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## Cognitive Dissonance, Crime and Commitment to Urban Life: Why Individuals with Means Choose to Live and Remain in Largely Low Income Neighborhoods

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COGNITIVE DISSONANCE, CRIME AND COMMITMENT TO URBAN LIFE:  
WHY INDIVIDUALS WITH MEANS CHOOSE TO LIVE AND REMAIN IN  
LARGELY LOW INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS

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Bachelor of Business Administration  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS in PSYCHOLOGY

at the

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December 2013

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We hereby approve this thesis

For

NELSON S. BECKFORD

Candidate for the Master of Arts in Psychology degree

IN the Department of

Psychology

And

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY'S  
College of Graduate Studies by

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Thesis Chairperson, *Steve Slane*, Ph.D

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December 17, 2013

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Student's Date of Defense

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I salute the nonprofit organizations, especially community development organizations that are committed to improving the quality of life for all in Cleveland neighborhoods.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE, CRIME AND COMMITMENT TO URBAN LIFE:  
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ABSTRACT

The study examined factors influencing an individual's decision to move to and later commitment to remain in Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway, two low income neighborhoods in Cleveland, Ohio. Based on cognitive dissonance theory, it was predicted that paradoxically, people who were victims of crime would demonstrate greater commitment to their neighborhood than would those not victimized.

Unexpectedly, I found that crime did not increase or decrease commitment. The study found that neighborhood amenities and seeing improvements in basic services were key to neighborhood commitment. This implies that small investments and specific interventions can help revitalize low income inner city neighborhoods by attracting a higher tax base.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The Failure of Prophecy: The Seekers.**

December 21, 1954, was the day that the Seekers, a Chicago-based cult, believed the world would end and be engulfed by the seas and that they would be saved by flying saucers. So devoted and committed to this belief, they quit their jobs and sold their possessions. On December 22, 1954 the apocalypse had not occurred. This induced dissonance or a conflict between their beliefs (i.e. that the world would end) and the reality of the situation (i.e. the world did not end) (Festinger, Riecken & Schachter, 1956). The Seekers believed that their sacrifice and commitment to the cause would bring the reward of salvation. They believed this so strongly that they preached it to non-believers. However, when these two beliefs (the apocalypse and the resulting salvation) did not come true, the Seekers were not dismayed or embarrassed. Instead, they became more committed. They took the reality of “no apocalypse and no salvation” and created a new reality. Instead of viewing their sacrifices (time committed and belongings sold) as a mistake it was viewed as a selfless act that actually saved the world. They became even more than just committed, they became zealous.

In their book, *When Prophecy Fails*, Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter (1956), describe how Festinger infiltrated the Seekers and uses their example to assert that human beings are not entirely rational creatures. In coping with conflicting beliefs humans often rationalize the conflict by changing one of their beliefs (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2008). His experience with the Seekers contributed to the development of the theory of cognitive dissonance. The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational desire to lower frustration by changing an existing reality, adding new ones created a consistent belief system, or lower the importance of any one of the elements that evoke dissonance (Nail & Boniecki, 2011; Tiller & Fazio, 1982). Cognitive dissonance is a frustrating state when a reality does not fit with what we know (Festinger, 1985; Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2008). Key is the assumption that people want their expectations to match reality, creating a sense of balance. Similarly, a person will avoid situations or information that causes feelings of uneasiness, or dissonance (Goethals & Cooper, 1965).

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Cognitive Dissonance Theory**

Who among us likes to be wrong? In an effort to save face or to protect our ego after a bad decision, we change how we think and behave to mitigate negative feelings. For example, I could purchase a gas guzzling sport utility vehicle, live in a dense urban area and rationalize this decision. I could isolate one feature such as safety, and use this to overshadow the frustration and ego-depleting feeling I get when I pay for gas or try to maneuver a large vehicle into a small parking space. To combat the negative implications of our feelings, we mitigate and rationalize our choices or change our behaviors. This is part of the human condition. Despite the reality of a situation along with the hard and cold facts, and advice to the contrary from experts and our families, we find a way to ease the conflict and tension of being wrong (Festinger, 1985; Nail & Boniecki, 2011).

Few can question the connection between cigarettes and cancer, fast food and poor health outcomes, exercise and better health outcomes, and saving and positive fiscal outcomes. We have mountains of data and studies to support this, but we easily create other cognitions, such as “cigarettes help me to relax”, or “I am too busy to exercise”, to justify our actions. We are not objective. When beliefs, behaviors, and facts are at odds or

in conflict with reality, we change our behavior and our thinking to achieve homeostasis (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2008).

### **Current Study on Cognitive Dissonance**

The concepts of prospect theory, self-esteem and justification of effort play an important role in the progression from decision making to commitment, and work in concert with cognitive dissonance (Draycott, 2012; Kahnemann & Tversky, 1999; Keisler, Pallack, & Kanouse, (1968) Prior to making a decision, the individual sets the frame and reference points for the decision, this is called prospect theory. Once the decision is made, the individual will naturally tie the decision to the ego. The act of protecting the ego validates the decision; this is the concept of self-esteem at play. The time, effort or resources that an individual invests into a goal makes the goal or objective more appealing. This is the theory of justification of effort. In this section, I will examine these theories and their connection to my research topic.

### **Prospect Theory**

Prospect theory asserts that individuals make decisions based on the promise of a subjective value of gains or losses rather than a definitive outcome. Developed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (1999), this theory presents a model of decision making based on the value the individuals place on the beneficial features of an object and place a lower value on the negatives. For example, the potential of being a victim of crime is understood. However, according to this theory, the individual will place greater value on what they will gain (i.e. parks, restaurants, and diversity) and this provides the frame of reference in making the decision to move into the neighborhood.

