrounds, urbanites began requesting that playgrounds be built in existing parks. Parks Departments began to combine playground equipment into the pleasure grounds' in many cities of the industrialized United States. Designers separated the areas for children from the rest of the park, in order to protect the parks' green areas and lawns. By the second decade of the 20th century it was generally assumed that parks would contain children's play areas.

5.7.3- Playgrounds and the playground movement

Most early public playgrounds were built in the most densely populated immigrant, lower income urban enclaves. Only if there was additional space available, would these playgrounds include aesthetic elements characteristic of the pleasure ground such as shrubbery and plants. The playgrounds were built either as additions to already existing small parks or as completely new spaces, usually in vacant lots. Spatial and economic limitations reduced the possibility of adding any natural-looking components to the playgrounds built in these neighborhoods.

Mostly built in vacant lots, urban playgrounds were often enclosed on three sides by the backs of surrounding buildings. Facing the usually congested and noisy street, the entrance to the playground was the fourth side of the square lot. The largest section of the play facility was where team games were played, specifically football and baseball. The space remaining had games as well as equipment for smaller children such as seesaws, slides, sand boxes, swings, and horizontal bars or balance beams. This was very bare equipment but its purpose and the play possibilities it fostered, were not as much to entertain the children as to maximize their psychological and physical capabilities as efficiently as possible.

According to Goodman (1979) there was an attempt at formulating standards as guidelines for playground size. The

standards offered as a general guideline, a minimum of thirty square feet per child which was criticized as insufficient because this measurement did not take into consideration the ages and number of children using the facility at once. Neither did it take into consideration the kinds of games to be played that might require more space, nor the amount of open space available nearby where other play activities might take place.

The logistics of the location were also taken into consideration playground construction guidelines. In order for playgrounds to be accessible to people in poor neighborhoods, guidelines indicated that they should be located in areas with inexpensive and fast transportation. The size, shape, boundaries, topography and other characteristics of land in the area were elements also considered in order to determine where to build the playground. Preferred locations for the construction of playgrounds were those that contained water, as long as the site for the playground did not fall half way into a slope, a lake, or a hill. This criteria, however, was not followed systematically. Playgrounds were built instead because of public pressure, availability of land, and/or plots of land offered for sale or donated by private individuals.

A diversity of play and gymnastic equipment was kept in the recreational facilities usually contiguous to the

playgrounds or with the playground supervisors (Boyer, 1978). Most of the equipment and games were built by the Parks Department, not purchased. In 1913, the New York Parks Department distributed the following equipment and apparatus throughout its playgrounds:

approach boards, baby hammocks, bagatelle boards, baseball back stops, basketball back stops, basketball courts, gymnastic bucks, building blocks, bulletin boards, chest weights, climbing ropes, croquet sets, doll houses, dumb bells, faga gaba boards, flagpoles, flying rings, giant strides, gymnasium frames, handball courts, high jumping standards, horizontal bars, Indian clubs, iron stakes, jump ropes, kindergarden benches, kindergarden tables, pursuit pins, regular size and baby swings, ring toss boards, rope rings, seesaws, shelter tents, parallel bars, tether ball poles, and vaulting poles. (Boyer, 1978, p.91)

Before becoming Manhattan's Park Commissioner in 1910, Charles Stover created The Outdoor Recreation League in 1898. The main purpose of the League was to develop economic and moral support and resources for playgrounds within the government (Cavallo, 1981). The League opened the first playground in Hudsonbank Park, later renamed DeWitt Clinton Park, with the financial help of the Social Reform Club and the Athletic Association of New York. In 1899 Seward Park, in

the Lower East Side was another playground inaugurated by the League. Presently, in poor urban enclaves, there is a lack of similar initiatives from private individuals with enough economic resources and/or organizational interests to either develop playgrounds or to mobilize governmental support to provide for playgrounds and recreational facilities.

The League provided all the basic services for the new playgrounds in New York City until 1902, and one of their main accomplishments was to delegate the city government to be responsible for the provision of play and recreational facilities. In that same year the transition of playgrounds from the League to the government took place. The government assumed all responsibility for the management, maintenance, and operations of the playgrounds. Playgrounds became the government's fiscal and legal responsibility. The Outdoor Recreation League's main contribution to the organized play movement was delegating the ownership and management of playgrounds to the city.

Between the years of 1900 to 1915, the city spent over 17 million dollars for playgrounds. After the League's succeeded in lobbying for the city to take over the ownership of playgrounds, and Stover became Commissioner of City Parks, the League ceased to exist in 1910. That space was then occupied by the Playground Association of America and the city's Bureau of Recreation.

5.7.4- The Playground Association of America

The Playground Association of America was founded in 1906. Its purpose was mainly to develop and coordinate the playground movement nationally. Its leaders included the reformers Henry Curtis, Jane Addams, Jacob Riis, Joseph Lee, Lillian Wald, Luther Gulick, and Graham Taylor, and their effort was sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation. Between 1880 and 1920, municipal governments in the United States spent over one hundred million dollars for the construction and staffing of organized playgrounds. By 1920 thanks to the founding of the Playground Association of America, and its successful attempts at organizing children's play, children's play like their formal education, was almost totally supervised by the state (Goodman, 1979). This way, the state had a high degree of control over the content and form of these two aspects of children's socialization into industrial society.

The main figure in organizing the Playground Association was Henry S. Curtis. A student of the Clark Psychologist G. Stanley Hall, Henry S. Curtis earned his Ph.D. in 1898. He was then appointed Director of New York City's playground system. After studying recreation administration in Germany and England, Curtis developed a perspective that considered team games more democratic and "social" than gymnastics. This

was the focus he brought into the play movement in US through the organization of the Playground Association of America (PAA). The PAA was later organized mostly in the industrial cities of the Northeast as a federation of autonomous playground organizations.

The Playground Association of America strengthened the play movement and was very successful during its first ten years. The PAA was founded in 1906 and by 1909 American cities had already spent over 55 million dollars on play facilities. For instance, in 1905 a total of 87 playgrounds were under operation in US cities. After only a year of the PAA's existence, this number increased to 169 playgrounds. Most of the play facilities were supported with public funds. Children's play continued to be under state control through the governmental management and administration of playgrounds (Cranz, 1982).

During the decade of 1910 to 1920, there was a dramatic increase in the number of playgrounds constructed. The Playground Association of America received reports from 257 cities in which it was mentioned that 1,543 playgrounds had been built. From the 257 cities reporting on playgrounds, 32% (83) had privately funded playgrounds, 34% (88) were publicly funded, and 33% (86) had combined support from the public and private sector. Of the 481 cities in the US, 253 owned and were responsible for the maintenance of playgrounds using

public funds. Altogether they spent a total of 6.5 million dollars for playground personnel and equipment (Cavallo, 1981).

However, even with the success of the Playground Association of America, by 1920, playgrounds alone were not enough for all the children of the city and their play needs. In 1911 as a response to the need for additional play areas, The Playground Association of America changed its name to the Playground and Recreation Association of America. Rosenzweig and Blackmar (1992) state that to add the word recreation was crucial for the organization's outreach efforts and survival. The word recreation did not imply the exclusion of any age group or activity as the word play did. Accordingly, parks became recreational facilities, and the term "facility," just like recreation, was equally neutral and embracing of different age groups, activities, and spaces.

In her history of park design, Cranz (1982) identifies the years from 1930 to 1965 as the recreation facility era. She mentions that during this time, facilities were sponsored and targeted for public active recreation. However, different to the reform era, this new trend in the history of park design was not guided by a general undergirding assumption or even a social movement. Instead public services such as parks were mainly developed for a growing middle class with more time available for leisure activities.

In the parks departments' shift from an ideology of reform to one of leisure, they became similar to "commercial producers of entertainment commodities" (Cranz, 1982, p.106). Parks departments' functions responded to the leisure demands of the public. By doing so they then changed their goal from a perspective that considered play mainly according to its potential socialization possibilities to one that responded to public demand (Cranz, 1982). Eventually this change led to an emphasis on bureaucratization and systems thinking as a way of making the functioning of parks departments in the US more efficient. Departments of parks' authority as an institution lost prestige and their budgets were increasingly diminished.

In their environments and programming parks in the United States reveal the social, historical and economic conditions that have shaped and still affect their uses (Goodman, 1979). Nowadays parks remain as safety valve mechanisms for social integration in a highly diverse society. The eclectic layering -- or the combination of different ideologies translated into the designs of the physical environment -- provides an easily accessible visual image of continuity (Goodman, 1979). Parks still provide a concrete space of connection to the past, a sense of unity and the continuity of cultural practices throughout time, and an ensemble of efforts inscribed in the physical environment

to deal with the multiple and sometimes conflicting interests that challenge a true meaning of public space, accessible to all.

5.7.5- Work and leisure in capitalism

According to Goodman (1979), after the Civil War, when the New Industrial Era emerged, the kind of life rhythms that resulted from urbanization, increasing industrialization, and immigration was a complex issue, and from a dominant class perspective, the amount and type of recreation for the poor was inadequate. Technological developments and labor politics shortened the work day. Work required more training and discipline but there was also a wider array of leisure opportunities. 'Childhood' had been extended by the need to educate and train people into a world now filled with words and new symbols. In addition to schools, this need also translated into the organization of leisure activities for children. The Reformists' reaction to these changes was to create a movement that could integrate leisure into capitalism's structure and value system. Along these lines, Reformists believed that industrial efficiency could be developed by providing individuals with a "play life" in which resourcefulness and adaptability could be fostered. For the Reformists, a good citizen could be formed from exposure to the habits of co-operation provided in play. According to the Reformists: "People who play together find it easier to

live together and are more loyal as well as more efficient citizens. Democracy rests on the most firm basis when a community has formed the habit of playing together" (Goodman, 1979, p.37).

Leisure, play, recreation are all terms that imply notions counterpoised to work. According to Rosenzweig & Blackmar (1992) if we were to apply Jungian terms to parks, they could be represented as the shadow side to a work-oriented culture. Even though they are different, work and leisure are both sides of the same coin, they are complementary within capitalism's logic. Thus, developments in capitalism have altered the relationship between work and leisure. During the early twentieth century and the beginning of the industrialization, labor work shorter working hours during the week, longer holidays, higher pay, and earlier retirement. The reform park of that time offered leisure experience that responded to these gradual changes in the urban context. However, the leisure experience was as routinized and almost as rigid as that of work.

The Reformists were against any relation between leisure and commercial activity. Reformers did not favor gambling, saloons, and vaudeville. In their attempt to regulate bowling alleys and pool halls they tried to implement licenses for those establishments. The Playground Association of America was against passive recreation combined with money spending. From the Reformers' perspective recreation, sports, and even

play were supposed to provide the opportunity of complementary activities to those of the monotonous and alienating experience of work in the factory. Thus leisure activities were not supposed to be connected in any way to work as a commercial activity. Leisure and within those recreational activities and play were conceived outside the sphere of the market. They were seen as a space outside the boundaries of the work ethic rhythm, providing freedom and action. Leisure was understood by the reformers as that space where workers could forget and escape from the self as a worker, work reminders, and stressful rhythms of urban living. Accordingly, if leisure had to be bought or people had to pay for it in some way, this state of leisure as escape could not be achieved. From the Reformers' point of view, paying or paid leisure activities could create anxiety by providing workers with the opportunity to question the wage system or their lack of satisfaction with wages.

According to Goodman (1979), one manner in which the upper classes exerted control over the working class outside the work environment was through the control of the workers' time, space, and motion. Time was controlled by the upper class through their ability to organize the work week, vacations, weekends, time off, and leisure. The control of these areas granted control over many social processes. In being able to shape space by constructing streets, parks, tenements, and the overall creation of public space as such

-- the upper classes were able to exercise more control over people's movement. By controlling motion -- faster means of transportation and/or commuting -- the rhythm and tempo of immigrants' motion could also be controlled.

Common both to labor and leisure, mechanisms that attempt to control time, space, and motion express the desire of dominant classes to impose patterns of movement over others. According to Rosenzweig and Blackmar (1992), this control functioned as a device masked by the permissive assumption that has generally characterized parks as neutral grounds whose boundaries are set outside the spheres of social or economic class issues. Urban park users reflect the variety of city dwellers in terms of types, groups, and classes, and the activities and rhythms of uses allowed there. Parks spokespeople in general avoid referring to these differences from a conflict point of view. Parks are portrayed as spaces where these differences are neutralized or meaningless, therefore assuming an absolute notion of space where conflictive issues of difference are not made explicit. It is a delicate act to believe in the notion of the public good that allows a genuine expression of possibly conflicting multiple interpretations of appropriate park use and activities, without jeopardizing the necessary soothing effects a park can provide either by relaxation or exercise along with the opportunity to meet different others. Presently, a similar ideology regarding parks as neutral

grounds seems to pervade, and those processes that provide the space to vent differences (such as public hearings concerning parks) are mostly deliberative, where the public is engaged in expressing opinions with limited access to actual decision making. Nancy Fraser (1990) calls this sort of practice 'weak publics' (p.75).

5.8- Development of playgrounds in New York City

The New York City Report on the Vacation Schools and Playgrounds of 1900 indicated that playgrounds were established by the Board of Education in 1895 as a result of efforts by Jacob Riis and the 1894 Tenement House Commission to create a compulsory school playground law (Goodman, 1979). The law stated that every new school should have a playground organized and operated by the Board of Education. In 1910, when Charles B. Stover became Manhattan's Park Commissioner, the playground movement was implemented and 30 new playgrounds on school grounds were established. Afterwards, Commissioner Stover created a separate bureau of recreation under Parks Department auspices for programming playground supervised activities. By the mid-1920s, New York had ninety-three playgrounds in its parks and schools.

According to Goodman (1979), organized play started in New York City in 1890 when the New York Society for Parks and Playgrounds for Children was founded. The organization

evolved in New York City because it was one of the main destinations for immigrants. Because of the reformers' concern with reaching immigrants, most of the first playgrounds in New York (five) were placed in the Lower East Side. Typically a playground would have an outdoor gymnasium for older children and a playground for the younger ones. Boys and girls were separated in different areas. In 1906, according to Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone (1992), there were one or two play leaders per playground in New York. After some time, more activities, including naturalization and Americanization classes, crafts, and pageants were introduced by the professional play leaders. These activities were largely successful attempts to assimilate immigrants into the middle-class mainstream of American life.

5.8.1- Robert Moses and Central Park playgrounds

Before Robert Moses's playground construction in Central Park, Reformers built a small sand garden near the Umpire Rock in Central Park in the 1890. Summer programs for children in Central Park started in 1912, but they did not have equipment. By the 1920s only about 9 percent of the park's terrain was devoted to playing fields or special programmed events.

The period in which most playgrounds were built in Central Park is best represented by the figure of Robert Moses. Moses was Parks Commissioner in New York City from 1934 to 1960. He transformed, among many other things, New York's park system. From 1934 to 1940, the number of playgrounds in New York City increased dramatically. Many of them were carved into existing landscaped parks of the mid-to-late 1800s, including Central Park. In 1934, Central Park had only one playground, located in the southwest of the park. Three years later it had twenty-two, including the West 110th Street playground. These were "marginal playgrounds" located along the park's periphery. The design of playgrounds during this period was standard. It included swings, slides, seesaws, a jungle gym, playhouses, sandboxes, and benches on an asphalt surface.

According to Caro (1974), Moses also expanded the uses of Central Park by building facilities for older children and adults. The "marginal playgrounds" were designed mostly for small children. During the Moses era, the playground in the Great Lawn was designated for older children and the Great Hill was reserved for adult use. In addition to playgrounds, other recreational facilities were built in Central Park during the Moses era, including baseball fields and tennis courts, an ice rink, and the restaurant Tavern on the Green . Of the 255 playgrounds Robert Moses built in New York City, only one was located in Harlem (Caro 1975). Caro reads this

fact as evidence of Moses' lack of concern towards Black children and Black neighborhoods in the city. In addition, Moses rarely built basketball courts in public spaces, and the Robert Moses Jones Beach development was almost inaccessible by public transportation. Moreover, and particularly relevant to playgrounds, Robert Moses' idiosyncratic views reflected a certain intolerance towards different playground designs which considered the natural environment as an integral component. He rejected the playground designs of sculptor Osamu Noguchi and these playgrounds remained unbuilt. In Noguchi's playground designs for Riverside Park the natural environment was shaped into different playful ground levels, where the earth was sculpted into what he called 'playscapes,' a combination of playgrounds and the landscape of the natural environment (Shenta Laury, personal communication, June 15, 1998). His designs were more compatible with a notion respectful of the landscaped 'natural environment' and compatible with a view of the park as intended in the design by Olmsted and Vaux.

5.8.2- History of the West 110th Street playground

Of the 23 "marginal" playgrounds system built by Moses in Central Park those at the North End of the Park are close to the Harlem neighborhood. The West 110th Street playground, located at the northwest corner of Central Park close to

110th Street and Central Park West is one of them. Called the North Woods, the northwest corner of Central Park resembles what could be a natural landscape in the countryside. This area of the park is one of the most hilly, with beautiful contrasts of grade (see Appendix 12, Plan #2).

Apart from alterations to comply with safety standards, playgrounds in Central Park have usually been redesigned based on community initiatives to improve them. Therefore those playgrounds bordering more affluent neighborhoods have had the political and economic power to direct funding efforts towards the improvement of their playgrounds. The neighborhood near the West 110th Street playground is not an affluent one and it was not until Towers on the Park was built in 1988, that a resident there assumed the initiative to organize efforts within the community and The Central Park Conservancy to improve it. At the beginning of 1990 the playground, as described by respondents, was a "garbage dump." Drug activity was intense and abandonment and neglect were very much present in the playground. Concerted efforts at that time between community residents and The Central Park Conservancy identified sources for funding, and even though limited if compared to redesign budgets for other playgrounds in the Park, a budget was provided for the redesign of the West 110th Street playground. In 1992, efforts were made to redesign the playground. The playground's design was not changed dramatically. The main emphasis of the redesign was to bring the playground up to safety and equipment standards.

It did not get the visual change that most of the other playgrounds in Central Park did.

5.8.3- Physical description of the West 110th Street playground and the Dana Center playground

5.8.3.1- The West 110th Street playground

The West 110th Street playground lays in a ravine, which makes it secluded and lacking visual access from the street (see Photo # 1). Likewise there is no visual access from the playground to the street. West of the playground is a brick bridge, built in the last century for horse carriages (see Photo # 2). The playground is oval in shape and contains one climbing structure for young children and another for older children. There is also one tire swing, a sprinkler, a sandbox, a balance chain and a beam, and eight toddler swings. The toddler swings and the tire swing are fenced-in according to federal safety regulations (see Photo # 3). All the equipment is made of steel. There are benches along the periphery of the playground. The continuity of the benches is interrupted by the west entrance to the playground -- which is usually closed -- and by the toddler swing and tire swing areas. On the southern side of the playground there are three low-lying rocks (see photo # 4).

Photo #1 - West 110th Street playground (1998)



street playground (1998)



Photo #2 - Brick bridge and tunnel adjacent to the West 110th
Street playground (1998)



d tunnel adjacent to the West 110th



Photo #3 - Tire and toddler swings, the West 110th Street
playground (1998)



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iller swings, the West 110th Street



Photo #4 - Low-lying rocks in the southern end of West 110th
street playground (1998)



n the southern end of West 110th



A few scattered trees in the playground provide shade. There is a drinking fountain near the western entrance to the playground. The playground is enclosed by a six foot fence, with gates at the East and West ends. The western gate is usually closed and the playground is locked at dusk. Additional short shubbery has been planted on the north lawn to avoid erosion when it rains and the water runs to the lower level into the playground (Low & Milan, 1992). The climbing structures, the tire swing and the toddler swings all have safety mats under the equipment. Elsewhere some tree roots protrude through the ground. The playground equipment is painted in bright primary colors: red, yellow, and blue.

5.8.3.2- The Dana Center playground

The Dana Center playground is located East of the Lenox Avenue entrance to Central Park (Appendix 1, Map #1) near the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, a facility that provides cultural and recreational activities for the community, and the Harlem Meer. Outside the building there are restrooms and a telephone booth is located next to the building. Northwest of the Dana Discovery Center is the playground (see Photo # 5).

The Dana Center playground was also built in the 1930s during the Moses Era. It was re-designed in 1979 and renovated in 1994. The area of this oval playground is larger

than that of the West 110th Street playground. The main body of the playground is made of 12 by 12 stacked timber wood forming strong groupings of jungle gym and exercise bars, chained up bars, and an over-head arch climber. There is also a tree house-like structure with a fire pole. There are benches all along the periphery of the playground with the exception of the South side of the playground. There are also a few trees inside and outside the playground that provide shade for the playground. There is a mushroom head water feature on the East side of the playground.

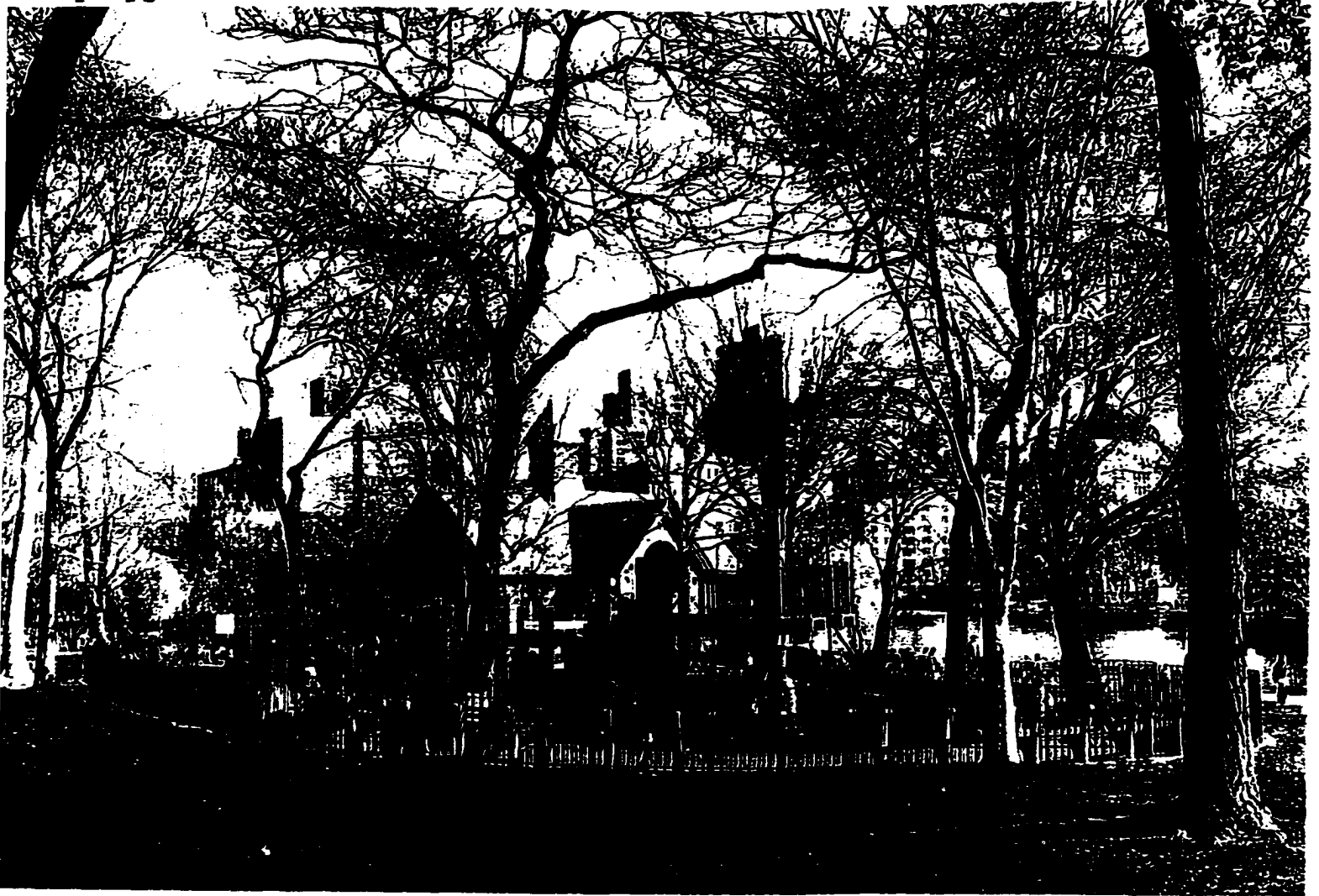
Photo #5 - The Dana Center playground (1998)



The playground is enclosed by a low four foot fence. There is only one open entrance to the playground located centrally on the South side of the playground at the front path to the Harlem Meer. The entrance gates are also closed at dusk.

Different to the West 110th Street playground which has rubber mats as safety surface, the Dana playground has a safety surface under the equipment, made of a combination of rubber and asphalt. All along the periphery, there is asphalt

ter playground (1998)



enclosed by a low four foot fence.
 entrance to the playground located
 side of the playground at the front
 r. The entrance gates are also closed

West 110th Street playground which has
 surface, the Dana playground has a
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approximately two feet wide which changes into a soft surface under the equipment. The transition between these two surfaces -- the periphery and that under the equipment -- is very smooth, and the surface under the equipment is extremely cushioned. The safety surface is one of higher quality than that of the West 110th Street playground. The Dana playground is also an uneven grade but not as contrasting as the West 110th Street playground. The playground slopes towards the South in the direction of Meer. Most of the colors of the playground are dark: red, purple, green. A few structures are painted in a bright green.

The Dana playground is part of the northern landscape last to be restored in the ambitious capital project to restore and improve Central Park undertaken by The Central Park Conservancy from 1980 to the present. It is contiguous to the recently built Dana Discovery Center, whose numerous programs include recreational and educational activities (such as lending fishing poles for fishing in the lake, and workshops covering a wide range of themes, from art to environmental awareness of the Park's flora, fauna, topography, and history). As noted above, the Dana Center also provides restroom facilities and a telephone. There are frequent police patrols of the area.

5.8.4- Physical description of playgrounds in Central Park and in the Harlem neighborhood.

5.8.4.1- Playgrounds in Central Park

The closest playgrounds in Central Park, to the West 110th Street playground besides the Dana Center playground are located on Central Park West: the Sandpark on 103rd Street (see Photo #6) and the 'Wild West' playground on 100th Street (see Photo #7). On the East Side, along Fifth Avenue, there are the Bernard Family playground at 108th (see Photo #8) and the Robert Benheim playground at 100th Street (see Photo #9). These playgrounds are located on the periphery of Central Park. By being in Central Park, however, the playgrounds are surrounded by many trees. These playgrounds are very well maintained in terms of equipment and cleanliness. Each playground has many available trash cans. There are also green wooden benches inside the periphery of each, the same design found in all playgrounds in Central Park. All the playgrounds have ornamental iron fences. These range in size from 5 feet to 6 feet tall. The swing areas are also enclosed by short fences (approximately 4 feet tall).

5.8.4.2- The Sandpark

This playground at the West Side of the park at 103rd Street, is large (approximately 30 by 40 square feet). It has

many compartments delimited by 3 foot concrete borders which contains the sand that covers most of the playground surface. The equipment in the playground includes a wood climbing structure, an arched monkey bar, a tire swing, and a cement pyramid with two slides, a section with four swings and one tire swing. The equipment is in brown wood with a bright orange and red structure that holds the tire swing. There is also a hanging wood bridge that connects one play area to the next. The railings on that structure are red. The playground equipment is in very good condition.

5.8.4.3- The 'Wild West' playground

This is a large playground at 100th street on the West Side of the park. The playground equipment is made of wood. Short timber poles (approximately three feet) enclose the four play areas. There is also a sprinkler area, a cement picnic table with four cement seats, and a separated area with toddler and older children's swings. The four integrated areas include one area with a climbing structure and a slide, a second area with three tire swings and a climbing arch, a third area has another climbing structure and a curled slide. The surface of the three areas is covered with sand. The fourth area has a small climbing structure, and the safety surface of this play area is rubber.

5.8.4.4- The Bernard Family playground

This playground at 108th Street on the East Side of the park. It has three play areas. There is a sprinkler area, another area with eight toddler swings, and a main climbing structure next to a sandbox. The main climbing structure has three slides. There is a hanging wooden bridge from one end of the structure to the next. The remainder of the climbing structure is in metal. The equipment color is dark red and dark green. There is safety surface (rubber mats) not only under the equipment but throughout the playground area. The safety surface is in very good condition.

5.8.4.5- The Robert Bendheim playground

This is also a very large playground on the East Side at 110th Street. There are three play areas. One area has very large climbing structures linked with metal and wooden hanging bridges. There is another area with five nested circles that sprinkle water towards the circle's center. The height of the circles is approximately 6 feet. The third area is a large sandbox with a metal table next to it where children can play with sand. A separate area has six toddler swings. The equipment colors are dark red and green. The safety surface in this playground is very soft (similar to the Dana Center playground) covering not only the ground under the equipment but also the areas next to the equipment

and under the circles that spray water. This is the only playground at the North End of the park that has a portable restroom at the entrance of the playground.

