

# Between a rock and a hard place



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Running head: BETWEEN A ROCK Between a Rock and a Hard Place Between a Rock and a Hard Place The article is about the effect of regional housing discrimination in propagating poverty, crime, and other social ills. The story is about ten women, all African-American and married, living in a poor, small community called Meadow View, lying just outside a major city in the Midwest, in the years 1995-96. Due to the rising criminality in the area, several of the women wanted to leave, but the terms of their housing subsidy restricted their mobility to Meadow View due to a political clash of policy between county and local housing authorities. On the other hand, those without housing subsidy are limited by their lack of resources in finding better places (Bretell & Sargent, 2009). Spillover vice is a problem in the community, with drugs and sex attracting rich white people into the area. The women consider this an insult and a hypocrisy, because rich people do not want to live in the area because of the resident blacks, although they provide the incentive for the proliferation of vice and crime in the area. Children are in particular danger, and the mothers exert extreme effort in watching their children and keeping them off the violence in the streets, and from being recruited by criminal gangs. Some have died protecting their children from armed goons. Maintaining vigilance often meant constantly staying indoors; therefore, women who find themselves in this position seldom could go to work, much less pursue a career. Their constant stress and watchfulness takes its toll on their health and the health of their children. Among those parents who had jobs, one in every four stressed that they did not have sick leaves available in order to take care of their sick children (Heymann, Earle & Egleston, 1996). The dilemma focused upon by the selection is the struggle of women - black, low-income mothers

in particular – in creating for their families and their children a home where they will be safe, when they are forced by circumstances to live in areas like Meadow View (Bretell and Sargent, 2009). This is a problem understandably encountered in the inner cities, where lawlessness is due to high concentration of poor people in an urban setting; however, Meadow View is a suburb, and therefore the concentration of crime therein is largely due to the forced, de facto segregation these families find themselves in, as a result of housing policies and terms of government subsidies. It is a problem created by government, and therefore fully addressable by the state. I have chosen this particular topic because I can relate to the poverty and criminality mentioned in it. I grew up in such a neighbourhood; both my parents worked, even my mother which was against my father's wishes, but we needed the money to survive. At that time, there were no job or training assistance programs, so there appeared to be no way out of the dire situation people found themselves trapped in. People turned to selling drugs just to survive, because there were no jobs available for them. These were thus not truly bad people, and I believe if they were given the chance, they would have preferred another source of livelihood. The theme or concept of this article, therefore, may be said to be the dilemma faced by women who live “between a rock and a hard place” – that is, under circumstances that threaten the lives and welfare of their families, whatever they do or however they choose. Mothers (women) are more affected by this dilemma than fathers, because it is usually they who retain custody of the children after divorce. Finding themselves in a suburb like Meadow View is a hopeless situation forced upon them by society and perpetuated by the government.

QUESTION: What options may women in such a predicament resort to, in

order to attain for themselves and their children a decent life, and what protections may the institutions - government or the NGOs - offer them?

References: Bretell, C. & Sargent, C, (2009) " Between a Rock and a Hard Place," Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective, 5th edition. Prentice Hall Publication. Heymann, S. J.; Earle, A.; & Egleston, B. (1996) " Parental Availability for the Care of Sick Children," Pediatrics: The Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics 98: 226-230