

**Assessing the Concept
of
Concentrated Poverty
In
HOPE VI**

A thesis

Submitted by

MEGHAN WELCH

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

**Medford, MA
February 2013**

**Advisor: James Jennings
Reader: Laurie Goldman**

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the theory and application of poverty concentration and deconcentration within public housing's HOPE VI program. Negative resident behaviors, such as crime, unemployment, low education attainment and teenage pregnancy are posited to be symptoms of "poverty concentration" or the grouping of low-income people in public housing. Poverty concentration, along with other public housing challenges, has prompted a reform of housing poor people. Through the dispersal of public housing residents across lower poverty communities and the rehabilitation of public housing projects into housing for a range of incomes, the \$7 billion HOPE VI program advances this reform and aims to do more than simply administering housing. Theoretically, a mixed income environment will improve the social and economic stability of public housing residents by increasing interaction and connection to positive social networks, role models, institutions, and mainstream opportunities. However, the absence of a causal relationship between poverty, its concentration, its negative effects on life outcomes, and socialization mechanisms, challenges such theories. The assessment suggests several important implications and critiques about the concept of poverty concentration, and the strategy of poverty deconcentration as advanced by the HOPE VI program.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMI	Area Median Income
BHA	Boston Housing Authority
CHA	Chicago Housing Authority
HOPE VI	Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere
HUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
MTO	Moving to Opportunity Program
NCSDPH	The National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing
PHA	Public Housing Authority

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As part of the New Deal's legislation in 1937 public housing is the country's oldest housing subsidy program (Schwartz 2006). Historically, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) responsibilities have included the construction and maintenance of large public housing developments ("projects"), individual units ("scattered site") and the appropriation of housing subsidies ("vouchers") for use in the private rental market by low-income Americans. Increasingly, large public housing developments have become controversial and "media scrutinized" (Popkin et al. 2004). Despite the majority of the stock providing adequate housing, the failures of several large urban projects caught the attention of Congress, policy makers, politicians and public concern in the 1980's. Reports cited not just the distress of public housing's management and physical plant but also residential behavior deemed inappropriate for economic mobility (Popkin, et al. 2004).

In several American cities, project-based public housing residents reflected disproportionately high rates of unemployment, health concerns and poverty (Popkin et al 2004). Similarly, negative resident behaviors believed to dominate at these developments included crime, low education attainment and teenage pregnancy (Curley 2005; Epp 1996; Fiss 2008; Goetz 2000; Popkin et al. 2004; