In FY 2012-2013, Center for Human Environments (CHE) researchers were engaged in more than 30 externally funded projects, which ranged from international projects on children’s rights and children’s participation in community development efforts, to local New York City-based projects focusing on such topics as the role of community-based organizations in post-Sandy recovery; NYPD policing policies and how they affect neighborhoods in the Bronx and Brooklyn; immigration reform as seen by community college students; how LGBT students fare under the disciplinary policies and practices of secondary schools; and college access for low- and moderate income NYC high school students, many of whom are first generation college-goers.

As in the past, CHE projects in the past year offered a wide range of employment and fellowship opportunities to Graduate Center students. (Thirty-five GC students received support from CHE projects in 2012-2013—see list attached in our Data Form.) Of course, just as significant as the financial support that GC students receive from these projects is the experience in drafting proposals, designing and conducting research,
preparing reports and presentations for sponsors, and developing a network of contacts, both academic and extra-academic.

With more than 35 years of history at the Graduate Center, CHE continues to carry out its mission of advancing understanding of the human/environment relationship through a unique consortium of specialized research subgroups that address specific areas such as children’s environments, health and society, participatory action research, developmental psychology, housing environments, public space, and the evaluation of social change and advocacy projects. Here are highlights from the past year’s work conducted by these research subgroups:

- In December 2012, the Children’s Environments Research Group (CERG) began work on an 18-month project, “Child Friendly Communities,” funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation of The Netherlands. This project, led by CERG Co-Director Dr. Pamela Wridt, involves children in community planning efforts at multiple sites in India and in Brazil. The project has partnered with local organizations in both countries that are committed to bringing children’s views and voices into community planning processes, especially those efforts that seek to improve conditions for marginalized populations. The “Child Friendly Communities” project represents an outgrowth of earlier CERG work on a “Child Friendly Cities” toolkit, which was supported by UNICEF and other sponsors, and is now available as a web-based resource, where it continues to attract international interest. During the past year, Dr. Wridt was also an invited speaker at the following conferences: “Child and Youth Friendly Places” (invited keynote address), at the 25th Anniversary of the National Youth Policy Institute of South Korea, Seoul; “The Role of Children’s Participation in their Well-Being,” at the annual meeting of the UN Commission on Social Development, the Committee on Children’s Rights and the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences; and “Engaging Children and Youth in Neighborhood Change,” at the annual “Growing in Place” professional development symposium for urban planners and designers, at the Natural Learning Initiative, North Carolina State University.

- While on sabbatical in 2012, CERG Co-Director Prof. Roger Hart made contacts and developed plans for widening the scope of CERG’s other major undertaking, the “Article 15 Project” (supporting children’s self-organizing in clubs, groups and associations—a right recognized in Article 15 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). In 2012-2013 CERG Research Associates, including two GC doctoral students, were invited by international development agencies to present the Article 15 toolkit and facilitate workshops on its use in Ghana and Sierra Leone (August) and in Egypt (March). CERG hopes now to deepen its research on children’s self-governance in organizations and groups, while continuing to encourage wide use of the “Article 15 toolkit” as a means to foster children’s knowledge of, and ability to act on, their rights, and thus their authentic participation in their communities.
In June 2013, the Public Science Project (PSP) hosted the third annual edition of the “Critical Participatory Action Research Institutes,” which drew 75 attendees from secondary and higher education, nonprofits, and community-based organizations. PSP Co-Directors Prof. Michelle Fine and Dr. Maria Torre led the two sessions of the CPAR Institutes, each consisting of a week-long training and workshop series, with a focus on the methods and the ethics of engaging community members in research, evaluation, advocacy, and social change projects. PSP’s portfolio for the past year also included the third and concluding year of a documentation and evaluation project for the Brooklyn community-based organization El Puente de Williamsburg, which is receiving multi-year funding from the Kellogg Foundation to improve the educational prospects and the health of participants in its youth programs. In addition, PSP has expanded its involvement in Brooklyn community-based research with a two-year award from the American Association of Universities and Colleges, which is funding “Brooklyn Public Scholars,” a demonstration project assessing the psychosocial benefits of community college students’ involvement in community projects.

PSP also houses the “Morris Justice Project,” led by Prof. Brett Stoudt in collaboration with Dr. Torre. This participatory project has worked with residents of a Bronx neighborhood to examine the impact of the NYPD’s “Stop and Frisk” policy. (A class action suit challenging the “Stop and Frisk” policy on constitutional grounds reached federal court in March 2013, with a ruling expected later in the year; the MJP collaborated with other community organizations in holding educational events related to the court case.) Following up on the “Morris Justice Project,” PSP researchers were encouraged by the Tides Foundation to submit a grant proposal (now pending) entitled “Researchers for Fair Policing,” which would involve community surveys of policing practices as they affect Brooklyn neighborhoods. PSP’s research on communities and policing also yielded a 2012 article in the New York Law Journal, “Growing up Policed in the Age of Aggressive Policing Policies,” authored by Brett Stoudt with contributions by Michelle Fine and GC doctoral student Madeline Fox. Lastly, in Spring 2013 PSP received new project funding through Indiana University’s Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, which will support research on how LGBT students fare under the disciplinary policies and practices of secondary schools.

Also at PSP this year: MIT’s Community Innovators Lab (MIT CoLab) provided seed funding to establish the Urban Research-Based Action Network (URBAN), a multi-disciplinary network of scholars and practitioners committed to strengthening community-based research both within the academy and outside. The Graduate Center, together with a core group of other public universities, will lead this initiative, which takes inspiration from the work of the late Marilyn Jacobs Gittell, educator, activist, author of seminal works on citizen participation, and longtime Director of the Howard Samuels Center at the GC. Initial MIT CoLab funding for the URBAN project has provided fellowship support for three
GC doctoral students in 2012-2013; an event stemming from their work with the archives of Marilyn Gittell has been scheduled for November 2013.

