Environmental Justice and Urban Green Spaces:

The Case of Morningside Park in New York City

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Degree of Master of Science

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Abstract of Thesis

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Urban green spaces have positive impacts on human physical and mental health. They also support social ties, and strengthen community relations. Because of these benefits, urban green spaces are considered an environmental amenity, and an environmental justice issue. However, the research around urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue has thus far focused on distributive justice as measured by access to urban green spaces. Research on urban green spaces has rarely considered the two other aspects of environmental justice, which are recognition and respect, and participation in the decision making. This research aims to address this gap by investigating how environmental justice in the context of urban green spaces can be conceptualized when access is not a major factor. The research explores the specific case study of Morningside Park in New York City. Through archival research and semi-structured interviews, the research points to four factors that contribute to the role parks play in serving environmental justice. These factors are: history, institutional context, perceptions and use of the park. Rather than relating to the distributive aspect of environmental justice, these factors are analyzed through the aspects of recognition, and participation in the decision making. One recommendation is for future research to take these factors, as well as the other aspects of environmental justice, into account when studying urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue.

Keywords: Environmental Justice, Urban Green Space, Parks, Morningside Park, New York City

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1 Introduction

Urban green spaces have positive impacts on people's physical and mental health, as well as on their overall quality of life (Ulrich et al. 1991; Maas et al. 2006). They also create ecosystems in otherwise disturbed urban centers, which can be havens for migratory birds and animals, and can harbor endangered species and increase biodiversity (Kowarik 2011). In addition, they can provide ecosystem services, such as air filtration, contributing to reducing pollution in cities (Escobedo et al. 2011).

However, with the realization of the importance of urban green spaces, came the realization of the lack of equal access and distribution of urban green spaces in general, and parks in particular. This inequality in access can often be seen along racial, ethnic and socio-economic lines (Wolch et al. 2005; 2014). This has made access to parks an environmental justice issue, and some cities such as Berlin currently use access and proximity to green space as an indicator of environmental justice situation, and as a way to locate environmental justice communities. Other indicators of environmental justice communities include air quality, water quality, and sanitation (Berlin Senate Department of Urban Development and Housing 2015).

The conversation around urban green spaces and environmental justice has so far focused on the distributive aspect of environmental justice, and on physical access to urban green spaces. This does not deliver the full picture of green spaces as an environmental justice issue. While unequal access to green spaces is a problem that needs to be addressed, especially in large urban centers, such as New York City where there is little green space to begin with, environmental justice is not about access and distribution alone (Schlosberg 2004). More importantly, simply having access to urban green spaces in marginalized communities does not necessarily mean that a green space is serving to achieve environmental justice in that community.

The aim of this research is to highlight, through a case study, factors aside from access which affect urban green spaces' ability to serve an environmental justice goal. By studying Morningside Park in northern Manhattan in New York City, I argue for a new approach to studying parks as an environmental justice issue, one that has so far not been applied, and one that challenges the dominant approach which investigates parks as an environmental justice issue primarily through access alone. The research will investigate how the factors of history, institutional context, perceptions, and uses of Morningside Park, come together to depict a complex relationship between this park and the theory of environmental justice. A picture that cannot be represented by access alone.

1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The aim of the research is to explore the history, institutional context, perceptions, and use of Morningside Park in the context of environmental justice. The research investigates two questions:

1. How is environmental justice conceptualized in a specific context where access may not be a central factor?
2. How does the history, institutional context, perceptions, and use of Morningside Park affect its role in achieving environmental justice for the Harlem community?

The objective of the research is to understand Morningside Park based on its history, geographical location, demographics, neighborhood relationships, financing, maintenance, and user perceptions from the analytical perspective of environmental justice. To achieve these aims and objectives, I conducted field research including interviews with different stakeholders in the park and the surrounding community. I then followed up and further investigated themes that came up in my interviews through archival research and document analysis, to present as holistic an

image about the circumstances and attitudes surrounding the park as possible. A more detailed description of the methods used and the research approach and design will be discussed in the methodology section

1.2 Outline

The following chapter of this thesis is the literature review and theoretical framework. This chapter will review the literature available on urban green spaces and environmental justice, under three subsections. The first will define what urban green spaces are, followed by an overview of the benefits of urban green spaces. The third section will define environmental justice theory, and discuss research on urban green spaces as an environmental issue. Throughout this chapter, issues particularly pertaining to Morningside Park will be highlighted. The third chapter will discuss the methods used in the research, similar literature that has used this methodology, and why these methods and Morningside as a case study were the best for the research problem.

Chapter four will introduce the park mainly by discussing its history, perceptions and use, as these themes and factors came up in interviews and from archival and document analysis. This chapter also introduces general information about the park, such as its design, the surrounding neighborhoods, and discusses some problems that face the park – all this still with relation to the main three factors of history, perceptions, and park use. Lastly, chapter five takes all that information, and draws important conclusions about Morningside Park and its relationship with environmental justice. This chapter will also discuss the implications of the results of this research on how we understand and how we study urban green space as an environmental justice issue.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction: Urban Green Spaces, People, and Environmental Justice

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the literary background for this research, and to show the gaps that this work contributes to. I will firstly define what urban green spaces are, followed by a more detailed review of the benefits of urban green space. The focus will be on health benefits, as well as impacts on social integration and community building. The following section establishes the connection between urban green spaces and environmental justice. I will give a history of environmental justice as a political movement, and a theoretical concept. I will then introduce the definition that this research adopts for environmental justice. It is important to introduce this definition as this represents the analytical framework through which my data is analyzed and understood. Lastly, I overview available research and literature discussing urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue.

I aim to highlight the research gap that this project contributes to. This is that research studying the importance of urban green spaces, as well as research discussing urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue, both predominantly approach the issue with a sole focus on access. This does not take into consideration the many other factors that affect green spaces once access is achieved, such as history, institutional context, perception, and use. All of which are factors that can affect the role of urban green spaces in serving environmental justice.

2.2 Defining Urban Green Spaces

The term ‘urban green space’ has no set definition that is universally agreed upon. These spaces can include anything from large urban, public parks such as Central Park in New York City, up to smaller, privately-owned community gardens, children playgrounds, and trees on the side of streets. While this research will be looking at one specific urban green space, which is a public park, I will introduce some broader definitions. The World Health Organization (WHO) report reviewing the evidence on urban green spaces and their health impacts adopts the European Urban Atlas definition of Green Urban Area as: “public green areas used predominantly for recreation such as gardens, zoos, parks, and suburban natural areas and forests, or green areas bordered by urban areas that are managed or used for recreational purposes” (WHO Regional Office for Europe 2017a, 3). The WHO’s report reviewing impact and effectiveness of interventions on health simplifies this definition to: “urban space covered by vegetation of any kind” including both private and public space (WHO Regional Office for Europe 2017b, 7).

In this literature review, I will be reviewing papers discussing urban green spaces regardless of the distinction between the public and private. I will be excluding papers that discuss open space that is not green space. The definition adopted here is the simplified WHO definition, that is any urban space with vegetation. This research project overall focuses on Morningside Park, which is a New York City public park.

2.3 Benefits of Urban Green Spaces

This section will establish why urban green spaces are important by giving an overview of their benefits for human users, starting with their health benefits. The research on urban green spaces and health is expansive and well established. Access and proximity to urban green spaces were found to have positive associations with improvement in overall physical health (Maas et al. 2006; de Vries et al. 2003; Mitchell and Popham 2007), reduced morbidity for many diseases (Maas et al. 2009a), improved mental health through stress recovery and restoration (Ulrich et al. 1991; Hartig et al. 2003; Roe and Aspinall 2011), buffering of stressful life events (van den Berg et al. 2010), reducing anger and aggression (Kuo and Sullivan 2001), and decreasing anxiety and mood disorder treatments (Nutsford et al. 2013).

Many of these studies found these associations strongest for marginalized and vulnerable populations, such as people of lower socioeconomic status, less educated people, the elderly, income-deprived people, and children (Maas et al. 2006; de Vries et al. 2003; Mitchell and Popham 2007; Maas et al. 2009a). This is significant to note as these groups of people are the ones often with unequal access to urban green spaces, and this is where urban green spaces become an environmental justice issue. I will discuss this in more detail in the section on environmental justice.

Another important benefit of urban green spaces, and one that is particularly relevant to Morningside Park, is the impact urban green spaces have on community building and social ties. One study found that for residents of public housing, increased levels of vegetation in common spaces increased their use, and predicted neighborhood social ties. The study concluded that increased greenery and stronger neighborhood social ties positively related to the sense of safety and adjustment that community members had. (Kuo et al. 1998). Additionally, use of urban green

spaces seems to play an important role in the social integration of older adults, and in the strength of their sense of community and social ties (Kweon et al. 1998). In fact, studies suggest that community building and social contact are some of the main mechanisms through which urban green spaces positively impact human health (Kweon et al. 1998; Maas et al. 2009b).

In New York City, Latino community gardens were studied in order to contribute to a debate that pitted community garden supporters against housing developers. The study concluded that the most important role of Latino community gardens is community development. One garden member said that the community garden "helps to keep the community tight" (Saldivar-tanaka et al. 2004, 408). Schmelzkopf (2002) wrote about this same conflict between housing developers and community gardens. She argues that ultimately this struggle is about the right to space, and the right to the city, between a profit-oriented government, supporting private enterprises, and the community-oriented gardens. The right to space and to land use is a very important issue for Morningside Park, especially in the institutional context around the park, and its relationship with Columbia University, which I will explore further in chapter four.

This section has illustrated that urban green spaces can have a positive impact on the physical and mental health of their users. They also have the potential to strengthen social ties, and bring communities together. However, while there is ample research on urban green spaces and the relationship to human health, the research exploring urban green spaces as community centers, and the benefits they offer communities seems to be sparse. This is a clear and important research gap that this research partially contributes to, by investigating Morningside Park as a community park that is significant to the Harlem community. The following section will explore urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue, by connecting issues such as the unequal access to benefits of green spaces to theories of environmental justice.

2.4 The Environmental Justice Framework and Urban Green Spaces

The purpose of this section is to introduce the concept of environmental justice, and to relate it to green spaces by overviewing the literature discussing urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue. I will first give a brief introduction of the history of the term 'environmental justice,' followed by indicating the definition I adopt as a theoretical framework. Having defined the term, I will move to discussing literature on urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue.

The purpose of giving a historical overview of environmental justice is to understand how research on parks fits within environmental movements. Particularly, to show how the environmental justice movement contributed to expanding the definition of environmentalism in a way that allows for discussions of race, class, culture and history – all of which are factors that are important in the discussion around Morningside Park.

2.4.1 Historical Introduction to Environmental Justice

It is difficult to pinpoint the birth of a movement, however, there is general agreement as to what gave birth to environmental justice. In 1978 in North Carolina, 30,000 gallons of PCB contaminated oil was illegally dumped along state roads. The State Department of Environment and Natural Resources in North Carolina pondered on how to deal with the now PCB contaminated soil, and eventually decided to build a dump to dispose of the contaminated soil in the rural town of Afton in Warren County. Testing to see if this site was compatible with EPA standards was only done *after* the site was chosen, and despite the site not meeting EPA standards, the EPA still approved the construction of the dump site. The community in the town and in Warren County was initially concerned about their property value, and the potential impacts on their health. They were also disturbed by the fact that out of all 93 sites considered for the dump, the chosen site had

the highest percentage of African Americans, and Warren County had the highest concentration of African American population out of all of North Carolina's 100 counties (Burwell and Cole 2007).

One community member, Reverend Luther Brown, reportedly told the Washington Post "We know why they picked us, it's because it's a poor county – poor politically, poor in health, poor in education and because it's mostly Black. Nobody thought people like us would make a fuss" (Burwell and Cole 2007, 15). In 1982, trucks carrying contaminated waste began arriving in town, and were met with 125 protesters including children, some of the protesters were injured, and others arrested (Burwell and Cole 2007). This was followed by weeks of peaceful marching and protesting, with support pouring in from outside the county, eventually resulting in the arrest of over 500 people (Skelton and Miller 2017). Eventually, the contaminated soil was dumped as planned. However, the effort was not fruitless.

This and similar incidents sparked an investigation by the Commission for Racial Justice in the United Church of Christ. The outcomes of the investigation were published in a report titled "Toxic Waste and Race in the United States – A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites." In 1991, the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit convened in Washington, DC as a way to organize around environmental issues and race on a national level. The attendees of the summit produced a document titled "The Principles of Environmental Justice" defining and outlining what that term means to them, and signaling the beginning of a united, national organizing against environmental injustices.

The term 'environmental justice' itself has also entered the academic world, and extensive research has been done regarding the theory and definition of the term, the validity of the argument for environmental justice, and on specific environmental justice communities and issues across the

United States, as well as internationally. Some of this research and these definitions will be discussed in the following section.

2.4.2 Defining Environmental Justice

In order to understand urban green spaces in the context of environmental justice, it is important to define what environmental justice means. It is difficult to set one definition for a concept that is as complex as environmental justice, as it has scientific, political, social, legal, and policy components and implications. This section will present some of the ways that environmental justice has been defined, and specify the definition this research adopts as its theoretical framework. Before presenting these definitions, I would like to acknowledge the argument of Holifield (2001, 78) in his paper "Defining Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism":

> I argue that the pursuit of stable, consensual definitions of such terms as *environmental justice* and *environmental racism* is misguided. We must accept that people in different geographic, historical, political, and institutional contexts understand the terms differently. Instead of regarding the lack of universal definitions as a barrier to progress, however, we need to treat the breadth and multiplicity of interpretations as guides to more relevant and useful new research. In addition, we must acknowledge that interpretations of the terms have inevitable political implications. Our research should make our assumptions about the nature of racism and justice explicit.

Definitions of environmental justice can be divided into three categories, although there is much overlap. The categories are activist definitions, governance and policy definitions, and theoretical or academic definitions. Each of these sets of definitions serves a different purpose, therefore it is important to make the distinction between them.