5.8.5- Playgrounds in Harlem

The closest public playgrounds to the West 110th Street playground in Harlem are located in Morningside Park and Marcus Garvey Park (see Appendix 1, Map # 1). There are two playgrounds in Morningside Park: one located near 110th Street (see Photo #10) and the other on 123rd Street and Morningside Drive (see Photo #11). In Marcus Garvey Park/ Mount Morris Park there are two contiguous playgrounds located on 124th Street between Morris Park Avenue and Madison Avenue (see Photo #12 and Photo #13). These playgrounds, in contrast with the playgrounds in Central Park, are less well maintained in terms of equipment and cleanliness. There are just a few trash cans, the equipment is not as new, and the playgrounds, particularly those at Marcus Garvey Park, are not as clean. The playgrounds have benches on the periphery. They are the typical brown wooden benches found throughout city playgrounds and parks. The benches in some of the playgrounds are not in the best condition as the paint is peeling off and they seem to need maintenance. The Marcus Garvey playgrounds are surrounded by short iron fences, approximately five feet high. The Morningside playground at 110th Street is in the middle of

the park and does not have a fence. The one in Morningside at 123rd Street has a tall fence of approximately 12 feet. The swing areas are also enclosed by short fences. The safety surfaces in all these playgrounds are rubber mats. They are in satisfactory condition with the exception of the playground in Morningside Park at 123rd Street, where some of the rubber mats are deteriorated.

5.8.5.1- Morningside Park playground 1 at
110th Street

The design of the equipment is very simple. There is a climbing structure in wood with metal railings. There are two slides connected to each end of the equipment. The equipment colors are dark green and the railings are beige and red. There are no trees near this playground. The surface under the playground equipment is covered with rubber mats which are in satisfactory condition.

5.8.5.2- Morningside Park playground 2 at
123rd Street

Located in Morningside Park, this playground is next to the street to the east and lies next to rocks, trees, and hills to the west. Its design is also very simple. There is a small climbing structure in metal with two slides. Next to this play area, there is another play area with two tall

metal slides. The equipment colors are similar to those of the Morningside playground at 110th Street: dark green, beige railings, and the monkey bars are painted red. The safety surface under the playground equipment is made of rubber mats. This safety surface is not in good condition as some of the rubber mats are deteriorated. There are other areas for recreation contiguous to the playground and these are separated by tall fences.

5.8.5.3.- Marcus Garvey / Mount Morris Park
playgrounds 1 and 2 at 123rd Street

South of the playgrounds is the park area and a swimming pool. There are two playgrounds close by in the same block. One is located in the middle of the block and the other playground is towards the corner of 123rd Street and Morris Park Avenue. These two playgrounds have the same equipment. There are three play areas: one with a tall and wide monkey bar, next to this play area there is a wooden climbing structure with a slide. This structure is linked to another by a hanging wood bridge. In the next play area, there is a taller climbing structure with a monkey bar and a slide. There is a separated play area with six swings. All the play areas have rubber mats under the equipment. The safety surfaces are in good condition. The playground colors are black and yellow, the structures are made of a combination of wood and metal.

5.9- Efficiency and maintenance: concluding remarks

The emphasis on the efficiency model for both the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and The Central Park Conservancy has its roots in the effort to organize play for poor urban immigrant children. The Reformers constructed physical infrastructures and activities attempting to assimilate poor immigrants to middle class 'American' values. The lack of safe places for children's play in urban 'ghettos,' the deteriorating conditions there, and child psychology theories that stated the importance of play in children's development were all used as justifications for the development of organized play as both a social control mechanism as well as an initiative that improved children's leisure activities. In so doing, the Reformist movement added still another component to the organized play equation. Most importantly they involved the government in providing for organized play and maintaining playgrounds and recreational areas.

The historical development of government intervention in the provision of recreational facilities and activities -- among other social services -- brings us to the most recent trend, the "neo-liberal" tendency to privatize public services. The role of the government has been changing in recent years. Public disinvestment is the main structural change witnessed in many forms of governmental retrenchment

which affect, among other things, the maintenance and operations of public spaces. In its place, other organizations and agencies are assuming once taken-for-granted governmental duties, and, increasingly, have been moving the provision of social services to the private sector. This process is particularly visible in the maintenance and other operations of public spaces and playgrounds by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation in the Harlem neighborhood near the West 110th Street playground and The Central Park Conservancy's maintenance and operations within Central Park itself. The maintenance and operations of public spaces and playgrounds have a direct effect on public safety. The public perception of what constitutes a safe public space is very much linked to the presence, or lack thereof, of sufficient support for maintenance and operations. In other words, the public perception of a safe place is intrinsically tied to the visible conditions of that place, and to a great degree determines the level and patterns of use for that space.

The history of the development of organized play and its relationship to the development of parks and playgrounds in New York City, helped provide the historical, institutional and physical context for the construction, maintenance and use of the West 110th Street playground and other playgrounds in Central Park and the Harlem neighborhood. The interlayering of historical processes, social factors and the

re-shaping of the physical environment are also apparent in the actual conditions of parks and playgrounds elsewhere in New York City. The historical framework developed here attests to the fact that the environment is not independent from social and economic factors, nor is it a neutral ground. The Progressive Era set the stage for the transformation of the physical environment according to a civic minded ideology of elevating the moral standard of poor immigrants and to engage the government in the provision and maintenance of these services. The legacy of this socio-spatial history takes us to current times and the existence of play areas and parks in lower income urban enclaves -- the focus of the Reform movement agenda. In present times the case of the West 110th Street playground, other playgrounds in Central Park, and playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood are affected primarily by changes in the role of the government in the provision of public services and in the increasing trend towards privatization. The spaces these conditions produce, specifically the West 110th Street playground, affect users', non-users', and managers' perceptions of safety.

CHAPTER SIX

PRODUCED SPACE AND PUBLIC SAFETY: RELATIONS AMONG THE
PLAYGROUND, ITS AREA OF THE PARK, AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

At the beginning of this century, the Reformers created an infrastructure where playgrounds and organized recreational facilities provided a context for the transmission of dominant values. Nowadays, lower income urban enclaves still have access to the landscape of recreational facilities and playgrounds inherited from the Reformist era although it has been transformed through time. Presently, the contents of the Reformist era's implicit social contract seem absent. Reformists justified the organization of play and recreational activities as a means to "better" immigrants' living standards and assimilate them into American values. In their efforts, Reformists attained the goal of involving the government in assuming responsibility for the provision of play and recreational facilities. Currently however, this ideology has been replaced by an extreme progressive selection resulting in the coexistence of well-manicured urban public spaces juxtaposed to dilapidated ones. There are some other public spaces, located within the center of this continuum that provide a moment for the contradictory character of this ideology to emerge. The West 110th Street playground is such a public space.

Parents had mixed views concerning how physical and social aspects of the West 110th Street playground related to safety. The playground as perceived by parents, contained elements of abandonment and neglect when compared to other playgrounds in Central Park, but was seen as better maintained and safer when compared to playgrounds in Harlem. This perception of safety of the West 110th Street playground as relative to other playgrounds inside and outside of Central Park is evidence of the importance of context. The perception of safety changes according to what the playground is compared to in terms of other playgrounds in different areas of Central Park and different neighborhoods in the city. Accordingly, the context of the West 110th Street playground -- defined as inclusive of not only other playgrounds and areas of the park, but also neighborhoods and the city -- is a basic component for understanding parents' perceptions of safety as relative. In this view of safety as relative, parents also mentioned specific elements of the social and physical environment that exemplify the connection and relation to broader structural issues that affect the playground, its area in the park, and the neighborhood. Structural issues also contextualize parents' perceptions of safety in the West 110th Street playground.

This chapter will focus mainly on issues regarding broader structural processes that are part of the West 110th Street playground's context as related to safety by parent

users, non-users, and managers⁷. This account will include a synthesis of the individual and structural perspectives on the parents' perceptions of safety in the West 110th Street playground. The following sections will include: 1) a general description of the parents and the most relevant issues they mentioned that affect their perceptions of safety in the West 110th Street playground; 2) a detailed account of the social and physical issues that affect parents' perceptions of safety in the playground, its area of the park, and the neighborhood; and 3) the connection between social and physical issues to broader social, economic and political aspects raised by parents in their perceptions of safety throughout the three scales of analysis. The last section will include a conceptualization of the relationship among the scales of analysis as depicted in the respondents' discourses on safety. The West 110th Street playground served as a prism filtering a discourse on safety that linked the physical and social attributes of the playground, the area of the park, and the contiguous neighborhood of Harlem offering the opportunity to frame safety concerns and perceptions within larger structural issues.

⁷ Unless stated differently, there were no significant differences based on parents' ethnic background or gender regarding their perceptions of the West 110th Street and the Dana Center playgrounds.

6.1- Profile of parents and their general perceptions of safety in the West 110th Street playground

Based on the interviews conducted in the West 110th Street playground and observations of the playground and adjacent landscapes, the West 110th Street playground was used largely by parents (93%)⁸ who have lived on the blocks contiguous to the northwest area of Central Park for an average time of twelve and a half years. The West 110th Street playground was used by African-American parents (52%), Puerto Ricans (28%), and Dominicans (23%). I rarely observed White, Anglo-American parents in the playground. The few who did use it usually ventured into the playground during the morning hours, approximately at ten or eleven o'clock. The average age of respondents was 36 years old. Most of them (48%) had two children whose average age was six years old. Usually one parent accompanied the children, but there were many instances in which a mother and father were together with their children in the playground. Most of them (40%) had been visiting the playground for a period of two to four years and most (36%) stayed in the playground from one to two hours per visit.

Parent non-users of the West 110th Street playground had passed by or been there only once. Instead, they used the Dana Center playground. Most of the parent non-users also

⁸ All percentages are calculated based on the total number of respondents who answered the specific question.

lived in the adjacent neighborhood (90%), but in blocks closer to the Dana Center playground which is approximately two hundred feet away from the West 110th Street playground. Like the West 110th street playground users, parent non-users had been living in this neighborhood for over a decade (an average of 11 years). Most parents who visited the Dana Center playground were Latino (45%) and African-American (38%). As with the West 110th Street playground very few Whites (6%) used the Dana Center playground regularly. Many White people who were approached to be interviewed mentioned that they did not live nearby nor had they been to or know about the West 110th Street playground. The average age of the parents who used the Dana Center playground was 33 years old. Most of them (43%) had two children and the children's average age was seven and a half years old. Both playgrounds -- the West 110th Street and the Dana -- were used most heavily in the afternoons between 2:30 and 7 pm. Thus, the parent users and non-users interviewed for this study shared largely similar characteristics.

The 'managers' were all (11) professionals who worked for The Central Park Conservancy and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. They had been working for these institutions for an average period of five years. Five of these professionals worked directly in the West 110th Street playground: a maintenance worker, two gardeners, a playground captain, and a project coordinator who oversaw the

functioning of all playgrounds in Central Park. In addition, two landscape architects who worked on the redesign of the West 110th Street playground and of the Dana Center playground were interviewed. The remaining five were professionals in The Central Park Conservancy and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation: a park planner, a director of community relations, a chief of design for Central Park, and a park supervisor for the Morningside Park within the District 9 jurisdiction. From their perspective, managers considered the West 110th Street playground to be in good condition (48%). For them, the 1930s style playground built by Moses is in "good shape" (9%), the equipment is well built (9%) even though it did not received a dramatic visual change when it was redesigned (9%). According to the managers, the playground equipment does not require much maintenance (9%), it does not get much vandalism (9%) or negative use (9%), and it is well maintained (9%). Managers did mention however, a few negative comments about the West 110th Street playground (34%), and those were mainly related to the West 110th street playground location. Managers mentioned that the playground is a landscape away from street life (9%), lies in a low grade (9%), needs better drainage (9%), the fence needs repairs (9%), is spatially uninspired (9%), lacks spatial diversity (9%), is the most isolated playground in Central Park (9%), and it is not as heavily used as others (9%). Despite these negative comments,

managers generally considered the West 110th Street playground to be in acceptable condition.

Parents, users and non-users alike, identified the condition of the playground equipment as the most important physical factor when they decided to visit a playground (38%). In both playgrounds -- the West 110th Street and the Dana Center playground -- the equipment satisfied the consumer report safety standards for playground construction. Parent users and non-users were very satisfied with the conditions of the equipment in both playgrounds in terms of the age group for whom they were designed; the West 110th Street playground for young children and the Dana Center playground for older children. Parents offered positive remarks for the West 110th Street playground (93%) and for the Dana Center playground (96%) about the design and condition of the playgrounds' equipment. Even though safety was an important factor in parents' decisions to visit either playground, the physical condition of the playgrounds did not represent a safety concern for them since both playgrounds are up to safety standards.

In general, however, for parent non-users the physical conditions of the Dana Center were better than the West 110th Street playground. In terms of playground equipment, parent non-users considered the Dana Center playground to have more climbing structures and better equipment (11%), to be geared

towards an older age group (5%), to be bigger (5%), and to be safer (3%) than the West 110th Street playground. Parent non-users also considered that the West 110th Street playground's equipment was designed for smaller children (6%), that it had less equipment (3%) than the Dana, and some thought that the West 110th Street playground offered combined equipment for different age groups (3%). A small number of parents considered the sandbox in the West 110th Street playground to be a "nasty thing" (3%). Few parent non-users (10%) stated that they considered the conditions of the playground equipment between the West 110th Street and the Dana Center playground to be the same. For parent non-users the safety surface under the equipment at the Dana Center playground is of a better quality (22%) than the one at 110th Street. Some of the parent non-users considered the safety surface at the Dana playground to be smoother (14%), providing more protection and padding (5%) than the rubber mats of the West 110th Street playground. A few parent users or non-users (5%) suggested that there should be safety surface similar to the Dana Center playground covering the whole area of the West 110th Street playground and not only under the equipment. One manager also voiced a similar suggestion (2%).

While the condition of the playground equipment, was the most important physical factor, the most important social factor for parent users when they decided to visit a playground was people (22%) -- kind of people and presence or

lack thereof. Following the condition of the playground equipment and the kinds of people present, location (16%) and maintenance, specifically cleanliness (11%), were the next most important physical aspects parent users considered when they decided to visit playgrounds.

To a great degree, the familiarity and convenience parents mentioned as the main reason why they visited the West 110th Street playground combines both aspects: social aspects and location. In what follows, a general account of the West 110th Street playground will be offered based on formal and informal observations of the physical aspects of the location, activities taking place in the playground, and observed situations that involved safety issues.

6.2- The West 110th Street playground as marginal playground: the border, the edge

Even though all playgrounds built in Central Park by Robert Moses were called marginal playgrounds because of their location on the park's periphery, for the West 110th Street playground is also a "border" space where contrasting and contradictory messages emerged. These messages pivoted around parental users' and non-users' perceptions of the location. The playground is located in well manicured and maintained park -- Central Park -- but it borders Harlem's "ghetto." The marginality of the playground is depicted in

the contrast between the highly manicured landscape of Central Park and the lack of cleanliness, dilapidated infrastructure, and fiscal neglect in Harlem. These factors were accompanied by halting attempts at gentrification initiated with the construction of Towers on the Park, on the blocks contiguous to the West 110th Street playground.

The formal and informal observations of the West 110th Street playground represented it as a marginal playground. The marginal quality was evident in the characterization of the playground as a space apart from the rest of the park, overlooked and often ignored not only in terms of maintenance and surveillance but even in its physical context: the topography of its adjacent landscapes. The qualities of the West 110th Street playground's surrounding physical environment -- it is sunken and secluded -- added to the feeling of marginality. Simultaneous with this feeling of marginality and almost as an indirect result of it, the playground was also a space where users were not reminded so continuously of the rules and regulations of park protocol. This situation produced a counter-space with different and alternative uses often including uses outside the boundaries of playground's and park's regulations. One such instance was exemplified but not limited to older children playing basketball at the monkey bars (the playground is mainly designed for young children):

Older children play basketball in the monkey bars of the main climbing structure. Users bring their own games and other activities such as roller and in-line skates, balls, bicycles, tri-cycles, basketballs. They bring radios to the playground and play music such as hip-hop, salsa, and reggae. None of these activities are permitted in the playground according to park rules and regulations (Field Notes, Tuesday, July 2nd, 1996).

Another example of a different use from those allowed in the park, involved throwing barbecue parties on the lawns adjacent to the playground (barbecuing is forbidden in Central Park). Different uses, activities, and situations overlapped each other and this combination of different activities and uses created situations where conflict was prone to happen,

An African-American teenager threw a rock from the top of the big rocks south of the playground down to the lawn where a group of Latino people were celebrating a birthday party. The rock hit a woman on the back. It did not cut her skin but she seemed to have a lot of pain. The husband of the woman ran up the rocks and caught the kid. The teenager seemed as if caught in a mischievous act (in law lingo it is called 'criminal mischief'). The teenager was surrounded by police and paramedics while the woman was in anguish from the pain

in her back and probably her shock at this unexpected event (Field Notes, Sunday, July 28, 1996)

The presence of dogs in the playground (there is a rule that clearly states no dogs allowed in the playground) as well as in adjacent park landscapes, was source of concern voiced by an African-American mother of three including a 6 year old. Besides the fact that dogs were not allowed in the playground some users did bring them in and in the not so often occasions when there were police patrolling the area, the "no dogs allowed" rule was reinforced,

A police car turned around and came into the playground. The policeman went to talk to an African-American man who had an unleashed dog inside the playground. The policeman instructed the man to chain the dog to the fence unless he wanted to receive a fine. The man whispered to himself remarks against the policeman's request (Field Notes, Wednesday, July 24, 1998).

The lack of restroom services and the secluded feel to the area allowed people to use it instead of out of view places around the rocks and trees on the North lawn. Even though I have seen this practice in other public spaces, such as closed subway entrances or dark streets and sidewalks, in different parts of the city, the northwest corner of Central

Park, particularly the path north to the West 110th Street playground was used routinely as a "public restroom" by males, both adults and children.

Playground users (parents, children, teenagers and other adults) appropriated this space by navigating around rules and regulations that were not rigidly enforced because of the lack of supervision, the infrequent patrolling of the area, and the seclusion of the space. For parents, barbecuing and throwing parties on the adjacent lawns during Summer weekends were their ways of appropriating the space against the official playground and park rules and regulations displayed on the playground's bulletin boards. In other southern areas of the park, these rules were more heavily enforced.

There were also illicit activities that took place in landscapes adjacent to the playground and they affected the playground's use and perceptions of safety there. The illicit use, much of it around drugs, occurred mainly at the bridge under the tunnel which made the path north of the playground heavily transited by people in search of drugs. Parent users and non-users identified the tunnel under the bridge as a drug spot. An African-American mother of two boys including a 4 year old who uses the playground regularly, said about the path, "not nice people pass through, nobody travels through there only junkies and drug addicts, fewer people go there (to the tunnel)."

The drug paraphernalia left in the playground and found in the morning by maintenance workers, was, for the playground users, evidence of illicit drug use during the night. Even though the playground was closed at dusk by playground maintenance workers, the tall iron fence that surrounds the playground was rusted making the bottom of the fence fragile and prone to break. There were a couple of iron bars in the fence broken at the bottom which allowed easy access to the playground.

The rhythm of playground use developed by parents who appropriated this space despite illicit activities such as drug use and dealing in the surrounding landscapes, revolved around visits to the playground when they saw other parents and children there, mainly during Summer weekends and weekdays in the afternoon when parents finish their workday and brought their children to the playground. Many of them avoided using the playground when it was empty (45%), and an African-American father of a three year old boy mentioned that he forbids his wife to visit the West 110th Street playground when there is nobody there. The presence of people, kinds of people, or lack of people was a key social aspect regarding parents' (users and non-users) decisions to visit the West 110th Street playground, as well as other playgrounds in Central Park and in the adjacent neighborhoods. The particular characteristics of the West 110th Street playground's location and the illicit drug use

and dealing that places such as the tunnel sheltered only accentuated parents' concerns for safety there.

6.3- Social aspects

6.3.1- Constituencies and 'undesirables'

Despite illicit and transgressive activities in the playground and its surroundings, parent users perceived the West 110th Street playground to be safe (56%). One of the most important aspects that made parents feel safe -- and this was true for non-users as well -- was the presence of many people (71%). When asked if there was anything that made them feel safe in the playground they also mentioned that the type and kind of people was a factor in determining how safe they felt in the playground (32%). Parents indicated that knowing other parents (12%) and the presence of other parents engaged in positive activities made them feel safe (10%). On the other hand, those parents who perceived the West 110th Street playground as unsafe or even those who perceived it as safe, referred mainly to those instances in which the playground was empty as the time in which they avoided going there (37%). These were both faces of the same coin. The presence of people and/or the lack thereof influenced parents' perceptions of safety in the West 110th Street playground. Similarly, from a professional perspective a manager mentioned that increased use increases safety.

Another manager mentioned that one of the problems of the West 110th Street playground was that "not too many people use it, as much as other playgrounds in Central Park are used."

Parents -- users and non-users alike -- however, did qualify the kind of people who made them feel unsafe. These were drug addicts or people "desperate" for drugs (64%) , and unsupervised children (43%). An African-American mother of two, including a seven year old girl, referred to them as "undesirables." In general, parents referred to people who were 'desperate' for drugs (7%), junkies (7%), drugs users (7%), strange people (7%), unsavory people (7%), people hanging out or drinking (7%), wild people hanging out (7%), mischievous kids throwing things from the top of the rocks South of the playground (7%), adults without children (7%), and homeless people (7%) as undesirable. From the non-user perspective, an African-American father of two, including a nine year old, mentioned in reference to the West 110th street playground that "only junkies and drug addicts passed by that playground."

Even though most parents who used the West 110th Street playground considered the presence of 'undesirables' an obstacle in their perception of the playground as a safe place, some of them did qualify their remarks. In so doing, they addressed broader urban issues such as that of

homelessness within the context of lack of housing options and of "hoodlums" who also belong to the neighborhood. For instance, an African-American mother of a two month old girl and a two year old boy, when referring to one group of 'undesirables' said, "...some of these homeless people, **if they had some place to go**, [italics added] I would feel safer if they are not hanging around the hill." Another African-American mother of two, including a four year old boy, when thinking about improvements that would make her feel safer in the area of Central Park around the playground, qualified her remarks about 'hoodlums' when considering them as members who also belong to the neighborhood:

Maybe to see less, I mean [it] is all of Central Park, I can't say it's just here, it's just less "hoodlums" but then this is probably their neighborhood anyway, so you can't just tell them to get out of their own neighborhood.

One African-American father of a two-and-a-half year old boy mentioned that there were lots of working people in the neighborhood, "good people live there." However, parents were also aware of contextual issues that affect the employment situation in Harlem, an African-American mother of two, including a six year old pointed out,

...there are no jobs in the neighborhood, there is no sense of belonging. Give them jobs and they will not kill or steal. People do not steal or kill out of pleasure but for survival. People react to what is happening in their lives.

Familiarity was a recurrent answer (38%) to questions that addressed different issues including factors that parent users took into consideration when they decided to visit a playground and listed among the reasons that made them feel safe in the West 110th Street playground. Despite the problems in the northwest corner of Central Park and the contiguous neighborhood that negatively affect parents' perceptions of safety (such as drug activity and gun shots) only 30% of parents felt unsafe in the neighborhood. In general, parents tended to feel safe in the neighborhood where most of them had lived for a long period of time (69%). The more familiarity respondents' felt with people in the neighborhood and the area where the playground is located, the safer they tended to perceive the playground. Mainly, parents felt that in case they needed help because of a threatening situation in which they might find themselves involved, knowing people gave them the certainty that when and if they needed help there would be people they can ask for help, or people who will care for them (25%). This sense of familiarity was also expressed as a sense of ownership and

empowerment, a feeling of belonging. An African-American father of three, including a 6 year old explained:

I don't feel unsafe anywhere I go, I mean I'm an African-American so I guess I can walk through Harlem, I don't feel any way, you know, I might feel more uncomfortable when I go to the East Side to see my friend who lives on York Avenue and Seventy something Street....

Knowing the kind of people, places, or the time of day that should be avoided, enables parents' safe use of the playground. However, parent users' and non-users' perceptions of safety of the area of the park near the playground differed. The main difference reflected the dissimilar, contradictory, and almost contrasting interpretations between parent users and non-users which produced a safety rhetoric embedded with elements of the physical environment. Contiguous landscapes elicited different messages to parents who used the West 110th Street playground and to those who did not. In both groups, however, the messages inscribed in the landscape were read almost invariably as an expression of safety concerns.

6.4- Location as the contradiction "where beauty meets horror"

For parent users and non-users, the location of the West 110th Street playground was perceived differently and the symbolism of various elements regarding safety issues was highly contradictory. This contradiction is best synthesized in the managers' accounts. While parent users in general considered the qualities of the West 110th Street playground's location as positive and parent non-users identified similar aspects as negative, managers' accounts better grasped this contradiction. While for one manager the location of the playground was considered "a landscape away from street life," another manager mentioned that the playground is located "close to the [park] perimeter." Managers, when asked about the area of the park where the West 110th Street playground is located, in general offered positive remarks (72%), best summarized in the following description from a manager, "cool, quiet, lovely being surrounded by rock formations and trees." They also mentioned that this was a unique area in the park (3%), heavily wooded (3%), best area in the park (3%), gorgeous (3%), wild terrain (3%), the roughest terrain (3%), and mysterious (3%). Nevertheless, when managers were asked about how would they describe the area of the park where the West 110th Street playground is located in terms of safety, their remarks were usually negative (52%). One manager mentioned that the West

110th Street playground was the most isolated playground in Central Park. From another manager's point of view, the original designers of Central Park (Olmsted and Vaux) designated the northwest corner area as the Woodlands, a picturesque area. This manager described the geomorphology of the area of the park where the playground is located as a narrow valley and mentioned that the problem with the location of the playground is that the playground cuts the perimeter halfway. A solution considered for solving the location problem of the West 110th Street playground was to either get rid of the carriage bridge or to upgrade the playground area. According to this manager, this situation raised the issue of preservation versus use. As a cultural and historical landmark, Central Park's landscapes had to be kept as close as possible to the original design even though people might desire the landscape to facilitate other uses.

Parent users also emphasized the quiet, tranquil, and placid qualities the playground's location evoked for them (92%). They mentioned that the atmosphere of the playground was one of calm and tranquillity; the natural beauty of the surroundings was aesthetically pleasing and was shaded and cool thanks to the canopy of the trees. All of these features contributed to the sense of peace and calm expressed by almost all users (87%). The natural beauty of the area and the images it evoked for the users suggested the pleasure ground ideology under which Central Park was designed. One of

the purposes of Olmsted's design was to create a landscape that resembled the countryside within the urban context. A Latino mother of 11 month old twins mentioned that Central Park "makes you feel that you are not in New York City, [this area of the park called the North Woods, has a] peaceful and quiet atmosphere, relaxing, and sunken down in the Manhattan Valley."

Nevertheless, the striking beauty of the playground's surroundings greatly emphasized by the parent users, played a double role in which appreciation of aesthetics was paralleled with apprehension:

There are a lot of pigeons here now and a cool breeze comes around under the shadow of the trees. Even though it is so beautiful, there is a feeling of seclusion and isolation inside the playground. I am looking in every direction. It feels as if, in case anything happened to me, or if I needed help, it will be hard to get any from here. Not even screaming will make much of a difference because there are a lot of physical elements in the environment that filter the noise, for instance, lots of trees, rocks, a bridge or tunnel, the park wall, and the street noise (Field Notes, July 25, 1996).

Likewise, for an African-American mother who did not use the West 110th Street playground, its location is definitely a source of concern. She mentioned that "you are down below, it's way below street level, nobody can really see you in it, if somebody wanted to do something or snatch your child, I think there will be confusion down here as to which way to go, there is a big underpass over there, and I know people used to sleep under there..." Or like a non-user Latino mother mentioned "if something happens to you no one knows."

For parents who did not use the West 110th Street playground, this apprehension was more emphatically voiced. The same elements of the physical environment that made users feel at peace and calm because of the beauty of the surroundings and the secluded location of the playground were sources of safety concerns among parent non-users. The playground's convenience of location for parents who used the playground (86%), was perceived as away and 'off' for the parent non-users (46%). What the users treasured as the location's natural environment and beauty, its greenery and shade, were for the parent non-users, "lush vegetation," "dark," "shadowed," and "scary." Parent non-users considered the West 110th Street playground to be forgotten and neglected, a "lost space" (9%). For them, the path to the West 110th Street playground had threatening elements: bushes where drug addicts may hide out, the tunnel where junkies

hangout, and the benches along the park where people were drinking and smoking (crack) or injecting heroin.