## **Self Esteem**

Once the individual follows through on the decision to move into the neighborhood, the concept of self-esteem assumes importance. Simply put, self-esteem is a general high rating of self along with the belief that one is good, decent and competent. Self-esteem is related to how the individual views their decisions (Clemence, 1994; Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2008; Rholes, Bailey, & McMillan, 1982). In the context of this research, these individuals see themselves as being smart and competent. Therefore the decision to move into the neighborhood was a good decision and despite the challenges, these residents chose these neighborhoods because of the value they place on the features and amenities like parks, restaurants, and housing stock. This theory asserts that if given the choice of distorting the world to feel better about oneself or accurately representing the world, one will distort their view of the world (Goethals & Cooper, 1965; Tavis & Aronson, 2007).

## **Justification of Effort**

Elliot Aronson and Judson Mills (1959) conducted a study to explore the connection between the justification effort and dissonance reduction. The participants in their study went through a screening process that was divided into three levels of difficulty: 1) demanding and unpleasant, 2) mildly unpleasant and 3) no screening. The participants were then asked to rate a discussion that was designed to be dull and boring. The participants with no screening called the discussion for what it was: dull and boring. The participants who had more strenuous screening called that same discussion interesting. This can apply to the residents of the neighborhoods; they are living through the challenges and stresses of urban life and may have invested time and resources in

their home and neighborhoods. Justification of effort theory argues that if a person agrees to go through an unpleasant experience to achieve a goal, the more likely he or she will be to rate the goal to be attractive and appealing (Carter, 1972; Joule, 2003; Keisler, Pallack, & Kanouse, 1968).

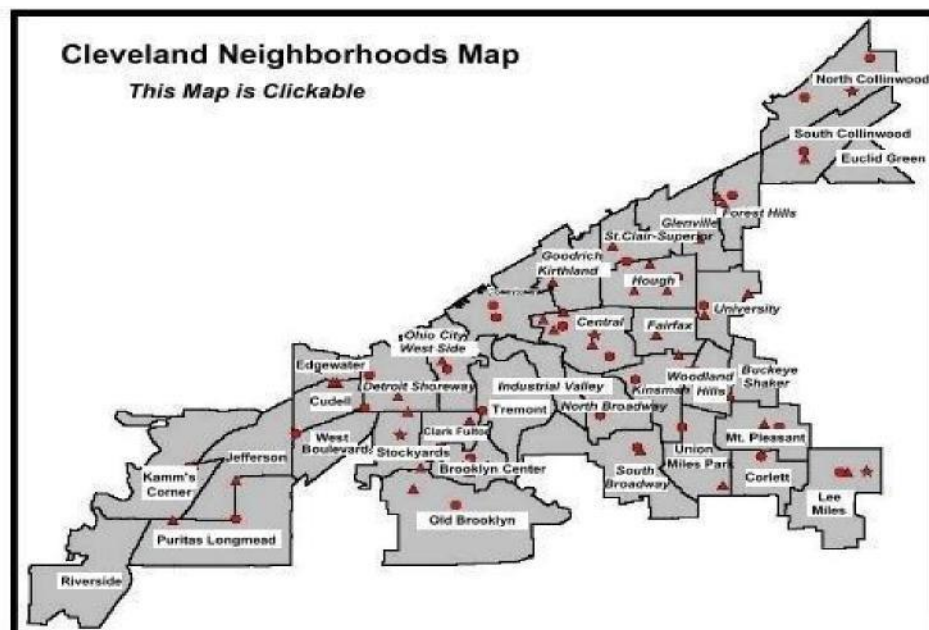
In conclusion, prospect theory, self-esteem, and justification of effort appear to work in concert to mitigate the dissonance of objective realities. With prospect theory, the respondent frames the decision to move around the benefits or gains with the potential of losses as a secondary. The promise of gains (amenities) and the fear of loss (crime) do not hold equal weight. After the decision to move into the neighborhood is acted upon, the natural inclination for ego defense presents itself with self-esteem which we use to validate and safeguard our decision. Finally, the time and resources invested in the community or home causes the residents in these neighborhoods to place a higher value on the outcome which in this research is remaining in the neighborhood.

Based on cognitive dissonance, I made the rather counter-intuitive prediction that residents of inner-city neighborhoods who have been victims of crime would have higher levels of commitment to the community than would residents who have not been victimized. This is a parallel to the experience of the Seekers (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956), who were highly committed to a decision that was then disconfirmed. In both cases, there is a commitment to a belief that is strongly challenged, in this case by becoming a victim. I predict, as with the Seekers, the crime experience will paradoxically increase commitment among its victims.

## The Neighborhoods: History, Present, and Future

Located on Cleveland's near west side with Lake Erie to the north, and the Cuyahoga River to its east, the Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway neighborhoods were ethnic enclaves for working class immigrants such as the Irish, Italians and Romanians because the neighborhoods were near manufacturing and industrial companies. As Cleveland grew, so did the neighborhoods (see Figure 1). They grew enough to have vibrant commercial districts with locally owned shops and restaurants. However, when Cleveland's economic condition worsened during 1970-1980, so did the conditions of the neighborhoods.

Figure 1: Map of Cleveland Neighborhoods



Cleveland, like its post-industrial sister cities Detroit, Milwaukee, and Gary are associated with a host of urban ills (Badenhausen, 2013). A perfect storm of a challenged public school system, high unemployment, foreclosures, vacant homes, and crime has turned Cleveland into a poster child for urban decline. However, there are neighborhoods



that are considered “bright spots.” University Circle, Little Italy and Fairfax on the east side of the city, and Tremont, Ohio City, and Detroit Shoreway on the west side have bucked this trend and are experiencing something surprising: revitalization.