The activist and grassroots definitions of environmental justice were the first to emerge, as the environmental justice movement started as a civil society grassroots movements. These definitions are clearly stated in the aforementioned document published by the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit titled "Principles of Environmental Justice." The document emphasizes that an activist approach and understanding of environmental justice is

concerned as much with the 'environmental' aspect as it is about the 'justice' aspect. Therefore, the first principle "affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction," while the sixth principle "demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production."

This shows that the environmental justice movement is not merely concerned about environmental harms and benefits being distributed equally – thus the rejection of the term environmental equity – but is concerned with stopping and preventing environmental harm altogether. Other principles affirm and demand the right of people of color to participate equally in environmental decision making, and demand that public policy be based on mutual respect without discrimination. They additionally oppose multi-national cooperation and the destruction they cause, as well as opposing military occupation and military operations. Lastly, they call for education, and the reduction of human consumption of natural resources (Delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit 1991).

Meanwhile, governmental and policy definitions of environmental justice have evolved and changed over time. In 2000, the EPA's view on environmental justice was that "the goal of environmental justice is to ensure that all people, regardless of race, national origin or income, are protected from disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards" (Holiefield 2001, 80). This leaves room for environmental hazards to continue impacting people, so long as they are not impacting some people disproportionately. This is where this definition and understanding of environmental justice differs from that of activists. Today, the EPA's website defines environmental justice as

> the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2015).

This definition retains the element that allows for negative environmental consequences to occur, but expands it to include involvement in decision making, bringing it closer to the grassroots definition, but still keeping it distinct.

Lastly, there is the theoretical and academic interpretation and understanding of environmental justice. These definitions are concerned with understanding what 'environmentalism' means, what notions of 'justice' mean, how the meanings combine, and what they indicate as they become one concept. Holifield (2001, 79) describes terms such as 'environment' and 'environmentalism' as being "themselves notoriously ambiguous." Nonetheless, Holifield asserts one thing, which is that the environmental justice movement has brought in issues of race, class, economic status, indigenous rights, culture, and gender into the discourse around environmental issues, forcing this discourse to expand beyond the traditional issues of biodiversity, conservation, and population growth. This assertion is important with regards to Morningside Park, as many of its issues relate to problems of race, class, and culture, and without environmental justice, these discussions might not have had a place in environmental movements.

The other important component of the concept of environmental justice is the idea of justice and what justice means and encompasses. David Schlosberg has done extensive work theorizing about environmental justice, and it is through his work that I will define environmental justice as I use it in this research. Schlosberg divides justice theorists into two categories, the first is liberal justice theorists, who very strongly connect justice to distribution. Justice for them then is largely

tied to the idea of equality and fairness. As Schlosberg (2004, 518) puts it, "everyone would have the same political rights as everyone else, and the distribution of economic and social inequality in a society should benefit everyone, including the least well off." This framework of justice has been the framework most often used by academics and theorists for understanding as well as studying environmental justice issues. The focus has largely been on spatially and quantitatively studying who has access to what resource, and how the resources (or the harms) are distributed (I shall showcase examples of this while reviewing literature on environmental justice and urban green spaces in following sections).

However, the second group of theorists, including Schlosberg is a group that believes in a more expansive, more inclusive understanding of justice, that goes beyond the simple notions of equality. The two scholars that Schlosberg uses to support his thesis are Iris Young and Nancy Frazer. The argument as Schlosberg (2004) synthesizes it is this: distributive justice sees problems of inequality and misdistribution and offers solutions to improve these issues. However, this view of justice fails to ask one important question, which is: why does this inequality exist in the first place?

There are of course many answers that can be offered to such a complex question, however, for Schlosberg, Young, and Frazer, and for the purposes of this research, the answer is this: lack of respect and recognition of group difference, leading in part to lack of community participation, as well as lack of political and institutional participation (Schlosberg 2004). Recognition of group differences, and respect of these distinct groups, and their rights for self-determination, and their right to participation is important on multiple levels, beyond simply the institutional level. This recognition, argues Schlosberg, "must happen as much in the social, cultural, and symbolic realms as in the institutional" (Schlosberg 2004, 521). Some of the theorists of the first category argue

that recognition is either already included in the framework of distributive justice, or that recognition is not a theory of justice issue. To that, Schlosberg responds by making a distinction between the idealized theory of justice, and justice in practice.

> If the interest is about attaining *justice*, rather than a sound *theory* of justice, recognition is central to the question and the resolution – and is not simply to be assumed. Again, the point here is that a study of justice needs to focus on the reasons and processes behind and determining maldistribution; recognition, or the lack thereof, is key (Schlosberg 2004, 520).

This is not a radical idea, and can be seen growing organically in environmental justice activists' understanding of justice. Environmental justice activists often understand these components of justice, because they are often working from within their own communities, and they understand what their community needs are. The people gathered in Washington, DC who wrote The Principles of Environmental Justice were primarily activists and concerned family members, who realized the importance of an expanded framework of justice.

A concrete example can be seen in the case of Warren County. Burwell and Cole (2007) point out that at the time of the incidents, despite Warren County being mostly African American, black people did not have much power through political representation. In fact, there was only one elective office in the county that was held by a black person. Activists quickly realized that in order for their demands to be met, they had to change that. By teaming up with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), they began registering black voters. In the November elections of 1982, black people won every county seat they ran for, people of color had a majority on the County Board of Education for the first time, and the first black Sheriff ever was elected. Soon after a legislation was introduced to prohibit any dump sites from being built within a 25-miles radius of the Warren County site (Burwell and Cole 2007).

What this shows is that environmental justice movements, since their establishment, have had a far more expansive understanding of justice and environmental justice than many justice

theorists and academics studying environmental justice. Schlosberg (2004) notes that the way global and local environmental justice movements have defined and dealt with environmental justice issues has always included demands for recognition and respect, as well as participation. The main argument of Schlosberg (2004, 528) is the following: "Inequitable distribution, a lack of recognition, and limited participation all work to produce injustice, and claims for justice are integrated into a comprehensive political project in the global Environmental Justice movement." Thus, it follows that "global environmental justice is threefold: **"equity in the distribution of environmental risk, recognition of the diversity of the participants and experiences in affected communities, and participation in the political processes which create and manage environmental policy"** (Shlosberg 2004, 517).[1] This is the definition of environmental justice that this research adopts, and the theoretical framework through which the results of studying Morningside Park will be analyzed and understood. The analysis of the data from Morningside Park focuses in general on themes of recognition and respect, as well as participation in the decision making. These themes come up when discussing issues of respecting tradition and culture of park use, and contributing to the making of park policies, such as closing times, among other issues.

[1] Emphasis added.

2.4.3 Urban Green Spaces as an Environmental Justice Issue

As mentioned in section 2.3, positive associations between access to urban green spaces and health were found to be strongest amongst disadvantaged social groups. What this means is that groups such as children, the elderly, and people of lower-socioeconomic status benefit the most from having access to urban green space. This also means that they have the highest need for access to urban green space (Boone et al. 2009). However, that has not been the case. Studies in urban centers across the world have found that distribution of and access to green spaces is often unequal along socioeconomic and racial lines. This section will give an overview of these studies, with particular focus on studies that discuss urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue.

I would like to start by making the connection between urban green spaces and environmental justice more explicit. Because of their health benefits, their contribution to the overall quality of life, and their role in community building, urban green spaces can be considered environmental amenities (Boone et al. 2009; Wolch et al. 2005; Heckert 2013). Just as environmental justice is concerned with fighting unequal distribution of environmental hazards, it is also concerned with achieving equal distribution of environmental benefits and amenities. This acknowledgment of green space as an indicator for environmental justice has entered the sphere of city planning and policy making, beyond the activist or the academic sphere. For example, Berlin's Environmental Atlas has a section dedicated to environmental justice and to measuring environmental justice in the city, this section uses 'availability of green spaces' as a core indicator of environmental justice, along with indicators such as air pollution, and noise (Berlin Senate Department of Urban Development and Housing 2015).

However, while the theory and discourse of environmental justice is not a new issue, viewing urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue and with an environmental justice

framework is a relatively new trend. While there is a number of studies that measure access to green space against socio-economic or racial factors, these studies do not always relate this to environmental justice, or do not use environmental justice as a framework of analysis. They instead utilize frameworks such as 'environmental equity' or 'environmental disparity', which as pointed out in the previous section, differ in fundamental ways from the environmental justice framework. Specifically, studies that use the environmental justice framework are often concerned with issues beyond access, such as community participation and recognition. This section will focus specifically on the studies that do use environmental justice framework, while acknowledging the larger body of literature which discusses unequal access to green space.

Firstly, the evidence that there is unequal access to green spaces in urban centers along either socioeconomic or racial lines (or both) is overwhelming, and it is also global. Results showing inequality either in access to green space, or in the amount of green space available per person have been found in Baltimore (Boone et al. 2009), Los Angeles (Wolch et al. 2005;Sister et al. 2010), Munich (Schüle et al. 2017), Australia (Astell-Burt et al. 2014), Berlin (Lakes et al. 2014), Hong Kong (Tang 2017), Hartford, Connecticut (Li et al. 2015), Silicon Valley, California (I. T. Stewart et al. 2014), Philadelphia (Heckert 2013), Atlanta (Dai 2011), Kansas City (Vaughan et al. 2013), Alabama (Jenkins et al. 2015), Montreal (Pham et al. 2011; 2012), Illinois (Zhou et al. 2013), Tampa, Florida (Landry et al. 2009), and Rio de Janeiro (Pedlowski et al. 2002).

These studies all use different methodologies, indices, and frameworks. But they do not all use the environmental justice framework in discussing the inequalities they find. Of twenty studies reviewed on inequalities of park access, about twelve of them mention environmental justice. The number of studies that actually use environmental justice as framework is even fewer than that.

Interestingly, the studies using environmental justice framework are primarily done in the United States or Germany, with the exception of one study in Brazil.

Pedlowski et al. (2002) attempted to test the hypothesis that species diversity, number of trees, and availability of yard space vary depending on the wealth status of a neighborhood in Campos dos Goytacazes, Rio de Janeiro. One of the stated aims of the study is to confirm a relationship between environmental and social segregation. The study found that wealthier neighborhoods have higher biodiversity and higher number of trees than poorer neighborhoods. This indicates that wealthier neighborhoods have higher access to environmental services and benefits that are provided by trees than poorer neighborhoods. Additionally, the authors argue that this inequality is not coincidental, but is instead caused by lack of recognition of environmental inequality by the local government, and the corresponding lack of policy adjustment in terms of where trees get planted.

Two studies were done in Germany (Berlin and Munich) that specifically had an environmental justice framework. The study in Munich developed an index for the socio-economic position for each neighborhood, based on indicators such as employment, immigration and citizenship status, population density, education and occupation. This study found that lower socioeconomic position was associated with less availability of green space in a neighborhood (Schüle et al. 2017). In Berlin, Lakes et al. (2014) did a methodological study, testing the possibility of developing an environmental justice index for the city of Berlin. The study focuses on disparities in environmental burdens such as noise pollution, and environmental benefits such as green spaces, along socio-economic lines. The study found a higher socioeconomic status of a neighborhood generally meant higher vegetation in the neighborhood. The study focused heavily on integrating local stakeholders, and one point emphasized in the conclusions is that “the

establishment of partnerships between researchers and community organizers and in particular the affected residents is of utmost importance" (Lakes et al. 2014, 553). This study points to one important aspect of environmental justice aside from access, which is political participation and integration for the community members.

The other studies that utilize an environmental justice framework are all studies that have been done in cities across the United States. One of the first and most cited studies on the issue was done in Los Angeles. Wolch et al. (2005) investigated the distribution of both current and planned parks in Lost Angeles, with relation to children and older people, and particular youth of color. They also wanted to understand where funds were allocated and to what purposes. The research describes parks as being "fundamental to the livability of cities" and "a vital aspect of urban livability" (Wolch et al. 2005, 4-6). The researchers ground the study in the environmental justice framework, both as it relates to parks, as well as the history of undesirable land use in Los Angeles. They argue that factors such as environmental racism, a history of housing and employment discrimination, as well as the fact that green spaces lead to higher property values – these factors inevitably lead to people of color and low-income households living in park poor areas.

The study found "striking inequities" in park distribution, particularly for youth and children in Los Angeles (Wolch et al. 2005, 23). Neighborhoods dominated by African Americans, Asian-Pacific Islanders, and Latin Americans had significantly lower levels of access, as well as dramatically lower numbers of acres per person. This compares at less than an acre per 1000 people in Latino dominated neighborhoods, and about 32 acres per 1000 people in neighborhood where 75% or more of the population is white. The study additionally found that funding patterns in the city exacerbated these inequities in resource distribution. The study also stresses an important

point, which is that strict equal distribution of parks still would not amount to equal recreational opportunities, as socio-economic status will still play a role (Wolch et al. 2005). The issue of funding is particularly relevant in the case of Morningside Park, as the lack of funds for the park has contributed to many of its problems, and unequal funds for parks in less affluent areas is a problem in New York City, as will be discussed in chapter four.

These results were supported by another study in 2010, which found that in L.A., Latinos, African Americans, and low-income people are more likely to live in areas with high potential park congestion, while Whites and wealthier individuals were less likely to have park congestion in their neighborhoods (Sister et al. 2010). This study also points to the importance of integrating local community in the process of studying and determining future steps for park access. The researchers did this by developing a web-based reporting tool, which allows for self-reporting regarding need for parks, and what kind of parks are needed (Sister et al. 2010).

In Silicon Valley, California, Stewart et al. (2014) developed three indices to study disparities in exposure to environmental hazards and access to environmental benefits. This is done from an environmental justice as well as a public health perspective. The indices developed were environmental benefit index (EBI), environmental health index (EHI), and social vulnerability index (SVI). The EBI aggregated values for city parks, county parks and other open spaces. The SVI considered values such as poverty, dependency status, education, and renting status. The study found that the people who scored as being the most socially vulnerable were Hispanic individuals, and that people who were most socially vulnerable were more exposed to environmental hazards than wealthy Whites, and had less access to environmental benefits.