Managers also voiced similar concerns. Some of them (70%) considered the West 110th Street playground to be less safe than other playgrounds in Central Park because the playground's secluded location enabled drug dealing and drug use. The physical attributes of the area caused safety problems because they isolated the playground from the rest of the park and from street life, rupturing the visual continuity of these public spaces. The difference in grade particularly separated the playground from other areas of the park and from street life. Managers agreed that the location of the West 110th Street playground "creates vulnerability for the users" because it is nestled in the valley which obstructs the view from the park's perimeter. The sense of tranquillity the natural landscape offered in this area of the park was balanced by a degree of caution and wisdom because, as a manager mentioned "the landscape lends itself to a feeling of tranquillity and easiness, but the reality is that it is still New York City." This comment implies that despite the safety concerns towards this area of the park, safety was not any worse than in other areas of the city.

The perception of the safety of the playground's location for the parent non-users was quite different from that of the users. Their depictions were usually loaded with

negative and apprehensive connotations, such as distant from everything (3%), sunken in a corner (3%), no man's land (3%), not well lit (3%), deserted (3%), secluded (3%), and neglected (3%). For parent users, those same elements of the physical environment were considered pleasant. However, in their admiration for the natural beauty of the playground surroundings there was an element of caution. It is possible that the element of convenience that users enjoyed in terms of living near the West 110th Street playground helped them develop familiarity with the people who also used the playground, familiarity with the surroundings and what was happening there, and with the neighborhood which enabled them to determine what to avoid and to develop strategies to use the playground safely. Familiarity represented, for West 110th Street playground users a mechanism to cope with potentially threatening people, situations, and places. But it also provided a sense of ownership and belonging, especially towards the playground and the neighborhood with which they identified themselves. Familiarity and convenience were also the main reasons parent non-users visited the Dana Center playground.

Parent non-users' point of reference to compare the West 110th Street playground's location was the playground near the Dana Discovery Center, also in Central Park. This was the closest playground to the one at West 110th Street in the north end of the park. For the non-users, the dramatic

differences between the playgrounds' locations were grounds for their safety concerns, even though they visited the Dana playground for the same reasons parent users visited the West 110th Street playground: familiarity (63%) -- they knew other people who frequently use the Dana playground and they knew the playground's neighborhood -- and convenience (47%) -- most of them lived right across the street from the playground or in the nearby neighborhood (58%). The Dana playground, unlike the West 110th Street playground, is located in an open area with an exquisite view of the Harlem Meer and the surrounding rolling hills. Dana playground users also mentioned that it is located at street level making it visually accessible and near other attractions such as the Dana Discovery Center and the Lasker Rink. A Latino mother of two, including a 6 year old mentioned:

This one (Dana) is more enjoyable, it's more populated, the kids seem to like it. This park here has more of a family atmosphere, where the one down there is, nobody thinks about it. [When you say this one is more enjoyable, what do you mean by that?] The park here, the pool is there, the lake is here, everything here is more geared towards enjoyment, there is a variety of things, everything is brought together here, whereas the one over there (the West 110th Street) is only just the park [playground], couple of swings, couple of monkey bars and that's it.

Parent users of the West 110th Street playground also felt that the sense of safety there could be improved if the playground had more attractions or activities in the nearby area like the Dana playground. A Latino father of three, including a five year old stated:

Well if you look at it, it is an area that nobody pays attention, inside Central Park, because it is a secluded area, it doesn't offer any attractive features. [What do you mean by that?] Because any person can get lost there and doesn't know how to walk (the area), even though they are in an area near Central Park West, it doesn't offer the attraction of a place where people can orient themselves, it's hard to orient yourself here. [When you say attractive, what do you mean?] Something to do, like for the adults if they were [able to participate in] any activity in the green areas. It doesn't have lights, in case anything happens [if] there is light, people could stay longer. Nobody likes to go to a place and leave soon because the sun is fading. The area is more secluded because it's an Avenue that most of its traffic is by car and not pedestrian.

Moreover, cleanliness and constant police surveillance in addition to restrooms facilities and public phones, were also elements of comparison between the Dana playground and the West 110th Street playground that allowed parent non-

users to feel safer at the Dana playground and contiguous areas. These characteristics of the Dana playground's location attract more people and increased the perception of the Dana playground and its surroundings as safe by parent non-users (71%).

6.5- Unevenness

The theme of unevenness permeates many interpretations of the West 110th Street playground's safety. There is an unevenness of the grade which makes the playground sunken in a ravine. But also there is unevenness when compared to other playgrounds in Central Park and in the neighborhood. The West 110th Street playground also portrayed the uneven distribution of resources and services -- such as maintenance -- between those playgrounds in Central Park and the playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood, directly affecting perceptions of safety. Those playgrounds that are well maintained such as the ones in Central Park tended to be perceived as safer than other public playgrounds less maintained, such as those in the Harlem neighborhood. In other words, the playgrounds in Central Park are better maintained and are perceived as safer than those in the Harlem neighborhood.

6.5.1- Differences in perceptions of safety among Central Park playgrounds, playgrounds in neighborhood, and the West 110th Street playground

A post-occupancy evaluation of the West 110th Street playground should involve a study of the playground itself as it is perceived by users. Including the additional concern towards safety that has guided this study, from a post-occupancy evaluation perspective, those aspects that are directly linked to the functioning of the playground were also included. This research has found that in order to fully understand how the West 110th Street playground was perceived in terms of safety it needed to be placed within the context of other playgrounds in Central Park and in the contiguous Harlem neighborhood. Accordingly, an account of how physical and social factors affect the perceptions of safety of parents who use the West 110th Street playground is relative to what other contexts the West 110th Street playground is compared to or in the context this discourse on safety is placed.

The West 110th Street playground seemed to fall in the middle of a safety continuum. In terms of perceptions of safety, it was **in-between** those perceptions of other playgrounds in Central Park as safer, but it was considered safer in comparison to public playgrounds⁹ in the Harlem

⁹ By public playgrounds I refer to those playgrounds visited by users located in the surrounding Harlem neighborhood and

neighborhood. Other playgrounds in Central Park were seen -- by parent users and non-users alike -- as safer when compared to the West 110th Street playground (74%), but other public playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood were seen as still less safe, at the bottom end of the perceived safety spectrum when compared to the West 110th Street playground (67%). The West 110th Street playground was seen by parents as offering better safety conditions than the public playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood.

The rhythm of playground usage for parent users and non-users alike included other playgrounds in Central Park and, to a lesser extent, other public playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood. When asked to compare safety in the West 110th Street playground to other playgrounds in Central Park, most parent users mentioned that they perceived the West 110th Street to be safe but not as safe as other playgrounds in Central Park (52%). Parent users mentioned that the location of playgrounds in Central Park at street level on the periphery of the park contributed to a perception of these as safer because their location allows prospect or visual access from the playgrounds to the street and from the street to the playgrounds. The West 110th Street playground's location was tied to safety in a striking way. Location in the West 110th Street playground was essential in the safety equation. For

maintained by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. I am not including here playgrounds in the neighborhood, Housing Developments or schools which were also mentioned by respondents.

parent users and non-users, the West 110th Street playground did not share the same locational qualities as those of other playgrounds in Central Park. Other playgrounds in Central Park have entrances near the street, at street level. The West 110th Street playground is too far inside the park and down in a ravine to be seen as safe by many would-be users. However, despite these locational conditions, the West 110th Street playground offers better safety options than Harlem's public playgrounds. Parent users and non-users, perceived factors such as maintenance and presence of drug activity as deterrents to their use of public playgrounds (76%) both in Harlem and in the park. According to a Latino non-user of the West 110th Street playground, a mother of three, including a 7 year old girl:

There is little hygiene, that's why I barely visit that one (West 110th Street playground). Different from the one that is on 59th and Columbus Circle, there is someone cleaning all the time, very often a truck passes by and picks up the garbage, very often somebody is sweeping, if someone throws garbage to the ground you get a summons, if you are drinking beer (alcoholic) beverages they give you a summons, in other words you can see that is more hygienic there, they are more concerned with the hygiene there.

Even though most public playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood are located at street level and therefore visible from the street, they were in much more deteriorated conditions than those in Central Park and their maintenance is still compromised by a diminishing fiscal budget. The level of maintenance, budget allocation and resources that playgrounds in Central Park enjoy was dramatically higher than the budget for public playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood: the Central Park budget for all operations was \$3,464,000 including 31 playgrounds, while that of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation for public spaces including 5 playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood (District 9) was only \$364,841¹⁰.

Parent users mentioned that playgrounds in Central Park were better kept than other public playgrounds they visited in the Harlem neighborhood (52%). In the public playgrounds outside the park, parent users mentioned negative elements that deterred them from visiting these public playgrounds more often: lack of cleanliness and maintenance (16%), adults without children (16%), drinking and using drugs (8%), unleashed dogs (8%). For users, the West 110th Street playground was cleaner (4%), larger (4%), roomier (4%), had more shade (4%), had water (4%), was designed for smaller children (4%), and was not as crowded (4%). When the same

¹⁰ Even though the area that covers District 9 is smaller than that of Central Park, the difference between the budget allocated for the operation of playgrounds in Central Park to those in the Harlem neighborhood is significant.

playground (West 110th Street) was compared to other playgrounds in Central Park in terms of safety it was considered the same (47%). However, this might be explained by the strong sense of familiarity that parents felt towards the West 110th Street playground and to the strategies they had develop to use the playground safely by avoiding the playground when it was empty or to use it when there were other neighbors there. Moreover, one African-American father of three including 4 and 6 year old girls referred to the West 110th Street playground as "it is like my area," implying a sense of ownership. Notwithstanding, some parents, when comparing the West 110th Street playground to others in Central Park, did consider it to be underused (7%), in need of improved maintenance (20%), and that other playgrounds, especially further downtown in Central Park, had more services and more security (16%). An African-American mother of two boys, including a 6 year old explained:

Um, I find that downtown parks [playgrounds in Central Park] are a lot more safer. If I were to go uptown there will be a lot of crack bottles on the floor and, you know, loud music and all...this area down 96, 96 is a little bit more safer, you get a cleaner crowd.

Interestingly enough there is a strong link between perceptions of safety and cleanliness. Parents -- users and non-users alike -- often referred to cleanliness as one of the determining factors that affected their perceptions of

safety. For them cleanliness was an issue. The allocation of resources and services, such as maintenance, differed between Central Park and the public playgrounds in the Harlem. But even in the neighborhood itself, respondents mentioned differences in the maintenance services offered by the city in its public playgrounds and by the Department of Housing in the playgrounds located at "the Projects" (city owned public housing). A non-user Latino father of a 4 1/2 year old boy and a six year old girl mentioned:

In the city parks, they [maintenance workers] come around but not as often as in the Projects, cause it's the Housing Authority that cleans the parks in the Projects and in the city parks is the sanitation, you know, so they get to it when they can get to it.

An African-American father of four, including a 7 year old and a 4 year old girl, implied in his remarks that the lack of services in the playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood points at broader issues that depict the government delivery of services as unreliable,

They're [public playgrounds] all about the same on cleanliness, unkempt. When I was a kid there was a "parkman" present at the playgrounds, now it's about parents' involvement, and some parents do not make time for their kids. You can't depend on government anymore.

More broadly, the concerns with cleanliness and its effect on an overall sense of safety spilled over to the conditions of the neighborhood. There was a recurrent theme concerning differences in the conditions between downtown and uptown: "one block down is cleaner and one block up is dirtier," as a Latino father of three including a 7 year old girl, mentioned. Another African-American mother of two, including a 4 year old girl, also mentioned "Well, we are in Harlem, so, you know, traditionally, poor neighborhoods are least kept up as far as cleanliness, equipment, up-keep." The location of the West 110th Street playground acts as the middle point between the best and the worst in terms of cleanliness. An African-American mother of two boys, including a 6 year old:

We are **in between** [emphasis added] of what you might consider Harlem and downtown, um, this neighborhood is a little more better as opposed to uptown, you go one block down you can see that it is much cleaner and if you go one block uptown it is much dirtier.

The differential in the perceptions of safety between the playgrounds in Central Park and playgrounds in the neighborhood was condensed in the concerns about safety parents voiced about the West 110th Street playground. The point of contact between these differences produced the

constructions of safety of the West 110th Street playground. The marginal character of the playground reflects its in-between location in the conceptions of safety respondents attached to it. The contradictory impressions of the West 110th Street playground among users, non-users, and managers brought together many of the often dissimilar, uneven and contradictory aspects of larger structural issues that affect the perception of safety of the playgrounds.

6.5.2- The intersection of uneven development, race, and class

Comparisons and contrasts are analytical tools that helped unveil the relational character of space and the importance of context. Race and class and the connection of these issues to the uneven allocation of services and resources were unavoidably present in some parent users and non-users comparisons of the West 110th Street playground to other playgrounds in Central Park and in adjacent neighborhoods (14%). Among the themes addressed by some of the parent users and non-users, were those regarding differences between uptown and downtown (4%) in terms of: maintenance (3%), class (4%), safety (1%), and quality of equipment (1%), police presence (1%), and vendors (1%) in playgrounds outside of Central Park, as well as a mention of the gentrification process in Harlem (1%), and prejudice against Harlem as a dangerous place particularly by outsiders

(1%). Even though these percentages are not significant figures in terms of frequency, they do have theoretical relevance since these remarks included parents' critical perspective on issues that show how structural forces affect the urban landscape unequally. Therefore they have the same potential to provide a more comprehensive account of the contextual issues that address the social, economic, and spatial conditions of the neighborhood in relation to the West 110th Street playground. The dichotomies of uptown/poor and downtown/rich were almost inescapable in these parents' accounts of the aspects that affect their perceptions of safety. When parent users and non-users voiced their general concerns and opinions regarding social and physical elements of the environment that affected their perceptions of safety as discussed in previous sections of this chapter, there were no remarkable differences between African-American, Latino and/or White respondents. However, most of the critical remarks mentioned by users and non-users were offered by African-American parents (55%). A selection of some of these critical remarks is included in the following sections.

There was an awareness of the dissimilar class and race composition between downtown and uptown. An African-American father of two, including a 3 year old girl who uses the West 110th Street playground mentioned:

Yes, make it like it is South of 96th Street, both East Side and West Side. [What do you mean?] What I mean is this, you know, in the White neighborhoods over there you don't see the drugs on either side like you do see up here. I pay taxes like the people down there, why can't I have the same thing?

Generally speaking, the way the neighborhood affects the West 110th Street playground -- from parents' and managers' perspectives on safety -- suggested a relationship in which the boundaries between the playground and the neighborhood were permeable. For both groups, the main link that suggested the permeability of boundaries was people. When managers were asked how the neighborhood contiguous to the playground affected the use of the playground, most of them mentioned that the kind of people who live in the neighborhood affects the use of the West 110th Street playground. Their emphasis however, was on drug users, drug dealers, and gangs. According to one manager "if there is positive people in the community positive things will happen in the playground, if there are negative people, negative things will happen." Another manager mentioned that "anything that discourages or dissuades people from their home to the playground will have negative effects on the [use of the] playground." Furthermore, the permeability of the boundaries between the West 110th Street playground and the neighborhood was also particularly evident when users addressed either the positive

aspects of the playground's immediate neighborhood (such as their sense of familiarity with people) or negative aspects (such as the presence of people who engage on illicit activities or the dilapidated conditions of residential buildings where people tend to hang out). However, the permeability of boundaries was not unique to the West 110th Street playground and its adjacent neighborhood. One parent offered an example of a similar relationship between the neighborhood and the playground in Riverside Park. This account also embedded a discourse of class, resources and services differences there. An African-American mother of two, including a 9 year old boy, who regularly visited the West 110th Street playground stated:

In Riverside Park on 97th St., they have dinosaurs and the kids interact better there. The design reflects the atmosphere of a politically correct neighborhood, empowered parents, they take care of things. That playground has a parkman, police presence, and vendors. Here is not the same, power without economics, it's a mere symbol. The problem with the sunken playground (West 110th Street playground) is that it is so isolated and out of the way. In order for the community to take advantage, it has to be available for all and not just for a few.

The class differences were also expressed in this parent's observation that the West 110th Street playground lacked a name. This was due, in part, to the absence of a beneficiary who could provide economic resources for the improvement of the playground¹¹. Therefore lacking a name was equivalent to lacking resources, as a Latino mother of 5 and 3 year old girls and a 5 year old boy who do not use the West 110th Street playground mentioned:

in school he (her son) went to 86th [Street] Park, playground, yes, I noticed all the parks downtown have names, you know. [That's interesting.] It's a money, class case thing happening here in Manhattan, you know, this is like Harlem and they feel like [you don't even have to name a place.] You know, we don't really have a beneficiary [West 110th Street playground], I guess they might call it the Dana Discovery [Dana playground], I don't know, the whole area must be Mr. Dana's thing, but all the other parks have names.

Class differences and location intersected in parents' descriptions of the provision of services, as a Latino father of a three year old boy who visited the West 110th Street playground often, explained:

¹¹ There are just a few playgrounds in Central Park that are named, usually the name of a private donor, who made a monetary contribution for the improvement or re-design of the playground.

Well, we are here right now [West 110th Street playground], but I think that there [downtown] is more security there because we are more to the middle of Manhattan and at least there are more services there, you understand me, I don't know if it is because in that area live more high class people, and we are more low class, you know, that we are all equal, you understand me, because for me to be from a higher class and you of lower class, we're human beings. At least there are more services, more security, because there are more interests there, up front. You understand, so we also have security but it's less, but it is less safe.

[So then you feel safer there (downtown in the park) than here (West 110th Street playground)?]

Yes, because when I'm here I'm seeing, but when I'm there, you see, I also notice that I feel safer, inside myself.

[Why?]

Yes, because those are things you can simply notice, because we are here in a part they call Harlem, you understand, this is an area of poor families, you understand, then, there on 96th St., 86th, where rich people live and 5th Ave. And you can easily see that, the skate rinks, the people who pass by running up this hill (the roadway south of the playground), and they run fast around here, I'll tell you the truth. While they sit there to rest, 20 women sitting there

resting, which is not the same...Here, they pass by here, because they have to, this is the path for runners, like they say, passing by but not stopping.

Prejudice against Harlem is a recurrent theme that directly or indirectly tainted the perceptions of safety people shared. However unfortunate, most of the prejudice against Harlem is based on criminal incidents happening there and the drug trafficking which has been present in the area. These issues have had the effect of reifying prejudices against Harlem and "demonizing" its residents and the area. Prejudices add often in a distorted way, to the complexity of factors -- positive and negative, structural and in terms of agency -- that affect the conditions of the area. It fixes Harlem into a rigid negative representation and blows out of proportion critical issues present in Harlem's residents' everyday life. A white mother of two girls, including a 5 year old, who used the West 110th Street playground on rare occasions expressed the following remarks about "outsiders" perceptions of Harlem:

There is a very strong perception in the city that if you go up north of 90th Street, or 96th Street, it is dangerous. People don't want to look for apartments up here, they perceive as quote-unquote Harlem, you know, dangerous, people who are, let's say, White or not Black or Hispanic, they will think they don't belong

there, so there is a lot of prejudice against this area, tremendous prejudice, people are very reluctant who live in New York, to even explore that obvious, you know, good things. Um, and incidents like you know, some of the race attacks just freak people out, they think, you know, it's the whole neighborhood, that is not an isolated incidents, meanwhile people have horrible muggings in midtown everyday, you know. But you know, people have a very strong, you know, I think a very false impression of what is up there....

The previous account was provided by one of the few White mothers who visit the West 110th Street playground. She lives in Towers on the Park. Towers on the Park is the symbol of a forced transition to improve the neighborhood through the gentrification of the area. The intent to gentrify obviously brought along a series of changes in the neighborhood: from changes in the demographic composition of the neighborhood in terms of income and ethnic background (residents of Towers on the Park raised the income level of the census tract 197.02, as well as the number of Non-Black people living there), to improvement of buildings and streets in the area. Cleanliness and aesthetics play a significant role in any gentrification initiative, alongside public safety. From my own experience living in the neighborhood and traveling to other better maintained neighborhoods in the city I find that cleanliness and aesthetics also help convey

the sense that a space is safe. For parent users maintenance and cleanliness were issues of concern when comparing the West 110th Street playground to others in the Harlem neighborhood. Parents pointed directly to the conditions of the physical environment outside the West 110th Street playground's neighborhood, "and part of the disgrace is that Frederick Douglass Circle is ugly, is unwelcoming, is, you know what I mean, it gives a sense of depression..." (White mother of two girls, user of the West 110th Street playground). The improvement of these particular conditions of the physical environment attest to the gentrification process underway there. The area seemed to have been in worse condition before Towers on the Park was constructed and the way it has improved attracts "new people," a change that was seen as positive by some of the parents who mentioned it (4%). An African-American father of a two and a half year old boy who does not use the West 110th Street playground but visits the Dana Center playground regularly mentioned that,

They are doing it now, they are rebuilding this area a lot. [Why does that make you feel safe?] You get new people coming into the neighborhood, different people, working people coming into the neighborhood. The streets have been cleaned up as well, there used to be drugs all over this neighborhood.

Building, rebuilding, fixing the area are all elements of the physical environment that signal the transformation brought along by the attempt to gentrify the neighborhood. The major sign of changes to come was the improvement of the West 110th Street playground and the northern end of the park even though the restoration of these landscapes was part of the capital project to bring Central Park to its original glory. For most of the few parents (3%) who addressed this issue, the improvement of the badly dilapidated north end of Central Park has been a welcomed change. For others, the improvement of the park and the subsequent increase of adjacent land value signaled a gentrification process where the improvement of a public space such as Central Park facilities makes the area more attractive for newcomers. This African-American mother of a 6 year old girl who regularly visited the West 110th Street playground seemed to have mixed feelings:

I think about all that stuff all the time. I was born and raised in Brooklyn and there everybody was upper middle class, but here in Manhattan you have very poor people living next to very rich people, here in the parks is like the cut-off. This is the absolute cut-off here when you get to the Park, one block over 111th and confusion. Because Fifth Ave. is over there and there are some very expensive condos right there in you know, it's like all of the services are downtown nothing

really comes past 97th Street, you know, even to the playground. So everybody here was very surprised when they started fixing the playground, and the park area, and we were like, wow, gentrification is happening up here. Yeah, the neighborhood is changing a lot. But people with money are kind of realizing that this is a perfect place to live, all the trains are here, on the 110th Street, right across. I mean it's beautiful up here, the garden is right there, this lake is here, it's beautiful, there is the Discovery Center now and every bus goes by here, the 1, 2, 3, 44, the 18, the 11, the 7, you can get to Manhattan, you can get to Wall St. in 15, 20 minutes, but you don't have to live like in a high rise, you can live over here, I have a view of the Park. When they were doing the playground thing, some of the people of the Central Park Conservancy came up here and they live on 86th St. and Central Park West and they were just like, it's so beautiful over here. I mean they really sounded surprised and shocked, like [they] didn't know there were places like this in Harlem.

For others, the impending gentrification meant the displacement of the "urban natives" from their neighborhood to make space for newcomers in search of desirable locations within Manhattan. According to a Latino mother of a five year old girl and an eight year old boy who also visited the West

110th Street playground regularly, the restoration of buildings happens alongside gentrification:

Well right now they are fixing it, because they are fixing the buildings, they are restoring that whole area, but also the people make some comments that say, this area is being restored to take out the Blacks, to take out the Hispanics, that's what the people in the area are saying, my sister-in-law lives in that area, to take out Blacks, the Hispanics, the poor people, the people who receive social services, and in that way they will clean it up so other kind of people will come, Jewish, Anglos. [That's what they call gentrification.] Yes, they are doing that in that area, and I see it's true, there are lots of buildings that they are taking over, cleaning them up, and they ask the people to move out, and then after they restore them, the rent goes up, so a person with limited economic resources cannot live in a building with such high rent. Any apartment there pays 2 and 3 thousand dollars. In this area, I am not talking about downtown or midtown, in this area of uptown in Central Park. Then people feel that they are being forced out, not everybody can pay such a high rent.

Almost invariably, the issue of class surfaced in parents' descriptions of the gentrification process in

Harlem. Even though parents felt positive about the improvement of the neighborhood's infrastructure they questioned and were critical of who will benefit from the outcome. An African-American father of seven children, including 7 and 9 year old girls, who does not use the West 110th Street playground but brings his children to the Dana Center playground instead, expressed the view that:

The improvement will be that they restore the buildings, that they restore the level of life of the people, but not to restrict so much to the people with limited resources, I think we should all enjoy the same, of course there are areas that are already designated for people of higher income. Then the people who do not have those resources, this was a poor area, now they are changing it into a not so poor area. Then that is not going to be the same. That's why this part of the Park is not as well maintained or taken care of, as the area of Columbus Circle, because they gave it less importance, this is an area of Hispanics and Blacks, of poor people, so they do not give that much importance to it, they do not care that much for that Park because that was an area inhabited by Blacks and Hispanics, and now they have left it out, if they restore it, they should restore it more uniformly, the housing, the park, everything, because everything should work as a whole.

6.6- Surveillance and skepticism

Parent users offered many suggestions to improve their sense of safety at the West 110th Street playground. Even though the majority of parent users admired the location of the playground, when addressing the improvements that would make them feel safe there, they suggested changes in the physical environment to improve safety (14%). They specifically suggested to take some rocks and trees away (2%), to get rid of the bridge (2%), and even complained that the playground feels unsafe because it is secluded (2%) and that if something happens nobody could see it (2%). Parent users also mentioned that they would feel safer if there were no homeless people (5%), hoodlums (2%) or drug addicts (2%) in the area. Furthermore, parent users mentioned that they would it would make them feel safer if there was a call box or pay phone in the nearby area (8%) and better lighting (5%). Other recommendations included having more stores in the nearby area (2%), more playground equipment (2%), rebuilding the area (2%), better maintenance (2%), more transit of people through the area (2%), more activities for parents and children like gardening and clean-ups (2%), and more community involvement and playground programming (2%). Parent non-users offered similar suggestions to improve their sense of safety in the northwest corner area of Central Park but their main recommendation was to eliminate drugs in that area (19%). This recommendation was very much related to that

suggested by parent users as their main improvement to feel safer at the West 110th Street playground: increased police presence (42%) and/or security guards (2%).

Surveillance was one of the main improvements many parent users felt was necessary for the West 110th Street playground and the neighborhood in order for them to feel safer. Surveillance in a neighborhood like Harlem, however, intersects with power and safety issues. The issue of surveillance or more specifically police patrolling provoked a polarized response. While the perception of the police was personified by some as "angels of safety," others referred to the police presence in the playground and in the neighborhood with skepticism, distrust, and disbelief.

Parent users (72%) and non-users (76%) considered that the places of the park where they felt safe were those with police presence. A Latino mother of a five year old boy who regularly visited the West 110th Street playground and lived in Harlem, provided the following opinion about police:

...But talking about safety, I think that there should be a little bit more people watching over here, because there are not too many people with whom one would feel safe, I never see them, maybe the policemen pass by the higher street, but they don't have access to the playground, inside here, like I never see anyone with

whom I would feel safe here. Sometimes I come and it's very lonely here. **Because when I see a policeman I feel like, oh, protected** [emphasis added]. I think they should pass by in their little cars. The only time that I have seen policemen has been when they come to the tunnel when something happens there.

A Latino mother of a five year old girl and an eight year old boy, who also often visited the West 110th Street playground, attributed the lack of police presence there to the uneven distribution of services that make the West 110th Street playground less of a priority when compared to other playgrounds in Central Park:

You see this park gets patrolled (Dana), the other one (West 110th Street playground) doesn't. They just forgot about that one, and that park has been like that for a long time.

She also compared the location of the West 110th Street playground to other neighborhoods in the city that are predominantly White and of an upper class:

...But the thing that I dislike about it (the location of the West 110th Street playground) is that there is an element of crack back there, under that tunnel, and you see police but seldom, not like some other areas

of Central Park, you know, not in this community, you know, in other communities you see they have two police cars and it is not a high crime area. This is a high crime area, you know, so I think there should be more police protection and if not more police protection at least a park attendant, here when the park closes, you know.