Nonprofit community development corporations were formed to address the blight and to encourage investment. Using tools like tax abatements, low interest loans, community activism, and crime prevention programs in concert with politics made the notion of urban life more appealing. Today, Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway are revitalized with improvements to housing stock, infrastructure and the creation of new businesses (Kennedy & Leonard, 2001). In Ohio City there has been over \$32 million in planned and completed commercial, residential and infrastructure investments. In Detroit Shoreway, the Battery Park area, once home to twenty vacant industrial buildings is now a \$100 million, 13 acre market rate housing development project (Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization , 2013).

Nonetheless, one will find that the wealth and revitalization efforts are targeted and concentrated. The local development industry has supported a form of revitalization called “Strategic Investments” (Neighborhood Progress Inc., 2012) which builds on a unique feature of the neighborhood and targets resources around these assets. Just blocks from newly constructed homes that sell for \$350,000, are homes that should be demolished, or are in poor condition. Two blocks from highly rated restaurants are food pantries; another surprising juxtaposition of the neighborhood. The neighborhoods are also home to a high concentration of social service organizations and programs.

The thing that make the neighborhoods convenient for residents like public transportation and proximity to downtown, also make it a convenient neighborhood for

the homeless to spend their day. The West Side Catholic Community Center, St. Malachi House, St. Patrick’s Church and May Dugan Center offer services for the needy, and are located in these neighborhoods for a reason. Cleveland’s primary Men’s shelter at 2100 Lakeside with 400 beds, is less than three miles away from these neighborhoods. This shelter is cleared out each day and the men frequent these neighborhoods to access services and programs.

**Neighborhood Realities: Statistics**

Reviews of the neighborhood statistics websites of Case Western Reserve University’s Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development (<http://neocando.case.edu>) and the City of Cleveland’s Department of Planning (<http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us>) present some cold and hard facts. In Detroit Shoreway neighborhood, the average household income is less than \$26,398 and has a thirty six percent poverty rate. The average home costs less than \$50,000. In Ohio City, the average household income is less than \$43,000 with a thirty seven percent poverty rate. The average home cost \$99,000. In terms of crimes called part II such as simple assaults, vandalism, prostitution, drug abuse violations, in Detroit Shoreway the count is 8,100 per 100,000 residents. In Ohio City, that rate is 9,800. As illustrated in Table 1, the neighborhoods’ poverty rate and crime statistics are higher than Cleveland as a whole.

<b>Table 1</b>				
<b>Demographics of Survey Neighborhoods</b>				
<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Poverty Rate</b>	<b>Part Two Crimes (per 100,000)</b>	<b>Average Sales Price</b>	<b>Household Income</b>
Detroit Shoreway	36%	8100	\$49,772	\$26,398
Ohio City	37%	9800	\$99,412	\$43,000

Cleveland	26%	7500	\$37,885	\$33,651
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<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>		
Sample	42%	49%		
Detroit Shoreway – overall	49%	51%		
Ohio City – overall	53%	47%		
<b>Race</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black/African American</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>
Sample	92%	1.7%	2.3%	2.3%
Detroit Shoreway – overall	59%	17%	23%	1%
Ohio City – overall	50%	24%	25%	1%
<b>Income</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Percentage - Detroit Shoreway overall</b>	<b>Percentage – Ohio City overall</b>	
\$100,000 or more	28%	3%	4%	
\$51,000-\$100,000	32%	14%	14%	
\$26,000-\$50,000	18%	18%	18%	
\$20,000-\$25,000	20%	16%	14%	
Under \$20,000	2%	48%	48%	

The quality and effectiveness of government services present a less than ideal picture. The Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the public school system for both of these neighborhoods, is under academic watch. Garrett Morgan and Joseph Gallagher are two neighborhood public schools that have a C and F rating on the State’s performance indicators which measures how many students in the school have a minimum level of knowledge in a given grade and subject. Its graduation rate is 60%. In addition,

Cleveland's housing code enforcement does not have the capacity nor resources to deal with the volume of vacant and abandoned homes. In Detroit Shoreway twenty percent of homes are vacant, in Ohio City that number is seventeen percent, and for Cleveland as a whole the number is nineteen percent. A recent report by Gaylord LLC projected that Cleveland will need \$4.5 billion to sustain the cost of vacant housing with 8,500 that are ready to be razed, however, the city's budget can only handle 600 a year.

Given these signs, data and statistics, what makes middle to upper income individuals choose to move into these neighborhoods? The reason for doing this study is to add to the research around neighborhood revitalization and diversity and inclusion at the neighborhood and societal level. While this research is informed by statistics and neighborhood indicators, it strives for more. It aims to understand the psychological influences around neighborhood attraction, the role of cognitive dissonance, and the factors that affect neighborhood commitment. Our understanding of the systems and processes required to create inclusive and strong neighborhoods is dwarfed by the pace of the divestment in older industrial and often very segregated places like Detroit, Buffalo, Indianapolis, Youngstown and countless others.

### **The Suburbs: A Viable Option**

The antidote to the negatives of urban life is suburban living. The suburbs presented and often delivered a good quality of life, a life that is generally without crime and have public schools that are performing well. If urban living represents the dissonance, suburban living represents a life with fewer stressors and better public services. Every year, Cleveland Magazine produces a series that it calls the "Suburban Field Guide" (Schneider, 2013) and ranks communities on a variety of factors such as safety, taxes, property value, walk-ability, and education.

In 2013, Cleveland Magazine ranked the communities of Rocky River, Solon, Independence, Westlake and Beachwood as the top suburbs. These communities are less than 30 minutes from the Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway neighborhoods and represent very good alternatives to urban living. Unlike the poor who have limited options, middle to upper income professionals have the options and the buying power to choose a product (a home or neighborhood) based on factors that are important to them.