After finding these results, the researchers were interested in how the community members wanted to use these results for planning in their communities, and in order to do this they conducted

a focus group. The representatives suggested an approach which addresses procedural environmental justice, regarding a community's ability to influence environmental policy making. They also suggested community-based action research, measuring community assets, measuring social isolation, and documenting civic engagement (Stewart et al. 2014).

Studies done in Kansas City and Philadelphia showed different patterns to those shown by the previously mentioned studies. In Philadelphia, Heckert (2013) found that Black and Hispanic people as well as renters were more likely to live close to a public green space. However, these same categories live closer to overall smaller amounts of green space. Similarly, in Kansas City, Vaughan et al. (2013) found that low-income census tracts had significantly more access to parks, however, they also found that the parks they had access to had fewer playgrounds, as well as concerns regarding the quality of the park space. Additionally, higher income neighborhoods had parks that had more aesthetic features, such as fountains. Within the environmental justice conceptual framework, this study aimed to assess access, as well as park features, and overall quality of the park, understanding that access to parks alone is not enough when discussing parks as an environmental justice issue.

Another problem related to urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue is the relationship between green spaces and exclusive development[2], which is development that leads to the displacement of poorer residents due to rising property prices. This often leads to changing demographics of neighborhoods, along both socio-economic as well as racial lines. This is especially relevant to Morningside Park, as this is one of the problems the park faces. Checker (2011) argues that environmental justice rhetoric in relation to greening is being coopted by urban

[2] This is sometimes referred to under the framework of 'gentrification.' For the sake of this research, I will be using the term exclusive development instead, since I am discussing specifically the relationship between parks and development.

developers, and that parks are now being developed in support of zoning techniques that eventually will lead to the displacement of marginalized people in low-income neighborhoods, such as Harlem. Further, Wolch et al. (2014) has found that park development has the potential to cause this exclusive development, and therefore cities should thrive to be only "green enough."

The last paper I would like to discuss is a study done in Baltimore which found that African Americans and other high-need people (such as children and the elderly) have better overall access to green spaces, however, they have less acres per person, and therefore more park congestion (Boone et al. 2009). In building its conceptual framework, this study points to very important issues that are relevant to the research at hand. Firstly, Boone et al. (2009) stress the importance of focusing on environmental amenity provision as much as focusing on environmental hazard prevention while studying environmental justice issues. This is why studying parks is important for environmental justice. Additionally, they make an important distinction between *'equal distribution'* and *'just distribution'* stating that

> A difficulty with equal distribution as an outcome measure, however, is that it does not take into consideration needs, merits, or choices of the population, which can differ considerably between a middle-class family with two cars and a single mother who depends on walking or public transportation. Neighborhoods with an abundance of young children or elderly individuals might merit more parks and recreation spaces than do neighborhoods with working-age individuals.

This study also points out the inadequacy of understanding and investigating justice in terms of distribution alone, and stresses the importance of participation in the decision making in relation to green space. In addition, the researchers acknowledge the multiple political and social factors and actors that impact the development of a park (Boone et al. 2009).

Another acknowledgement that this study makes, which is crucially important and relevant to the research about Morningside Park, is that neglect of parks, short-sighted management decisions, and park design decisions that do not take into account the clientele of the park, are all

factors that can make parks dangerous, unwelcoming, and alienating to people. The authors stress that "Neglect of existing parks, or nonaction, is an injustice" (Boone et al. 2009, 771).

2.5 Conclusion

Despite asserting all these important points, Boone et al. (2009) along with all the other articles reviewed which investigate green spaces as an environmental justice issue all do this by investigating access to green space, meaning that they are investigating distributive environmental justice alone. For urban green spaces, this misses many of the important points that Boone et al. (2009) make in their article. When investigating access alone, issues such as the characteristics and features of a park itself, the governance structure around a park, people's perceptions and attitudes towards a park, the ways in which people use the park, and the organic and rich history within which a park was born, all of this falls through when studying access alone. Yet, these dimensions are crucial to understand parks and environmental justice, because as Boone et al. (2009, 771) state "The simple presence of a nearby park does not mean that people will perceive it as an amenity or use it for recreation," and if people are not getting the promised benefits of green space, despite achieving equal access, then is environmental justice being achieved?

This research attempts to address this gap. By studying Morningside Park as a case study, and investigating the history, perceptions, and use of the park, I argue that all these factors affect a park's role in achieving environmental justice for a community, and I also argue that in order for the research on environmental justice and green spaces to move forward, it needs to take these aspects into consideration, and further investigate the ways they interact with urban green spaces.

3 Methodology

3.1 Conception of the Research

The original idea of the research was to investigate parks as an environmental justice issue, outside of the problem of who does or does not have access to a park. I wanted to investigate problems facing parks and the communities using them that are environmental justice concerns past the actual development of a park, i.e. after access has been achieved. Initially, I set out to investigate people-park interactions, and people's perceptions of parks while studying and comparing two specific parks, which are Riverside Park and Morningside Park. This was an interesting idea because the two parks were spatially in proximity of each other, but seemed to have such drastically different uses and perceptions around them. I wanted to investigate why that is, and to understand these differences from an environmental justice perspective.

However, as I began my interviews and my archival research, I realized that the difference in the perceptions and situation of these two parks was drastically different. More importantly, I realized that Riverside Park itself is a big park, that spans neighborhoods of different socio-economic and racial composition, and that depending on what part of the park was in question, answers and perceptions would differ. Because I concentrated most of my work in Morningside Heights and Harlem neighborhoods, it made sense to concentrate my efforts on studying a single park, with all its surrounding circumstances, and to draw an image about people, parks, and environmental justice through understanding Morningside Park. Setting out to look at perceptions about Morningside Park, I realized through my interviews and document analysis that it is not possible to get the full image about the perceptions of Morningside Park, without studying how the history and institutional context of the park has impacted these perceptions, and how they, in turn, influence park use. These factors, history, institutional context, perceptions, and use, come

together to tell the story of Morningside Park, and to illustrate its relationship with Environmental Justice. In the following sections of the methodology, I will introduce the methods I used for collecting my data, and how I analyzed and made sense of this data. I will also discuss limitations and challenges to this research.

3.2 Archival Research and Document Analysis

Archival research and document analysis were used for two main purposes: the first is to fill in the historical and factual gaps in the story of Morningside Park, its relationship with surrounding institutions, the reason behind its foundation, and how it was designed – all of which are factors that impacted perceptions and use of the park, and therefore, became important factors to investigate. The second purpose is to supplement the narrative that was coming together from the interviews themselves.

For archival research, key documents and sources played a crucial role in the research. One of the main data sources was *The New York Times* and its archives. The newspaper has had coverage on the history of the park since its establishment, and the coverage often reflected many of the attitudes and perceptions towards the park. It also reported many of the events that were occurring around the park. The archives were searched by looking up key words such as 'Morningside Park' and 'Morningside Park and Columbia University.' Another important resource was the Columbia University Archives, which is accessible both online and in the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Particularly, a special exhibition on the Columbia University Crisis of 1968 is available as an online archive, which was used when researching and discussing these events. Other documents examined included Community Board records, other local and university newspapers and publications (such as *The Morningside Post*), and documents from The Friends of Morningside. All of these documents were accessible online through the respective websites.

Additionally, NYC CensusFinder, an online tool created by the NYC Department of City Planning was used to get census and demographic data for the neighborhoods surrounding the park.

Other sources included research papers that have cited or mentioned information about the park, or that have otherwise investigated the park. Lastly, two key texts were used to further understand and explain the context within which Morningside exists, and to further understand the historical events surrounding it, and the impacts they have today. The first text is a book by Stefan M. Bradley (2010) titled "Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s." This book was important in representing the relationship between the park and Columbia University (discussed in the following chapter in detail). The second key text is a report which was prepared by Jay Shockley of the Research Department in 2008, for the Landmark Preservation Commission. This report is the Morningside Park Scenic Landmark Designation Report, which was published the same day Morningside Park was given landmark status, on July 15, 2008. From all of these databases and reports, relevant data was coded and categorized, and integrated with the interview analysis, which will be presented in chapter four.

3.3 Semi-structured Interviews and Field Research

As I set out to investigate perceptions of parks and people-park interactions, it made sense to use in-depth interviews to understand these perceptions and interactions. As Seidman (2013, 1) states "Individual's consciousness gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experience of people." In order to gain access and to understand issues surrounding the park, I chose interviewing as one of my methods. Ethnographic research has been used for issues around environmental justice and green spaces by Checker (2011) in Harlem, and by Curran and Hamilton (Curran et al. 2012) in Greenspoint, Brooklyn. Additionally, McDonogh et al. (2011) used ethnographic

approaches to understand different ideas about sustainability in the city through perspectives of environmental racism, and justice. So ethnographic research is not an uncommon method of investigation in the environmental justice and parks field.

I decided to create categories that represent different stakeholders in the park, and attempt to reach out and interview people from each category, rather than doing random sampling. The categories that I came up with were: park user, environmental activist, community organizer, non-profit organizations working in the park, long-term community member, Columbia University professors, and Park's Department official. Out of those seven categories, I was able to cover five categories, with six interviewees. The interviewees included activists from Columbia Climate Divest, the President of the Friends of Morningside Park, an average park user, a Community Board 9 member, and long-term resident of the area, and a social worker who has been working in St. Luke's, a hospital by the park, for the past 31 years.

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning I had a set of very open-ended and general question, the purpose of which was to start a conversation about the participants' opinions, perceptions, and ideas about the park in question. Using those questions as a starting point, I followed up with points of interest. An example of a question asked would be "What do you think of Morningside Park" or "describe an average day in the park for you." The interviews were all recorded using a digital voice recorder, and were later transcribed. Additional field research methods included spending time in the parks doing participant observation, as well as attending a Community Board 9 meeting for the committee of Landmarks Preservation and Parks.

3.4 Data Analysis and Coding

In social and qualitative research, coding refers a word or a short phrase which symbolizes and summarizes a piece of qualitative data (Saldana 2015). In this research, no specific coding

method was followed to the letter, however, the principles of open coding were prevalent in the coding and analysis of the data. Open coding can be defined as "the analytical process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 101). The interview transcripts and research notes were analyzed in depth by looking at the text at hand, and noting general concepts that were coming up. For example, "exercising" and "safety" or "danger" are all concepts that were noted. I then came up with categories within which these concepts could fit. There could have been a large number of categories drawn out from each interview, however, I tried to focus on common themes and concepts that seemed to be repeated across the interviews.

From this analysis, four categories relating to the park were discovered. The first one was perceptions, which is the category I set out to investigate to begin with. However, the data analysis indicated that there are three other generalized categories that needed to be considered, which are strongly connected to perceptions, these are history, institutional context, and park use. As I mentioned earlier, the original purpose of the research is to investigate, from an environmental justice perspective, what factors aside from access affect parks and the communities that use them. While my starting point was perceptions, other factors (categories) coming up and being considered is still within the scope of my research. This document was organized around these categories. The document analysis and archival research results were similarly analyzed, and the data from them could be organized in these categories as well.

3.5 Limitations of the Research

There were multiple limitations and challenges that the research faced. Firstly, due to the time of the year (May and June), many parties and stakeholders, heads of organizations, and potential interviewees were on vacation, and could not be easily reached. Additionally, many

organizations were not responsive, or were very late in responding, despite multiple attempts to contact them. While this was unexpected, I still managed to access and collect a great deal of archival data, which ended up forming the bulk of my research data, and complimented very well the data that came out of interviews.

In addition to that, financial limitations, particularly with relation to transportation, were present. One subway ride in New York City costs $2.75, and a monthly subway card costs over $100. As I was relying on staying with friends, I could not go out to the parks and to meetings as regularly as would be desired, and money was constantly a concern, which additionally limited the number of interviews I was able to conduct.

4 Morningside Park: History, Perceptions, and Park Use

4.1 Introduction to Morningside Park

Throughout this part of the thesis, issues pertaining to Morningside Park will be discussed, occasionally bringing in comparisons with Riverside Park. This section is thematically arranged around some of the main themes and categories that came up from the data analysis. Archival data as well as interview data will be presented here to give a full picture and a greater understanding of the case study, both from the historical perspective, as well as from the perspective of stakeholders who interact with the park.

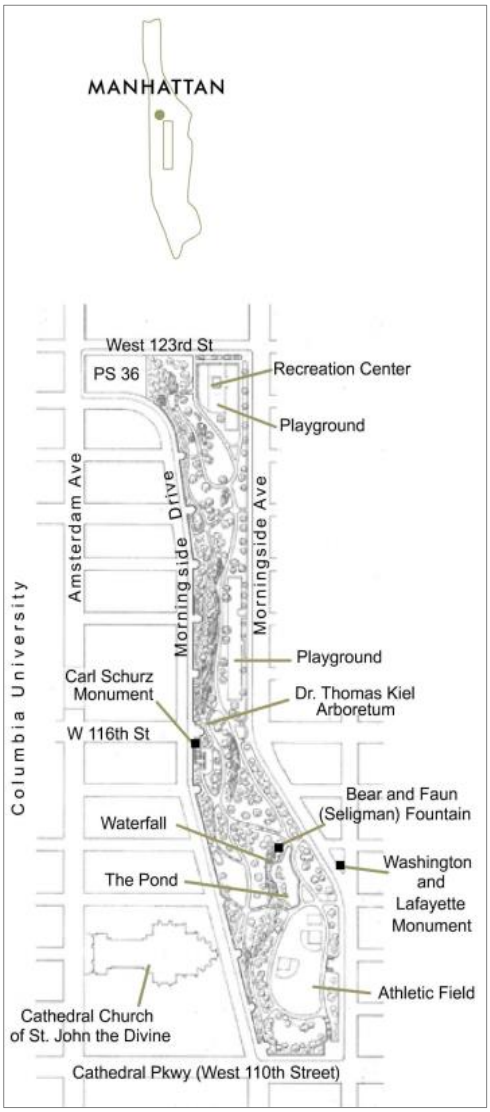

Figure 1: map of Morningside Park showing main attractions and borders. Adapted from Friends of Morningside Park Interactive Park (Source: Friends of Morningside Park, Interactive Map)

4.1.1 Location

Morningside Park is located in the northern part of Manhattan Borough in New York. Morningside's borders are 110th St. to the south, 123rd St. to the north, Morningside Drive to the west, and Morningside Avenue and Manhattan Avenue to the east (Fig.1).