Some managers also perceived that there was an erratic pattern of police protection of the northwest corner area of Central Park (38%). From the point of view of one of the maintenance workers **"the police don't come down to the valley"** [emphasis added]. However, more than a complaint towards the absence to police presence, the tone of this statement seemed to me at that moment to indicate rather a complaint against the uneven distribution of services that negatively affects the West 110th Street playground more generally. For an African-American maintenance worker the patrolling of the northwest corner area had improved, but it was still not sufficient:

This particular area is very important to me, it has a lot of working people, a lot of decent people in it and then it has its share of homelessness, and drug infestation. I believe that is something that goes along, you have to take the bitter with the sweet, you know. You have an area, it's not only this particular

area but you know because of the fact of where it is located you don't have police enforcement that you do in other areas of the park, um, and that's the only problem. If you can keep the homelessness down to a minimum degree and drug uses down to a minimum degree, they are not as bad. It is not as bad here as it was years ago. Yes, this is great now, you know, but like I said there is always room for improvement, and it will be nice to see a PEP [Park Enforcement Patrol] officer or police officer come to this particular area at least once in an hour's time. And all I'm saying is like, through this walkway right here, I never noticed them (the police) in the afternoon too much. In the morning I might see them but not in the afternoon and that's when the heavy use of park occurs. I don't see much law enforcement in this area.

Among parent non-users, 19% mentioned that they would like to see drugs eliminated and 16% noted that they would also like to see more police presence at the West 110th Street playground. Even though users and non-users alike prefer more police patrolling at the northwest corner playground, some of them offered qualifying remarks to their request which illustrated the conflictive and often contradictory perceptions they have of police presence. A Latino mother of girls 6 and 5 years old and a 3 years old boy, who frequently visited the West 110th Street playground

expressed her opinion about police in the following skeptical manner:

...I think some of the areas need a little bit more trimming, so if you want safety in the park, let's say from 9 pm when it's getting dark (in the Summer), then the lighting has to be provided, the patrolling of the community, you know, more patrolling. **Not that I believe in police activity**, [emphasis added] but you know, there has to be a sense of security. Probably the community could do it itself with training, you know, from the city, um, but give some incentive, if you are going to, if you want...

A Latino father of 6 and 2 year old boys, who also uses the West 110th Street playground frequently stated a similar skeptical opinion:

they got police patrol here, eh, **too much police patrol if you ask me**. [emphasis added] [Oh, really, why?] Oh no, that's just a personal thing. [What do you mean?] Cause cops are not the way they used to be. They don't hang loose anymore. [emphasis added]

Others are blatantly cynical. An African-American mother of two including a 6 year old boy who often uses the Dana Center playground said "the police presence doesn't make me feel

better, **police is for White folks to arrive safe at home**" [emphasis added].

The distrust for the policing of the neighborhood seems to be attributed to previous uncomfortable experiences with police and to the lack of concern the police have shown towards the community. An African-American mother of a 10 year old girl and a three-and-a-half year old boy provided this comprehensive analysis of her feelings towards police and the neighborhood:

The neighborhood around here is quite a mixture. [What do you mean?] Well you see a lot of professional people who live like in that building, the Towers [on the Park] and you see a lot of people hanging out in benches, you don't know what they are up to, **and the police, some of the police are pretty mean around here.** [Oh, yes, what do you mean?] Um, well, they are nasty, the other day a police officer said to me, um, stop the "fucking" car or something, like that, you know, I mean, I was shocked because it caught me off guard but I thought I should stop and ask his name. You know and I get the feeling from a lot of the police here. **I don't trust the police, I do not have trust in the police in general,** only the ones, I guess it's like with anything, only the ones that I have met personally, like the ones that patrol this park

I have met and then there is the one who patrols up our (neighborhood) here, who I have met and this other guy who has been transferred to another precinct, but other than that...[Why don't you trust the police in general?] I just don't think they, I don't, it's sort of maybe the way some people think about lawyers, I just don't think..I just think they are up to no good, I don't think they have any interest in the community in general, you know, the best interests of the community in their hearts and they just like, what do you call it, like some wild cowboy, I have no trust in the police [emphasis added].

The way community residents and playground users perceived police was somewhat tempered by accounts of the level of criminality present in a not too distant past in Harlem. A White mother of two girls, including a five year old who seldom visits the West 110th Street playground but was a resident of the area stated :

I think there was a reality that Manhattan Valley and Harlem had tremendous shootings and drug problems **and part of it was the police corruption, a lot of it was police corruption, and a lot**, I mean the city was out of control four years ago, it really was, Manhattan Valley was totally out of control, with 16 boys dying, I mean 16 kids under 18 year old were dead

within a year, two blocks from my building, every single one of them [emphasis added].

Eradicating criminality in the Manhattan Valley area in order to increase safety was largely due to the gentrification process the area had been subjected to (Manhattan Valley is the area where Towers on the Park is located). It seemed logical, for an area in the process being gentrified, to improve the safety of the neighborhood: What person with a comfortable income would like to move into an area where criminality is rampant? Gentrification then has played a large role in the "improvement" of public safety, mainly accomplished by the deployment of more police into the area. From my observations of the changes that had taken place in the neighborhood and the north end of Central Park, and in the West 110th Street playground over the past four years, as well in the comments voiced by parent users, aesthetics, maintenance and surveillance were all part of the groundwork for the gradual gentrification process that had taken place there. The gentrification process is a volatile issue because all these elements-- aesthetics, maintenance, and surveillance -- are also appealing to local residents of the area who had wished for similar improvements, probably before members of other ethnic groups and social strata moved into their neighborhood.

Surveillance is also a conflictive issue because it involves an ideology that contains strong elements of social control. In order to promote "safety" there needs to be a difference between what is considered safe from what is not. Usually this difference entails an exclusionary practice, a decision about what or who needs to be changed, what or who needs to stay, or what or who needs to be added or removed. Even the most popular and general notions of public space or what a public space should provide entail the acknowledgment of access to all without restrictions against any particular group. Therefore, boundaries of what a safe constituency represents, of what a safe use of a public space entails, are closely tied to the issue of surveillance. For parent users and non-users alike, the most common form of surveillance suggested was that of the police. However, even among those who expressed a desire for more policing, some were ambivalent or skeptical about police presence.

Parent users and non-users both, wanted increased police presence as an improvement to the West 110th Street playground. In addition to police presence other forms of surveillance were mentioned. These included the surveillance services from security guards, and park workers "watching." Other recommendations for surveillance included more people watching and community members patrolling their own community. If the main goal of surveillance is to "watch" in order to prevent criminal acts or develop strategies to deal

with criminal acts once they occur, then the act of surveillance entails a concerted effort to judge a whole array of factors and situations. These factors include judgments about the activities that are to be monitored as safe or unsafe; and judgments about people; a determination of who will be the "surveyors" and who will be the "surveyed." An important issue is to determine on what basis these distinctions are going to be based. These questions pose critical issues that affect the way public space is conceptualized, used, and managed.

Regarding activities, the implementation of additional surveillance practices raises questions such as, which social activities are going to be monitored and which ones are going to be criminalized in public spaces? How are these distinctions going to be made with certainty? For instance, there is a clear opposition to drugs in the neighborhood. However, for one Latino mother, her issue with drugs was not so much the activity itself but the arbitrary appropriation of public space that the drug trafficking and consumption created in which conflicts were mainly solved on the street at gun point, jeopardizing the safety of those who were not involved with the drug business. Another issue that deserves attention regarding the surveillance of activities in public space is what would be the consequences of developing community strategies such as community members watching. This suggestion implies transferring the power from formal

institutions, such as the police, into the community. It would require community members to be involved in judging safe public space practices. This suggestion raises the issue of control versus autonomy in public space within the urban context. Moreover, it would be necessary to determine the quality and character of the links between the surveillance practices at the community level and those at the state or governmental level such as with the police. A case in point is the Cuban model where community organization at the local-block level has raised criticisms even from the same neighborhood residents about the lack of privacy such a model entails, symptomatic of the "Big Brother" social and political control of the police state.

A loaded issue, surveillance and its direct identification with the desire for police protection when needed, parents interest in policing was juxtaposed against a distrust concerning police presence in Harlem. The history of police presence in Harlem suggests some contradictions; many instances show perceptions of the police as strongly biased and having negative practices against this community. Other times, a strong desire for police presence was stated as a way of first, feeling safe in public space including parents' own neighborhoods, and second, having a sense that the city cares for them when services that other neighborhoods enjoy are also offered to them. Among the most critical parents'

suspicious and distrust were the feelings that colored their perceptions of the police and public safety in Harlem.

Public safety at the West 110th Street playground involves complex processes. As such it is perceived differently according to the point of reference from where comparisons are made: both physical and social. In physical terms, the comparison between services allocated between other spaces or more specifically, other playgrounds in and outside Central Park, and other neighborhoods in the city itself point at an uneven allocation of resources that affect parents' perceptions of safety. Broader contextual issues were critically incorporated in some parents' accounts that helped to clarify, in a more comprehensive manner, the resulting differential in services. The other point of reference from which comparisons were established and contrasts analyzed included differences in perceptions between parent users and non-users. While for non-users the main concern regarding the improvement of safety at the West 110th Street playground was based on people -- "elimination" of drug addicts, homeless, and hoodlums, for parent users the main concern that affected their perception of safety and that they considered to be a requirement for an improved sense of safety was the presence of police. Parent users' and non-users' recommendations for the improvement of the West 110th Street playground only included those that are based on police surveillance or private security guards. Only

one user mentioned community involvement and playground programming as improvements to the safety conditions of the West 110th Street playground. Some managers, on the other hand, offered suggestions that included collective efforts (36%). They mentioned that there was the need to develop communal involvement (9%) in the form of the public to become part of the safety equation through better education (9%), public programs (9%), and for the public to have a responsible use of the park (9%). In this regard managers considered that the community needed to have a sense of empowerment (9%) and to be involved in order to take ownership of what goes on in the park (9%). As such, these suggestions explicitly establish a connection between the improvement of safety at the West 110th Street playground, its area in Central Park, and its adjacent community.

6.7- Skein and thicket: the relations among the scales of analysis

The manner in which the discourse on safety linked elements of the social and physical environment across scale resembles a skein (Foucault, 1986) or thicket (Menser, 1997). It denoted the complexity of social and physical issues and factors that affected parent users', non-users' and managers'

perceptions of safety at the West 110th Street playground. Rooted in a theoretical construction of space as relational, the type and quality of the relationships among the scales produced the social space of the playground. The scale of the playground was the main focus of this study and the axis from which the relationships with other scales was anchored. There, sunken and in a ravine, the playground's physical location was perceived by parents as both a source of enjoyment and relaxation as well as a source of safety concerns.

The second scale of analysis was the area of the park where the playground is located in a section of the park enclosed by hills, a bridge, and the park's peripheral brick wall. The secluded feeling to this area of the park affects perceptions of safety because of the illicit activities that have been sheltered there. The neighborhood where the playground is located was the third scale of analysis, the origin of the social component: for the people who used the playground, the neighborhood is their space of residence. There, as in the scales of the playground and the park, elements of the physical and social environment were intertwined in parents' safety discourse, often with negative undertones.

The form and quality of the relationship between social and physical aspects trespassed and covered the three scales

of analysis. As in the case of space, parents' discourses on safety reflected a continuum of relational perspectives. Accordingly, different opinions about safety when located in comparison with other playgrounds in Central Park and in the Harlem neighborhood evoked different safety concerns at different levels. If the study of perceptions of safety at the West 110th Street playground focused only on the playground itself and was not compared to other playgrounds in Central Park and in the Harlem neighborhood, it could have falsely been identified as totally safe from the parent users' perspective. In this latter aspect lies the importance of studying context when conducting a post-occupancy evaluation and integrating the relevance of context as a relation among social, physical, and economic processes. When different aspects such as maintenance and the allocation of resources were described as different when compared with other playgrounds in Central Park and those in the Harlem neighborhood, the perception of safety of the West 110th Street playground varied accordingly: considered to be safer than other playgrounds in Harlem and less safe when compared with other playgrounds in Central Park. Moreover, the scale of the neighborhood also adds a layer of understanding that helped articulate broader contextual issues. Urban restructuring, uneven development, fiscal abandonment, gentrification, allocation of resources, and demographic patterns were read as processes that exalted Harlem's particular history. They helped qualify the differences that

make Harlem distinct from other areas of the city in terms of race and class issues. For parents, these aspects affected their perceptions of safety and what they considered were their options to improve safety. Nonetheless, while the context of the playground as defined by its relationship to other playgrounds was evident in parents' safety accounts, the social component addressed by parents when they referred to safety issues lacked suggesting connections that would allow or foster collective or communal efforts for safety improvements. In this regard, safety was not considered relational to issues that linked spaces and people together in developing options for change.

In the combined attempt to account for the physical attributes of the landscape and the conceptualizations about safety that the scales of analysis allowed, rested the importance of presenting the playground as a socially produced space. In delimiting the scales in such a way, I explicitly avoided limiting the local as concrete aspects of its environment only, or limiting the global as a more general approach only (Smith, 1992), therefore implying a false dichotomy where the global and the local are distinct and totally separated processes. Instead, the global and the local are conceptualized as interrelated processes, they affect each other in specific settings and their relationship is not unidirectional. The scales of analysis of the playground, the area of the park where the playground is

located, and the neighborhood, are embedded in local, specific, concrete (such as gentrification or the dilapidated infrastructure in the neighborhood) as well as more general global processes (such as urban restructuring and fiscal disinvestment), simultaneously.

Among the meanings and social processes within and between scales were those based on differences, struggles, ideologies, and mechanisms of social control. These meanings and social processes that the analysis of the scales problematized, contained class and race issues as well as issues of uneven allocation of resources and public disinvestment. These differences were portrayed, for instance, in the uneven allocation of resources between neighborhoods downtown from the playground and the one adjacent to the playground. Imprisoned by the manner in which space is produced structurally, poor urban neighborhoods are subjected to the ideological manufacture of space as a container that the technology and logic of capitalism produce. From a structural perspective, scales such as those of the city and the neighborhoods were used to facilitate a spatial arrangement that accommodates the logic of capitalism, and its uneven and class differentiated spatial syntax (Smith, 1992; Harvey, 1990). Parents addressed some of these aspects of issues in their critical reading of processes such as, for instance, the difference in maintenance between playgrounds in Central Park, those in the

Harlem neighborhood and the West 110th Street playground. However, contrary to describing these processes from a structural perspective, they were addressed from the experiences parents have had in their neighborhood -- Harlem -- and in the city. These included their observations of class, gentrification, and prejudices against Harlem, among other aspects.

The scale of analysis that seemed to exert the most influence over the other scales was that of the neighborhood. The people who lived in the neighborhood, the conditions of the neighborhood in terms of maintenance and allocation of resources, the element of criminality and illicit activities that take place in the neighborhood affected their perceptions of safety. Moreover, these neighborhood conditions exerted great influence in the perception of safety in the area of the park where the playground is located, and in the playground itself. Parents identified homeless people and drug addicts as people who made them feel unsafe. Like most parent users and non-users, many of the drug addicts and homeless people live in the contiguous neighborhood of Harlem. The scale of the neighborhood is also a linking scale between the playground and that of the city. In that way parents are simultaneously playground users and non-users as well as Harlem's urban dwellers.

The West 110th Street playground as an in-between and marginal space, constituted a "critical edge of urban life" (Woods, 1997) providing a point of departure and perspective from which to measure other contiguous spaces for play in terms of safety. As such it was a space of rupture that interrupts, offering the opportunity to examine differences in parents' perceptions of safety across playgrounds in Central Park and in Harlem. Parents' representation of the West 110th Street playground as safer and better maintained than other playgrounds in the neighborhood shifts when compared to other playgrounds in Central Park and to other playgrounds in Harlem. The playground's positioning can be represented within a continuum that establishes relativity in perceptions of safety. Safety in the West 110th Street playground was then relative to other spaces, and by the polarized differences of the extremes of those spaces in a safety continuum. Likewise, the West 110th Street playground was largely influenced by Harlem's space of ruptures, placed at a critical edge of urban life by the inefficiency of public services and the poor maintenance of its infrastructure.

The West 110th Street playground's positioning as a representation of a "critical edge of urban life," provided then an opportunity to critically examine aspects that affected safety as they weave the different sites that conform to the scales of analysis and to broader social and

physical contexts. When compared to other playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood the West 110th Street playground provides a safer public space at certain times of the day. This resource has an impact in the kind of lifestyle the people who live in the neighborhood can enjoy. The West 110th Street playground -- despite its negative elements -- is an outlet for children in a neighborhood where there is a lack of well maintained and safe public spaces.

The definition of the scales in terms of their physical attributes depict an image of nested concentric circles. However, parents' perceptions of safety of the different scales in which this discourse is expressed and the relations it portrays resemble the image of a skein or thicket. The image of concentric circles and that of the skein when counterpoised to each other project a dissimilar pattern and form. Another way of explaining this visual effect is by qualifying the boundaries between the scales.

6.7.1- Boundaries

The relations among the scales of analysis point at a particular characteristic or quality of the boundaries between the scales. It is in this particular quality of the boundaries between the playground, the area of the park, and the neighborhood that the discourse on safety seems to intersect, as a discursive thread that weaves through the

scales in parents' perceptions of safety. Throughout parents' discourse on safety the boundaries between the scales of analysis are permeable and fluid. For instance, when parents mentioned the illicit activities that happened at the West 110th Street playground's adjacent landscapes as sources of concern for their safety and that of their children, they also mentioned they encountered similar conditions in their neighborhood's streets and dealt with on an everyday basis. Maintenance is also an aspect that in the parents' discourse on safety permeates the three scales of analysis. Through this permeable quality of the boundaries it is possible to identify the influence each scale of analysis exerts towards the others. To a degree, the manner in which parents interpret the social and physical conditions present in the neighborhood -- constituencies, "undesirables," resources and allocation of services -- affects their perceptions of safety in the playground. The combination of safety concerns anchored in the social and physical environment and articulated in parents' perceptions depict the boundaries between scales as permeable and fluid.

The permeable and fluid character of the scales' boundaries is evident in the parents' and managers' account of the influence of the neighborhood in their perceptions of safety. According to a Central Park manager, "when the police moved to the streets, drug dealing moved into Central Park." The permeability of the scales invokes an image of membrane,

which allows the flow of substances in and out the cell. This metaphor is borrowed from the natural sciences particularly when referring to organism's cells. However, even though the membrane of the cell is quite an appropriate metaphor to illustrate the permeable character of the scales' boundaries, like a membrane, the regulatory mechanism that seems to be in effect at the West 110th Street playground is based on the rules and regulations for its use. These include no radio playing, no dogs, no bicycles, and no children unaccompanied by adults. However, at the West 110th Street playground, due to its seclusion and the rare police or park guards patrolling, these regulatory mechanisms are not completely enforced. Likewise, that area of the park where the playground is located and the neighborhood are also covered under certain codes of law that forbid and regulate behavior in public space (drug use or selling is considered illicit, criminal activities). However, illegal activities do tend to take place in both scales: the area of the park and the neighborhood. The lack of efficient regulatory mechanisms allowed the permeability of people, things, and the influence of the social conditions of the neighborhood throughout the scales. If the metaphor of membrane -- when referring to the boundaries between the scales of analysis -- allows the permeability of social elements between the boundaries rather than acting as a selective filtering process, it then resembles more of an open back and forth flow. This quality actually attests to the fact of what an ideal public space

should provide, access without restrictions, even when the access is tainted with "undesirable" elements. This is a negative use of public space, drugs and illicit activities should not occur there, especially in an area designed for children, but the reasons why these conditions exist are outside the realm of public space. Public space in order to be public needs to be accessible and safe to all, but when the presence of dangerous and illicit activities interfere with these ideal uses of public spaces there is the need to address the conditions that create unsafe and inaccessible public spaces. When the official regulatory mechanisms that should deter unsafe elements does not function, the only other selective or regulatory process that operates and that actually took place in the playground was mainly determined by individuals' decision to use or avoid the playground based on their perceptions of safety, among other strategies that will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

6.8- Concluding remarks: relative public safety

The most significant aspects regarding safety at the West 110th Street playground are both social and physical: people, location, and maintenance. In terms of social aspects the presence of people (or lack thereof) in the playground represents for parents a source of concern. The type and kind of people present in the playground and surrounding landscapes qualifies parents' concerns for safety. Parents

offered a distinction between desirable constituencies and undesirable ones. In terms of the physical elements of the environment, parents mentioned that even though they do not feel unsafe at the West 110th Street playground they are cautious and act accordingly when they decide to use the playground. Even though parents feel that surveillance in the playground should increase, they are also critical about police presence in the neighborhood. Moreover, there is a clear difference between parent users' and non-users' perceptions of safety in the playground. Non-users perceive the West 110th Street playground as unsafe mainly because of the secluded area in which it is located and the drug use that the area shelters. Parent users, on the other hand, are aware of these conditions but their sense of familiarity with the area and the convenience of the playground's location allows them to determine when to use the playground safely. With respect to the maintenance conditions in the West 110th Street playground and that of other playgrounds in Central Park and in the contiguous neighborhood in Harlem, parents -- users and non-users alike -- consider the West 110th Street playground safe and better maintained than those in the neighborhood, but less so when compared to other playgrounds in Central Park.

Delimiting the scales of analysis helped me to study the relationship between the relevant spaces; the playground, its area of the park, and the neighborhood systematically. It

also aided in more clearly understanding the relationship between social and physical factors as they affect parents' perceptions of safety. The analysis of scales showed the different levels in which parents' concerns with safety are anchored. In parents' depictions of their perceived safety in the West 110th Street playground, they raised issues that show the influence of the conditions of the neighborhood. According to parents' perceptions when considering safety, context, both social and physical, matters. They voiced critical remarks regarding the context of the neighborhood in terms of processes such as gentrification and the uneven allocation of resources between neighborhoods downtown and those in Harlem. Parents perceived that these conditions affect Harlem's residents as well as outsiders' perceptions of Harlem as an unsafe place. However, despite the conditions that negatively affect parents' perceptions of safety they also developed strategies that allowed them to navigate through these contexts and determine when to use the West 110th Street playground safely. Parents' strategies to be safe in the West 110th Street playground, the area of the park, and the neighborhood are the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN
NEGOTIATING SAFETY IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

Public safety is relative at the West 110th Street playground. The many social and physical issues and factors that affect parents' perception of safety across scales create a complex spectrum of options, limitations and choices from which parents develop strategies. Absolute safety does not exist, life involves a certain degree of risk taking. Absolute safety in public space is impossible. Public spaces, cannot exist without people taking risks to venture outside of their homes and be with others, providing the opportunity of relating to others and connecting spaces through use. A notion of empty or underused public space can only be important as an example of that which public space should not be, of its negation. Therefore, it is almost a requirement for people to develop strategies that give them a degree of exposure to others and to risks while feeling safe in the public environment. Such strategies here include: 1) the instructions parents give to their children when going outside to play¹²; and 2) the strategies parents themselves develop to use the West 110th Street playground. Many of the strategies include those elements of the social and physical environment that at each scale of analysis -- the playground, its area of the park, and the neighborhood -- parents take

¹² Most parents -- users and non-users alike -- do not allow their children to play outside by themselves anywhere and some children are not allowed outside by themselves until they are 10 years old.

into consideration in their journeys to use the playground safely. While most of the strategies mentioned by the parents are strategies that focus on the individual, a description of other collective strategies taking place in the adjacent neighborhood at the community level will also be included. Some of these strategies mirror certain ideologies which have the effect of restraining the movement of children, women, and even specific ethnic groups in public spaces. Thus, relevant differences were found between the safety instructions offered to girls from those offered to boys, the safety strategies men and women used, and between Latinos and parents of other ethnicities interviewed, when the former added the notion of the "atmosphere" of the playground as an environmental component that they took into consideration in order to assess safety in the West 110th Street playground.

7.1- Public safety of children: parents' instructions

Most children were not allowed to play outside by themselves and children's activities were, in general, heavily monitored. The youngest age that parents in my study considered allowing children to play outside by themselves was 10 years old but for most it was older. Overall, parents seemed to be more concerned with the level of maturity and responsibility of the child than his or her age, when determining when to allow their child to play outside without adult supervision. There seemed to be a gradual transition

into a larger radius of play areas outside their homes (or home range) as children grew older. For the few who had a backyard, they were allowed to play in the backyard, other were allowed on the front stoop of the building where parents could still supervise them, or to go to the store or pizzeria and come back home as soon as possible. On such journeys the child was usually accompanied by an older child or an adult. These, however, were all opportunities for children who were "old enough" and still some level of supervision was present. Young children were always supervised regardless of distance. Most of the parents -- users and non-users -- had children whose average age was 6 and 7 years old, respectively. This age group was still too young to be allowed to go out by themselves and some parents mentioned that their children were too young to receive instructions about safety(14%). These parents, as well as others who gave instructions to their children considered that the safety of their children relied more on them than on instructions. Thus, children were usually accompanied by adults when venturing outside. Despite this fact, parents still tried to instill in their children a series of instructions as to what they considered were dangerous situations. These included, but were not limited to: traffic, strangers, and sexual molestation.

7.1.1- Hold hands

Street traffic poses a serious threat to children's safety. Heavily influenced by this aspect of the physical environment, almost all parents instructed their young children to hold their hands when crossing the street (21%). In the Reform era at the beginning of the century, the danger of cars and horses in the streets was one of the arguments used to justify the need for organized play along with acculturation of immigrant children into American mainstream values. Nowadays similar concerns for children's safety outside their homes still pervades. The northwest corner of Central Park, specifically the Frederick Douglass Circle traffic design, privileges automobile rather than pedestrian traffic. It is an intersection instead of a rotary circle for traffic and the conditions of the sidewalks are deteriorated. Holding hands is constantly used as a strategy to overcome the danger automobiles pose for children. For children of this age group, holding an adult's hand when crossing the street localizes one of the main physical dangers parents feel their children are exposed to: cars.

7.1.2- Don't talk to strangers: a contradictory message for children in public space

Streets, playgrounds, parks, and public spaces in general are the sites for one of parents' deeply rooted

social concerns for children's safety: strangers. When asked about safety instructions in the West 110th Street playground, most parents mentioned that they told their children not to talk to strangers and/or not to take anything from strangers (64%). The instruction not to talk to strangers reflects one of the most contradictory concerns within the context of public space. Public space should provide the opportunity for people to meet others they might not choose or have the opportunity to meet under different circumstances. Public space provides the opportunity for spontaneous interactions between people of different backgrounds (ethnic, economic, social, educational, political, and so forth). The instruction that children received from their parents not to talk to strangers places limits on the interactions that public space could provide. Moreover, few bad things actually ever happen to children in public space. In fact fewer criminal acts are committed by strangers against children than those committed by people children know (Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1995). However, the fear of strangers in public space is still a source of concern for parents, and consequently translated into the control of children's behavior. A Latino mother of two boys aged 2 and 7 instructed her children as follows:

You stay here, you don't talk to nobody, you don't go nowhere with nobody, even if you know them, because the majority of the time it will be the person that you know

that does things to your children. [Very seldom] is a stranger, see, a lot of people think it's a stranger. Oh, ..., no I don't trust nobody when it comes to my kid, nobody, not even my husband. There are other cases, but the majority of the time it's someone that you know, because everybody teaches their child not to talk to strangers, not to go with strangers, that's why it's very hard for strangers to get to your child, but it's easy for somebody that the child thinks is your friend..."unless mammy says you can go, if you [the child] didn't get any instructions from me, you don't go.

Some parents, however, were unsure about how effective the instruction not to talk to strangers really are, an African-American father of a 3 year old girl stated that:

... you tell your children not to talk to strangers but they do it anyway. I mean they do, my children are very friendly and they are very open, and I feel they can walk out with someone.

In a more ironic tone, the instruction "not to talk to strangers" could backfire as is in the following account of an African-American father who instructed his 3 year old son not to talk to strangers. This instruction, if overemphasized, could lead to confusion for the child:

I used to tell my children not to talk to strangers but when one of my kids started school there was a teacher that mentioned that my boy was distant from her. We asked him what was happening and he mentioned that we told him not to talk to strangers. So we had to tell him when to speak to strangers and when not.

Other instructions given to children by their parents included practices that delimit the range of motion of the children in the play area (23%), "stay close, don't wander off, and stay inside the playground." If something happens, some children were instructed by their parents to seek the help of a policeman:

If for some reason you lose them (adults) or they lose you, you don't go to no stranger, you find a police officer, you find a police officer. Even when we are on the train, I show them, you see this, you see that, remember you got off here, remember the number of the train in case you get lost, you know how to get home, and if you can't remember you find a cop. They know their address, they know their telephone number.

Another set of instructions largely required a passive role on the part of the child. Parents emphasized to their children the instruction to listen (17%) and obey (12%) them or the adult with whom the children went outside. These

usually involved almost a "code of ethics" for children's behavior in public space, even though these instructions might overlap with the behavior of children in other settings and/or contexts. This pseudo-code of ethics is best summarized in the following instruction from a White father of two girls, 5 and 3 years old: "listen, behave, pay attention, obey, and respect." In some instances parents have instructed their children to avoid physical activities in which they might injure other children or other children might injure them. An African-American father of four instructed his 9, 7, and 4 years old girls: "no fighting, no hitting, do not let anyone push them, don't play rough." This father was also concerned with vandalism. He instructed his children not to steal anything but also not to let anybody take any toys from them.