Inherent in the purchase price of one's home is the promise of a good quality of life; good government services, good neighbors of a similar socio-economic status. Easy access to highways makes it easier to sample urban life but live at a comfortable distance away. Simply put, a higher socioeconomic status allows for a wide range of choices in purchase decisions. With this range of choices, why would one choose to live in the urban core with its associated (perceived and actual) challenges and issues when the suburbs present such a viable options to persons with means?

This research study will be used to determine whether or not cognitive dissonance theory can actually be used to explain the behavior of the respondents in this situation. By researching neighborhood commitment after a dissonance inducing event (crime), I will use the data to clarify and demonstrate how the participants in the study managed the dissonance that may have been associated with their choosing to live in an inner city neighborhood instead of one of the suburban communities.

This research has real world implications because it provides information regarding the conditions which influence neighborhood commitment and could inform efforts to build and rebuild urban neighborhoods.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### **Respondents**

The 230 respondents live in the defined geographic boundary of the neighborhoods of Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway. They were recruited through social networks such as block club members, young professional organizations, political and/or nonprofit affiliations and community activists.

The sample was predominantly self-identified as Caucasian or white (92%), Asian (2.3%), Hispanic/Latin American (2.3%), and Black or African American (1.7%).

Females made up the majority of respondents at 58% percent (See Table 1).

Seventy percent of the sample made more than \$50,000 a year, with thirty two percent making more than \$100,000 a year. The remaining made \$26,000-\$50,000 a year. The survey also asked the respondents if they have been victimized by crime since moving into the neighborhood. 75% of the sample was victimized by some form of crime after moving into the neighborhood and experienced a reality of urban life. This event was hypothesized to create dissonance and provide the opportunity to question the decision to move into and to remain committed to the neighborhood.

## **Survey Instrument**

The survey questions fell into the following categories: 1) demographic questions, 2) impressions about the Detroit Shoreway or Ohio City neighborhoods prior to moving into one of these neighborhoods, specific to crime and safety, schools, amenities, housing conditions and poverty, and 3) perceptions of neighborhood crime and safety, schools, amenities, housing conditions and poverty after moving into neighborhoods.

This research was conducted to understand how middle to upper income residents of the neighborhoods of Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway manage the dissonance between the amenities of urban life and the realities of urban life like crime and poverty. The goal of the study is to gather a more complete picture of the perceptions and impressions of the neighborhood before and after the move. The survey questions asked about initial perceptions of crime, poverty, housing stock, government services, and amenities before moving into the neighborhood. The second set of questions asked about current impressions. The participants were also asked if they were victimized by crime after moving into the neighborhood. The final set of questions asked the participants to predict their likelihood of remaining in the neighborhood.

## **Survey Administration**

The survey instrument was administered via an online tool called Survey Monkey that was shared through an electronic link that was sent to social networks described above. This tool was convenient and easy for the respondents to use. In addition, the online format guaranteed respondents anonymity.

Survey respondents were told that the purpose of the survey was to investigate perceptions of their current neighborhood of residence and were asked to give informed



consent by checking a box which adheres to the standards of the Institutional Review Board.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Based on the theory of cognitive dissonance, it was predicted that those victimized by crime would actually be more committed to staying in their neighborhood than those who were not victimized. This prediction was not supported. Victims ( $M = 4.19$ ) reported a significantly ( $t_{174} = 1.89, p < .03$ ) lower current impression of their neighborhood than did non-victims ( $M = 4.41$ ), and there were no differences between the groups in their likelihood of staying in their neighborhood. Curiously, crime victims differed on their reported initial impressions of their neighborhood but not on their current impressions. Victims reported more negative initial impressions of their neighborhood in terms of safety ( $t_{174} = 1.81, p < .04, M = 2.86$  vs.  $M = 3.10$ ), quality of schools ( $t_{174} = 3.71, p < .001, M = 2.08$  vs.  $M = 2.60$ ), government services ( $t_{174} = 1.64, p = .05, M = 2.96$  vs.  $M = 3.18$ ), and poverty ( $t_{174} = 1.62, p = .05, M = 3.53$  vs.  $M = 3.29$ ).

Table 2

Current impression of neighborhood after being a victim of crime (1-5 scale)

Crime Victims	4.19
Non-Crime Victims	4.4

Table 3

Initial Impression of neighborhood safety before the move (1-5 scale)

Crime Victims	2.86
Non-Crime Victims	3.10

Table 4

Initial impressions of the quality of schools, government services and poverty (1-5)

	Quality of Schools	Government Services	Poverty
Crime Victims	2.08	2.96	3.53
Non-Crime Victims	2.60	3.18	3.29

On the whole, the sample was predominantly white, female and middle to upper income. When asked what attracted them to the neighborhood they listed features of the neighborhoods such as the restaurants, parks, diversity, and a sense of community. These features, or amenities, were key drivers in their choosing the neighborhoods. Despite the sample's higher income, the data also reported that seventy five percent had become a victim of crime since moving into the neighborhood.

In order to better understand the factors influencing commitment to the neighborhood, stepwise multiple regression analyses were conducted with reported likelihood of staying in the neighborhood as the dependent variable and ratings of aspects of their neighborhood as the predictors. Quality of government services (Beta = .30) and neighborhood safety (Beta = .24) entered as significant predictors, accounting for 22% of the variance. Current overall image of the neighborhood was also subjected to stepwise multiple regression analyses. Quality of housing (Beta = .34), neighborhood safety (Beta = .20), and quality of government services (Beta = .19) entered as significant predictors, accounting for 36% of the variance.