The park is primarily surrounded by two neighborhoods, Morningside Heights to the west, and central Harlem to the east, and it is one of four designated historical Harlem parks (Fig. 2). Riverside Park is west of Morningside Park and it originally ran from 72nd St. to 125th St., and was later expanded to reach 155th St north, and 65th St. South. This means that Riverside Park runs parallel to Morningside Park for the entire length

of the latter. The overall size of Riverside Park is about 266 acres, whereas Morningside Park is about 30 acres.

Figure 2: Map showing the neighborhoods and areas surrounding Morningside Park, including Central Park to the South, Riverside Park to the West, Morningside Heights, Harlem and Columbia University campus. (Source:edited from New York City Map: Harlem and Morningside Park, www.moon.com.

4.1.2 Park Design and Topography

The architectural design of Morningside Park is a significant aspect of this discussion, as it seems to impact the perceptions of the park, as well as the way it is used. Firstly, it is important to discuss why the park was built to begin with. The Commissioners Plan of 1811 was a plan to develop Manhattan into a grid of streets and avenues.

This grid plan was supposed to apply to the area that is now Morningside Park, however in 1867, Andrew Haswell Greene, who was a commissioner and the comptroller of Central Park raised the issue that developing the Morningside area into a grid would be too costly, difficult, and the resulting streets would be inconvenient to use (Shockley 2008). From that, it was decided that

that area will be excluded from the grid, and developed into a park instead. In comparison, the nearby area of today's Riverside Park was undeveloped, and therefore a park commissioner suggested it be turned into a park (Riverside Park Conservancy 2017). Central Park on the other hand was developed with the hopes of improving public health, and to serve towards establishing a civil society (Central Park Conservancy 2017).

The difference in intention behind building and developing a park is significant because it is reflected in the design, and the overall administrative attitudes towards the park. Morningside was developed for convenience, which explains the complicated stages of development that the park went through before it took its final shape today. The first plan for the development of the park was presented by architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux (who also designed Central Park and Riverside Park) in 1873. However, the park's construction did not begin until 1883, and was not completed until 1895. During the almost thirty years since the idea of the park was first pitched to its completion, many architects, engineers, and park plans were involved, and often the factor for accepting or rejecting plans was financial in nature (Shockley 2008). However, the topography of the area (Fig. 3), which originally excluded it from the grid, contributed greatly to the troubles of constructing and the expenses associated with developing the park. The Department of Public Park's 1871 Annual Report described the park as "a very difficult piece of ground to treat for purposes of a garden or public park or place" (Shockley 2008, 3), and The Times reportedly described the ground as being "of such nature as to have been considered almost valueless" (Shockley 2008, 4).

While the city decided to build the park by taking the park's ruggedness and difficult inclines into account aesthetically, Samuel Parsons Jr. who was the park's superintendent at the time later admitted that the city only did this to save on expenses of building the park properly,

stating that the park was built "economically." He also stated that while there is no doubt that no city in the country builds parks as exquisite as New York's, "there is probably no park in the country… where the work of construction has been as badly done" (Bradley 2010, 41).

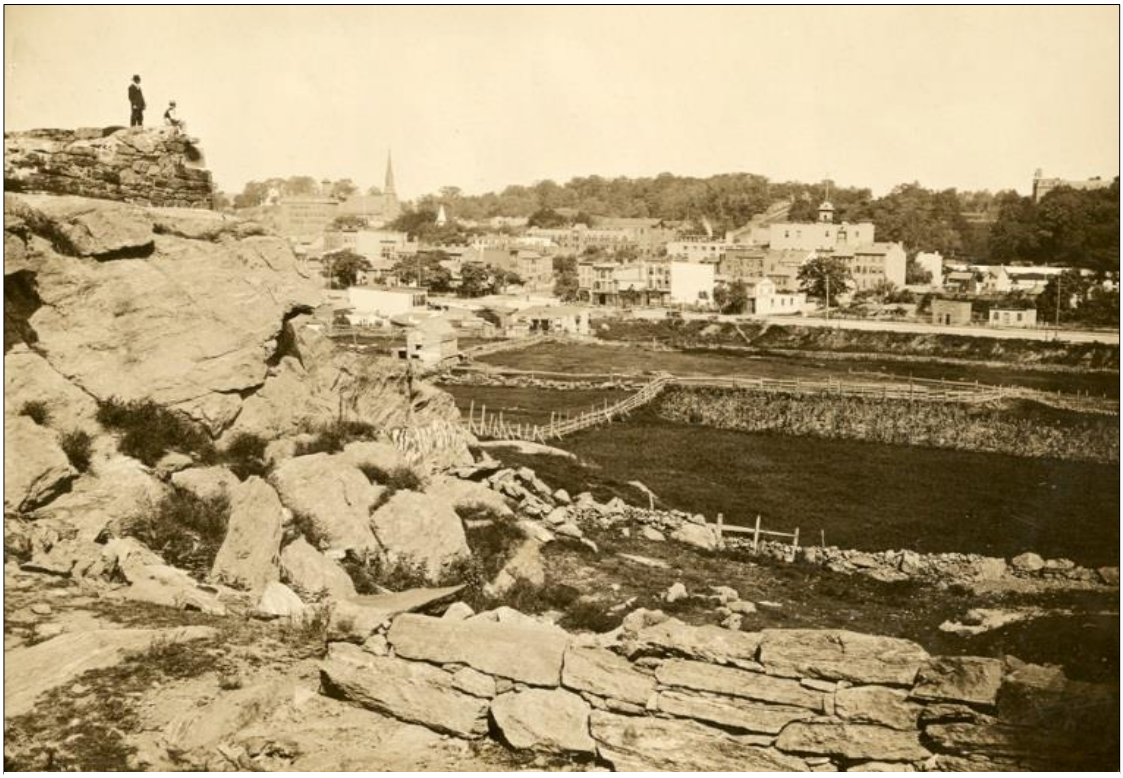

Figure 3: Morningside Bluffs, 1878. A historical image of the rock outcrops overlooking the area that will later become Morningside Park, showcasing the difficult topography of the area. (Source: Outcroppings, The Greatest Grid, Museum of the City of New York, www.thegreatestgrid.mcny.org).

The design considerations that the architects had in mind have affected park use as well as perceptions of the park, in ways that are sometimes considered positive, and sometimes have negative associations. For example, Miles Hilton, a frequent park user and a Columbia student commented on the park by saying that

> Along like the manicured lawn to the virgin forest scale it is further towards virgin forest than Riverside is. It seems to have less landscaping, less overall maintenance than Riverside does, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, like the lack of landscaping makes it so that it's a quieter more private place.

More of these design-influenced perceptions will be discussed in the following sections, and the design issue will be referenced throughout this section as it interacts with use and perceptions.

4.1.3 Demographics and the Neighborhoods

In order to get a full picture of the situation of Morningside Park, it is important to understand who has historically as well as currently lived around the park, and by extension who the primary users of the park are. This section will present these information and background, by discussing the two neighborhoods with the most access to Morningside Park, which are Harlem, specifically Central Harlem South, as well as Morningside Heights. Morningside Park is considered the border between the two neighborhoods. The most reliable source for this information is the American Community Survey (ACS), which is done every 10 years. The last ACS was done in 2010. I will be discussing that data, as well as doing comparison between the 2000 and 2010 data for the two neighborhoods.

Central Harlem South is the official ACS name of the neighborhood bordering Morningside Park to the east. In 2010, 16.1% of the population in the neighborhood was white non-Hispanic, a 404.2% increase from 2000. Meanwhile, the black/African-American population made up 55.9% of the total population, which is a 14.4% decrease from the 2000 census. Additionally, the yearly median household income was $48.366, while the mean was $78.612. The largest income category was the $50,000 – 74,999 income bracket, at 15.4% of the population, followed by the 'less than $10,000' category, at 14.9%. As for poverty statistics in the neighborhood, 22.3% of families were under the poverty line, while 27.3% of the total population was under the poverty line. Another important statistic to mention as it particularly relates to the issue of exclusive development is property ownership, and property prices. In 2010, 18.1% of Central Harlem South's residents lived in property they owned, while the rest were renters. This Is a 144.9% increase from 2000 (New York City Department of Planning 2000, 2010). Additionally, between the years 2004 and 2014, Central and Eastern Harlem saw a 102% increase

in median home price per square foot, indicating a steep increase in property value, as well as rent prices (Baiceanu 2015).

In comparison, Morningside Heights was 46.0% white and 13.6% black in 2010. This is a 6.7% increase in white population, and a 16.5% decrease in black population from 2000. The yearly median household income was $56.371, and the mean $96.085. The largest income categories were the 'less than $10,000' at 15.7%, followed by the 'over $200,000' at 12.7%, and the $50,000-74.999 bracket at 12.0% of households. 19.7% of residents owned their housing, while the rest were renters. This is a 17.4% increase in ownership, and a 2.8% decrease in rentals. 14.0% of families and 24.2% of the overall population were below poverty (New York City Department of Planning 2010, 2000). Lastly, property prices in Morningside heights were stagnant, at a small 2% increase (Baiceanu 2015).

What all these statistics allude to is that there is a stark divide between Harlem and Morningside Heights, particularly in terms of income and the racial and ethnic distribution of the residents (Fig. 4). However, these statistics also show that Harlem is changing, and that change is pushing black people out of the historically black neighborhood. This is an important problem for environmental justice and parks, and this is one of the ways that exclusive development, as discussed in the literature review, manifests.

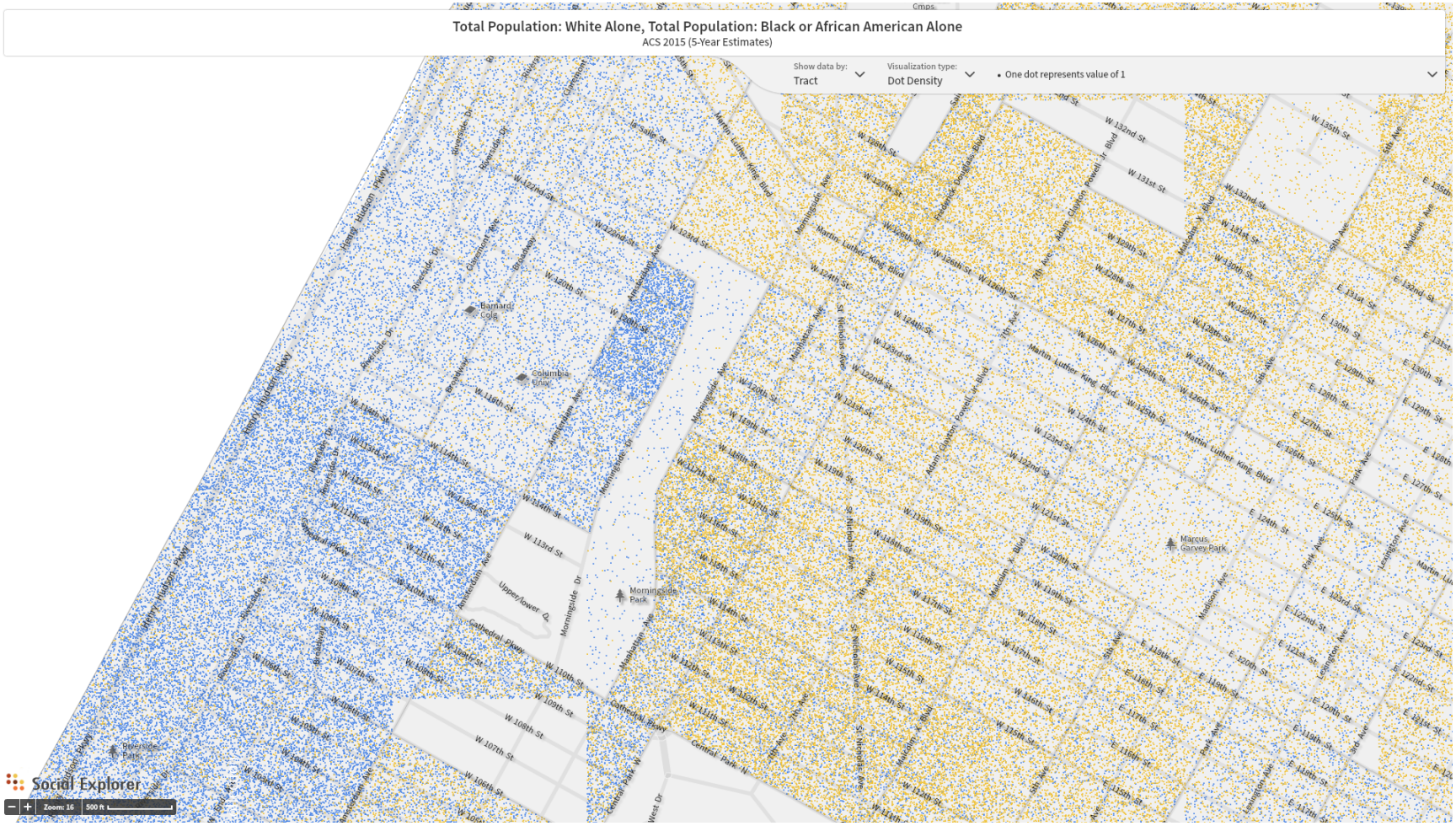

Figure 4: Population density of two race categories in the ACS by census tract. Dots in blue represent White persons, while dots in yellow represent African American persons. Alone means not mixed race. This map showcases the clear divide in the racial distribution of the two neighborhoods, but it also shows the changing Harlem, particularly on the eastern edge of Morningside Park (Source: Map made with Social Explorer online tool, www.socialexplorer.com).