Other instructions however, emphasized a more active role from the children and the development of a stronger sense of confidence in the children in order to determine by themselves -- as much as possible -- who is a safe person to talk to and who is not. An African-American mother instructed her 5 year old boy to trust his own instincts. She did not develop the fear of strangers in her boy but instead she relied on the child's sense of safety and instincts to determine by himself who to talk to and who not to talk to, "...we never tell him don't talk to strangers. He knows, they [children] sense who is OK to talk to and who's not." She

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completed her description of this instruction placing a stronger sense of confidence on the child's ability to judge a person,

Oh, children I think have, some of them, a lot of them have instincts for who they can trust and who they can't, better than adults do, he doesn't like just, he is a friendly guy but he doesn't like just anybody, you know.

There was only one parent who took a more reflective stand towards the general safety instruction he gave to his child. The main goal of this African-American father's instruction required from his 7 year old son "to be a good person and a critical thinker, to analyze and think every situation and to make his own choices, not to follow anyone else's." Similarly another Latino father of 5 year old and 9 year old boys mentioned that his children should not "let anybody convince them to do anything."

7.1.3- Body private

However real the fear of strangers and other concerns about the safety of children in public space, most criminal acts against children are usually perpetrated by people they know. At least two mothers reflected on this fact:

....because the majority of the time it will be the person that you know that does things to your children. It's very rare it is a stranger, see a lot of people think it's a stranger, Oh, they know my child they are not going to do, no I don't trust nobody when it comes to my kid, nobody not even my husband. There are other cases but the majority of the time it's someone that you know, because everybody teaches their child not to talk to strangers, not to go with strangers, that's why it's very hard for strangers to get to your child, but it's easy for somebody that the child thinks it's your friend. Unless mom says I can go, I tell them I don't care who he is, it could be your own father, if you didn't get any instructions from me you don't go.

(Latino mother of 3 year old and 1 year old boys, and a 6 year old girl)

'Cause adults who are abusive to children are usually adults who they know. (White mother of a 9 and 5 years old girls)

When asked, parents mentioned that they gave different safety instructions to their daughters than those they gave to their sons (78%). Accordingly, the main instruction parents mentioned they stressed with girls was not to be touched "the wrong way" (3%). Parents indicated that talking about this instruction with their girls was a very delicate

exercise. There is a self contained discourse on morality when parents instruct both girls and boys about their private parts.

Yes, that's all within parenting itself. It's a very different age, it's not the way it was when I was growing up, you have to be a little bit more open and honest with your children even though it doesn't sound right and they are young, you still have to let them know, you know, we have gone through the body parts phase of their lives, as a matter of fact I am just teaching it to my son now, my daughters know. And they know what a good touch is and what a bad touch is.

Yes, I might make her more aware of um, being touched inappropriately. And we already emphasize for her the fact that her body is her body, and you know that not me or her mother, anybody, she doesn't want her body touched in a certain way, she should tell us, so I think for the girl we will stress that more. But now that I think of that, the boy can get the same instruction.

(White father of a 3 year old girl)

Even though some parents also instructed their boys to protect themselves, they emphasized it more with girls. Parents, in general, were greatly concerned with the safety of their daughters. Accordingly, mothers (46%) more than

fathers (24%) were explicitly open about this instruction. One way girls can develop self respect is by exercising control over their bodies,

And mostly I tell my daughter that, you know, you should be proud of your body, and never be ashamed of it, but it's also your body and no one is allowed to touch it, not even me, no adult, not even your parents without your permission. (White mother of a 9 and 5 year old girls)

Um, mostly you instruct your child about their body, which I have done, that their body is private, no one is allowed to touch it, that they should be cautious of people, that no one is allowed to control them, you know. (African American mother of two, including a 6 year old girl)

The issue of girls' danger was depicted as the embodiment of the public-private dichotomy within the body itself, the body as the arena for the delimitation of public and private boundaries. Little girls were instructed to delimit boundaries within their bodies in order to be protected. This instruction also involved the development of girls' control and ownership of their body. The body was then assumed as the subject of an orchestration of factors that involved the most basic physical boundary between the self

and others. These sometimes could be mixed, confusing, and ambiguous messages. For instance, in a culture such as the Latino culture many emotions are expressed through touch and touching is seen as a common expression of affection. The delimitation and negotiation of this boundary between the self and others could be a cumbersome but a necessary task for a child. Due to this concern about children's safety in the privacy of their homes or with people they know, parents instruct their children to keep no secrets from them.

7.1.4- No secrets

Because of the privacy fostered by the instruction not to allow anyone to touch the child in a "wrong way," and the actual fear of parents that their children may experience such, some parents also instructed their children to "keep no secrets from their parents" (23%). Parents placed particular emphasis on those secrets children are afraid to tell. A Latino mother of two boys aged 3 and 1, and a 6 year old girl mentioned that:

Um, so it's important that they understand this, that they don't have secrets from their parents, that they should tell their parents everything, that there is under no circumstances, secrets, I mean that they want to tell you, [secrets] they are afraid to tell you.

Other parents were more realistic about their expectations from their children. A father of a 6 year old boy mentioned that children will always keep secrets from their parents. The main question was how to determine which secrets by being kept might jeopardize a child's safety,

You know, most children will do [keep secrets from their parents] whether an adult tells them [not] to, no matter what you tell them, that's the reality of it. I think most children will keep secrets because, it's the nature of being a child.

The main concern of parents was that their child might be a victim of sexual abuse and would not tell them about it. Some parents also felt that times have changed and that talking about sexual abuse and developing an understanding in their children of it, is essential nowadays (4%). They realized that for children to talk about these issues when they were growing up was taboo.

... because what we are afraid of, most parents' number one fear is kidnapping or sexual abuse, or some kind of physical abuse to your children. That is our greatest fear in life, maybe we get some media hype and maybe because it is a reality, maybe [Maybe it is a mix of both.] It's a mix of it, you know, I don't think there is any adult who doesn't know someone who's gone through

that at some point, and as a child most of us knew someone who went through it, as I said to someone, we were growing up, you will never think of telling an adult what you knew was going on, I don't know why but that was the reality. [What is it again?] If you knew someone was having things done by their parents or whether they were being hit or sexually abused, which children have a distinct sense of it, I think, they don't tell adults, we didn't when we were young. I don't know if children are different today, maybe, there doesn't seem to be more um,.... so maybe they will talk to us about it, whereas in our era they won't."

(Latino mother of two girls, 5 and 3 years old and a 19 month boy)

7.1.5- 'Vulnerable' girls and 'tough' boys

The emphasis on safety instructions for girls more than boys when parents addressed issues of sexual molestation seemed to point at generalized assumptions about girls' and boys' inherent qualities. Parents' increased protection over their girls is justified by a 'Darwinian' metaphor that underlines an assumption of girl as preys. A Latino father of a 3 and 2 years old boys mentioned that,

It's just, it's automatic with girls, what can you say, it's just something, you just feel you have to be more

protective of girls. I mean, I guess because you sense that girls are more likely to be **preyed upon** [emphasis added].

Therefore, girls are also protected by not being allowed to "go out with an adult male figure" (2%). Parents' instructions stressed that girls be more cautious and "pay attention to your surroundings and who is around you" (2%). Girls' range of movement is compromised by the parents' strategy to "try to keep her as close as possible at all times" (2%). Also the instruction not to talk to strangers was emphasized more with girls. Parents tend to be stricter with girls in their instruction not to talk to strangers than they were with their boys (Hart, 1978; Katz, 1995). According to an African-American mother of two, including a 6 year old girl and a 7 year old boy:

Oh, sure, you have to tell her to beware of perverted men and little boys that may touch you in the wrong places but you know what, I'm going to tell my child the same thing, and yes my perception is that girls are more vulnerable to, you know, more likely to be victims of different sorts of crimes or abuses or so on. [Why?] Well I think in my mind the perpetrators are mostly male now who's the male going to pick on but a female, the weaker sex, they pick on little boys too,

that may be unfair to say but the majority of the crimes or abuses are, you know, from male to female.

Some parents decided to restrict girls' interactions with boys, altogether. This, from my point of view, was a more extreme attempt at protecting girls' safety. A father of two including a 9 year old girl mentioned that he doesn't allow his girl to play with boys. "Boys play with boys, girls play with girls" was his guiding principle.

In the dissimilar view of girls from that of boys, as respectively 'vulnerable' and 'tough,' some parents mentioned that this view creates a false sense of strength about boys. According to one African-American father of an 8 year old boy and a 4 year old girl: "boys will fight, girls will scream." This parent instructed his boy to fight back while he instructed the girl to get out and walk away.

For some parents the dissimilar view of girls and boys creates additional pressure for boys. A mother mentioned that nowadays she had the same safety concerns for boys than those for girls,

No, in these times, the security for a girl or a boy is the same. If there is rape, it's the same, and it's worst for boys because even though it is less noticeable (not as obvious) they are more defenseless. [In which

way?] Yes, because they think they know, they think they are strong, but they aren't, then the girls are afraid and take care of themselves because of the fear, the boys do not take care of themselves because they believe they know and that they are strong and that they can take care of themselves....To fight, to take a girl, to compete for a girl, to hit each other for anything, no and these (are the) same steps that take them to use drugs, because a friend tells him you are not courageous, you are not a man (African-American mother of two including a 6 year old boy).

The same socialization process that promotes strength over weakness, courage over fear, carelessness over protection in boys tends to create an unattainable ideal that produces a lack of acknowledgment of boys' actual limitations and vulnerabilities. A White mother of two girls pointed out that

...I distinctly think that people have this false sense of safety with boys...But I think the perception of boys safer than girls is a very false one. I just think that there is a lot of denial about it. The abuse of young boys is the same as young girls, I think it has to do with people hurting children, it does not have to do with their sex. But there is this sense, people worry more about the girls, where I feel is totally false, I

think they should worry about their boys. Boys have terrible stories, because boys are more physical, I see more abuse in boy children than girl children when I'm walking around the city, like boys fighting with boys or the boys hurting younger boys, um, there is a lot of bullying, where older boys hurt younger boys, you know. I don't hear that much of girl on girl maybe because we protect them more, or boys are less inclined to go after girls....so I think there is a total false perception, and boys feel that they have to take care of themselves so they don't tell you....But if you are a girl, will you come here by yourself? [Girls aren't allowed to go out by themselves as much as boys.] Do you think he went home and said daddy I'm scared because 5 boys beat up on me, no, he went home and said "I took care of it I got away. You know what I mean, that is the pressure we put on our boys. It's wrong, it's really wrong, young men in my building that I talk to who are like 13 or 14, there is tremendous pressure on them. One boy was sent to school where they stole his jacket and he was overwhelmed by anxiety about it. And if he had been a daughter maybe his mother would have walked her to school. I don't know, I just think we demand more of our boys, and they are afraid to tell us they are scared...I don't think we should give girls more freedom, **I think we should be kinder to our boys**, that's my perception [emphasis added].

A Latino father mentioned that he stresses similar cautionary remarks to his 6 year old boy. The instructions to the boy, were somewhat complementary to those given to his 5 year old girl,

...being careful who they go out with, stay in groups, you know, don't go off by yourself at night wandering around, don't go off with another boy by yourself until you are a certain age, you know, common sense things, that for my boy I will probably stress the same kind of instructions but in reverse, be respectful to women, don't start things you are not ready for, you know, I mean the same thing in reverse.

Again, parents tend to be more skeptical about girls' companionship than they are about boys', and this is a concern mentioned by an African-American mother of two, including a 10 year old boy and a 6 year old girl. Even though she considers herself to be a feminist,

...I am very skeptical about who takes care of my kids and who they are with, and I think I will be even more skeptical with her than with him. [Why?] Because she is a girl. [Because she is a girl?] And I am a feminist, I don't know why I think like that. [There we go, contradictions...] Yes.

There were other parents who did not make a distinction in terms of boys and girls. Nowadays for them boys like girls need to be protected,

...because it doesn't matter what you, it could be a little boy nowadays, sometimes you got to protect your boy more than a girl, the way things are, no I (protect) both of them, I watch, 'cause it doesn't matter no more, it's really wild out there... (Latino father of a 5 year old girl)

7.1.6- Technology: beepers and codes or some pragmatic logistics for children's safety

Instructions were the main strategies parents used to protect their children. These included instructions for how the children venture into the public, but also about children's protection of their own bodies as private. Moreover, there were those more pragmatic strategies and logistics developed by parents to protect and guarantee their children's safety. An African-American mother of two, including a 7 year old boy mentioned that she instructs her child to keep a quarter in his pocket in case something happens. New technologies allow her to be accessible to her child at any moment through the child's use of a telephone and the mother's beeper:

... always keep a quarter in your pocket in case you need to call. But most working mothers and most mothers carry beepers which is an 800 number, so they don't need the quarter.

Some parents have mentioned that they instruct their children to ask for help when they need it. Recognizing what a policeman looks like and also recognizing businesses that are part of the 'Safe Haven' initiative¹³, a Latino mother of four including a 7 year old boy, a 3 year old boy and a 1 year old girl mentioned that:

They know what the police looks like, they know the signs for safe place for children [safe haven] if something goes wrong and they'll go into a store and ask for help if they feel threatened, they will go into the store and ask to use the phone or to walk home if it is a neighborhood store.

An African-American mother of two mentioned that she gives her child a code, which in actuality is a specific word given to the child by the mother. She explained her strategy in the following way:

¹³ The 'safe haven' program is one in which businesses identify themselves as havens for children feeling vulnerable. Children are taught to identify businesses in the neighborhood where they can go for help. Further information regarding this strategy will be provided in the collective strategy section.

Don't go with anybody, um, don't take anything from anybody, if somebody said that I sent them to get you, I have a code with both of them, that they know what it is, and I know what it is, so the person will have to know this, you know, so if the person doesn't know that (the code), they (children) don't go (with the person).

Overall parents developed a diverse array of strategies to ensure their children's safety. None of those, however addressed collective initiatives with the exception of organizational ones such as the Safe Haven Programs. Most of the strategies were based on influencing children's behavior through instructions.

7.2- Public safety for adults: strategies

Searching for safety by developing and using strategies for the use of public space allows parents to exert control over and appropriate their physical environment. A depiction of the strategies parents use to feel safe in the playground, the area of the park, and the neighborhood resemble a mosaic of juxtaposed actions and behaviors. These strategies are not totally disconnected from each other, but are intertwined within the parents' rhythms of everyday life. The multiplicity of strategies used by the respondents to feel safe are, in the main, individual strategies (76%). Some of these individual strategies function as internal filters that

signal danger and that are based on metaphysical processes that invoke internal and psychological processes. Fewer of the strategies mentioned by the parents included collective action. Only a few social strategies were mentioned by parents and these included being accompanied by other people when visiting the playground, and parents who socialized with other parents in order to establish rapport and make sure the children would be taken care of by the adults present. Among the parent users and non-users, there were no significant differences in their safety strategies. The only strategies developed by parents that pointed at differences between groups were those that dealt with mothers as women and their perceptions of safety in public spaces, and Latino parents who identified the "atmosphere" of the playground as an important environmental component to their perceptions of safety. These differences will be addressed in the following sections.

7.2.1- Visual strategies

7.2.1.1- The surveillance of the eye

One of the most significant strategies used by the parents -- users and non-users alike -- is what I call the "surveillance of the eye" (74%). Sight, eyes, looking are common denominators to these strategies, "you look behind you and on the side of you, and all over," mentioned an African-

American mother. Most respondents mentioned that through this strategy they are able to know "what is going on" (56%). Moreover, the most commonly heard strategy regarding the safety of the children was for parents to "keep an eye" on them (62%).

Parents' strategies to keep an eye on children at all times involved, staying close to their children and following them around. "Stay close" was also a frequent instruction given to the children. In addition, parents also avoided getting distracted from their children (23%), they got involved in their children's activities making sure that the children were "OK" (18%). They also paid attention to and watched out for unsupervised children in the playground who were not accompanied by an adult (15%).

7.2.1.2- Prospect

At the West 110th Street playground parent users deployed a visual strategy that included prospect. Parents stood at the gate of the park or on the street corner, at a distance from the West 110th Street playground to observe what was happening there and judge if it was safe to visit the playground or not (3%). They "check(ed)" the park (3%) before they got there and specifically observed if the playground was "quiet and safe" (1%).

A Latino father looked at what he called the "atmosphere" of the playground from the park's entrance. By atmosphere, he and other Latino parents referred mainly to people. Specifically a Latino father mentioned that he looks for a good atmosphere ("buen ambiente"):

When I crossed the street that I am already entering (the park), the first thing that I do is see if there is a **good atmosphere**, if there are many people, if there are many kids, if the playground is too empty, that is the first thing, as soon as I can see into the playground, since I cross the street, that is the first thing, because some times that I have come all the way to the entrance of the park and I just turn around and leave. [emphasis added]

A Latino mother added:

[And what makes you feel safe?]

Well that same thing that you can see how the **atmosphere** of the place is, the people.

[Oh, the people?]

Yes, the people, if you see that your atmosphere/environment is fine, you stay there.

[And what would be a bad atmosphere for you?]

Well, a bad atmosphere or environment, if you see people who are drinking, that they are drunk, or whatever that could be, that one always know, when you see an environment like that, one leaves that place.

A "good atmosphere" in the playground was defined as a considerable number of people present in the playground (1%), parents engaged with children's activities in the playground (1%), or children playing with each other (1%). A "bad atmosphere," on the other hand, was one where there were people drinking (alcoholic beverages) (1%) or the presence of adults without children in the playground (1%). A Latino father "checks" the atmosphere of the playground to determine what is happening there and whether there are "inappropriate people who aren't supposed to be there."

When asked about what she liked about the West 110th Street playground, a Latino mother also mentioned the atmosphere. For her the atmosphere was:

[To] Look around, look at the setting of the park, the trees, the steps, children can use their imagination in every which way they can.

For her the atmosphere refers to the setting of the playground.

The parents who mentioned that they pay attention to the atmosphere of the playground are Latino. For them, a good atmosphere in the playground is equivalent, in general, to the presence of people. For Latinos and non-Latinos alike,

users and non-users, awareness of the people, activities they are engaged in, and the conditions and activities taking place in the surrounding landscapes of the West 110th Street playground are key components that they take into consideration as part of their safety strategies (74%). An African-American mother summarized this strategy as the need "to know, who's here, who's around, and you know, whatever is going on in the area."

7.2.2- Awareness: "Who's here and what's going on"

7.2.2.1- Awareness of external stimuli: people, activities, and surroundings

It is almost impossible to separate the awareness that parents developed towards the people, activities, and surroundings in their perceptions of safety. For them the presence or absence of people using or dealing with drugs (56%), homeless people (53%), 'bums' (42%), adults without children (37%), unsupervised children (33%), and an empty playground (45%) were elements simultaneously perceived and judged in terms of how safe they were. The awareness of these elements seemed to be judged by parent users almost in unison.

In their strategies relating to people, parents watched and looked in order to pay attention to people's demeanor

(36%), "I watch people, what they are doing, what they look like." There was an emphasis on "people who don't look right," (1%) and looking around "for people who should not be around" (1%). Parents -- users and non-users alike -- paid attention to people's demeanor in the neighborhood, people who could be on drugs, homeless, and/or emotionally disturbed. They were also attentive to what some parents called people "hanging out" (34%). A mother mentioned that she "makes sure that other adults in the playground are there for the same purpose."

If we were to hypothetically depict the manner in which parents used the visual awareness of people, activities, and surroundings as a strategy to safely traverse the areas near the playground it would probably be as follows: they looked for homeless people or "bums" sleeping on the sidewalk benches or smoking crack there; they looked for who's standing by the gate at the entrance of the park. The entrance of the park also served as an observation post from which to look inside into the playground from a higher plane. They looked at the lawns contiguous to the playground and the paths bordering it. They saw if there were dogs with and/or without leashes. They particularly paid attention to see if there were people coming out of the tunnel under the bridge. For most parents users and non-users, the people who came out of the bridge arch were generally assumed to be drug addicts

or drug dealers. Parents did not venture into that area, nor did they allow their children to be there.

Parent users paid attention to the people in the playground as well, specifically if there were adults without children. They would tend to avoid the playground if they saw homeless people, 'bums,' or drug addicts there. They paid attention to 'bad kids' who would vandalize the playground by breaking the equipment or breaking glass bottles. Some mothers tended to feel unsafe when the playground was overcrowded. A mother mentioned that she was afraid of losing sight of her children when the playground was overcrowded. She said this might raise conflicts among the kids and the parents,

In two occasions I did it (leave) because this playground was so full of people that I said to myself, if I bring my two kids there they are going to be lost in the crowd, I will be walking after them like a mad woman. And something else, there are lots of conflicts when there are too many kids and few things for them to play, like in here, and there is a point in which there is no more space. And there are times in which a kid is pushed and then the parents will come, and one doesn't want to be in that situation.

Parents also paid attention to the activities other people were engaged in, "knowing everything that is going on around me when I have my kids with me."

Paying attention to the surroundings and looking into specific places of the physical environment were strategies that involved judging how safe people were in the environment. A mother mentioned that she looked at "street lights, hoods in the corner drinking, drug dealers around the corner and everything, keep an eye on them." They "survey" the surroundings, paying "attention to everything." When crossing the street they paid attention to traffic and cars and at the street corners they searched for drug activity.

7.2.2.2- Awareness of internal processes: metaphysical strategies

Parents also relied on what I like to call metaphysical strategies. These included those strategies that involved internal psychological processes and a combination of sensations and introspective practices that provided the parents with an acute sense of safety in specific situations. These were general strategies which they did not seem to be totally aware of or at least that were spontaneously spoken about. But, once asked about what parents did to feel safer in the playground and the neighborhood, these psychological strategies surfaced in the parents' accounts of their

perceptions of safety. They realized that these strategies were part of their everyday lives, and their conscious and/or unconscious practices. Among the metaphysical strategies, parents alluded to the "conscious," "unconscious," "vibrations," "faith," "street sense," "sensations," and "instincts" and mentioned that they relied on these while traversing the neighborhood and the area of the park near the playground, as well as elsewhere (57%).

Parents mentioned their instincts as the main metaphysical strategy they use (37%). For some, their instincts translated into feelings of being unsafe (1%), seeing danger (1%), paying attention to (1%) and staying away from trouble (1%),

Oh, yeah, you pay attention to them, I mean that's sort of a natural radar or natural **instinct**. When something is not safe you get a feeling for it [emphasis added].

...You know, you usually can see if something is dangerous. Nothing particular, **instincts** tell you. Instincts tell you, like "Oh, no, I am not going that way," if you see a group of people standing over there that were just waiting for somebody to pass, you will not go that way [emphasis added].

What do you pay attention to, well, I don't know, I guess it's **basic instinct** [emphasis added], you know, ah, people hanging in neighborhoods, we stay away from [them].

...like anybody I have an **instinct** for trouble, you know, I was raised in the city so I kind of more or less know what to stay away from" [emphasis added].

One mother mentioned the sensations of her body that tell her when there is danger, her body speaks to her,

Something in your body tells you, "I don't think you should be here."

For another parent, there was a consciousness that operated as an awareness of people around her. This "consciousness" accompanied her throughout her day,

I have the same **consciousness** when I leave the house, all the way until I get back home at 10:30, same **consciousness**, seeing who's around you, you know [emphasis added].

For others it was an unconscious or pre-conscious process: the lack of a conscious act at the moment of judging how safe a situation is, this unconscious strategy relied on

the presence of cues that attested for something that did not "look right."

I don't know, maybe I just do it **unconsciously**, you know, believe me if something doesn't look right I will not be there [emphasis added].

Vibrations, on the other hand, guided this parent's safe trajectories, "Yes, I go by **vibrations** totally, in the world" [emphasis added].

For another parent, street sense was the internal "mechanism" that deterred him from dangerous situations, "I don't know, all New Yorkers, we are inbred with mechanisms, I guess, of **street sense**, of danger, you know..." [emphasis added].

To be always on the alert mentally and to rely on faith was the safety strategy of this mother:

I am always prepared for danger, you know, not with weapons but mentally, I'm prepared, I am a, how would I say, I'm a true believer in God and Jesus Christ, I don't worry about too many things, when I walk, I walk with them.

All of these metaphysical strategies were highly internal, individual processes that accounted for the mediation between the environment -- including people and surroundings -- and parents' perceptions, feelings, and sensations about safety. Other parents, particularly women (who mentioned strategies that made them avoid places altogether and/or at certain times of day) based on the fear of possible criminal acts against women. Even though men also used strategies of avoidance, it was for women that these strategies seemed to be more frequently voiced. These strategies of avoidance, however, could also be read as a reaction against the fear of crime that often functions as a social control mechanism and that ultimately deters women from their full participation and access to public space (Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1995).

7.2.3- Avoidance strategies: the ideology of fear

Women's strategies of avoidance implicitly tend to limit their scope of movement to that of the home. A mother mentioned that she "only feels safe in the apartment." Even though home is perceived as the safest place to be, it is the place where most criminal acts against women and children occur. There is a false idea of public space as unsafe for women and private space as a haven. Some theorists (Katz, 1993; Madriz, 1997; Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1995) identify this misconception as a social control mechanism based on

fear that deters women from their full participation in public life and limits their ability to venture into and enjoy access to public space. However, women also develop strategies to feel safer and appropriate public space. In the West 110th Street playground, the parent users' familiarity with the neighborhood and with the playground allowed them to feel safe there. In other words, knowing the people in the neighborhood and their surroundings allowed parents to develop strategies that made them feel safer there. They were aware of strangers and the dangerous situations they should avoid. Women -- especially the mothers interviewed for this study -- also used a whole spectrum of safety strategies that even at the internal, psychological, and metaphysical level allowed them to protect themselves from unsafe situations in public space. Because of all the strategies developed to feel and be safe and because of the fact that women are more likely to be victims of crime at home than in public space, the fear of danger in public space can be seen to function as an ideological mechanism of social control. Even when criminal acts in public space against women do happen, the ideology of women's fear of danger in public spaces, ultimately functions as a mechanism that deters women and others from full participation in and access to public space.

7.2.3.1- Self-imposed curfew and self-isolation

The strategies of avoidance were used as preventive measures against unsafe situations. Among the strategies of avoidance developed by the mothers interviewed were what Madriz (1997) calls "self-imposed curfew" and "self-imposed isolation." The self-imposed curfew and self-isolation were explicit in some mothers' strategies of not going anywhere, particularly at night, "I don't go out at night." This strategy limits women's range of movement to that of the home and the daytime. Another mother's self-imposed curfew limits her social life, because she did not "hang-out." Even though fathers did mentioned that they took precautions by avoiding the playground, the park and lonely dark places in the night, their strategies were not as rigid as those of mothers.

7.2.3.2- Environmental effacement

The strategies of avoidance such as self-imposed curfews and self-isolation have an environmental component. These strategies not only implied a psychological attitude towards being outside, but they entailed women's and children's avoidance of 'dangerous places.' This aspect of avoidance strategies are associated with what I call environmental effacement. They included, for instance, avoiding public settings such as parks when they were isolated and secluded. Mothers, in particular, avoid the West 110th Street

playground when it was empty. They also avoided the playground at night because it lacked lighting. In contrast, the Dana playground does have lights in the evening, and is therefore used during the Summer until late at night. The areas surrounding the Dana playground were often visited in the evening by young couples.

Most of the environmental effacement strategies or avoidance of the physical environment covered those spaces where women -- mothers -- felt fearful. More clearly, it is shown in one mother's description of her strategy about avoiding the park during the night:

Up there where they are walking along the road, there are certain times of the day that you do not walk in the park. Usually between 5 and 6 am, in the Summer after 9 pm you do not like to walk in the park alone or with someone else.

The woods and parks are both generally represented as images of unfamiliar places that women tend to fear and avoid when by themselves (Madriz, 1997). Even though they might know these places, the lack of visibility and the isolation of these places combined with infrequent, but well publicized violent criminal acts against women occurring there, reinforces the image of the park and the woods as unsafe places for women alone. One Latino mother mentioned that:

Well I run in the park on occasions, sometimes I run up around this hill, this hill is real quiet at times, in the morning, also that same path where the first Central Park jogger was raped, that's still a scary area. These places are scary because the events that took place, the second place where the woman was killed last year, I don't go by there, I feel nervous...Yes, down behind the pool, I never go down there anymore, I used to walk all up in there with the dog, never now. I never go up there at all. I used to go up there almost everyday.

7.2.3.3- Spaces marked by fear

Apart from the characteristics of the location of the West 110th Street playground and the area of the park where the playground is located, there were other spaces marked by fear. Generally speaking, women felt that the hillside south of the West 110th Street playground, the paths to the woods, the areas with dense foliage, the 103rd Street pond, the tunnel near the West 110th Street playground, the sidewalks around Central Park, and other relatively isolated areas made them feel unsafe. As indicated above, for one young mother in particular, the area behind the Lasker Rink where the first woman jogger was raped and another woman was killed in 1996, is a place that some women attached particularly strong meanings that effused these places with fear.