These results are consistent with current thinking about neighborhood commitment. However, there are two anomalies that are instructive. First, concern for safety was important to all, yet, actual experience as a crime victim did not correlate with the likelihood of staying in the neighborhood. Second, the initial perception of amenities was strongly predictive of the initial impression of the neighborhood, and likely by extension the willingness/desire to move to the neighborhood. In addition, the highest neighborhood ratings were in the category of perceived amenities. Clearly the role of amenities and actual safety and the effect in neighborhood commitment remains to be fully understood.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

It was my aim to draw a connection between Festinger's initial research on cognitive dissonance and neighborhood commitment after being a victim of crime. Unfortunately, my prediction that the respondents would become more committed was not supported. One potential explanation is that dissonance was not, or not adequately, aroused. Festinger (1957) concluded that certain conditions are more likely to lead to the arousal of dissonance:

1. The belief must be held with deep conviction and be relevant to the believer's actions or behavior.
2. The belief must have produced actions that are difficult to undo.
3. The belief must be sufficiently specific and concerned with the real world such that it can be clearly disconfirmed.
4. The disconfirmatory evidence must be recognized by the believer.
5. The believer must have social support from other believers (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956)

Examination of these five conditions for cognitive dissonance indicates that the survey respondents did show signs of the first condition: a deep conviction that is relevant to

their actions and behaviors. These individuals believe in urban life and community and want to live in a diverse and mixed income neighborhood citing the neighborhood's walkability, density, diversity and access to public transportation as things they like about the neighborhood. A growing availability of bars, restaurants and unique specialty shops that sell artisan yogurt, craft beer, specialty soups, and vinyl records also add allure to the neighborhood brand. In addition, they value the social connections and sense of community that the neighborhoods offer. These amenities resonate with the participants and overshadowed their concerns about poverty, crime, and government services.

The second condition is that the act must be difficult to undo. For example, purchasing a home or signing a lease is a legal commitment which can be difficult to reverse. Once a mortgage or lease is signed, it will take legal action or negative financial consequences to reverse. Same goes for relationships and friendships. Leaving a neighborhood once you have established friendships is not an easy task. This is also supported by the research data. Seventy four percent of the participant sample rated their likelihood of staying in the neighborhood as very high or high. Seven percent said that they are likely to move and five percent stated that they will move.

Thirdly, the belief must be specific and concerned with the real world. The respondents' experience their neighborhoods on a daily basis and the obvious signs that the neighborhood is improving could help to quiet concerns about crime. Disconfirmation must be recognized and experienced by user is the fourth condition. The majority, seventy five percent of respondents, experienced the harsh reality of urban life and became a victim of crime.

The fifth condition is that the believer must have support from other believers. In neighborhoods, there are numerous opportunities for engagement and interaction with other people committed to remaining in the neighborhood in spite of being a victim of crime. Every week, a neighborhood resident has the opportunity to attend block club meetings, community meetings, board meetings and social events. This was also supported by the data with seventy percent of respondents reported involvement in community activities. These opportunities help to reinforce that the sense of community. Although the sample showed signs of these conditions, the statistical analysis did not support Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory (i.e. after a dissonance inducing event, the individual will become more committed). The data showed that being a victim of crime did not cause an increase in commitment to the neighborhood. Paradoxically, crime did not cause a decrease in neighborhood commitment.

A point of comparison is offered by research on people who live in areas prone to natural disasters such as flooding or droughts or earthquakes and it offers insight into this paradox. Evans and Jacobs (1982) found that longtime residents of Los Angeles perceived less smog than newer residents and believes that as humans, we perpetually adapt to threats. We could also apply research on the "inoculation" of victims of natural disasters to the crime victims. This research suggests that having a previous experience (related to flooding) reduces the mental health impact of subsequent floods (Norris & Murrell, 1988). Research suggests as humans, we can easily adapt and therefore reduce the effect of a negative event or reality.

## **Future research**

The demographics of my sample is worthy of mention and further exploration. As a whole, the respondents are of higher income and are college educated. They represent a powerful voice; in fact community development organizations have staff dedicated to “organizing” neighbors around issues and creating opportunities for residents to play a leadership role in the neighborhood such as leading a neighborhood project, serving on a board, or advocating on an important issue (Marlowe, 1965; Wilhelmy, 1974). Future research could involve longitudinal research of a subset of the sample. For example, a future study might have a research focus on crime victims and track the frequency of neighborhood involvement over a period of time. Another study might compare and contrast two other neighborhoods, one that is experiencing revitalization and one that is not. This study might sample for a more economically diverse group of respondent and include individuals on public assistance or of lower income.

The issue of crime is also complicated and is not isolated to the inner city. Both of these neighborhoods have identified and are tackling issues related to disinvestment, basic services, and crime. It is reasonable to conclude from this study that the respondents’ ability to deal with issues of crime is mitigated by seeing continued signs of revitalization which in turn sustains commitment.

This was not the case with the Seekers who were described in the introduction. Soon after *Prophecy Fails* was released, the public and media interest in the Seekers began to wane. In time, the Seekers dispersed; contradicting Festinger’s theory that cognitive dissonance will result in increased commitment. The proselytizing (increased commitment) noted was very short term. Dorothy Martin, the leader of the Seekers,



later admitted herself into a psychiatric hospital, and moved to Sedona, Arizona. She then spent several years in Peru and later then returned to Arizona and died at the age of 92 (Moser 2011). The Seekers were never heard from again.

Over time, Festinger's theory has been challenged and criticized. It has been called one-dimensional, and lacking an understanding that the Seekers held a larger and more complex set of beliefs (Melton, 1985). The prediction of the apocalypse was one part of this belief system but did not represent the whole. This suggests that the research sample, middle to upper income residents of the Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway neighborhoods have a larger set of beliefs (urban life, social justice and community, etc.) of which crime is just one part.

This research offers recommendations on how to attract or retain professionals to commit to living in low income urban communities. First, amenities such as bars, restaurants and parks that are unique and specific make a neighborhood appealing to residents and visitors. How a neighborhood is branded and marketed is important and helps it to stand out in the market place. Secondly, it is important to have programs, activities and events that allow neighbors to connect with one another. This builds community and further deepens relationships among neighbors thus creating a sense of safety. These two recommendations are supported by the research findings of this study that link initial impressions of amenities to a favorable overall perception of the neighborhood. In other words, that first snapshot created an image for the study's respondents that overshadowed any specific negative variable.