4.2 History and Institutional Context: Columbia University, the Neighborhoods, and the Park

An important factor to introduce to understand the story of Morningside Park is the historical – and often tense – relationship between the park, and one of its biggest, most influential neighbors; namely Columbia University and its affiliated institutions. It might seem random or even unrelated to discuss Columbia University in relation to a nearby park in the context of environmental justice, however, this section will introduce the ways that Columbia University acts in the neighborhoods beyond its capacity as an academic institution. Additionally, this section will discuss the historical instances of Columbia University directly attempting to impact and alter Morningside Park. Beyond this specific section, following sections will also discuss how Columbia's relationship with the parks has altered or influenced perceptions about the park, as well as affected how the park is used.

Columbia University moved to the area currently known as Morningside Heights in 1894. While it had existed since 1754 as King's College, it only became Columbia University and moved to the neighborhood around the same time that Morningside Park was completed. Therefore, the institution and the park were both interacting with each other, and with the surrounding communities since their establishment. However, while Morningside Park is a public park that has been, by admission of its designers and founders, cheaply built and maintained, Columbia University has been one of the richest, most influential institutions in New York City for a while, which inherently creates uneven dynamics of power and influence. Aside from having an endowment of over $9 billion (Smith 2016), much of this influence comes from Columbia University's role as the largest private landowner in New York City by number of addresses, at 209 addresses (Bilogur 2016). In 1979, the New York Times reported that Columbia University

had assets valued at $197 million in New York City, and that about 1 in 5 buildings in Morningside Heights is owned by Columbia University (Higgins 1979). Many of these buildings are used as either student dorms, or faculty residences.

The history of how Columbia achieved this dominance over the Morningside Heights neighborhood is important and relevant to the relationships between Harlem, the park, and Columbia. In his book on the history of Harlem and Columbia, Stefan M. Bradley outlines this story, which starts in the early 1900s, with what is called "The Great Migration," in which millions of black southerners moved north, in hopes of finding better job opportunities, and most importantly, a resemblance of social and racial equality. This migration changed the demographics of neighborhoods such as Harlem, where many of them settled, eventually becoming the majority population in Harlem. Due to conditions of economic and housing segregation even in places like New York City, much of the black population was unable to leave Harlem no matter their economic status. From that, a vibrant culture, known as the Harlem Renaissance developed, where arts, literature, poetry, dancing and a concept of identity thrived for the people of Harlem. However, as New York City developed highways and elevated transit lines around the area, property values started dropping, causing the area to deteriorate. Additionally, as The Great Migration continued, more black and Puerto Rican residents were moving into the now cheaper Morningside Heights and Harlem neighborhoods. Between the years 1950 to 1960, the black population in Morningside Heights increased by 700%. Private and public support to the neighborhoods decreased, causing the living conditions of the neighborhoods to continue getting worse (Bradly 2010).

These social and economic conditions caused an array of problems to develop in the neighborhoods, including an influx of heroin into Harlem, resembling an epidemic. Additionally,

as the property values decreased, Single Room Occupancy buildings (SROs) were on the rise. These are buildings that were originally apartments, but due to low market prices, were divided into single rooms, and rented out for cheap prices. Many of these SROs ended up being occupied by black and Puerto Rican residents. Through these changes came Columbia University's opportunity for land acquisition and the purchasing of many of the buildings in the neighborhoods (Bradley 2010).

The way that Columbia University wanted to handle the surrounding social conditions was by keeping them at bay, and away from the Morningside Heights campus. The solution was then to purchase the surrounding property, and change its composition.

> Dr. Robert S. Liebert, instructor of psychiatry at Columbia, noted that in the 1960s alone, the university purchased 150 housing units mostly used by black or Puerto Ricans. A report of the Columbia College Citizens Council indicated that the university facilitated the displacement of 9,600 people, approximately 85 percent of whom were black or Puerto Rican. In doing so, the university actually reversed the population trend of the 1960s, thus engineering the racial anatomy of the neighborhood (Bradley 2010, 28).

Columbia University's provost at the time, Jacquez Barzun, described the neighborhoods surrounding the university as being "uninviting, abnormal, sinister and dangerous," additionally, one of the planners of the University was quoted as saying "We are looking for a community where the faculty can talk to people like themselves. We don't want a dirty group" (Bradley 2010, 27-28).

Columbia's tactics to take over so many residences were the typical tactics of landlords trying to get tenants out, including many reported incidents of neglect on the university's part of its duties as landlord. Roger Khan, a critic of Columbia University's expansion described Columbia as representing one of "the largest most aggressive landlords on earth," he also stated that "in …human terms, the story becomes an assault of Columbia, the immense institution, on underprivileged human beings living in Manhattan's SROs" (Bradley 2010, 28-29).

These factors above resulted in much resentment towards the institution from residents of Harlem and Morningside Heights. The last straw however, was Columbia's plan for developing parts of Morningside Park as a gym for the private use of the institution. The controversy surrounding this development came to be known as "Gym Crow" in reference to the Jim Crow era of segregation between black and white populations.

4.2.1 Gym Crow

The controversy surrounding the planned gymnasium ended up being instrumental in shaping the future of Morningside Park, as well as the legacy of student activism in Columbia University. The crises that Columbia found itself in in 1968 was not only due to the plans for constructing the gymnasium, but the gymnasium construction plan was the spark that ignited the Columbia protests of 1968. Another main issue was the student protests against Marines open recruitment on campus, as well as Columbia's involvement with the Institute for Defense Analyses, as well as the disciplinary probation against six student leaders in Student for a Democratic Society (SDS). Additionally, in April of that same year, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, and Columbia held a memorial service in his honor. The service was interrupted by SDS chairman who considered it 'obscene' for Columbia University to be holding a service for the civil rights leader, while continuing its discriminatory actions and plans in Harlem. He proceeded to walk out of the service along with other students (Wilk 2008)

There were multiple issues with this gymnasium plan, aside from the obvious 'land grab' of public space for the private use of a private institution. Firstly, the design of the gymnasium was considered to exhibit "separate and unequal access" to the facility (Wilk 2008). The gymnasium had two separate entrances for the university community and for the Harlem community. Additionally, only a small section of the gymnasium was designated for the use of

community members, while the rest was exclusive to Columbia College (the undergraduate college of Columbia University) students. To many, this was reminiscent of segregation during the Jim Crow era, thus the controversy became known as the Gym Crow controversy. Additionally, this not only excluded other community members, but also excluded other Columbia University institutions and students such as graduate schools, Teacher's College, as well as the all-women's Barnard College (Wilk 2008).

There was much discussion and negotiations with the community members in Harlem, but they were eventually unproductive, as Columbia refused to relocate its gym, or to make access equal to all. In December of 1967, H. Rap Brown, a member of the Black Panther's Party, showed up to a meeting in Harlem and expressed strong sentiments against these plans by saying: "If they build the first story, blow it up. If they sneak back at night and build three stories, burn it down. And if they get nine stories built, it's yours. Take it over, and maybe we'll let them in on the weekends" (Avorn 1969, 20). Despite these strong sentiments from the community, Columbia University went ahead with the construction of the gymnasium. The day after the construction began, a sit-in was organized by students and community members at the construction site, in which a total of twelve people, students and community activists, were arrested (Avorn 1969).

The peak of this crisis however was on April 23rd, 1968, when students not only protested at the construction site, but went on to occupy several of Columbia's buildings, refusing to leave the main university buildings until their demands were met. In April 26th, the construction of the gym was suspended. The occupation of the buildings continued, and on April 30th, the New York Police Department intervened to forcefully remove protestors. Over 700 people were arrested, and over 100 injured (Wilk 2008).

This planned gym was not Columbia's first encroachment over Morningside Park. In fact, in 1955, an agreement between Columbia University, Park's Commissioner Robert Moses, as well as the Department of Parks allowed Columbia to construct two softball fields, three football fields, a soccer field, a fieldhouse/comfort station, and a storage building in the southern part of Morningside Park. These fields and facilities were completed in 1957, almost an entire decade before the events of Gym Crow. However, Columbia only had exclusive use of the facilities on weekdays from June to October, but they were open to the community on weekends, and for the rest of the year. This is why these fields were not as much of a problem (Shockley 2008).

Nonetheless, this shows a trend of Columbia creeping into Morningside Park, and attempting to privatize parts of it. More importantly, it also shows a trend of city officials and departments allowing and supporting these kind of advancements when done by institutions like Columbia University. The *New York Times* even wrote in support of the gymnasium plan:

> This newspaper ordinarily disapproves the taking of any park land for non-park purposes. ... But once in a while the community need for specialized use of a fragment of park property – elsewhere than Central Park, which should be inviolate – can outweigh the need for purely park use.

This plan had the consent of the mayor, the parks commissioner, the City Council, the Legislature, and was approved unanimously by the Board of Estimate, none of whom thought it a problem for Columbia University to appropriate approximately two acres of public space for its private use (Shockley 2008).

The plan was approved in 1961, and the construction and the consequent protests occurred in 1968. In those years, the city administration saw some changes, particularly, the Parks Commissioner in 1966, Thomas Hoving, expressed strong negative sentiment towards Columbia's plans, saying that he was "pretty damned upset" about the deal, and added that "this is the most puzzling example of the use of public space for a private institution that I have ever seen"

(Shockley 2008, 15). Meanwhile, the Parks Commissioner in 1968, August Heckscher, promised that if Columbia abandoned its plans for Morningside Park, he "will do everything in my power to keep its naturalistic features while making it useful to the community it serves" (Shockley 2008, 16). In August 1968, Columbia's president resigned, and in March 1969, the Columbia Board of Trustees officially abandoned its plans for Morningside Park. This was a historical moment for both the park and the Harlem community, as large scale changes were promised for the park, with $500,000 allocated for the rehabilitation of the long-neglected park, the formation of the Morningside Park Preservation Committee, and eventually, the formation of The Friends of Morningside Park in 1981 by a Columbia student. (Shockley 2008).

4.3 Perceptions of Morningside Park

One of the main objectives of this research was to explore what perceptions park users and stakeholders have about parks, in this particular case, about Morningside Park. A related objective is also to understand how these perceptions do not only reside in people's mind, but can have real impacts on how a park is used, maintained, and kept, and by extension, have impacts on the park's ability to serve an environmental justice goal. This section will explore the perceptions of the park both as recounted by interview participants, as well as through historical records. The section will also discuss some of the consequences and implications that certain perceptions have on the park.

4.3.1 The Dangerous Park

One of the most common perceptions about Morningside Park has been that it is a dangerous park. This perception about Morningside came up across all interviews conducted, as well as in many of the historical reports and archives across different eras of the park's lifetime. While the participants did not themselves necessarily believe this perception to be true, many believed it to be a perception held by many, particularly by people on the Morningside Heights side of the park. An issue that needs to be discussed hand in hand with the perception that the park is dangerous, which is often a cause for this perception, is the issue of maintenance of the park. However, it is also important to note who holds this perception of the park, and what underlying reasons or biases can lead people to believe a space to be dangerous.

As early as 1911, the *New York Times* published a petition by Columbia faculty and others who were concerned about the status of the park, titled "Urge City Against Popularizing Parks" in which the petitioners complained about the park's use as a playground and ball field, as well as general issues of safety and crime, and the park's use by "gangs of hoodlums" (Shockley 2008, 13). In 1935, the *Herald Tribune* published an article written anonymously titled "Columbia and

St. Luke's 'Post' Morningside Park as thug's lair" (Solecki et al. 1995, 106), and in the same year, The Times reportedly noted a sign posted in the dorms of students from the Teachers College of Columbia University, which announced that "it is not safe to enter Morningside Park at any time of the day or night" (Gray 2005). In 1955, the *New York Times* again reported how "the park was virtually off-bounds to [Columbia University] students and faculty as 'too dangerous'" (Samuels 1955). Solecki and Welch (1995) cite another *Herald Tribune* article in 1961 in which D. Ross reports on Columbia University constructing iron gates at the park's entrances, which were locked at night. In 1975, after the promised plans to redevelop and improve Morningside Park were – once again – abandoned due to financial reasons, the *New York Times'* Ada Louise Huxtable wrote about urban development, mentioning Morningside Park as an example that simply developing a place does not make the problems of that place go away, adding that "Morningside Park may now be the city's most crime-ridden, underutilized and dangerous spot" (Huxtable 1975).

There are two important trends to note form these historical records. The first is that almost every complaint about Morningside being dangerous came from the Morningside Heights institutions and individuals such as Columbia University and St. Luke's, but no such complaints can be found from the Harlem community. Johnathan Thomas, a Community Board 9 member and a long-term Harlem community members states that he has never heard of Morningside Park being considered unsafe. He goes on to say that it is Riverside Park that he would avoid at night, as it feels more secluded. In fact, during the gymnasium controversy, leaders of neighborhood groups went on tours of Morningside Park with Manhattan Borough president and other governmental officials to "show its deteriorated conditions and the need for reinstated funding, as well as to counter perceptions that the park was dangerous" (Shockley 2008, 15).

The other issue to note is that perceptions of the park being dangerous are tightly related to the park historically suffering from neglect and lack of maintenance. Brad Taylor, discussing the need for maintenance in the park remarks that

> the area that still needs attention is the upper level, it still can be a little frightening to be in there, uh, because there are lots of twists and turns there's no signage in the park so you come into a place and you don't know… like to get up to Columbia do I go this way or that way… so, when the trees are all overgrown it becomes even more [frightening].

Today, these perceptions seem to still come up. Interview participants, especially those associated with Columbia University, mentioned how Riverside Park is often considered as the safe park, while there is a general perception among students that Morningside Park is dangerous to enter, particularly due to crime issues. Brad Taylor, the president of Friends of Morningside Park and an interviewee brought up this particular issue, mentioning that the kind of crimes that occur in the park are often non-violent crimes, such as robbery. More importantly, he noted that for some time, the Friends kept track of crime statistics within the park, in comparison with statistics in surrounding precincts, and found that one is more likely to get mugged outside of the park than within it. He recalls when he started his role in the Friends in the early 2000 that "it used to be that, especially from the Morningside Heights community, there was a real fear of the park, and people wouldn't go into it." According to data from New York Police Department and New York Parks Department, in 2015, there was a total of three crimes in Morningside Park, all of them robbery crime. In 2016, the number was seven, six robberies and one felony assault. In comparison, Riverside Park had 10 crimes in 2015, and 13 in 2016, all either robberies or felony assaults (New York Police Department 2017). This is not to say that instances of more dangerous or more violent crimes do not occur, but they are not unique to Morningside Park.