Another area near the West 110th Street playground that represented a place that provokes fear was the Great Hill south of the West 110th Street playground:

Well, up there. [Where?] Here on 108th Street, the place to jog, and turn around, and there I have felt very, very unsafe, to the point to run away from that place to my house. [And why do you feel that way there?] Because, for the things that have happened there lately, because, I used to jog, then, well around that time they killed the woman jogger, and there were another couple of incidents, I was going to run and the policeman told me to be careful when I was running in that area, not to wear earphones, and to be alert, and I don't know what else. So there were times that when I went to run I will leave the place even more nervous because I was running, and looking, and paying attention to everything, to every movement, and I was looking in every single direction so I was constantly paying attention to any person who could come out at any moment, so it's better not to do things. So I would feel very nervous there, and sometimes I would have to go to jog alone and they do not recommend that (Latino mother of two, a 7 year old boy and a 5 year old girl).

For another African-American mother of two 6 and 5 year old girls, the fear of crime did not deter her from the activities in public space that she enjoys,

No, I don't feel unsafe in the park, my friends used to say when I used to go jogging, don't go jogging in the park, OK, I'm not "Miss-not-paying-attention- in-the-park," you know this area is getting busy, I watch people in the park.

She used strategies such as awareness of people to increase her sense of safety in the park without resorting to strategies of avoidance.

The strategies of self-imposed curfew, self-isolation, environmental effacement and the consequent spaces marked by fear were all interrelated expressions of how respondents, particularly mothers, dealt with safety issues. They were all individual strategies that point towards a tendency for women's access to public space to be restricted. Formal, institutional, and/or collective strategies that could allow women a less limited access to public space seem absent, among the people interviewed. Mothers were left to resort to a combination of safety strategies that guide their trajectories for safe use of public space, and in particular the West 110th Street playground.

7.2.4- Rhythms of safety strategies

7.2.4.1- The checkered journey

The array of strategies parents used to feel safe were orchestrated and concretely anchored to elements of the physical environment that operated as cues to ensure a safe journey to and from the playground, and a safe time there. The elements of the physical environment were connected in the parents' accounts through their trajectories from their home, through the neighborhood, into the park and last into the playground.

Parents avoided or used specific places by changing their trajectories. Thus, their safety trajectory, was checkered, as parents moved through these areas according to what was happening and who was there, avoiding some places and or people they found to be unsafe, traversing by other people who seemed to them to be safe. The travels through the physical environment suggested an adaptable and flexible reading of the environment where respondents developed strategies to appropriate and use public spaces or to avoid them. The trajectories inscribed in the uses of the physical environment were molded according to the parents' assessments of the physical environment itself in terms of safety.

7.2.4.2- The visual thread: marking danger through the elements of the physical environment

Another way of looking at the strategies parents employed in deterring danger and feeling safe could be conceptualized in terms of a typology of elements of the physical environment that operated as markers of possible dangerous situations. These elements of the physical environment can be identified at each scale of analysis. In the neighborhood, parents directed their attention to the street and traffic in particular. Parents accompanied their children to the playground and insisted on holding hands at street crossings. They paid attention to the street lights and traffic flow to determine when to cross the street. Parents also paid attention to the street corners, where they judged if there was drug activity taking place or if there were undesirable people hanging out, if there was too much movement, if the people there were too loud or if there were "hoodlums." On the sidewalks, respondents looked for "bums" also hanging out or sleeping on the benches at the periphery or entrance of the park. They also looked there for homeless people sleeping, using drugs or smoking crack. Parents also looked at the gate at the park entrance to see who was standing there. On top of the bridge they looked for joggers who exited the park. Underneath the bridge, in the tunnel, they looked to see whether homeless people or drug addicts were inside. On the lawns next to the playground and inside

the park they looked for homeless people and also for unleashed dogs. Along the paths that border the playground respondents looked at who was "going through," who was crossing the paths, and in the surrounding hills they searched for people who "don't look right." Inside the playground they saw if there were broken fragments of glass on the ground and in the sandbox, they checked for needles or empty syringes that might have been accidentally left there after drug use during the night. Having arrived at their destination safely, parents always searched for shady seats to sit and relax, to watch their children and protect them after such an exhaustive journey there.

7.2.5- Community based collective strategies

Despite the fact that only a few parents provided examples of strategies other than individual ones, community efforts and initiatives have been developed to deal with safety issues for children in the neighborhood. Examples of these are: the Westside Crime Prevention Program - Safe Haven Program and the Harlem Hospital Injury Prevention Program.

7.2.5.1- Safe Haven

The Westside Crime Prevention Program located on 893 Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street, sponsors Safe Haven. Safe Haven is a program that promotes the involvement of local

merchants in the community to provide help and protection for children who encounter safety problems in the streets.

Although mainly focused on the Upper West Side, there are grocery and other stores near West 110th Street that offer help under the Safe Haven Program. Merchants who participate in this program place a bright yellow sticker on their door which lets children in the neighborhood know that their business is a safe place where they can go to ask for help, a place a call to the police or home, or to receive encouragement and be listened to. The program operates through the cooperation of volunteer parents from public and private schools who recruit and enlist merchants in the program.

7.2.5.2- Harlem Hospital Injury Prevention Program

The Harlem Hospital Injury Prevention Program focused on analyzing and documenting the conditions of play areas in the Harlem neighborhood to show the need for their improvement. The program originated in response to high rates of childhood injury from traffic and unsafe play conditions in the neighborhood. The information gathered through the program was complemented with injury reports for specific sites and distributed to the public agencies responsible for the maintenance and conditions of the play areas. The program's goal is to promote the improvement of parks and play areas

within the community to prevent child injuries and to offer support to community initiatives whose main goal is to provide safe play environments, role models for children, develop children's talents and self-esteem, and to keep them off the streets. The program includes different activities from the renovation of public parks and playgrounds in the Harlem neighborhood, building privately funded playgrounds, gardening, mural painting and other strategies that encourage the positive use of public space and discourage illicit activities that might otherwise occur there. The program also provides complementary activities that focus on injury prevention of trauma-related violence and anti-violence education for children of all ages.

7.3- Concluding remarks: adaptable strategies

A positive outcome from this study was parents' recognition of their ongoing awareness of and vigilance about safety that must be exercised in their everyday environment. Parents, in their quest for the safe use of public space by themselves and their children, largely developed individual strategies for coping. Coping with safety, however, was not articulated as a means for changing the conditions that create unsafe environments collectively. The strategies parents used were based on their careful evaluation of the social and physical environment. The emphasis on individual strategies also pointed to the fact that safety was a highly

individual perceptual issue. The manner in which safety was perceived and the behaviors and actions prompted by that assessment, was relative to many factors. Those factors included time of the day, the kind and type of people present, and the visibility of the physical location, to name a few. Despite the fact that some parents mentioned that they also implemented more social strategies such as using public space in the company of other family members or with other parents, the individual strategies mentioned were to a large extent reactions to rather than transformations of unsafe situations. These were reactions to what parents consider threatening or unsafe situations for them and their children. There seems to be a lack of strategies organized collectively to make safer use of public space or to change the conditions that make these public spaces unsafe. Ideologies of fear, such as the "terror-talk" against strangers for children and the criminalization of public space for women, provoked reactive strategies which, generally speaking, tend to function in ways that might limit the movement of children and women and their fuller appropriation of public spaces. Thus, the more extreme reactions to these ideologies, resulted in an intense monitoring of children's activities, and for women, self-imposed curfews and self-isolation. These strategies, instead of attempts at changing the conditions that create these ideologies and at changing the limited access to public space these ideologies enact, only function at the individual level as reactions rather than proactive

collective initiatives that could benefit all. The psychological burden of these strategies is also a sign of institutional inefficiency at dealing with safety issues.

At the community level, however, Safe Havens and the Harlem Hospital Injury Prevention Program are two examples of collective strategies geared at children's safe use of public space: the street and public play areas. Even though not mentioned by respondents, the concerted efforts of these strategies are geared towards a fuller access to public space for children. Rather than constraining, they allow parents and children to use public space and feel safer there. When detailing those aspects that would make them feel safer in the playground, the area of the park and the neighborhood, parents largely focused on the improvement of elements of the physical environment that had to do, among other things, with the improvement of the playground area and the conditions of the neighborhood by eradicating drugs. These improvements however, focused largely on expectations of the government -- through, for instance, police surveillance -- and other agencies (such as park institutions) to make those changes. Largely ignored in parents' accounts was the possibility of a community organized effort to address safety issues and concerns. However, this possibility might also be viewed as another example of placing burdens on people already burdened with poverty, poor housing, and limited social services.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

8.1- Towards landscapes of public value

A landscape that is valued by the public implies that the public has access, control, and ownership of it. One aspect that to a great extent determines the value of a public space is safety. Public space, as well as the sense of safety it should foster, is a multi-layered and complex issue. The participants in this study have contributed to a deeper understanding of the complexity of contextual factors that affect the use of public space and urban public safety more generally. However, concerns about and perceptions of safety in public space involve two aspects: 1) the individual; and 2) the structural. These two aspects collide in the discourse on safety at the three scales of my analysis: the West 110th Street playground, the area of the park where the playground is located, and the neighborhood that surrounds the playground. The socio-economic context provided a platform for understanding why safety is perceived as compromised in the manner in which the respondents voiced their concerns regarding this space: the West 110th street playground. The compromise parents faced in terms of safety (individual aspect) involves developing strategies and awareness of the social and economic conditions of the neighborhood. Strategies allowed parents to use the

playground safely as they negotiated their need for public space for themselves and their children and in the face of illicit activities and 'undesirables' (structural). Moreover, the perception of safety in the West 110th Street playground was relative to parents' comparisons to the maintenance and operations of other playgrounds in Central Park and in Harlem. Safety in the West 110th Street was then affected by a combination of social and physical factors that in parents' discourse on safety permeated the three scales of analysis. Parents' discourse on safety related: 1) social and physical factors and 2) different spaces. The social and physical factors as well as the different spaces they linked, constituted the context where parents' perceptions of safety rested. Accordingly, the individual strategies developed by parents for their safe travels were contextualized in an adaptive manner, relative to their perceptions of safety which differed according to time of day, the people, and the situations they encounter.

Structurally, the description and analysis of the socio-economic context provided a framework from which to critically examine public space issues and more specifically how current 'neo-liberal' discourses on urban public safety are ideological manufactures that help develop, improve and maintain the social conditions and the physical infrastructure in some urban areas and not in others. Accordingly, parents' perceptions of safety at the West 110th

street playground varied greatly according to its comparison with other play spaces (in Central Park and in Harlem) and with other areas within the city. Indeed, while places like midtown Manhattan are developed and maintained to attract tourism and the entertainment industry, in places like Harlem, urban restructuring and public disinvestment have resulted in public spaces of abandonment and neglect. The ideological discourses on public safety based on the fear of crime contribute to obscure and distract from the circumstances such as governmental retrenchment and budget cuts that adversely affect contemporary Harlem. My study shows that these conditions -- contrary to being considered abstract issues only or visible in the conditions of the physical environment only -- are filtered into parents' everyday lives. Even though parents' awareness of and interpretations of the conditions of the neighborhood differ, they also think critically about them. Issues such as surveillance, gentrification, and the differentials in the allocation of resources within city neighborhoods raised critical analysis from parents who, as residents of Harlem, experienced the consequences of these uneven circumstances.

8.2-.The West 110th Street playground: sharpened contrasts

By studying the social and physical aspects that affect perceptions of safety at the three scales of analysis, the

West 110th Street playground became the axis where sharpened contrasts gravitated. On the one hand, parents who used the playground considered its location as aesthetically appealing and relaxing. For the parents who did not use the playground, the location affected their perception of the playground as unsafe. However, for parent non-users the Dana playground was perceived as safe and they mentioned that familiarity and convenience were key factors that affected their perception of the Dana playground as safe. Parents relied mainly on the convenience of the West 110th Street playground location (which is close to their homes) and the familiarity they had with people and surroundings to overcome the obstacles presented by what could be considered a 'lack of safety' in the nearby physical and social environment: the West 110th Street playground, the area of the park, and the neighborhood.

Harlem is a space of rupture (Menser, 1997). In a relational view of space, the West 110th Street playground is an in-between space that ruptures the continuity between the well-manicured and increasingly homogeneous image of Central Park and the less maintained condition of the Harlem neighborhood. The ruptured space that the West 110th Street playground occupies is also a controversial space. When compared to other playgrounds in Central Park the West 110th Street playground has a simpler design, is less patrolled by police, and is considered to be less safe. But in terms of

playgrounds in Harlem outside Central Park, the West 110th Street equipment is better maintained. The in-between space of the West 110th Street playground is a point of comparison between two extremes, that of affluence and that of abandonment. The in-between quality interrupts and, in doing so, offers the opportunity to qualify the contrast of the extremes between which it lies. The perception of safety of this, the playground's in-between status, is largely based on the location of the playground: a relatively marginalized area of the park and contiguous to the Harlem neighborhood. The safety of this public space is compromised by contrasting perceptions, as a place of tranquillity and repose versus a secluded and isolated area. Because of the seclusion of the area and because the playground been less attended to than other playgrounds in Central Park, as an in-between and marginal space, it could be considered neglected in terms of services, but simultaneously it offers Harlem residents the opportunity to enjoy a relatively well-maintained public space. The disadvantage for Harlem residents to have such an option is that it may blunt the possibility of collective actions and activities that could improve Harlem's residents' broader recreational opportunities. The West 110th Street playground could be seen as a pacifier for increasing demands for appropriate public spaces and improved recreational facilities in Harlem, even as it begins to fulfill more demands.

The playground is located in an area of uneven grade, sunken in a ravine. The lack of prospect in the playground affects the perception of the playground as unsafe, particularly for non-users. The presence of illicit activities, people engaged in these activities, and suspicious people, create a the negative perception of safety of the playground. Furthermore, these seem to be elements that deter the use of any public space. Both physical and social factors have an impact on people's perceptions of the West 110th Street playground as a public space that allows access to all, but is perceived as unsafe or as a place where one should be cautious. These perceptions limit its accessibility particularly for non-users or potential users. However, for parent users these unsafe conditions are often overlooked or adapted in their "safe" journeys. The familiarity with the West 110th Street playground and adjacent landscapes and neighborhoods as well as the convenience that the playground represented for parent users could be interpreted as a way of accommodating to the same conditions that affect the everyday life safety of Harlem's residents.

Notwithstanding the structural problems that affect Harlem -- in part the consequences of urban restructuring and public disinvestment -- the individuals who live there have learned to deal and adapt to these issues in a reactive manner. Organized collective efforts at the community level

to deal with issues of safety and with the conditions of the neighborhood seem insufficient in light of its complexity, and were largely unknown to the parents who participated in this study. At the individual level, residents of Harlem developed everyday strategies that reflected their knowledge of the neighborhood and what is happening there. This knowledge helped them to draw the limits of what they could do, where they can go, and when. They were also critical in the ways that the state and official authorities (e.g. government, police) dealt with their community. There was a sense of distrust of official institutions in general, that attests to the fact that those institutions had created a history of neglect and lack of concern towards their community. In this regard, their safety in general, and that of public space in particular, had to be negotiated individually on an everyday basis due to the lack of official institutions that had dealt with the structural conditions of the neighborhood from a respectful and truly concerned manner. Largely out of need, they relied on what the government and institutions such as the Central Park Conservancy could offer them: a well manicured and exquisitely landscaped environment. Under the deteriorating circumstances in the contiguous landscapes, the space The Central Park Conservancy and the Department of Parks and Recreations has created in the West 110th street playground is an oasis. But this oasis only exists in Central Park.

The strategies deployed by the respondents are varied and often included a combination of practices. Their journeys through these landscapes of abandonment and neglect were orchestrated in rhythms of use and avoidance that depended on identifying elements of the physical environment based on their potential for safety or lack thereof. Likewise, there was an identification of social elements, people and situations, that were assessed and measured according to the degree of danger they represented.

8.3- Ideology of extinction by neglect

According to Zukin (1991) "public value suggests that there is an irreducible minimum balance that should be maintained between natural and social forces in a landscape -- between built and unbuilt spaces or new and old construction" (p.273). This balance is lacking in a neighborhood like Harlem where so much of the landscape and infrastructure is deteriorated. The contrast between a landscape such as Central Park and that of Harlem is striking. Juxtaposed to a well manicured park is dilapidation. This is the physical expression of an ideology of extinction through neglect on the part of both the private and public sector. The slow, decaying process of the lack of attention to Harlem's physical infrastructure, provision of services, along with decreasing opportunities for education and employment for Harlem's residents, all collide into what

could be understood as a desire for extinction on the part of official institutions. Harlem has invisible walls that contain and alienate its African-American and Latino population from the rest of the city. These remarks might be considered an extreme reading into the ideology of public space provision. Harlem is not a monolithic neighborhood; attempts at changing the conditions are incipient but present. Several community organizations address the concerns of public safety and try to provide alternative safe spaces for children. Two examples of these collective efforts are the Safe Haven Program and the Harlem Hospital Children Injury Prevention Project.

For the physical environment to be shaped by ideological assumptions is not a recent manifestation, and can be traced through the change of physical forms as they reflect the hegemonic practices of dominant groups and the response to these by those affected. During the beginning of this century, the Reform movement in the Progressive era, focused on the need to organize play for the assimilation and betterment of poor immigrant children. Changes in the physical environment such as the creation of playgrounds were justified with child development theories that emphasized the importance of play, the danger of street play, and the lack of supervision of the children's play activities. During this period, the government's involvement in the provision of play facilities and activities also increased. Emphasis was placed

then on order and efficiency. In particular, efficiency is an element that is increasingly present in contemporary arrangements in the role of the government and private organizations for the maintenance and operations of public spaces. Public disinvestment and budget cuts had a direct impact on the maintenance and operation of public space (including playgrounds), and the principle of efficiency masks an ideology of extinction towards large segments of the population and large areas of the physical environment. Even though the private sector, as represented in public-private partnerships, increasingly fills in the void left by the absence of governmental provisions of public services, there is no space created for the protection of the public good outside private interests or common efforts to salvage them. Included in these physical areas of neglect are public spaces and playgrounds in the neighborhood I studied. The lack of public investment in the maintenance and operations of these 'spaces for all' only points at an ideology of extinction in which the concerns and efforts from Mayor Giuliani's "quality of life" campaign seem to stop in the downtown areas developed for consumption, tourism and for the protection of privileged residents. In Harlem the "quality of life" campaign has not arrived and most public spaces remain substandard in terms of safety and lacking badly needed maintenance.

When the conditions of the physical environment are neglected and deteriorated, and the social landscape is to the point of extinction because of lack of governmental intervention, safety is an issue that particularly stands out. Especially in a neighborhood like Harlem, criminality and the fear of crime are generalized stereotypes. Even though criminal activity is present in Harlem, the fear of crime functions as an ideological mechanism that contributes to the marginalization of the community and the demonization of its residents. The effects of urban restructuring in the shift from a manufacturing to a service-based economy, the lack of employment opportunities for a large sector of Harlem's population due to this shift in the New York economy and the institutionalized racism still rampant in many arenas of government and business, the lack of private and public investment in the neighborhood, and the lack of governmental attention to the provision of services and improvement initiatives, all contribute to the social and spatial segregation of Harlem. These structural factors help explain why Harlem and its residents have to live under these conditions while New York City occupies such a commanding role in the global economy. Juxtaposed to sites of global financial transactions and movement of large liquid capital in this advanced First World city, Harlem still remains a 'Third World' neighborhood along with other neighborhoods in other boroughs in New York City. The lack of effective measures from the government and the private sector are

largely the reasons for Harlem's conditions. Criminality and the fear of crime only help to mask these issues and to divert attention from these structural causes, to blame the individual, and to mystify an ideology of extinction by neglect. Criminality and the fear of crime are both articulated in a discourse of safety that also justifies the intense deployment of police surveillance in the community. Increasing police presence is a strategy perceived with suspicion by many Harlem residents, even though they too are interested in the eradication of the drug problem that affects their neighborhood.

Attempts at gentrification in Harlem have proven largely futile and in many cases do not necessarily offer an advantageous option for the community. Maintenance, aesthetics, and surveillance, which are key to gentrification efforts, all mask neighborhood needs, but at the expense of native residents' induced exodus. Tourism -- which seems to be an 'economic activity' in Harlem that fits into the consumption of leisure and into the city's increasing trend as a site that produces entertainment -- is external to the community in that the neighborhood generally does not profit directly from this industry (most tourists who visit Harlem do not step out of their buses and they mainly visit well known establishments). Still, part of what is commodified in the tourist industry of Harlem, is its abandonment and dilapidation as well as its history and Black culture.

8.4- Implications

The implications of this study are threefold: theoretical, methodological, and organizational. Theoretically, this study sheds light upon those social and physical aspects that affect perceptions of safety. As a complex phenomenon, urban public safety involves the orchestration of a diverse number of elements: individual, social, physical, and structural. Public space must feel and be safe in order to provide access to all. However, the meanings and forms in which a space could provide this quality are different. Public space could be perceived as safe when people use it and their strategies of appropriation allow them to navigate through it unharmed. Another manner in which public space could be perceived as safe is when a space is well maintained, has visual access, and constituencies are engaged in positive activities. In addition, public space can be perceived as safe when there is an explicit effort at the community level that provides constituencies with a sense of ownership and control over it. Therefore the context where a public space is located also affects how safe it is perceived to be. For public spaces do not exist in a vacuum, they function in relation to other spaces, people, and circumstances. Further research in the area might include children's perceptions of public space in their neighborhood and of urban dangers.

Methodologically this study contributes to a better understanding of context when studying social and physical phenomena. Despite its relational character, for analytical purposes the playground was identified as a scale of analysis in addition to the area of the park where the playground is located and the adjacent neighborhood. The analysis of scales helped understand rhythms and patterns of usage as well as meanings and discourses about the playground's functioning as an urban public space and issues regarding the perception of safety there. Additional studies in this area might consider the analysis of visual images often used to describe relationships in space and the discourses and meanings that qualify these relationships. Such a study can shed light into better and more comprehensive ways of analyzing space as relational and socially produced. Specifically for post-occupancy evaluation studies that tend to limit their understanding of a setting's functioning to the analysis of setting use only, the importance of adding contextual factors seems essential to a comprehensive understanding of not only how a setting works but how a setting ought to work. From the perspective of the parents who participated in this study, if safety was to be considered in terms of their perception of the West 110th Street playground it would have been a limited account. While they considered it to be safe, when they were asked to compare it with other playgrounds in Central Park and in the Harlem neighborhood, their perceptions of the West 110th Street playground were relative. The context of the

conditions of the neighborhoods, areas of the city, and institutions that managed the operations of other playgrounds bears upon parents' perceptions of safety. Accordingly, parent users' and non-users', as well as managers' perceptions of safety pointed at the relevance of structural factors that shaped the conditions of Harlem neighborhood. But even their critical reading and awareness of social and economic factors has not contributed yet to a collective effort to improve services and resources in the area outside institutional initiatives which seem largely absent.

Organizationally and at the community level, the findings of this study suggest that community-based, collective initiatives to deal with children and safety are present, but many of the parents interviewed did not know about their existence. In terms of collective strategies for safer public spaces, community-based initiatives targeting women and children seem to be of timely importance.

Public safety at the West 110th Street playground is complex and this complexity is evident in the acknowledgment of contextual issues that affect the conditions from which parent users', non-users', and managers' perceptions of safety emerge. A complex situation requires complex solutions. This study shows that in order to take into consideration the safety concerns and issues voiced by respondents and improve public safety, not only in the West

110th Street playground but in other urban areas, an orchestration of contextual factors need to be addressed: structural, institutional, and agency factors.

8.4.1- Structural

Largely a theoretical consideration, the analysis of structural factors facilitates a reading of the urban landscape that helps understand its uneven character. It also contributes to demystifying the urban socio-spatial organization as natural, or taken-for-granted. Structural forces shape -- not accidentally -- the urban landscape as sites for the consumption of entertainment (such as Times Square), 'ghettos' and marginalized communities (such as Harlem), commercial and business areas (such as midtown Manhattan), and leisure spaces for active and passive recreation (such as Central Park). This spatial logic renders an uneven landscape characterized by class and racial tangent. In order to articulate actions and initiatives that include urban dwellers' concerns and issues regarding public safety there is also what I consider to be the need to develop analytical discourses that address structural issues from a critical perspective. This task is a shared responsibility between academicians and intellectuals and urban dwellers at large. The products of this endeavor should help shape institutional missions and policy.

8.4.2- Institutional

Public safety and access to public space is linked to past and present institutional practices. Institutions in general, and more specifically the Department of Parks and Recreation and The Central Park Conservancy, are the extensions through which structural forces operate in shaping the public physical environment and the behaviors allowed there. Affecting the policies of institutions seems a logical action to improve the conditions of areas affected by neglect. Regarding the neighborhood contiguous to the West 110th Street playground and one of the worst adversely affected areas of the city, Harlem's public spaces and public safety conditions could be improved if the boundaries with other neighboring public spaces were not so rigidly drawn. The startling difference between the maintenance of landscapes in Central Park to those of Harlem is largely based on the rigid boundary that separates these public spaces. If a notion of space as relational were to be assumed by the Department of Parks and Recreation and The Central Park Conservancy and adapted to the distribution of resources and allocation of services to public spaces in terms of maintenance and operation in Harlem, reasonable improvements could be obtained. A case in point was the initiative to redesign the Frederick Douglass Circle where The Central Park Conservancy, the Department of Parks and Recreation and community members participated in developing -- conceptually

and in terms of design -- a new spatial arrangement to that area of Manhattan, the Gate to Harlem. Even though this initiative might raise critical issues regarding the consequences of the beautification ,and the usual gentrification process that accompanies it, for many of the residents who participated in this initiative the re-design was seen as a welcomed change that not only could improve the aesthetics of the area but also attract more people and improve safety there. But most importantly, within this initiative there was the idea to link Central Park and Morningside Park in terms of the design components -- visually and spatially. Some of the suggestions involved adapting the theme of the elevated train that used to be at the northwest corner of the Frederick Douglass Circle in a design motif that would lead to Morningside Park. This suggestion was an inviting attempt to bring people to use Morningside Park, and as Jane Jacobs (1961) mentioned, as well as parent users and non-users who participated in this study, the presence of people engaged in positive activities attracts more people and is one of the most important components that improve safety in the urban environment. Even though this example might seem superficial in that it only addresses visual changes, similar institutional initiative that address issues such as maintenance and distribution of resources could be beneficial to neighborhoods like Harlem if these include a space for alternative counter-publics to

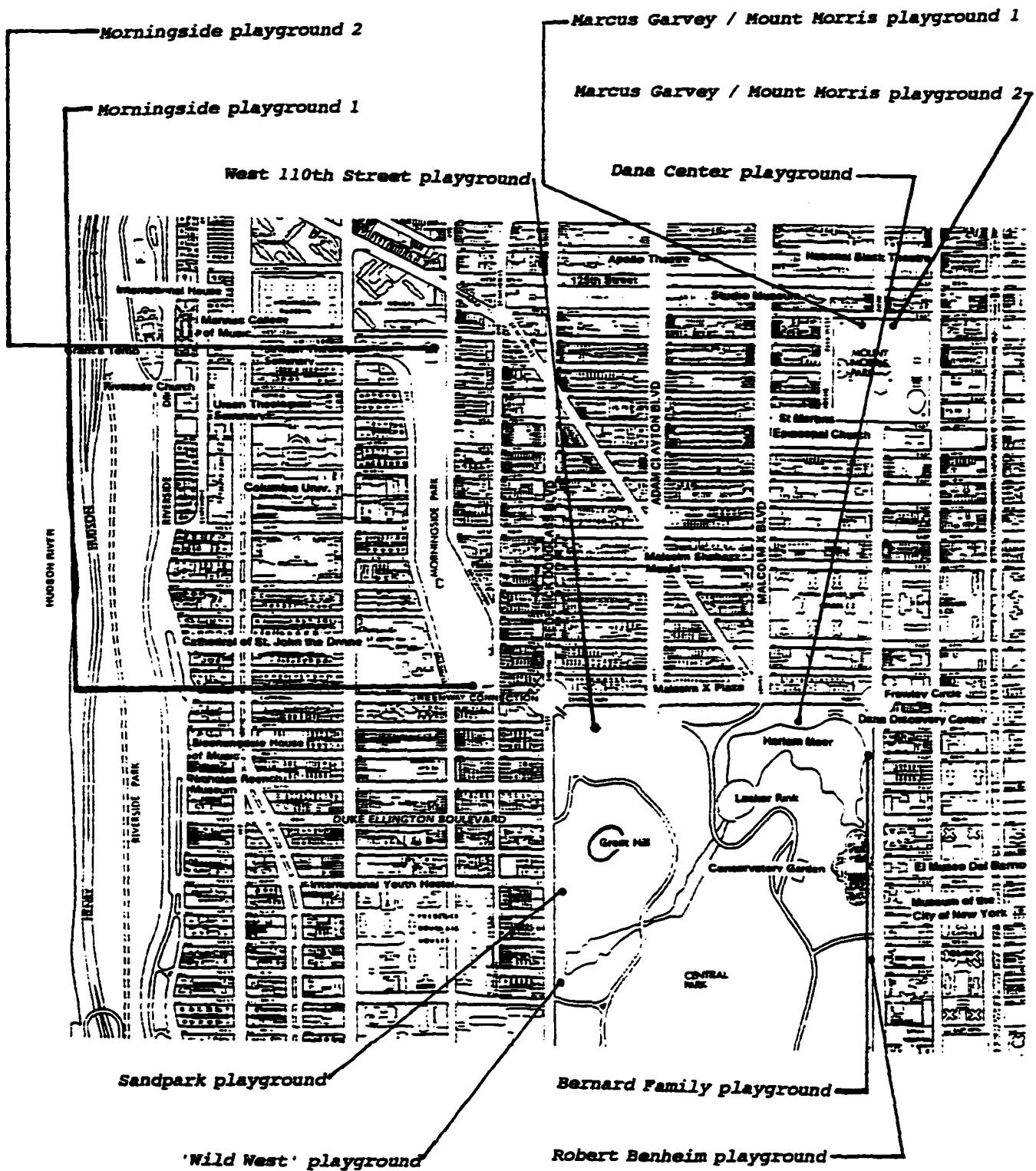
emerge that would include multiple opinions and recommendations from Harlem residents.