In conclusion, this research study has shown that being a victim neither increased nor decreased commitment to their neighborhood. However, neighborhood amenities

matter, and seeing improvement related to basic services increased respondents' commitment to their respective neighborhoods.

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## APPENDIX I

### QUESTIONNAIRE

**Thank you for choosing to participate in this study. Please do not put your name or any identifying information (such as your CSU ID#, name, or signature) on the questionnaire. This will ensure that all answers will be completely anonymous. There is no right or wrong answer to any of the survey questions. Please answer each question honestly and to the best of your ability. .**

The procedure involves completing an online survey that will take approximately 15 minutes. Your responses will be anonymous and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address. We will keep your information anonymous. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format and the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only

#### **ELECTRONIC CONSENT:**

**In checking the "agree" button below indicates that:**

- you have read the above information
- you voluntarily agree to participate
- you are at least 21 years of age

**If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.**

agree

disagree

**Consent forms will be kept separately from the questionnaires to ensure privacy. If you have any questions regarding this survey- please contact either Nelson Beckford at 216-798-0482 or her faculty advisor, Dr. Stephen D. Slane at 216-687-3554. Nelson Beckford will also be available for debriefing.**

## Survey questions

### Before the move

1. How would you describe where you previously lived?
  - \_Urban
  - \_Suburban
  - \_Rural
2. How long did you live there?
3. How long have you lived in Ohio City?
4. What were your initial impressions/perceptions of Ohio City (before the move)?
5. What other neighborhoods/communities did you consider?
6. How would you rate your initial impressions of the neighborhood?
  - \_Very positive
  - \_Somewhat positive
  - \_Positive
  - \_Somewhat positive
  - \_Negative
7. How would you rate your initial impressions of neighborhood safety/crime?
  - \_Very unsafe
  - \_Unsafe
  - \_Neutral
  - \_Safe
  - \_Somewhat safe
8. How would you rate your initial impressions of neighborhood schools?
  - \_ Very positive
  - \_ Somewhat positive
  - \_Positive
  - \_Somewhat positive
  - \_ Negative



9. How would you rate your initial impression about the quality of government services?
- \_ Very positive
  - \_ Somewhat positive
  - \_ Positive
  - \_ Somewhat positive
  - \_ Negative
10. How would you rate your initial impressions (quality and quantity) of neighborhood amenities?
- \_ Very positive
  - \_ Somewhat positive
  - \_ Positive
  - \_ Somewhat positive
  - \_ Negative
11. How would you rate your initial impressions of the neighborhood's housing stock?
- \_ Very good
  - \_ Somewhat good
  - \_ Good
  - \_ Average
  - \_ Weak
12. How would you rate your initial impressions community involvement engagement?
- \_ Very positive
  - \_ Somewhat positive
  - \_ Positive
  - \_ Somewhat positive
  - \_ Negative
13. How would you rate your initial impressions of poverty in the neighborhood?
- \_ Very high
  - \_ Somewhat high
  - \_ Normal
  - \_ Very little
  - \_ Unsure
14. What did your friends and families say about you buying a house in the neighborhood?
- \_ Opposed
  - \_ Approved
  - \_ Neutral

15. How would you rate your friends and families initial impressions of the neighborhood?

- \_Very Positive
- \_Positive
- \_Neutral
- \_Very negative
- \_Negative

16. Overall, your first impression of the neighborhood was:

- \_Very positive
- \_Somewhat
- \_Positive
- \_Somewhat Positive
- \_Negative

Current impression

17. Your current image of the neighborhood is:

- \_Very positive
- \_Somewhat positive
- \_Positive
- \_Somewhat positive
- \_Negative

18. In terms of safety/crime, neighborhood safety has:

- \_Has not improved
- \_Some improvement
- \_Neutral
- \_Improved greatly
- \_Some improvement

19. Currently, your impression of the quality of neighborhood schools is:

- \_Very positive
- \_Somewhat positive
- \_Positive
- \_Somewhat positive
- \_Negative

20. In terms of the quality of government services, things have:

- \_Improved greatly
- \_Some improvement
- \_Neutral
- \_Declined somewhat
- \_Negative

21. My impression about (quality and quantity of) a neighborhood amenity has:

- \_Improved greatly
- \_Some improvement
- \_Neutral
- \_Declined somewhat
- \_Negative

22. The quality of neighborhood housing stock has:

- \_Improved greatly
- \_Some improvement
- \_Neutral
- \_Declined somewhat
- \_Negative

23. Neighborhood housing stock has:

- \_Improved greatly
- \_Some improvement
- \_Neutral
- \_Declined somewhat
- \_Negative

24. Poverty in the neighborhood has:

- \_Increased greatly
- \_Some improvement
- \_Unsure
- \_Declined somewhat
- \_Declined greatly

25. Your friends and families impression of the neighborhood has:

- \_Improved greatly
- \_Some improvement
- \_Neutral
- \_Declined somewhat
- \_Declined

26. At this time, your overall image of the neighborhood is:

- \_Very positive
- \_Somewhat positive
- \_Neutral
- \_Somewhat Positive
- \_Negative

27. If positive, list three reasons why:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

28. If negative, list three reasons why:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

29. If neutral, list three things that have not changed:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Actual experience