Nonetheless, in Columbia University, the institutional legacy of fearing the park, and distancing the institution from the surrounding neighborhood and people remains. Elana

Sulakshana, a student activist in Columbia Divest for Climate Justice, recalled advice given to her by her mother who worked at Barnard for a year in the 80s, discouraging her from going to Morningside. She mentioned that the association that her mother had with Morningside was those of drugs and crime, however she mentioned that she does not share these same associations, and she doesn't believe Morningside Park to be a particularly dangerous place. Another Columbia student, Sofia Gouen concluded her interview by stating that "Riverside is definitely the favorite of Columbia students… more often than not, you will get people to say positive things about Riverside before they say anything nice about Morningside."

Some of the students interviewed believed this perception to be related to race. When Elana Sulakshana was asked to elaborate on her mother's advice, she stated that while she cannot invalidate her mother's experience, she believed that there were "racial factors driving people to perceive the park in that way, and still do… like, oh this is where black people hang out, they do drugs and steal your things so don't go there." This sentiment was repeated by Miles Hilton, a regular park user and student at Columbia University, who said that students who preferred Riverside over Morningside, believing Morningside to be dangerous were "racist students," elaborating that

> because the people who live near Morningside Park tend to be not white, you know tend to be black and brown people, it makes like the elite mostly white population of Columbia uncomfortable, I guess, to like be in a space that's dominated by mostly black and brown people. Which's like not a phenomenon that's exclusive to parks obviously but it definitely manifests in how people deal with the parks or interact with them I should say.

In 2015, a student-run newspaper, *The Morningside Post*, published an article by a public administration student entitled "Who's Afraid of Morningside Park?" The student recounts her experience arriving to Columbia, and being warned by both fellow students and the university's public safety against going through the park. Renu Pokharna mentions how being too tired to go

around the park one day, she decided to go through it at 1:00 am. She was surprised that the walk was not at all unsafe or uncomfortable. Pokharna then decided to do a social experiment where she used student Facebook groups to solicit volunteers to go through the park with her in the evening. She received zero volunteers, and many comments of disapproval. The student interviewed an Agent Garcia of the 28th precinct, which is the precinct under which the park falls, who said "I have been here ten years… It's pretty safe, that is my impression. The 28th precinct is one of the safest precincts in New York." Pokharna also points out that the university's public safety has reported more burglaries, assaults, and sex-related crimes happening on campus than happening in the park, yet the impression of the park remains strong in the minds of many Columbia University members. She finishes by asking these important questions

> Is it the park, or the big bad world of less-affluent neighborhoods outside our cozy Columbia University campus that really scares us? How many of us actually frequent parts of Harlem apart from jazz bars and pubs during happy hours? … When we want to save children from malnutrition in Malawi, or create job opportunities for the needy in India, we should start by knowing our neighborhood better.

The NYPD officer she interviewed simply states that "Morningside Park is as unsafe as New York is and as safe as New York is" (Pokharna 2015).

4.3.2 The Inaccessible/Barrier Park

Morningside Park being perceived as dangerous is not the only perception that exists about the park. One perception that came up during the research is the perception that Morningside is difficult to access, or that it serves as a barrier, something that stands in the way, or something that separates between the two communities on both sides of the park. Morningside Park is the official border between Harlem and Morningside Heights, which makes sense considering the topography of the area. However, this has brought up questions about the ways in which the park serves as an

actual barrier to the interactions and the mixing of the two neighborhoods. This is also a problem related to how the park was designed along the rough and steeply inclined outcrops.

When asked about Morningside Park, Sofia Gouen mentioned that she most associates Morningside Park with stairs, and described the park as being "a little bit of a pain to get through." Other participants also mentioned the stairs that lead from Morningside Drive in Morningside Heights into the park, mentioning how difficult it is, for example, to get a bike in and out of the park due to the many sets of stairs one has to climb. Gouen mentioned that she believes the reason many Columbia students avoid going through Morningside Park is precisely to avoid the stairs, "people hate the stairs" she said, "and I like heard that over and over." She feels that Morningside Park gives the impression of being "in the way" due to how difficult it is to cross back and forth between the two neighborhoods through Morningside Park.

This perception however is not a new or unique idea to the participants in this research. Solecki and Welch (1995) published an article titled "Urban Parks: Green Spaces or Green Walls" exploring the hypothesis that often times, parks that are a border between neighborhoods serve to further segregate socioeconomically and demographically differentiated neighborhoods. While the study was done on parks in Boston, the authors cited Morningside Park as an "excellent example" of a city park that serves as a boundary between neighborhood "which separates the poor, predominantly minority neighborhood of West Harlem from the predominantly white, middle-class neighborhood of Morningside Heights" (Solecki and Welch 1995, 95).

However, for others, rather than viewing the park as a border that segregates the rich and the poor, they view it as a barrier of public space that protects neighborhoods such as Harlem from encroaching institutions such as Columbia and more affluent neighborhoods such as Morningside Heights. Bradely (2010, 21) describes Morningside Park as being a "buffer zone between the two

very different environments." He argues that while many people viewed the park negatively, for many of the people who lived around and used the park, it "represented a piece of land that not even a rich and powerful, predominantly white institution like Columbia University could take from them" (Bradley 2010, 39). However, as the park's restoration operations have been ongoing, along with the changing demographics of Harlem, this differentiation between the two neighborhoods is beginning to disappear. Brad Taylor mentions that "there is not as much of a divide. There used to be a real divide between communities on the west side of the park and the east side of the park."

4.4 Use of Morningside Park

This section will be discussing the ways, both historical and current, that the park has been used by the surrounding communities. Studying park use is important because many of the benefits that people can get from parks is dependent on how the park is being used. As I mentioned in the literature review, if the park is not being used by the intended community, then the park cannot be serving an environmental justice purpose. Aside from discussing park uses, this section will point to the changes that have occurred over time in park use, and the significance of these changes. This section will also tie to the ideas of design, history, and perceptions and how all of these factors influence park use.

The way a park is designed will inevitably affect the way a park is used. This is why considering who will be using a park should be an important aspect in park design. In the case of Morningside Park however, as mentioned in previous sections, the park was designed with economic limitations in mind, and considering the topography of the park, that means that much of the park remained a descending cliff-side with wild vegetation and a lot of stairs, and little of the park is usable flatland. In 1873, Olmsted (one of the park designers) commented on the park

by saying that “the only surfaces within it not sharply inclined are two small patches lying widely apart, against the northeast and southwest corners respectively” (Bradley 2010, 21).

This has been a limiting factor on the kind of activities that the park can be used for, particularly after the construction of Columbia’s athletic fields in the flatland in the southeast corner of the park. Nonetheless, the communities that surround the park still find ways to utilize this green space, in ways that are sometimes unique to Morningside Park itself. For example, Columbia and Barnard’s departments of Earth and Environmental Sciences have a core geology class for their majors which has a mandatory field trip to Morningside Park.[3] The cliff sides of Morningside Park carry many glacial groves and other glacial markers, and the nearby academic institutions have used the park as a resource for geological education.

Another use of the park that many interviewees indicated is for sports or exercising. As part of their initiative to get people to use the park more, The Friends of Morningside Park started their own workouts that take place in the park. Additionally, the area around the pond in the park has been renovated as a running and walking path, with rest stops along the path. Brad Taylor, president of The Friends, indicated that this use of the park, especially by individuals rather than teams, comes with a new culture of health and exercising, as well as with a sense of safety in being in the park. He points out that he did not use to see so many individuals exercising in the park, but it is a welcome sight for him and his organization. Additionally, even the less desirable features of the park, such as the stairs, are being incorporated into the workout routines of health enthusiasts. Taylor mentions that some health clubs use the stairs in an almost military drill like fashion, while Sofia Gouen uses the stairs to switch up her exercising patterns.

[3] The author has taken this core geology course, and has been to Morningside Park for this field trip as part of her undergraduate degree.

There are of course many reasons and ways in which people use parks. Taking a break from the noise of the city, being around greenery, and exercising are all park uses that participants have mentioned. However, in the following sections, I will be focusing more on park uses and park use issues that are somewhat unique to Morningside Park and to the communities surrounding it.

4.4.1 Morningside Park as a Corridor

One of the ways that the park is both perceived as well as used is as a corridor that connects the Morningside Heights and the Harlem communities. As I discussed above, there have been times when the park was seen more as barrier rather than a corridor, and that might still be the case sometimes, however, especially during the day, the park is often used as a quick way to cross through from one neighborhood to the other.

Many people who work at or around Columbia University live in Harlem, and cross the park each day to get to work. Additionally, there are different Subway lines east and west of the park, and commuters who live in the area cross through the park to get to their desired Subway line. Going through the park, while it might involve some stair climbing is a much easier way to move through from one neighborhood to the other than to attempt avoiding the park. Avoiding the park often means a few extra blocks of walking and quite a bit more time. Brad Taylor considers this use to be one of the best things to improving perceptions of safety of the park and for bridging the gap between the two neighborhoods

> Having people that go through the park so much is good…it creates a much better perception of the park and that it is a more safe environment because if you don't go into it and you're kind of afraid of it you know it is never gonna get better, so getting people into the park and using the park and commuting through the park is really very important.

These efforts from The Friends have not gone unnoticed by park users. Miles Hilton comments on noticing these efforts

> Morningside tries really hard to engage the community… They really try to get people to go into the park and run along the paths… there are also down towards the bottom of the park there are playgrounds which are almost always full of kids, like even if it's really late at night. There's a dog park, there's an open fieldish area towards the bottom… there are also cook-out spots in Morningside which I have seen people using.

Other participants expressed that they used the park in similar ways, however, one comment that came up is that Morningside Park then only feels like a place one goes to temporarily for the purpose of commuting, but not really a place to go to for leisure purposes. However, this is also an issue that relates to the amenities that exist or that are lacking in the park. Due to the park's design, spending time in the park is sometimes made harder, as it can be physically tiring to move from one area to another, or the flat areas might be too crowded at times. Nonetheless, this use of the park has allowed for the park to have constant traffic going through it, contributing to dispelling perceptions of unsafety, and giving organizations like The Friends a strong argument when demanding improvements for the park.

4.4.2 Communities, Barbecues, and Playgrounds

Across all interviews and through observations, one theme that constantly came up as related to park use that is unique to Morningside park has been the use of the park as a community space, and the park as a space that fosters community relations. NYC Park's Department website describes Morningside Park as a park that "blends dramatic landscaping, with the pleasures of a community park" (NYC Department of Parks and Recreation 2017). So the status of the park as a community park is recognized even on a governmental level. Participants cited this as a clear difference they noticed between Morningside Park and Riverside Park, in that Morningside Park is often full of families, people in groups doing group activities such as birthday parties and barbecues, while Riverside Park seems to be used more on an individual basis. Johnathan Thomas, a Community Board 9 member and a community member states that due to the Park's location in

the heart of Harlem, it has a lot more activity (than Riverside Park) and it has become "a socializing spot" for everyone.

Brad Taylor stated that even long before The Friends existed, and even before the park started being better taken care of, the Harlem community has used the park "as their backyard" for community gatherings and cookouts since a long time ago. Having Barbecues and cookouts in Morningside Park, especially on holiday weekends such as the 4th of July, has become a tradition for the Harlem community. This is something that participants note as a positive aspect and a positive use of the park, as it brings a community and a celebration spirit to the park. Elana Sulakshana recounts an experience of walking through the park:

> I remember, I walked through the whole thing on a Sunday afternoon, there were so many people out barbecuing and hanging out, tons of kids, with like boom boxes, and it was really fun to walk through, and it just felt very much like a community space… It was just like this whole field that was filled with people in different clusters, and there was like music and dancing and stuff in a way that I haven't seen in Riverside or central park to the same extent.

Participants noted the absence of such community activities in the parts of Riverside by Morningside Heights neighborhood, but noted that once one goes further north in Riverside Park, where Riverside meets parts of Harlem[4], these activities become a common sight again. Participants believed this to be related to the cultures of the people living around the park. When asked why she thought this difference in park use existed, Elana Sulakshana commented saying that she believed "the populations (non-white people) that the parks are catered to or that are near [the park] … the populations in Harlem are more likely to use green spaces in this way than yuppies[5] on the Upper West Side[6]."

[4] Morningside Heights extends north until about 120th or 125th St., the neighborhood north of that is part of the larger Harlem neighborhood.

[5] Yuppies: originally short for young urban professional (YUP). Someone who is young and rich. Today most often used to refer to specifically white rich people.

[6] Upper West Side: a generalized way to refer to neighborhoods in the northwest parts of Manhattan, such as Morningside Heights.

The fact that barbecues and cookouts (which are often banned from other parks such as Central Park) are very common and desired by the Harlem community has not been absent from issues of park management and governance. With increased park regulations from The Parks Department, barbecues can now only take place in designated areas, and barbecues of 20 people or more require a special permit. Initially, Morningside had one designated area for cookouts and Barbecues, however, according to Brad Taylor, that creates a serious issue of overcrowding, especially since Morningside is one of the few parks in the area where barbecues are allowed, which means people come from further out of the neighborhood to use the barbecuing facilities. Because of this, there are now three designated areas in Morningside for Barbecues. The issue of overcrowding, especially in the summer months and around special holidays remains a big problem for the park. This is exacerbated by the lack of a dedicated cleaning and maintenance staff for the park.

Another amenity of the park that has helped revitalize it is the dog run, and the children playgrounds. Brad Taylor mentions how having a dog run has made the park use a lot more frequent, as dogs need to be walked multiple times a day. This has created a community of people who know each other and interact with one another because they meet while walking their dogs every day. More importantly, this has encouraged people to use the park in the evening hours, and helps break the perception of the park being unsafe after sunset.