8.4.3- Agency

The most crucial element that could ensure the kind of public safety in public space desired by neighborhood residents is their active participation in the transformation of the physical environment and the uses it should foster. For the neighborhood contiguous to the West 110th Street playground, collective initiatives aimed at transforming safety in that area of the park and the neighborhood were largely absent. Even though parents acknowledged for instance, the need to eradicate drugs as a means to improve safety there, they did not mention community-based organizations that dealt with safety issues in that area. One traditional way in which this kind of information could be disseminated is through the playground bulletin board. The only information posted there were the rules and regulations for playground use. Collective initiatives that can warrant the kind of safety parents expect for themselves and for their children could be articulated through links between community activists and residents. Posting information on playgrounds' bulletin boards about activities that attract different constituencies such as those recommended by parents themselves (for example, adult and children gardening in the landscapes next to the West 110th Street playground), could

serve as both a way of improving safety there through positive activities and a way of creating an environment where collective initiatives could emerge. The bulletin boards as well as collective activities developed in the playground could also be a forum to learn about similar or different community based efforts from other groups in the neighborhood whose main aim is to improve public safety in Harlem. Indeed when the improvement of public space safety for Harlem residents is achieved, other equally important structural changes could follow suit.

APPENDIX 1: Map #1- Context Map, Upper Manhattan, The Central Park Conservancy (1994)



APPENDIX 2
User Instrument

User Interview

Date: _____
Time of day: _____
Day of the week: _____

Dear Respondent:

I am a student in the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The purpose of this interview is to understand your use of the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park. The information provided will be anonymous. Your name will not be used in anything written up. This interview will take approximately an hour to complete. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and at any time you can choose not to continue the interview. You can choose not to answer a question. If you have any questions or comments please let me know. If you wish to obtain further information regarding the purpose of this study, you could contact Prof. Cindi Katz at (212)642-2568.

I will start, by first asking you general questions about this playground and its equipment. I will also ask you questions about you and the child(ren) whom you bring to the playground.

1- How often do you come to this playground?

2- Approximately, for how long have you been coming to the playground?

3- How long do you usually stay when you visit this playground?

4- Do you come alone or with someone else?

4a- With whom do you come to this playground? (Probe: With whom else do you come to the playground?)

4a- Do you come here with the same people always (i.e. children, relatives)?

1. Yes ____ 2. No ____

5- What is your relationship to the child(ren) that you usually bring to the playground? Continue survey only if relationship is mother, father, guardian or person that is responsible for child, either that child(ren) live with she(he) or legal guardian. [In separate sheet record other person than mother, father or legal guardian.]

1. mother: ____ 10. brother ____
2. father: ____

3. uncle: _____ 11. Other: (please specify) _____
 4. aunt: _____
 5. grandmother: _____
 6. grandfather: _____
 7. nursemaid: _____
 8. baby-sitter: _____
 9. sister _____

6- Why do you come to this playground?

7- When do you prefer to use this playground (i.e. time of day, day of week)? Why?

8- Is there anything that you like about this playground?
Explain

9- Is there anything you do not like about this playground?
Explain

10- What do you think about the following physical qualities or conditions of this playground:

1. Cleanliness (Is it clean ?)
2. Fence (What do you think about the fence around and in the playground?)
3. Surface (What do you think about the surface it has under the equipment?)
4. Playground equipment (4a- What kind of equipment your child(ren) likes the most?; 4b. What do you think about the equipment colors; 4c- what do you think about the shape of the playground; 4d. age group that it is designed for?)
5. Location (What do you think of the location of the playground?)

11- Are there advantages to this playground? Explain

12- are there any problems in this playground?

Now I would like to ask you about playgrounds in general and other playgrounds that you might visit.

13- What factors are most important to you when you decide to visit a playground?

14- Do you use other playgrounds in your neighborhood?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 14a, 14b)
2. No ____ (If not, why not?; then go to 15)

14a- What other playgrounds do you use in your neighborhood?;

14b- How often do you use these playgrounds?

Playgrounds:	How often do you use them?
1-	
2-	
3-	
4-	
5-	

15- How do you compare these other playgrounds in your neighborhood with this playground?

15a- How do you compare this playground to the others in terms of safety?

16- Do you use other playgrounds in Central Park?
1. Yes ____ (Go to 16a, 16b) 2. No ____ (Probe: Why not?)

16a- What other playground in Central Park do you use?

16b- How often do you use these playgrounds?

17- How would you compare these other playgrounds in Central Park with this playground, in terms of safety? (For those who consider other playgrounds safer, Why do you consider them to be safe?) (Probe: Do you feel safer in other playgrounds than this one? Explain your answer.)

I would like to ask you now some questions about your children and safety.

18- How many children do you have?

18a- How many girls and how many boys?

18b- What is their age?

18c- How far outside your home, do you allow your child to play without adult supervision?

18d- At what age do you allow your child(ren) to play outside by him(her)self?

Children:	Sex:	Age:	How far play:	Age allow play outside:
1	F	M		
2	F	M		
3	F	M		
4	F	M		
5	F	M		
6	F	M		
7	F	M		

19- Do you allow any of your children to come to this playground without adult supervision?

If yes, do you give them any special instructions for their safety?

If not, Why you do not allow your children to come to this playground without adult supervision?

20- What (safety) instructions, if any, do you give your child(ren) when going outside by him(her)self?; with other kids?; other members of your family?; or to school?;

20a- Do you give different safety instructions to your kid(s) when he(she) goes out by him(her)self than when going out with other kids?; adults?

20b- Do you give different instructions to your daughter(s) from those you give to your son(s)? If yes, why?

Now, I would like to ask you about safety in the playground, this area of Central Park where the playground is located, and in its surrounding neighborhood.

21- Briefly tell me what you did today when you came into the playground. Begin the story from where you usually come from when visiting this playground, describe the things you see and/or look for, and your feelings about safety in the neighborhood, this area of the park and the playground as you are passing by them.

22- How would you describe the neighborhood where the playground is located?

23- Is there anything that makes you feel safe here? Explain your answer.

1. Yes ____ 2. No ____

24- Is there anything that makes you feel unsafe here? Explain your answer.

1. Yes ____ (Go to 25) 2. No ____ (Go to 26)

25- Do you do anything to feel safer in this playground?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 25a) 2. No ____ (Go to 25b)

25a- What do you do to feel safer in this playground?

25b- Has your child(ren) been injured in this playground?; in other playgrounds?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 25c) 3. No ____ (Go to 26)

25c- Could you please describe the injury that your child(ren) has suffered in this and in other playgrounds?

For respondents who feel unsafe in playground:

26- Is this the only place where you feel unsafe in the park?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 26a) 2. No ____ (Go to 26b)

26a- In what other places in the park do you feel unsafe? (Why do you feel unsafe there?)

26b- In what other places in the park do you feel unsafe? (Probe: Why do you feel unsafe there?)

27- Is this the only place that you feel unsafe in your neighborhood?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 27a) 2. No ____ (Go to 27b)

27a- In what other places in your neighborhood do you feel safe?

27b- Are there other places you feel unsafe in your neighborhood?; If yes, what are they? (Probe: Why do you feel unsafe there?)

28- Are there any improvements that would make you feel safer in this area of Central Park?; in the playground?

29- Do you consider the neighborhood near this playground to be safe?

1. If yes, why?
2. If not, why not?(Go to 29a)

29a- Are there any changes that would make you feel safer in the neighborhood where the playground is located?

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about playground maintenance and management.

30- What do you consider is the most important purpose (or role) of the playground?

31- Do you know what are the rules and regulations for the use of the playground?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 31a, 31b) 2. No ____ (Go to 32)

31a- Could you describe what these rules are?

31b- What do you think about these rules?

32- How important is it for you to have access to playgrounds for your children?;

32a- Do you feel that a playground is a necessity?; a right?; a privilege?

33- Have you noticed any changes in the playground since you began coming to the playground?; If yes, what changes have you noticed?

34- What do you consider is the purpose of a public park?

I would like to ask you now some information about yourself.

35- In what year were you born? _____ (4 digits)

36- Gender: 1. Female ____ 2. Male ____

37- How do you classify yourself in terms of ethnic background or race? (Probe: Where do your ancestors come from?):

1- African American: ____
 2- White: ____
 3- Hispanic: (Please specify if Puertorrican, Dominican, Cuban, Mexican, Peruvian, etc.) _____
 4- Other: _____

38- Where were you born? _____

39- What are the nearest cross streets to your residence?
 1- _____ St.

2- St.

40- In what neighborhood do you live? (What are the boundaries of the area you call your neighborhood? Probe for streets.)

41- How long have you been living in this neighborhood?
_____ years.

42- Are you employed?; If yes, what is your occupation?

43- Have you ever been a victim of a crime?

1. Yes _____ (Go to 43a, b) 2. No _____

43a- Of what crimes have you been a victim?

43b- Where have you been a victim of a crime?

44- Has a close friend or relative of yours being a victim of crime?

1. Yes _____ (Go to 44a, b) 2. No _____

44a- What kind of crime has your friend or relative been a victim?

44b- Where has a friend and/or relative being a victim of a crime?

45- Is there anything you would like to add about the topics we have been discussing?

Thanks for participating in this interview.

APPENDIX 3
Non-User Instrument

Non-user Interview

Date: _____
Time of day: _____
Day of week: _____

Dear Respondent:

I am a student in the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The purpose of this interview is to understand why you do not use of the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park. The information provided will be anonymous. Your name will not be used in anything written up. This interview will take approximately half an hour to complete. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and at any time you can choose not to continue the interview. You can choose not to answer a question. If you have any questions or comments please let me know. If you wish to obtain further information regarding the purpose of this study, you could contact Prof. Cindi Katz at (212)642-2568.

I will start, by first asking about your general impressions of the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park. I will also ask you questions about you and your child(ren)'s use of playgrounds in general.

1- Have you been to the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park? [Show picture of playground.](If respondent answers that she(he) has been in the playground only once or that she(he) has passed-by, and/or if the person has been to the playground a few times before but does not use it any longer, continue the interview.)

2- Why you do not visit more often the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park?

3- What factors are most important to you when you decide to visit a playground?

4- Do you use other playgrounds in your neighborhood?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 5a,b) 2. No ____ (If not, why not?;
then go to 17)

5a- What other playgrounds do you use in your neighborhood?

5b- How often do you use these playgrounds?

Playgrounds:	How often do you use them?
1-	
2-	
3-	
4-	
5-	

6- With whom do you go to the playgrounds in your neighborhood?

7- Do you go there with the same people always (i.e. children, relatives)?

1. Yes ____ 2. No ____ (With whom else you go to these playgrounds?)

8- What is your relationship to the child(ren) that you usually bring to the playground(s)? (Continue interview only if relationship to child(ren) is that of the mother, father, legal guardian or person responsible for children.)

1. mother: ____ 10. brother ____
 2. father: ____ 11. Other: (please specify) ____
 3. uncle: ____
 4. aunt: ____
 5. grandmother: ____
 6. grandfather: ____
 7. nursemaid: ____
 8. baby-sitter: ____
 9. sister ____

9- Why do you go to that (those) playgrounds?

10- When do you prefer to use those playground(s) (i.e. time of day, day of week)? Why?

11- Is there anything that you like about that (those) playground(s) design? (Probe: What kind of equipment your child(ren) like the most?; What do you think about the equipment colors?; what do)

12- What you do not like about that (those) playground(s)?

13- What do you think about the following physical conditions about the playground(s) you visit in your neighborhood:

1. Cleanliness (Is it clean ?)
 2. Fence (Does it have a fence? In what conditions is the fence?)

3. Surface (What kind of surface it has under the equipment?)

4. Playground equipment (What kind of equipment has the playground?)

5. Location (Do you like where the playground is located? Why?)

14- What do you think are the advantages of that (those) playground(s)?

15- What do you think are the problems in that (those) playground(s)?

16- How safe do you consider that (those) playgrounds are? Why?

17- What do you do to feel safer in that (those) playgrounds?

Now I would like to ask you about playgrounds in Central Park that you might visit.

18- Do you use other playgrounds in Central Park?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 19a,b) 2. No ____ (Probe: Why not?) (Go to 22)

19a- What other playground in Central Park do you use?; 16b- How often do you use these playgrounds?

Playgrounds:	How often do you use them?
1-	
2-	
3-	
4-	
5-	

20- How safe do you consider that (those) playgrounds are?;

20a- Why do you consider them to be safe?

21- What do you do to feel safer in that (those) playgrounds?

I would like to ask you now a little bit more about your children and safety.

22- How many children do you have?

22a- How many girls and how many boys?

22b- What is their age?

22c- How far outside your home, do you allow your child to play without adult supervision?

22d- At what age do you allow your child(ren) to play outside by him(her)self?

Children:	Sex:	Age:	How far play:	Age allow play outside:
1	F M			
2	F M			
3	F M			
4	F M			
5	F M			
6	F M			

23- Do you allow any of your children to come to this playground (northwest corner of Central Park) without adult supervision?

If yes, do you give them any special instructions for their safety?

If not, Why you do not allow your children to come to this playground ?

24- What (safety) instructions, if any, do you give your child(ren) when going outside by him(her)self?; with other kids?; other members of your family?; or to school?;

24a- Do you give different safety instructions to your kid(s) when he(she) goes out by him(her)self than when going out with other kids?; adults?;

24b- Do you give different instructions to your daughter(s) from those you give to your son(s)? If yes, why?

25- Has your child(ren) been physically injured in these or other playgrounds? (What kind of injury has your child(ren) suffered?

Now, I would like to ask you about safety in the playground at the northwest corner, the area of Central Park where the playground is located, and its surrounding neighborhood.

26- Is there anything that makes you feel unsafe there? Explain your answer.

1. Yes ____ (Go to 28)

2. No ____ (Go to 27)

27- Are there any other places in the park that make you feel unsafe? Explain answer.

For respondents who feel unsafe in playground:

28- Is that the only place where you feel unsafe in the park?

1. Yes ____ 2. No ____

28a- In what other places in the park do you feel unsafe?
(Why do you feel unsafe there?)

28b- In what other places in the park do you feel unsafe?
(Probe: Why do you feel unsafe there?)

29- Are there any improvements that would make you feel safer in this area of the park?

30- How would you describe the neighborhood where the playground is located?

31- Do you feel safe in this neighborhood? Explain your answer.

1. Yes ____ (Go to 33) 2. No ____ (Go to 32)

For respondents who feel unsafe in the neighborhood:

32- Is this the only place that you feel unsafe in your neighborhood?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 32a) 2. No ____ (Go to 32b)

32a- In what other places in your neighborhood do you feel unsafe?

32b- Are there other places you feel unsafe in your neighborhood?; If yes, what are they? (Probe: Why do you feel unsafe there?)

33- Are there any improvements that would make you feel safer in this neighborhood?

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about playground maintenance and management.

34- What do you consider is the most important purpose (or role) of the playground?

35- Do you know what are the rules and regulations for the use of playgrounds?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 35a, 35b) 2. No ____ (Go to 36)

35a- Could you describe what these rules are?

35b- What do you think about these rules?

36- How important for you is to have access to playgrounds for your children?

36a- Do you feel that a playground is a necessity?; a right?; a privilege?

37- What do you consider is the purpose of a public park?

I would like to ask you now some information about yourself.

38- In what year were you born? _____ (4 digits)

39- Gender: 1. Female ____ 2. Male ____

40- How do you classify yourself in terms of ethnic background or race? (Probe: Where do your ancestors come from?):

1- African American: ____

2- White: ____

3- Hispanic: (Please specify if Puertorrican, Dominican, Cuban, Mexican, Peruvian, etc.) _____

4- Other: _____

41- Where were you born? _____

42- What are the nearest cross streets to your residence?

1- St.

2- St.

43- In what neighborhood do you live? (What are the boundaries of the area you call your neighborhood? Probe for streets.)

44- How long have you been living in this neighborhood?
_____ years.

45- Are you employed?; If yes, what is your occupation?

46- Have you ever been a victim of a crime?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 46a, b) 2. No ____

46a- Of what crimes have you been a victim?

46b- Where have you been a victim of a crime?

47- Has a close friend or relative of yours being a victim of crime?

1. Yes ____ (Go to 47a, b) 2. No ____

47a- What kind of crime has your friend or relative been a victim?

47b- Where has a friend and/or relative being a victim of a crime?

48- Is there anything you would like to add about the topics we have been discussing?

Thanks for participating in this interview.

APPENDIX 4

Guide for playground observations

The following is a guide for the playground observations. The observations however, will be written in the form of a text.

1- Time of day: _____

2- Day of week: Mon. _____ Tues. _____ Wed. _____ Thurs. _____
 Fri. _____ Sat. _____ Sun. _____

3- Users

3a) Gender (Female and male)

3b) Age groups / Toddlers _____
 Pre-adolescents _____
 Adolescents _____
 Young adults _____
 Adults _____

3c) Ethnicity

4- Total of people present in the playground, amount of time they spend in the playground

5- Equipment (i.e. equipment used, wear and tear of equipment)

6- Safety issues (i.e. accidents, dangerous situations, vandalism)

7- Cleanliness (i.e. presence of garbage or other debris)

8- Main activities

9- Behaviors (i.e. play, social interactions)

10- Events and situations

APPENDIX 5
Manager Instrument

Manager Interview

Date: _____
Time of day: _____
Day of week: _____

Dear Respondent:

I am a graduate student at the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The purpose of this interview is to understand the management and use of the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park. The information provided will remain anonymous. Your name will not be used in anything written up. This interview will take approximately an hour to complete. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can choose not to continue the interview. You can choose not to answer a question. If you have any questions or comments please let me know. If you wish to obtain further information regarding the purpose of this study, you could contact Prof. Cindi Katz at (212)642-2568.

First, I would like to ask you some basic questions about yourself and the organization in which you work.

1- Institution / organization:

- 1- Central Park Conservancy _____
- 2- Department of Parks _____
- 3- Community Organization (specify) _____

2- Occupation:

- 1- Chief of landscape architects: _____
- 2- Landscape architect: _____
- 3- Assistant landscape architect: _____
- 3- Administrator: _____
- 4- Director of governance and community outreach: _____
- 5- Park planner: _____
- 6- Park ranger: _____
- 7- Park manager: _____
- 8- Park captain: _____
- 9- Community organization representative: _____
- 10- Other (specify): _____

3- How long have you been working in the institution/organization?

4- Please describe your responsibilities.

5- For you, what is the most valuable aspect of your responsibilities?

6- What do you consider is the purpose of a public park?

In what follows I would like to ask you about the background of the organizations that manage the playground under study at the northwest corner of Central Park.

Organizational structure:

- 7- Why was the Central Park Conservancy formed?
- 8- Has it changed over time?
- 9- How would you explain the partnership of the Central Park Conservancy and Department of Parks and Recreation?
- 10- How are responsibilities divided between the two agencies (CPC and Departments of Parks and Recreation) in terms of the management of Central Park?; in terms of the management of the playground at the northwest corner?
- 11- How did the Playground Captains Committee became involved with the management of the northwest corner playground?
- 12- What do you consider to be the role of Central Park Conservancy?; the Department of Parks and Recreation?; the playground captains committee involvement with the northwest corner playground?
- 13- Are there any problems in the management of the area of Central Park where the playground is located?; which ones are more common?
- 14- In which way do you think the management of that area of Central Park could be improved?
- 15- In what ways, if any, do you consider this partnership to be successful?
- 16- In what ways, if any, do you consider this partnership needs improvement?

Now, I will like to ask you questions related to the area of the park where the playground is located, the northwest corner of the park, and its neighborhood. I would also like to ask you about safety issues.

Playground

- 17- What do you know about the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park?

18- What do you think is the purpose of playgrounds in general?; of the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park in particular?

19- How would you as a professional compare the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park to other playgrounds in the park?; to playgrounds in other neighborhoods?

20- What do you consider are the problems, if any, of the playground at the northwest corner of Central Park?

21- What do you consider to be the positive aspects, if any, of the playground at the northwest corner of the park?

Area of the Central Park where playground is located

22- What do you think about the area of Central Park where the playground is located?

23- In terms of safety, how would you describe this area of Central Park?

24- How does your organization deal with safety issues in that area of Central Park?

25- How are safety rules and regulations implemented?

26- From your own perspective, what other safety measures could be implemented in the future? in the playground?; in the area of the park?; elsewhere in Central Park?

Playground's adjacent neighborhood

27- Do you think the neighborhood that surrounds the playground affects the use of the playground?; In what ways?

28- In terms of safety, how would you describe the neighborhood adjacent to the playground?

29- What do you consider affects perceptions of safety the most, the location of the playground, the area of the park, or the neighborhood where the playground is located?; Are there any other things that affect the perception of safety, that you can think of?

Demographic information:

30- Gender: F M

31- Ethnicity (Check all that apply):

1- White: _____

2- African-American: _____

3- Hispanic: (specify) _____

4- Other: _____

32- Is there anything you would like to add about the topics we have been discussing?

Thanks for participating in this interview.

APPENDIX 6

Playground design safety and physical safety checklist

Dear Respondent:

I am a graduate student at the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The following is an interview and checklist to evaluate the playground design and physical safety for purposes of my dissertation. The information provided will remain anonymous. Your name will not be used in anything written up. This interview and checklist will take approximately half an hour to complete. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can choose not to continue the interview and checklist. You can choose not to answer a question. If you have any questions or comments please let me know. If you wish to obtain further information regarding the purpose of this study, you could contact Prof. Cindi Katz at (212)642-2568.

A- Playground design safety

- 1- Is the playground free from known documented hazards?
 - a) Is the spacing between adjacent activity-settings adequate?
 - b) Are the areas where activities take place designed to segregate children by age or developmental level?
 - c) Are any hazards found at those activity areas in the playground?
 - d) Is there a particular safety inspection program?
- 2- What do you think about the location of the playground?; What about the distance from the outside area? a) Is there an adequate boundary to separate children from the area outside the playground?
- 3- Does the design of the playground affect safety?
 - a) What about supervision and playground design?
 - b) Are any provisions made for security after-hours?
 - c) Are common playground accidents avoided by anything here?
 - d) Are there any hazard areas clearly marked?

B- Playground physical safety checklist

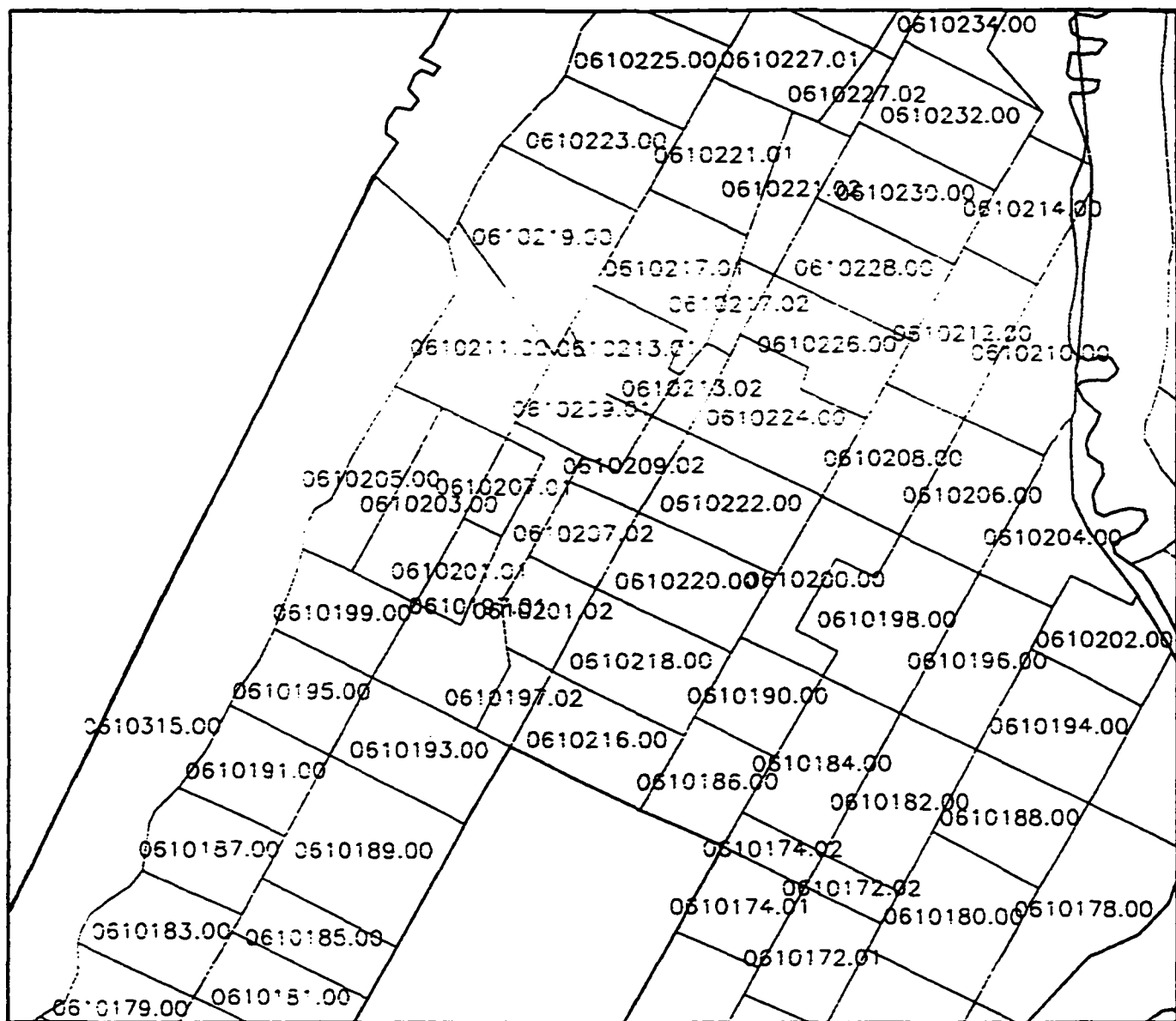
1- Grade segregation vs. integration	100%	66%	33%
0%			
2- Regular safety inspection	Annual	Bi-annual	
None			
3- Boundary with outside	Excellent		
Adequate			
Mediocre			

4- Supervisory facilitation	Supportive		
Neutral Negative			
5- After-hours supervision	Regular		De facto
None			
6- Spacing	na	Excellent	Adequate Unsafe
7- Mechanical pinch points	na	None	Yes
8- Exposed sharp edges	na	None	Yes
9- Dangerous protusions	na	None	Yes
10- Hard, heavy suspended elements	na	None	Yes
11- Unintentionally unstable elements	na	None	Yes
12- Hazard zone demarcation	na	None	Yes
13- Error friendly design	na	Excellent	Adequate Absent