In the past four years, the Public Science Project has served as the umbrella organization for “College Access: Research & Action” (CARA), a training and research program that is helping NYC high schools develop youth-led college access programs that markedly improve college application, enrollment, and persistence rates for students from low- and moderate-income communities, many of whom are first generation college-goers. CARA currently has grants from The Helmsley Trust, New York Community Trust, the Brooklyn Community Foundation, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, local partners Cypress Hills Local Development Corp. and Good Shepherd Services, and contracts from NYC Dept. of Education and the Fund for Public Schools. In Fall 2012, the NYC Office of the Comptroller released a report praising the effectiveness of CARA’s college counseling model, and recommending its wide adoption by NYC public schools. (See The Power of Guidance: Giving High School Students the College Counseling They Need, Oct. 2012.) And in March 2013, CARA received word that its NYC Dept. of Education MTAC (=Multiple Task Award Contract) proposal had been approved; the MTAC provides “pre-approval” for CARA to contract with schools across the entire NYC public system for work on college access programming. Meanwhile, on the research front, CARA Co-Directors Dr. Lori Chajet and Dr. Janice Bloom have applied for a Spencer Foundation grant to study how “school culture”—a broader measure of a school’s performance than that provided by simpler metrics—can influence the college-going behavior of its students.

In the past year, CHE affiliate organization ActKnowledge has continued work on two collaborative projects with Graduate Center researchers: a three-year evaluation of The Helmsley Trust’s education programming for low-performing NYC public school districts in the Bronx (PI: Prof. Michelle Fine, Psychology); and a multi-year, National Park Service-funded ethnography of the Staten Island Unit of the Gateway National Recreation Area (PI: Prof. William Kornblum, Sociology; Project Director, Dana Taplin). Beyond these collaborations at the GC, Actknowledge manages a portfolio of research and evaluation projects in the spheres of international development, youth programs, community development, and community schools. In the past year, Actknowledge was pleased to assist the Rockefeller Foundation in advancing its oceans health program, which supports small-scale fisheries in developing nations, and to work with a Rockefeller team on the Foundation’s “Transforming Health Systems” project, a multi-national effort to promote access and equity in healthcare through healthcare systems reform. In other projects, Actknowledge provided program conceptualization and evaluation services for (among others): Oxfam Australia; Canadian Feed the Children; the Business Education Compact (a secondary schooling reform project in Oregon); Digital Jobs Africa (another Rockefeller Foundation-supported project, now operating in six African nations); the Advocacy Project (which supports social change movements in Ireland); the
Hartford Community School Initiative in Hartford, Connecticut; the Children’s Aid Society (for its National Center for Community Schools); and the Paterson NJ School District, which is the recipient of one of a limited number of five-year federal grants in support of “full-service” community schools. Actknowledge also maintains its “Theory of Change” website, an online program evaluation tool, which to date has attracted more than 5,000 registered users from around the world.

- Health & Society Research Group Co-Director Mary Clare Lennon has begun work on a new project, “Home moves in the early years,” which builds on her three-year NIH/NICHD grant (ending in 2013) and expands her earlier research on the impact of family moves on children’s health. A collaborative effort with the University of London and the London School of Economics, the new project will use existing UK and US datasets to explore key questions about household moves and young children’s well-being. The work is supported by funding from the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council, and will culminate in an international meeting at the Graduate Center in late 2014 or early 2015. The ESRC grant is expected to provide employment and training opportunities in advanced statistical methods to two or three GC doctoral students.

- In 2012-2013, HSRG Co-Director Tracey Revenson continued work on two subawards from Mt. Sinai Medical School. These projects, which derive from parent grants from the NIH/National Cancer Institute and the Dept. of Defense, both deal with interventions to improve quality of life of cancer survivors, one of Prof. Revenson’s longstanding research interests.

- Prof. Colette Daiute, Director of the Developmental Studies Research Group, has received a Spencer Foundation grant for her study “The community college as agent of change in the 21st century immigration crisis,” which will focus on community college students’ response to the “deferred action” program announced by the Obama Administration in June 2012. “Deferred action” allows certain undocumented youth to apply for a renewable permission to remain in the US, and will make them legally eligible for employment. By some estimates, up to 20% of community college students in NYC may be eligible for “deferred action,” making the community college a highly significant setting for studying the program’s reception and impact.

- In 2013, Housing Environments Research Group Director Susan Saegert submitted an NSF proposal (now pending) entitled “Can Community Land Trusts Build Social and Economic Capital for Low- and Moderate-Income Residents?” Developed in partnership with Georgia State University, which has received recent NSF research grants on low-income housing, this proposal stems from work directed by Prof. Saegert and a group of GC doctoral students, who together have formed the Alternative Housing Research Working Group. (Their website may be accessed at http://opencuny.org/alternativehousingresearch/.)
The Public Space Research Group continues sharing research on its website at [http://publicspace.commons.gc.cuny.edu/](http://publicspace.commons.gc.cuny.edu/). PSRG Director Setha Low is also collaborating with Canadian colleagues on a research project sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, “Exploring Condominium Governance in Toronto and New York City.” She expects to employ GC doctoral students on a portion of this research.

Finally, it should be noted that CHE’s Public Science Project raised additional amounts to support two events that were funded primarily by tax-levy monies from the GC’s Advanced Research Collaborative: presentations by epidemiologist and expert on the consequences of inequality Richard Wilkinson (November, 2012), and a week-long series of events with New Zealand educator and author of the acclaimed study *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (April, 2013).