The other feature that has been recently developed and is becoming a main attraction of Morningside Park is the new playgrounds. The Manhattan Community Board 9 sets yearly priorities, and Taylor mentions that the Morningside playgrounds have been on their agendas and list of priorities, especially for the Landmark Preservation and Parks Committee. The first playground was finished in 2008 at 116th St. and cost 2 million dollars to complete. *The New York*

Times reported that the playground was "an instant hit" with children and parents (Dominus 2008). Taylor mentions that The Friends were impressed and surprised at how popular this playground was, and that Parks' Department said it was the most popular playground in the system. This was the first major capital project in Morningside Park since The Friends commissioned a Master Plan for the park in 2001. Interestingly, the first playground to be constructed was set to be on 123rd, however, according to Taylor, The Friends and the Parks' Department decided to go ahead with development at 116th first.

Taylor gives multiple reasons for that, the first is that the area where the playground now stands used to be in worse shape than the area on 123rd, and had many undesirable uses at the time. The second reason is its location in the middle of the park, and at the center of the corridor that connects Harlem and Morningside Heights. One of the biggest main entrances to the park is at 116th St., and across the street from that is the main entrance to Columbia University, and into Morningside Heights. Tylor believed having the playground at 116th be finished first "was vital to the cross-traffic" between the two neighborhoods, as it would mean having people in that corridor constantly using it and constantly present in the park.

Morningside Park has had a long history of being used by the surrounding communities, in accordance with their cultural and historical traditions. The park has served as a space full of green in the middle of the concrete jungle that is Manhattan, and has been a space for children and adults to exercise, play group and individual sports, walk their dogs, meet their neighbors, and celebrate different holidays. As Miles Hilton notes

> Morningside does a good job of being a public space that's still very much by and for the people who live around it and that still gives them a number of resources and ways to connect with each other that they aren't afforded in other spaces they may inhabit.

Nevertheless, the park continues to face a plethora of issues, some of which have historical roots, and some more recent. These issues interact with how the park is perceived and how the park is used. In the following section, I will be discussing some of these problems, and their impact on the park and the neighborhood.

4.5 Trouble in Morningside Park

So far, I have discussed many problems that have historically faced the park, and the many challenges that the troubled history of the park brings up. However, this section will discuss in more detail some of the main problems that have come up, and the ways these problems affect park use and perceptions. I will be discussing three main issues that have come up throughout the research: the first is issues of maintenance, funding, and governance of the park; the second is the issue of the private use of the park by some organizations, often sanctioned by the parks department; and the last is the issue of exclusive development and how it affects the park and the neighborhood. All of these issues are somewhat controversial, and there are people who see them as problems, and others who see them as improvements with positive potential. Nonetheless, the important point is that these issues came up in the research, and they affect or stem from park use or perceptions of the park.

4.5.1 Funding, Maintenance, and Governance in Morningside Park

Out of the many problems that face Morningside Park, many can be connected to issues of park governance, financing, and maintenance. The way that many parks in New York City are run and the way that they secure their funding is through having park organizations known as 'Conservancies.' Both of the parks near Morningside Park, that is Central Park and Riverside Park have their own conservancies, which are defined by The Trust for Public Land's Center for City Park Excellence (2009) as:

> Private, non-profit, park-benefit organizations that raise money independent of the city and spend it under a plan of action that is mutually agreed upon with the city. Conservancies do not own any parkland nor do they hold easements on it; the land continues to remain in the ownership of the city, and the city retains ultimate authority over everything that happens there.

However, Morningside Park does not have this structure. Aside from the Park's Department, The Friends of Morningside Park is the only organization currently working and raising external funds for Morningside Park. According to Taylor, The Friends were told by the Parks Department that there is no "economic base" to support having a conservancy for Morningside Park.

The Friends of Morningside Park was founded in 1981 by Tom Kiel, a Columbia student who saw the deteriorated condition of the park, and decided to start having clean-up meetings. Much like everything surrounding Morningside Park, Kiel's and other Columbia students actions stirred some controversy. Harlem residents were not happy with these students acting alone in the park, and some community leaders accused them of being arrogant, while the Parks Commissioner reportedly said they were insensitive to the troubled history of the park (B. Stewart 2001). Nonetheless, Kiel and Harlem community members went on to establish The Friends in order to prevent the city from implementing changes to the park that completely disregarded the original architectural design of the park. The goal of the organization was to restore the park while protecting its original design and authenticity.

Most of the upkeep, maintenance, and policy planning in the park is done by the NYC Park's Department. Taylor mentions that Morningside Park does not have staff dedicated to Morningside, instead, the staff from the Park's Department work regionally in multiple parks and lawns in the area. This arrangement makes it difficult to keep Morningside maintained, especially in the summer when the number of people attending barbecues and parties in the park can reach up to 1000 people (Mays 2013). Within their capacity, The Friends raise funds for light equipment for lawn maintenance, and after a shooting took place in the park, they installed surveillance cameras in some parts of the park.

The upper parts of the park remain in need of much maintenance throughout the year, and Taylor mentions that it is sometimes difficult to get staff to do the climbing needed to maintain those parts, which is one of the reasons the upper parts of the park remain in somewhat deteriorated and shabby condition. This could have impacts on how the park is perceived and used. Sofia Gouen feels that the park is largely desolate and unkempt, and that it only becomes appealing to go to in the summer months, when there are more maintenance and cleaning efforts.

The problem here is that this funding structure privileges parks in more affluent areas and parks with conservancies over smaller, poorer parks such as Morningside Park. In 2013, Central Park received a donation gift of $100 million. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Taylor describes this as "a recipe for disaster," as many of the parks in less affluent area fear that these individual gifts would take away from overall public funding for the park. This would lead to these parks receiving even less funds than they are receiving now. The largest gift that Morningside Park ever received was $10,000 (Foderaro 2013), and as mentioned previously, simply the construction of a single playground can cost up to $2 million.

Taylor mentions that when it comes to the parks, "the effort goes where the money is." This is relevant in another problem that Morningside has, which is the lack of any Park Enforcement Patrol (PEP) in Morningside Park, as the park cannot afford to pay their salaries. Meanwhile, smaller parks such as Madison Square Park have six PEP officers dedicated solely to the 7-acre park. Taylor sees having a PEP officer as a perception issue, as having patrols can make people feel more safe. At the same time, considering the relationship between Harlem, the park, and the history of law enforcement violence and discrimination, having PEP officers can just as well make some people feel unsafe in the park.

This can be seen when it comes to an issue like being in the park after hours, something that a PEP officer could give a park user a ticket resulting in a fine for. Unlike the nearby Riverside Park and Central Park, which close at 1:00 a.m., Morningside Park closes at 10:00 p.m. The NYPD, despite the efforts of The Friends and community members, refuses to allow for the park to remain open later. This is an issue because as mentioned previously, this is a corridor and a commuter park, many people would need to go through the park after 10:00 p.m. to get to and from Harlem. This is also a problem because in the summer especially, people will want to go out and have their barbecues and parties in the park for later, but the hours of the park either prevents them from doing that, or makes many gatherings illegal, and causes clashes with law enforcement. For that reason, having PEP officers might not necessarily be a positive thing for the Harlem community, especially if the law is not equally enforced. Miles Hilton brings into question the whole necessity of having park closing hours

> I don't get why parks have hours… it basically just gives police the excuse to arrest people who are in Riverside [Park] after hours, even if they aren't doing anything wrong… I cannot think of a way it makes the park any better or the people any safer, or that it contributes at all to the experience of the park, literally all it is, is giving police an excuse to arrest certain people….

Taylor confirms that issues regarding unequal enforcement of the law based on skin-color or attire have come up when Morningside Park had a PEP officer in the past. When asked why he believes Morningside Park has a different closing time than other surrounding parks, Taylor said he believed Columbia to have been involved in the making of that decision.

4.5.2 Public Land, Private Use

The issue of using public land for private use might not seem like an obvious problem in the park, however, for Morningside Park, this has historical roots in the troubled relationship between Morningside Park and the Harlem community, and Columbia University. Columbia was the first actor to be allowed to privately use public land, when it constructed two softball fields in

1950s (Bradley 2010). I want to reiterate here that the university constructed these fields on one of the only two usable large flat areas in Morningside Park, meaning that a big part of the usable park space has now become at least partially privatized.

Initially, these fields were viewed positively, as Harlem residents and other nonstudents were allowed to use the softball fields, and the university and community members held joint football and baseball games for community youth, however, there were multiple criticisms of the university programs. Firstly, the university community programs done in the park did not seem to target the Harlem residents that needed them the most, instead they targeted middle-class Harlem youth, or 'respectable' youth. The other criticism is that the fields could only be used with a member of the university present in the fields. By the mid-60s, and a few years before the gym crisis, Harlem residents noticed that the gates to the fields during the times allocated to nonstudents were more often closed than open. Bradley (2010) cites Dwight C. Smith, Chair of Morningside Renewal Council writing to *The New York Times* in May of 1966 that

> [A]s the neighbors look at the locked fence around the ball field on what was one of the most available play areas in Morningside Park, they seldom see it occupied by other than Columbia students.

Bradley then notes that Harlem residents were worried the same would have happened with the Columbia gymnasium plan, and that's why Harlem residents were so opposed to any more privatization of the Morningside's land (Bradley 2010). All this suggests that there is a historical legacy of fear of privatizing public space, especially in Morningside Park.

Perhaps then it is not surprising that this is still very much an issue that comes up today. While attending the Manhattan Community Board 9 meeting for the Landmark Preservation and Parks Committee, one of the members mentioned having an issue with a festival that was to take place in Morningside Park. The festival is called HarlemEatUp! Festival, and it is a festival with many culinary events, presentations and cultural performances. The festival takes over large parts

of the park for an entire week in mid-May, and according to Taylor, it disturbs much of the traffic in the area, causing disturbance to the local residents. The main issue here however is not that the festival happens, but that it is quite an expensive festival, and the area of the park where the festival takes place is closed for those who do not have tickets.

The ticket prices for the festival on Eventbrite[7] for this year were $85-$230 with different privileges for each of the ticket categories. The Community Board 9 members' main problem with this event is that this is an event that privatizes and makes profit off of public land for a week, without the community or the park getting any benefit or any return for that privatization. Brad Taylor had similar concerns. This is the third year that the festival has happened. Last year, the organization responsible made a $1000 donation to the park, but that was only a one-time occurrence, and there has not been a long-term arrangement for this festival. Additionally, The Friends has not been consulted with or has not been part of the planning of the event, and the planning has happened directly with the Park's Department. Taylor mentions that The Friends feels largely powerless to change or intervene as community representatives and park protectors, as this event is reportedly being supported from the Mayor's office directly.

This festival brings up multiple issues. Firstly, there is the exclusion of the only community organization that works within the park, and the only park organization from the planning of the event. The other issue is that this is a for-profit event, but the park is not profiting despite the land of the park being used for the event. Lastly, there's the age old issue of discussing whether public lands should be available for privatizing under any circumstances, even for a short period of time. Again, this is especially true for a park as small as Morningside Park, with little usable flatland.

[7] Eventbrite is a website that allows people to purchase tickets for events online. The HarlemEatUp! Page for 2017 can be found at www.eventbrite.com/e/third-annual-harlem-eatup-festival-tickets-32560071049.

When these areas are privatized, it excludes many community members who cannot afford the festival tickets or who are simply interested in using their park, but not attending this festival.

4.5.3 Morningside Park and the Issue of Exclusive Development

When it comes to exclusive development, its relationship to parks, and its impacts on neighborhoods, the relationship can go in two ways. Parks can be a cause in demographic changes in a neighborhood, and alternatively the changing demographics of a neighborhood can affect a park. This is somewhat what has been happening in Morningside Park.

Participants have felt that the influx of white and higher income residents into Harlem has had a role in revitalizing Morningside Park. Brad Taylor suggests that the influx of Columbia students and faculty into Harlem, has caused the traffic in the Morningside corridor, which is a big part of the revitalizing efforts for the park. Elena[8], a social worker who has been working in St. Luke's hospital[9] for 31 years, has seen the park go through many changes, and many cycles of progress and deterioration. She says that she has only started going into the park in the past five years, as she felt the park was too dangerous to go into before that. However, another thing that Elena notes is that parks with a white population living around have better maintenance and better facilities. She sees this new progress in Morningside Park as being a result of the changing demographic around the park. She believes that the push for better facilities comes from pressure by new, wealthier residents who have more lobbying power to make parks better. Additionally, she sees that Columbia's further expansion into Harlem has incentivized the university to push for better facilities and better safety measures in the park. While she is happy to see the park improving, she wishes the park could have seen these changes without the exclusive development of Harlem happening, and without many of the neighborhood's minorities getting pushed out.

[8] Elena asked for her last name to remain anonymous.
[9] St. Luke's Hospital is one of the institutions located on Morningside Drive, at the western edge of the park.

But one might ask, how is this a park use issue? How does the changing demographic of Harlem affecting park use? The answer is that different demographics use parks differently, based on their culture and tradition. No issue in Morningside Park illustrates this more clearly than the issue of barbecues, which have become quite a controversial topic among Harlem residents, and for Morningside Park. Checker (2011) mentions that the restoration of the park in recent years was done in a way that brings in rules and regulations which allow certain uses and consumption of the park, while creating barriers for other uses. People were now more likely to be fined by police and patrol officers for 'unauthorized' family picnics, and for walking in the park outside of park hours. In a town hall meeting in 2006, discontented residents told officials "we have been barbe-quing for years. We have a Father's Day event that's been going on for over 30 years and now they want to stop us from doing it. You want us to enjoy the park and the park is for the community; we *are* the community" (Checker 2011, 224).

This very same Father's Day event was also brought up by Brad Taylor. While discussing exclusive development and the changing demographics of the neighborhood in the context of gentrification, Taylor said that "the easiest way to get into the issue [of gentrification] … is around the issue of barbecuing in the park." The Father's Day event is a basketball tournament, that is often followed by grilling, barbecuing and celebrations in the park by the community. Taylor described the event as a family friendly, and as a positive and good event for the community. What people complained about, according to Taylor, was the event were that it went on for too late, and that after the official event ended, it turned into a "rowdy party." Taylor thinks the problem is that the event was widely publicized, and that attracted people from all around for a party in the park, even if they were not necessarily associated with the park.