APPENDIX 7: Designer Walkthrough & Interview

Date: _____

1. **RESPONDENT'S NAME:**
2. **OCCUPATION:**
3. **FUNCTION** (Describe role and activities with respect to the playground.) [Areas referred to in comments should be photographed.]
4. Description of the playground area and equipment
 - 4a. Physical description of the area where playground is located.
 - 4b. Description of playground equipment
5. **INTERVIEW CHECKLIST**
 - 5a. What is the process of re-designing a playground?
 - 5b. What do you think are the problems of this playground?
 - 5c. What do you think are the advantages that this playground offer to its users?
 - 5d. How is the safety and security in this playground?
 - 5e. What do you consider is the relationship of this playground to its surrounding neighborhood?
 - 5f. What do you think about the equipment in this playground?
 - 5g. What is the major problem of this playground?
 - 5h. What is the major success of this playground?
6. **OTHER COMMENTS**

APPENDIX 8: Map #2 - 1990 Census Tract Map

APPENDIX 9: Table 8-1990 Census Tract: Tract #193, Tract #197.02, Tract #216

	New York numbers:	City percen- tage:	"Tract" 193 County: NY numbers:	percen- tage:	"Tract" 197.02 County: NY numbers:	percen- tage:	"Tr 2 Cou num
Total population	7,322,564	(100%)	9,027	(100%)	1,414	(100)	7,
SEX	F: 3,892,195 M: 3,430,369	53% 46.5%	F: 4,122 M: 4,905	45.6% 54%	F: 728 M: 686	51% 48.5%	4, 3,
RACE P008 TOTAL POPULATION White Black	(7,322,564) 3,163,347 1,845,286				(1,414) 138 1,148	9.7% 81%	(7, 6,
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT Persons 25 years + & no high school diploma & bachelor's degree or higher	4,884,274 858,657 1,122,328	66.7% 21.7% 23%	6,058 894 1,662	14.7% 27.4%	1,065 218 340	75% 20.4% 31.9%	4, 1,
NATIVITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH / born in state of residence & born in state of residence Foreign born population Entered U.S. 1980 to 1990	5,239,633 2,082,931 953,449	74.2% 28.4% 45.7%	6,069 2,958 1,317	53.5% 32.7% 44.5%	1,184 230 89	58.2% 16% 38.6%	6 1
HISPANIC ORIGIN	1,786,705	24.4%	4,541	50%	115	8%	1
LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME Persons 5 years + Speak language other than English Speak Spanish	6,820,456 2,793,773 1,498,548	53.6% 22%	8,356 4,712 3,987	56% 47%	1,311 276 134	92% 21% 10%	6 1 1

1990 Census Tract: Tract #193, Tract #197.02,

	New York	City	"Tract" 193 County: NY		"Tract" 197.02 County: NY		"Tract" 216 County: NY	
	numbers:	percen- tage:	numbers:	percen- tage:	numbers:	percen- tage:	numbers:	percen- tages:
	7,322,564	(100%)	9,027	(100%)	1,414	(100)	7,604	(100)
	F: 3,892,195 M: 3,430,369	53% 46.5%	F: 4,122 M: 4,905	45.6% 54%	F: 728 M: 686	51% 48.5%	F: 4,346 M: 3,258	57% 42.8%
08	(7,322,564) 3,163,347 1,845,286				(1,414) 138 1,148	9.7% 81%	(7,604) 387 6,588	5% 86%
NT	4,884,274 858,657 1,122,328	66.7% 21.7% 23%	6,058 894 1,662	14.7% 27.4%	1,065 218 340	75% 20.4% 31.9%	4,517 1,164 447	59.4% 25.7% 9.9%
F f	5,239,633 2,082,931 953,449	74.2% 28.4% 45.7%	6,069 2,958 1,317	53.5% 32.7% 44.5%	1,184 230 89	58.2% 16% 38.6%	6,506 1,098 516	58.7% 14.4% 46.9%
90	1,786,705	24.4%	4,541	50%	115	8%	1,379	18%
n	6,820,456 2,793,773 1,498,548	53.6% 22%	8,356 4,712 3,987	56% 47%	1,311 276 134	92% 21% 10%	6,890 1,562 1,194	90% 22.6% 17%

APPENDIX 9: Table 8-1990 Census Tract: Tract #193, Tract #197.02, Tract #216

<i>Cont. Tracts Table</i>	New York numbers:	City percen- tage:	"Tract" 193 County: NY numbers:	percen- tage:	"Tract" 197.02 County: NY numbers:	percen- tage:	"T" 2 Con num
Total population	7,322,564	(100%)	9,027	(100%)	1,414	(100)	7
SEX	F: 3,892,195 M: 3,430,369	53% 46.8%	F: 4,122 M: 4,905	45.6% 54%	F: 728 M: 686	51% 48.5%	4 3
INCOME IN 1989 Median Household income Median Family income Per Capita income	\$29,823 \$34,360 \$16,281		\$24,426 \$23,365 \$11,813		\$30,000 \$27,625 \$18,399		\$1 \$1 \$1
POVERTY STATUS IN 1989 All persons for whom poverty status is determined Below poverty level	7,181,155 1,384,994	19.2%	9,015 2,662	29.5%	1,400 420	30%	7 2
GROSS RENT Total Housing Units Occupied housing units Unoccupied housing units Specified renter-occupied housing units Median rent (dollars)	2,992,169 2,819,401 172,768 2,008,714 \$496	6% 71.2%	4,228 3,818 410 3,351 \$404	10% 87.7%	831 649 182 411 \$316	28% 63%	3 2 2 \$

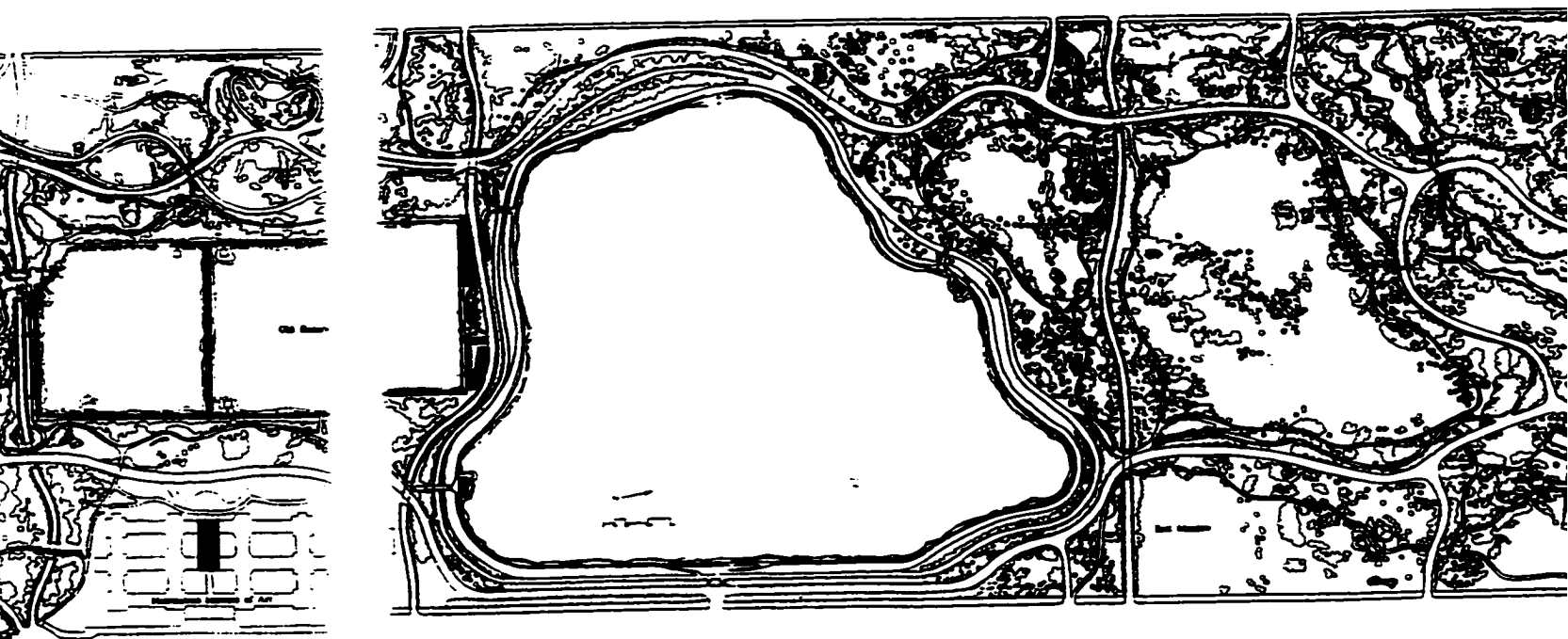
Table 8-1990 Census Tract: Tract #193, Tract #197.02,

Tracts Table	New York numbers:	City percentage:	"Tract" 193 County: NY numbers:	percentage:	"Tract" 197.02 County: NY numbers:	percentage:	"Tract" 216 County: NY numbers:	percentage:
1 population	7,322,564	(100%)	9,027	(100%)	1,414	(100)	7,604	(100)
SEX	F: 3,892,195 M: 3,430,369	53% 46.8%	F: 4,122 M: 4,905	45.6% 54%	F: 728 M: 686	51% 48.5%	F: 4,346 M: 3,258	57% 42.8%
IN 1989 household income family income poor income	\$29,823 \$34,360 \$16,281		\$24,426 \$23,365 \$11,813		\$30,000 \$27,625 \$18,399		\$12,609 \$15,868 \$7,370	
STATUS IN 1989 persons for whom status is determined poverty level	7,181,155 1,384,994	19.2%	9,015 2,662	29.5%	1,400 420	30%	7,478 2,940	39%
RENT renting Units renting housing units rented housing units renter-occupied units rent (dollars)	2,992,169 2,819,401 172,768 2,008,714 \$496	6% 71.2%	4,228 3,818 410 3,351 \$404	10% 87.7%	831 649 182 411 \$316	28% 63%	3,301 2,879 422 2,788 \$323	14% 96%

Appendix 10: Plan #1: Central Park's
Park Conservancy (1984)



: Central Park's Greensward Plan, The Central
84)



rd Plan, The Central



Appendix 11: Table 8 - The Central Park Conservancy Budget / The Central Park Conservancy Inc., June 30, 1996

ASSETS (in \$1,000)	1996	1995
Cash	\$ 347	5,304
Accounts receivable	3,558	1,522
Accrued interest receivable	72	28
Prepayments and other assets	80	113
Pledges receivable (note 4)	13,403	22,425
Investments (note 3)	42,033	23,479
Furniture and equipment, net (note 5)	484	304
TOTAL ASSETS	59,977	53,175
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	59,977	53,175

Note 1: Note 6/ Temporarily Restricted and Permanently Restricted Net Assets
Temporarily restricted net assets are available for the following purposes or periods at June 30, 1996 and 1995.

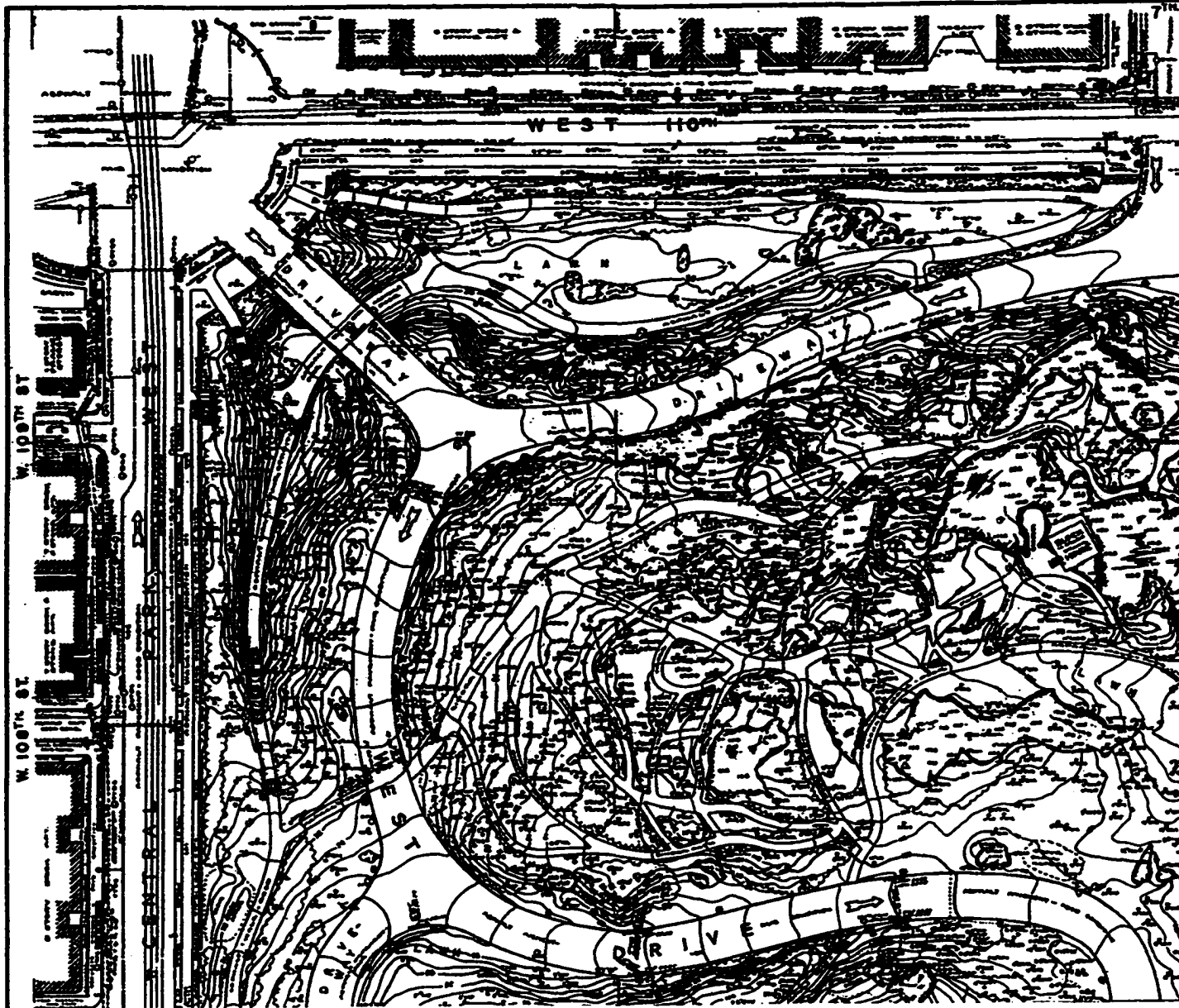
	<u>1996</u>	<u>1995</u>
Design and construction	\$24,426	25,308
Horticulture, maintenance and operations	6,717	5,749
Public programs	2,591	2,352
Future periods	<u>199</u>	<u>75</u>
Balance at end of year	\$33,933	33,484

Permanently restricted net assets are restricted to investment in perpetuity, the income from which is expendable to support the following purposes at June 30, 1996 and 1995.

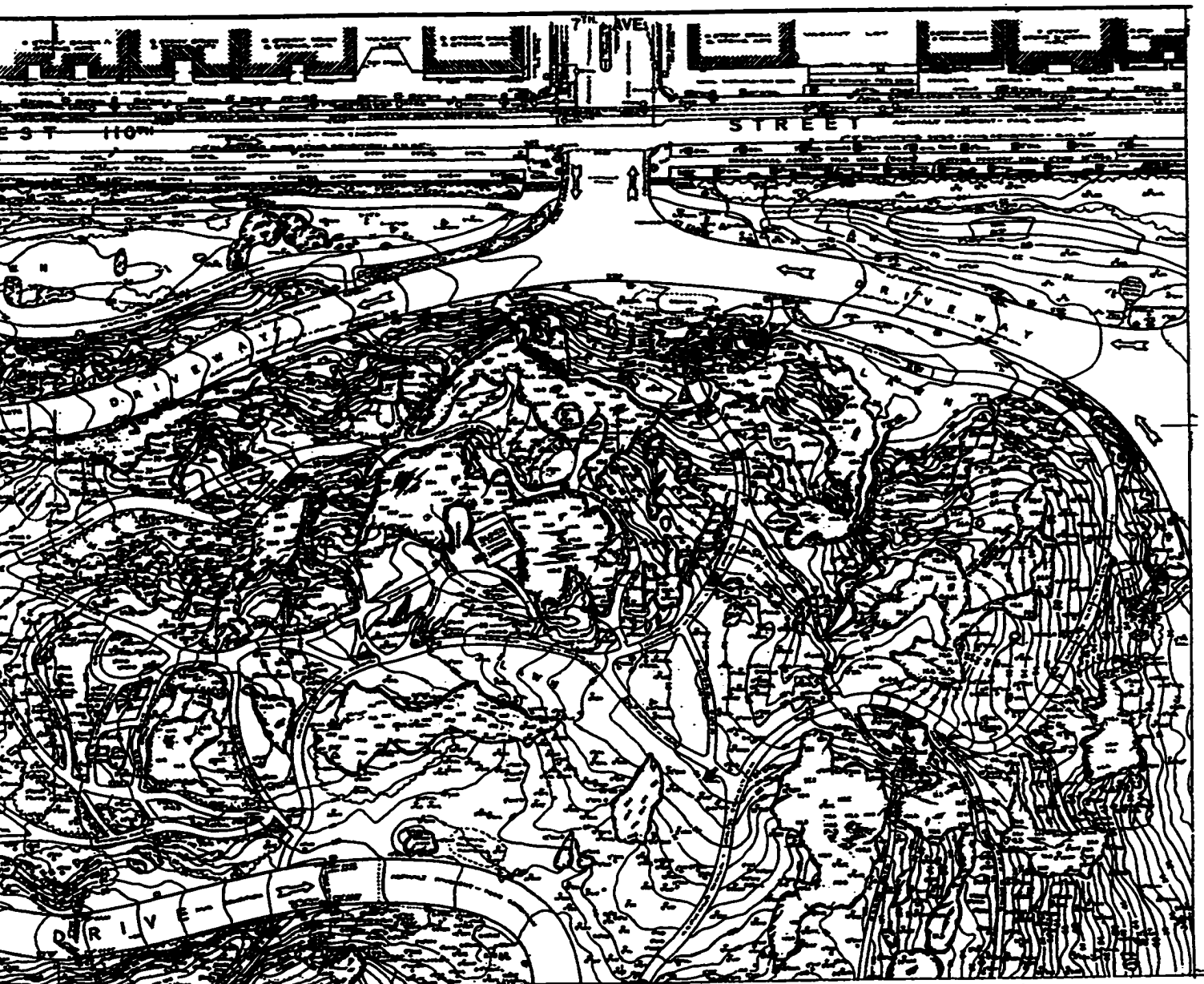
	<u>1996</u>	<u>1995</u>
Horticulture, maintenance, and operations	\$12,753	10,651
Public Programs	892	853
General Purposes	<u>4,042</u>	<u>3,363</u>
	\$13,155	\$10,617

Note 2: From The Central Park Conservancy, 1996, The Central Park Conservancy Annual Report.

Appendix 12: Plan #2 - Topographical map of Central Park's northwest corner, The Central Park Conservancy (1993).



al map of Central Park's
Conservancy (1993).



Appendix 13: Photo #6 - Sandpark playground, Central Park
(1998)



Playground, Central Park



Appendix 14: Photo #7 - 'Wild West' playground (Central Park,
1998)



ld West' playground (Central Park,



Appendix 15: Photo #8 - Bernard Family playground, Central Park (1998)



Family playground, Central

Appendix 16: Photo #9 - Robert Benheim playground, Central Park (1998)



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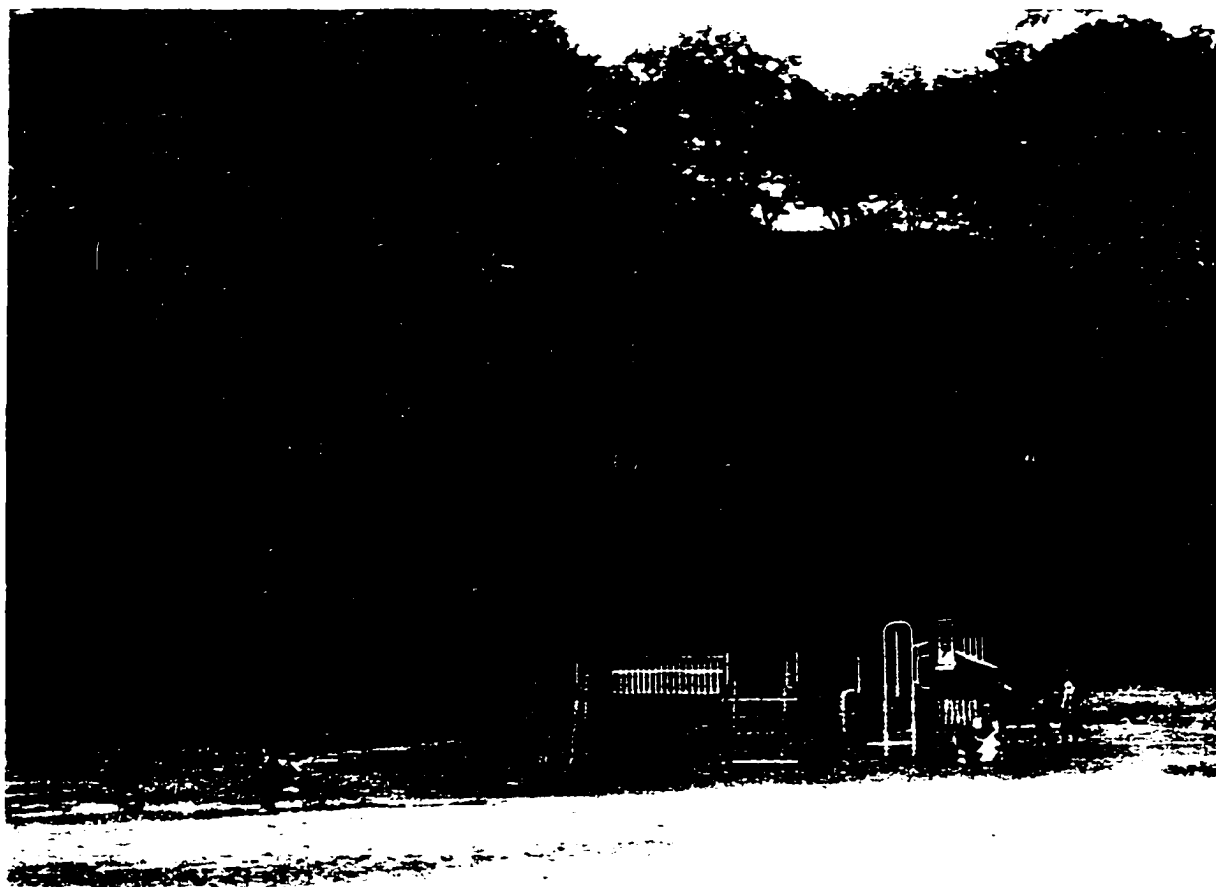
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#9 - Robert Benheim playground, Central

Appendix 17: Photo #10 - Morningside Park playground at 110th Street and Manhattan Avenue (1998)



ngside Park playground at 110th
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Appendix 18: Photo #11 - Morningside Park playground at 123rd
Street and Morningside Avenue



Morningside Park playground at 123rd
avenue



Appendix 19: Photo #12 - Marcus Garvey / Mount Morris Park
playground #1 at 124th Street between Morris Park West and
Madison Avenues



Marcus Garvey / Mount Morris Park
Street between Morris Park West and



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Appendix 20: Photo #13 - Marcus Garvey / Mount Morris Park
playground #2 at 124th Street between Morris Park and Madison
Avenues



- Marcus Garvey / Mount Morris Park
Street between Morris Park and Madison



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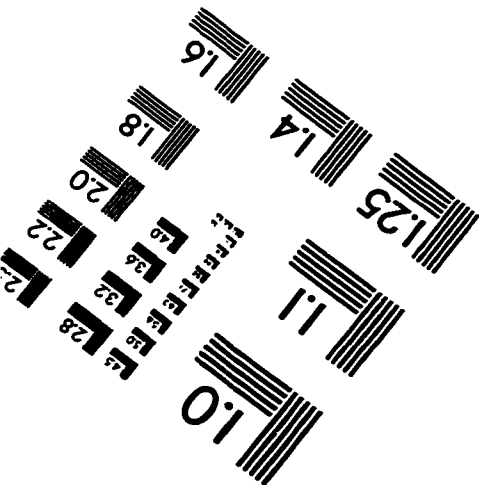
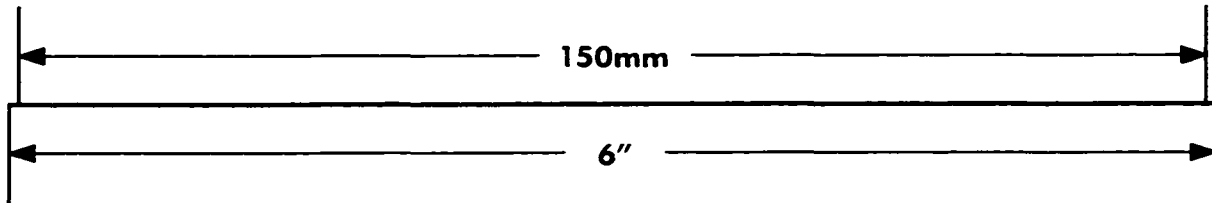
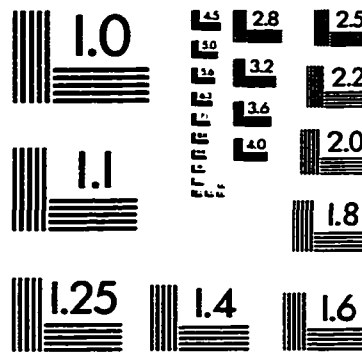
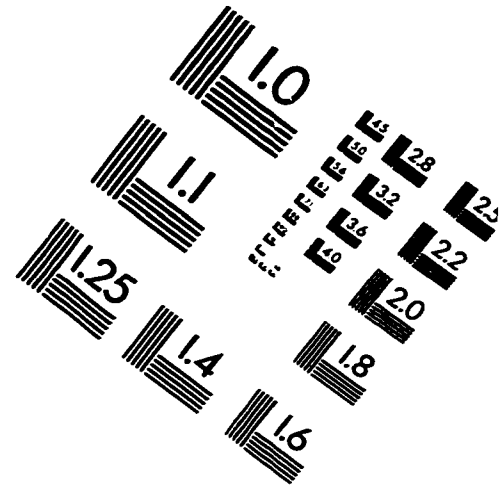
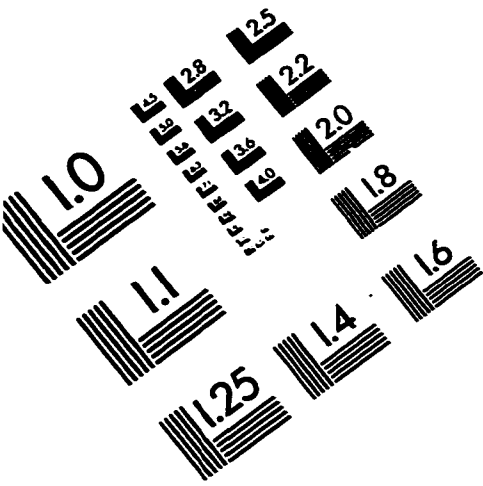
Autobiographical Statement

Julia R. Nevárez - de Jesús was born on January 21, 1964, in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, she grew up in Bayamón, a tropical suburb in the island. Daughter of Jorge L. Nevárez - del Valle and Reinalda de Jesús - Rivera, who always in the company of her siblings, Carmen, Lizzie, and Jorgito, friends, and other members of the extended family enjoyed leisure moments discovering the natural wonders of the island's landscape: the sea, the sun, and the mountains. She studied at Colegio La Milagrosa, Martínez Nadal Public Elementary School, and Papa Juan XXIII Public High School, always having good grades and participating in sports such as swimming and running. She was not too popular, therefore books and silence were her allies.

Her college years were spent at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras while listening to Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés, 'la nueva trova cubana' ('the new cuban music') when it was considered a dangerous form of communist brain-washing. During those years she began developing a particular interest for critical thinking and space accompanied by a respectful admiration for literature, languages, and visual art. Friendship was and remains a much valued relationship. She began travelling.

After completing her Bachelors Degree in Social Psychology, she entered the Environmental Psychology, Ph. D. Program at 23, and moved to the Graduate School Residence, West Hall, in Midtown Manhattan. While receiving a three year fellowship she completed most of her requirements and afterwards traveled to Africa: looking at life simply. At her return to New York she completed the remaining requirements for the Ph.D., acquired her Master in Arts in 1993, and her Masters in Philosophy in 1995 while working as a Social Science Research Consultant. She then earned the Dissertation Year Fellowship, transcribed the data for her dissertation and began writing while teaching Urban Studies and riding her red bicycle in Central Park. With the encouragement and companionship of family, friends, and Curuki -- her treasured cat -- she then completed her dissertation.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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