30. Have you ever been a victim of crime (any crime – theft, assault, etc.)? Yes or No

31. If yes, what kinds of crime have you been a victim of:

- Theft
- Burglary
- Assault
- Other

32. How has this influenced your perception of the neighborhood?

- Changed greatly
- Slight Change
- No Change

33. How would rate your current level of community involvement?

- Very involved
- Somewhat involved
- Involved
- Not involved
- Unsure

34. What kind of community activities are you currently involved in:

- Block Club
- Through nonprofit organizations
- Political activities
- Donating time and money to causes/organizations/people
- Church
- Other:

35. How would you rate the quality of neighborhood amenities?

- \_ Very Satisfied
- \_ Satisfied
- \_ Neutral
- \_ Somewhat satisfied
- \_ Unsatisfied

36. How would you rate the quality of neighborhood shopping?

- \_ Very Satisfied
- \_ Satisfied
- \_ Neutral
- \_ Somewhat satisfied
- \_ Unsatisfied

37. How would you rate your likelihood of staying in the neighborhood?

- \_ Very high
- \_ High
- \_ Undecided
- \_ Likely to move
- \_ Will move

38. Age:

- \_\_\_ 18-21
- \_\_\_ 22-25
- \_\_\_ 26-35
- \_\_\_ 36 & older

39. Gender:

- \_\_\_ male
- \_\_\_ female

40. Ethnic origin:

- \_\_\_ White/Caucasian
- \_\_\_ Black/African American
- \_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino
- \_\_\_ Asian
- \_\_\_ Native American
- \_\_\_ Other

41. Total Household income:

- \_\_\_ \$20,000 & under
- \_\_\_ \$20,000-25,000
- \_\_\_ \$26,000-\$50,000
- \_\_\_ \$51,000-\$100,000
- \_\_\_ \$100,000 & above

42. Do you have any children?

Yes

No

43. If yes, how many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX II

### Summary of Survey Responses

#### Experiences living in the Cleveland neighborhoods of Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway

1. Nelson Beckford, a graduate student at Cleveland State University, is conducting this thesis research project as part of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Psychology. Dr. Steve Slane at 216.875.9753 is the advisor to the study. The purpose of this research project is to explore your experiences living in the Cleveland neighborhoods of Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway. The procedure involves completing an online survey that will take less than 15 minutes. It is an anonymous survey therefore we will not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address. The survey is completely voluntary and participants can terminate their participation at any time. No risk greater than those in daily living is involved in participating in this research and there is no personal gain or benefit for participating in the research. However, there are a few questions that deal with crime and safety that may cause some slightly uncomfortable memories for those who may have been a victim of crime. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Nelson Beckford at 216.798.0482 or via email at nelson.beckford@gmail.com or Dr. Steve Slane at 216.875.9753. This research has been reviewed according to Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures for research involving human subjects. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you can contact the Cleveland State University Review Board at 216.687.3630. **ELECTRONIC CONSENT:** In checking the "agree" button below indicates that: • you have read the above information • you voluntarily agree to participate • you are at least 21 years of age If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button. If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
agree	98.7%	221
disagree	1.3%	3
<i>answered question</i>		<b>224</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>6</b>

#### 2. How would you describe where you previously lived?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Urban	50.8%	96
Suburban	41.8%	79
Rural	7.4%	14
<i>answered question</i>		<b>189</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>41</b>

3. How long did you live there (in years)?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	189
<i>answered question</i>	<b>189</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>41</b>

4. Where do you (currently) live?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Ohio City	71.0%	132
Detroit Shoreway	30.6%	57
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>186</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>44</b>

5. About how long have you lived this neighborhood?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Years	100.0%	189
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>189</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>41</b>

6. What were your initial impressions of the neighborhood (before the move)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very positive	16.1%	30
Positive	54.3%	101
Neutral	23.7%	44
Negative	4.3%	8
Very Negative	1.6%	3
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>186</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>44</b>

7. How would you rate your initial impressions of neighborhood safety/crime (before the move)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very safe	1.6%	3
Safe	20.0%	37
Neutral	49.7%	92
Unsafe	27.6%	51



Very unsafe	1.1%	2	
<i>answered question</i>			<b>185</b>
<i>skipped question</i>			<b>45</b>

**8. How would you rate your initial impressions of (public) neighborhood schools?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
Very positive	0.5%	1	
Positive	7.0%	13	
Neutral	26.5%	49	
Negative	47.0%	87	
Very Negative	18.9%	35	
<i>answered question</i>			<b>185</b>
<i>skipped question</i>			<b>45</b>

**9. How would you rate your initial impression about the quality of (local) government services?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
Very positive	1.6%	3	
Positive	25.3%	47	
Neutral	49.5%	92	
Negative	19.9%	37	
Very Negative	3.8%	7	
<i>answered question</i>			<b>186</b>
<i>skipped question</i>			<b>44</b>

**10. How would you rate your initial impressions (quality and quantity) of neighborhood amenities such as restaurants, parks and shopping?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
Very positive	28.1%	52	
Positive	45.9%	85	
Neutral	17.3%	32	
Negative	7.6%	14	
Very Negative	1.1%	2	
<i>answered question</i>			<b>185</b>
<i>skipped question</i>			<b>45</b>

**11. How would you rate your initial impressions of the quality of the neighborhood's housing stock?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
Very good	8.1%	15	

Good	41.6%	77
Somewhat good	27.0%	50
Average	13.0%	24
Weak	10.3%	19
<i>answered question</i>		<b>185</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>45</b>

**12. How would you rate your initial impressions of opportunities to become involved and engaged in the neighborhood?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very positive	21.1%	39
Positive	49.2%	91
Neutral	24.3%	45
Somewhat negative	4.9%	9
Negative	0.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>185</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>45</b>

**13. How would you rate your initial impressions of poverty in the neighborhood?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very high	5.9%	11
High	54.1%	100
Neutral	19.5%	36
Some	19.5%	36
Very little	1.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>185</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>45</b>