One big complaint about barbecuing came from dog owners, whose dogs would find many bones scattered about the park the next morning. Taylor notes that the contention often seems to break down along racial and economic lines, and in a "newcomer vs. old timer" fashion, because Harlem residents have been using the park for barbecuing for decades if not longer, while these newcomers "who have not done their research" are not part of this tradition. Taylor said he and The Friends do not have a problem with barbecuing at all, but he wishes people would clean after themselves in the park, and acquire the necessary permits[10] for their events.

In 2005, the *New York Times* published an article titled "As the City Shrugs, It's Burgers, Steaks and Ribs" which reported the complaint of some residents around the park about the summer Barbecues. The article disapprovingly announces that "the grillers, it seems, are winning the battle; the city even provides trash bags for them. Along with a 'charcoal only' bin to encourage cleanup," and goes on to quote one trader living in the neighborhood as saying that "people shouldn't take it and use it as their own personal backyard, and we shouldn't be smoked out of our own house." It is interesting to note the use of the term 'backyard' as I have previously cited Tylor as asserting that Harlem residents have historically used the park as "their backyard," long before there were any improvements in the park, and before anyone else was interested in the park. The article also quotes a Harlem resident as saying "we don't have transportation to go somewhere far, and we'd rather be in the neighborhood" (Lye 2005).

This same article received a scalding response from one Harlem resident, in a letter sent to the *New York Times.* The author of the letter, Mr. George Dawson who lives 100 feet from the park expressed his gratitude that his children live in a neighborhood where this type of family-

[10] Note that these permits need to be acquired for parties with 20 or more people. This could be seen as an inconvenient and can require extensive previous planning, especially since 20 people can be just one family. This might be a reason why many residents avoid going through the process of getting a permit.

centered and culturally rich celebrations, such as Juneteenth, can take place. He also stated that despite the many barbecues taking place in the park, he and his family were never 'smoked out' of their house. Dawson mentions noticing the deteriorating conditions of the park as separate from the barbecues, and he also mentions noticing "the seeming increase in the arrogant display of entitlement and chauvinism in some of our neighbors" (Dawson 2005).

Barbecues have essentially become a representative and a symbolic issue for the problem of exclusive development and the changing demographics that come with it, so much that even a town hall that was held around the issue of a shooting that occurred near the 116th playground, became a discussion around barbecuing. A *New York Times* article reported the progression of events post a shooting in Morningside Park, which made the new duality of Harlem and the duality around park use very clear. The article states that while Morningside Park has benefited from development, it also provides an escape from it for those who cannot afford the new upscale beer garden, or the pricy Starbucks. Nonetheless, issues around how the park should be used have become more and more apparent. The article notes that a few years back, a shooting like this, especially since no one was hurt, would have not received all that much attention. But with the many young professionals moving into Harlem condominiums with prices upwards of $1.4 million, that of course was not the case. In the aftermath of the shooting in June 2011, a group of newer Harlem residents started a mass letter-writing campaign and email-chains to community representatives, demanding a safer neighborhood and an end to gun-violence, and more importantly, demanding more police presence in the neighborhood and in the park itself (Leland 2011).

The issue of course is not that these newcomers were attempting to protect themselves against gun violence, the problem is their approach ignored already existing efforts, and sidelined

community members who have been working on this long before the more affluent started moving in. An example of that is Ms. Aissatou Bey-Grecia[11], a member of the Harlem community since 1968, and someone who used to track violence in the neighborhood, who had reservation as to who these efforts are really benefiting. Leland (2011) quotes Bey-Grecia recounting a recent event where "kids were milling around after a barbecue, and our neighbors called the police on them. They sent out a lot of negative e-mail, and they thought that was O.K. It's saying, we're newcomers and we're changing things. There's a new sheriff in town." Bey-Grecia was concerned that increased police presence would lead to an increase in stop-and-frisks, but would have no real effect on crime rates. Leland (2011) also reported that upon the police increasing their patrols, there seemed to be more complaints about police patrol cars being too visible in the park than about crime. At a community forum that was supposed to discuss the shooting, arguments and debates eventually ended up being, once again, around barbecues.

[11] Bey-Grecia is also the vice president of The Friends of Morningside Park.

4.6 Discussion

What the Morningside Park case study shows is that access to green space, as measured by distance to nearest green space, or number of green spaces within a certain radius, or whatever other method is used to determine access, only represents a small part of the relationship between green spaces and environmental justice. Central Harlem South, the part of Harlem right next to Morningside Park, may achieve a high score on an environmental justice index where access to green spaces is an environmental justice indicator. However, this type of analysis misses so many of the complexities that surround the access Harlem residents have to the park.

It is important to acknowledge the other ways in which environmental justice is or is not achieved. Morningside Park serves to achieve environmental justice for the Harlem community in many ways. For one, it provides communities services and amenities such as playgrounds, the dog runs, and the athletic fields. It also has the unique feature of being a green highway between Morningside Heights and Harlem neighborhoods, that allows users a commute with added greenery and natural features in a city that is often described as a 'concrete jungle.' Furthermore, in respect and recognition of the history, culture, and tradition of Harlem communities, Morningside remained one of the only parks in the area where barbecuing is still allowed, and designated areas are provided with appropriate facilities. As Johnathan Thomas states discussing the changes in Morningside Park since his childhood: "They still allow people to cookout and that's very important. You hear the memories I'm talking about, baseball, cookouts, fun."

Additionally, the community is being engaged and encouraged to participate in policy making through organizations like The Friends, Community Board meetings, and town halls. The success of this is apparent in the success of the 116th playground, as the project was developed following interviews with community members.

Perhaps one of the most important ways in which the park serves environmental justice is by providing a free and open community space for leisure and recreation. As mentioned in the literature review, parks assist in building communities and in strengthening social ties, both of which are important for mental health, and for the overall quality of life of community members. This importance of community is understood by many people, even beyond what the scientific evidence provides. Miles Hilton, a Morningside Park user, believes that community spaces are very important in developing a neighborhood, making it safer and more supportive, and making the people in it healthier. Hilton goes on to say that

> …community in general gives individuals a sense of belonging and that people are looking out for them…that It will be okay, I guess, because people have their backs… it like gives you a sense of belonging to a larger community, that's not just like your family or whoever lives in a building with you or whatever. And it also gives you the opportunity to do things with your community like have a cookout, or play with your dogs, or have all the kids come together and scream which like would be hard in someone's apartment.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the factors that challenge Morningside Park's ability to serve environmental justice, particularly, its history and institutional context, the perceptions surrounding it, and use issues. While it is true that the residents have lived in proximity to this park, this access has often been obstructed, compromised, or otherwise made useless due to policies of neglect and abandonment of the park. The institutional context becomes all the more significant when considering the role that overbearing institutions, such as Columbia University, are allowed to play in the park's management and function, as well as their impact on the neighborhoods around the park.

Columbia University took over one of the only flatland usable areas of the park, and turned it into athletic fields, which often limited the access of non-Columbia students to those parts of the park. The gymnasium controversy, while it did not come to pass, was another example of park space and access to parts of the park being compromised by a powerful institution. Despite the

gymnasium never getting constructed, Columbia had already started excavating for the foundations of the gym, and after the plans were cancelled, that area had to be rehabilitated. However, proper rehabilitation of the landscape would have been too expensive, therefore, the area was simply turned into a pond. Once again, Columbia's actions made a part of the park inaccessible or unusable for community members. Columbia, both student body and administration, as well as other institutions such as St. Luke's also contribute to fueling negative perceptions of Morningside Park, and the neighborhoods beyond it.

This focus on perceptions is crucial, because the impacts that these perceptions have on parks are very real, and have a deep effect on the park and its users. In the end of the day, it was the perception of the park as dangerous that delayed its recognition as a scenic landmark until 2008, while parks designed by the same architects, namely Riverside Park and Central Park, got that designation decades prior (Beyer 2011). It was also these perceptions that have, for many years, kept people from going into and using the park, something that has led to the deteriorating and the undesirable use of the park. As Brad Taylor states to *The New York Times*, "A lot of it is perception, but perception is everything…" (Leland 2011).

As mentioned previously, many of The Friends efforts for restoring the park have gone towards simply getting people to *be* in the park, whether it is as part of their commute, or for whatever other reason. For a park to remain alive and useful, people need to be using it. It is also important to recognize and investigate where these perceptions come from. As some participants pointed out, these perceptions often stem from prejudice along racial and socioeconomic signs. An example of these perceptions still impacting the park today is the disparity in the closing hours of the park. The park continues to close at 10:00 p.m. despite community demand to change that, and despite nearby parks having a closing times three hours later. This is also an example of community

needs and desires not being recognized by policy makers, and of their participation being curbed or ignored.

Another significant issue, for Morningside Park as well as other green spaces in urban centers, is the issue of exclusive development. The ways that it affects parks, or that parks contribute to it still requires more investigation. However, in the case of Morningside Park, there seems to be clear potential for the changing demographics in the neighborhood altering and impacting park use. This change in Harlem is threatening one of the more unique aspects of park use in Morningside Park, which is barbecues and cookouts. More importantly, not only is this aspect of park use unique, it also has a strong cultural and historical tradition, particularly for the African-American and black communities in Harlem. In the words of Iris Young, "Culture is a legitimate, even necessary terrain of struggle – a sight of justice in its own right and deeply tied to economic inequality" (Schlosberg 2004, 519). From that perspective, threatening the long-held historical tradition of a people, and one of the few avenues for communities to come together and celebrate their holidays, and enjoy the park without extravagant spending, is an environmental injustice.

Development in Harlem is encroaching on a long held cultural tradition of the people who built Harlem itself, and who lived in Harlem and used Morningside Park through its toughest as well as most comfortable times. This conversation around development and the change it brings is also relevant to issues of restoration of parks, and park management. Checker (2011, 224) asks some important questions on the matter

> …what was the point of restoring such spaces [Morningside and Marcus Garvy Parks] if they would become exclusive enclaves that allowed certain kinds of cultural expression while suppressing others? In short, for whom did such spaces make the neighborhood sustainable? …Sustainability, in other words, was anything but politically neutral.

What Checker (2011) is asserting here is that it is important to think critically of the sudden changes that occur in a place like Harlem and its parks. Sustainability and other environmental issues are not apolitical, and factors such as race and class contribute heavily to how issues around parks are perceived and discussed, and to the solutions that are or are not offered.

Harlem residents have had access to Morningside Park since its establishment, however, they have had to (and they continue to) fight tooth and nail for their community space not to be appropriated out of their use by powerful institutions. They have had to fight for their right to have the space, for their right to use the space, and for their spaces to be respected, and properly maintained. The have also had to fight against the many stereotypes and negative perceptions that have led to the deteriorating and abandonment of their spaces. As Bey-Grecia states to *The New York Times* "This is a great neighborhood, and has been for a long time. It's not just new people who are bringing greatness" (Leland 2011).

It is important to *recognize*, as this research shows, that people of different cultural backgrounds use parks differently, therefore parks should be designed and managed to take that into consideration. It is also important to *respect* the cultural traditions of park use that communities like the Harlem community have fostered throughout history. Lastly, the success of the 116th playground, which was a project that community members were interviewed regarding highlights the significance and the necessity of community *participation and inclusion* in the decision making around parks. While the park currently serves certain aspects of environmental justice, this research shows that has not always been the case. It also shows that many of the current problems the park faces stem from factors such as history, institutional context, and perceptions. This further supports the argument that the existence of a park in and of itself does not always serve environmental justice.

5 Morningside Park and Environmental Justice: Conclusions and Recommendations

This research investigated what factors play a role in the relationship between parks and environmental justice. I looked at Morningside Park in New York City as a case study for this research in order to demonstrate the complexity of this relationship beyond the issue of access and distribution. The research especially took interest in the two other aspects of environmental justice, which are recognition and respect, and participation in the decision making.

Access to parks, while an important aspect of environmental justice, is not enough for parks to play a role in achieving environmental justice. The history of the park, the institutional context, the perceptions and the use of the park were all found to be factors that play a significant role in Morningside Park. While this research was done specifically on Morningside Park, these factors are important for urban green spaces and environmental justice in general.

The birth, growth and becoming of a park is a significant aspect of how a park comes to serve environmental justice. The circumstances under which a park came to be seems to be reflected in how it was designed (this is very clear for Morningside Park as explored in 4.1.2), whether or not it is properly maintained, the perceptions that surround it, and the way it's used. Part of the growth of a park is the relationships it develops with its neighboring institutions; that is the institutional context of the park. In the case of Morningside Park and Columbia, this has historically been a bitter relationship. Not only because of Columbia's appropriating of park space, but also because of its relationship to community residents as a landlord.

For the specific context of parks, and outside the access factor, environmental justice is conceptualized through history, institutional context, perceptions, and use. These factors interact with and affect issues of respect and recognition, as well as participation in the decision making,

to produce a picture on the environmental justice situation in a park. This means that parks play an organic role in achieving environmental justice, and depending on these four factors, a park might or might not[12] be serving environmental justice.

These conclusions have important implications for the study of urban green spaces as an environmental justice issue. As demonstrated in the literature review, studying urban green spaces and environmental justice is often done through an access lens. This research demonstrates that existence of access alone does not mean that environmental justice is being served. Environmental justice research that only looks at access to urban green spaces is limited research. It is limited because it does not consider the other aspects of environmental justice (recognition and participation), and it is limited because it cannot account for the characteristics and the factors at play in urban green spaces. To move forward in research on environmental justice and urban green spaces, it is crucial for researchers to take this into consideration.

When studying urban green spaces, a potential approach for future study could be creating a rubric for evaluating a space's 'performance' in serving environmental justice. This rubric should include the three aspects of environmental justice, as well as the four factors affecting urban green spaces. Additionally, further research should investigate the relationship between parks, exclusive development or gentrification, and environmental justice. Particularly, research should investigate solutions for the apparent gentrifying impact that urban green spaces have. The results of this research could offer policy makers and developers insight on the importance of developing and designing urban green space in ways that serve existing communities, and the importance of considering their culture, tradition, and needs.

[12] In cases where parks become a no-man's land, where they present more danger than services and amenities, it can be considered that they are no longer serving environmental justice altogether. See 2.5 and Boone et al. 2009 for further discussion.

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