**14. What did your friends and families say about you buying a house in the neighborhood?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Opposed	29.0%	53
Approved	30.1%	55
Neutral	41.0%	75
<i>answered question</i>		<b>183</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>47</b>

**15. How would you rate your friends and families initial impressions of the neighborhood?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
----------------	------------------	----------------

Very Positive	3.8%	7
Positive	30.1%	56
Neutral	28.0%	52
Negative	32.3%	60
Very Negative	5.9%	11
<i>answered question</i>		<b>186</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>44</b>

**16. Overall, your first impression of the neighborhood was:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very positive	14.0%	26
Positive	62.9%	117
Neutral	17.2%	32
Negative	4.8%	9
Very Negative	1.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>186</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>44</b>

**17. At this time, your image of the neighborhood is:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very positive	42.0%	76
Positive	45.9%	83
Neutral	7.2%	13
Negative	3.9%	7
Very Negative	1.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>181</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>49</b>

**18. In terms of safety/crime, conditions have:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Improved greatly	11.0%	20
Improved	37.0%	67
No change	27.6%	50
Some improvement	8.3%	15
Has not improved	16.0%	29
<i>answered question</i>		<b>181</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>49</b>

**19. Currently, the quality of (public) neighborhood schools are:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very good	2.8%	5
Good	20.4%	37
Neutral	38.1%	69
Poor	24.9%	45
Very Poor	13.8%	25
<i>answered question</i>		<b>181</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>49</b>

**20. In terms of the quality of government services, things have:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Improved greatly	3.9%	7
Improved	42.5%	77
No change	43.1%	78
Declined somewhat	6.6%	12
Declined greatly	3.9%	7
<i>answered question</i>		<b>181</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>49</b>

**21. The quality and quantity of neighborhood amenities such as restaurants, parks and shopping has**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Improved greatly	51.9%	94
Improved	40.9%	74
No change	6.1%	11
Declined	1.1%	2
Declined greatly	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>181</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>49</b>

**22. The quality of neighborhood housing stock has:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Improved greatly	12.2%	22
Improved	58.3%	105
Neutral	23.9%	43
Declined	3.9%	7
Declined greatly	1.7%	3
<i>answered question</i>		<b>180</b>

*skipped question*

50

**23. Poverty in the neighborhood has:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Improved greatly	1.1%	2
Improved	11.7%	21
Unsure	69.8%	125
Declined	16.2%	29
Declined greatly	1.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>179</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>51</b>

**24. Your friends and families impression of the neighborhood has:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Improved greatly	19.4%	35
Improved	51.7%	93
Neutral	23.3%	42
Declined somewhat	4.4%	8
Declined	1.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>180</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>50</b>

**25. At this time, your overall image of the neighborhood is:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very positive	42.5%	77
Positive	43.1%	78
Neutral	8.8%	16
Negative	4.4%	8
Very Negative	1.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>181</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>49</b>

**26. If positive, list three reasons why:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	100.0%	138
2	97.8%	135
3	96.4%	133

<i>answered question</i>	138
<i>skipped question</i>	92

27. If negative, list three reasons why:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	100.0%	47
2	78.7%	37
3	63.8%	30
<i>answered question</i>		47
<i>skipped question</i>		183

28. If neutral, list three things that have not changed:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	100.0%	26
2	65.4%	17
3	42.3%	11
<i>answered question</i>		26
<i>skipped question</i>		204

29. Have you ever been a victim of crime (any crime - theft, burglary, assault, etc) while living in the neighborhood?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	72.0%	126
No	28.0%	49
<i>answered question</i>		175
<i>skipped question</i>		55

30. How has this influenced your perception of the neighborhood?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Changed greatly	7.2%	12
Slight Change	33.7%	56
No Change	59.0%	98
<i>answered question</i>		166
<i>skipped question</i>		64

31. How would rate your current level of community involvement?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very involved	24.1%	42
Involved	34.5%	60
Neutral	13.2%	23
Somewhat involved	20.7%	36
Not involved	7.5%	13
<i>answered question</i>		<b>174</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>56</b>

**32. What kind of community activities are you currently involved in:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Block Club	57.3%	98
Through nonprofit organizations	46.8%	80
Political activities	28.7%	49
Donating time and money to causes/organizations/people	57.9%	99
Church	21.1%	36
Other:	29.2%	50
N/A	8.2%	14
<i>answered question</i>		<b>171</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>59</b>

**33. How would you rate your likelihood of staying in the neighborhood?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very high	44.6%	78
High	28.6%	50
Undecided	14.9%	26
Likely to move	6.9%	12
Will move	5.1%	9
<i>answered question</i>		<b>175</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>55</b>

**34. What is your age?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
18-21	0.0%	0
22-25	2.9%	5
26-35	36.2%	63
36 &older	60.9%	106

<i>answered question</i>	174
<i>skipped question</i>	56

35. What is your gender?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	58.0%	101
Male	42.0%	73
<i>answered question</i>		174
<i>skipped question</i>		56

36. What is your ethnic origin?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
White/Caucasian	92.5%	160
Black/African American	1.7%	3
Hispanic/Latino	2.3%	4
Asian	2.3%	4
Native American	0.6%	1
More than one or other	0.6%	1
<i>answered question</i>		173
<i>skipped question</i>		57

37. Total Household income:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
\$20,000 & under	3.6%	6
\$20,000-25,000	2.4%	4
\$26,000-\$50,000	21.9%	37
\$51,000-\$100,000	38.5%	65
\$100,000 & above	33.7%	57
<i>answered question</i>		169
<i>skipped question</i>		61

38. Do you have any children that live with you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	29.5%	51
no	70.5%	122
<i>answered question</i>		173
<i>skipped question</i>		57



39. If yes, how many children do you have?

Answer Options	Response Count
	175
<i>answered question</i>	175
<i>skipped question</i>	55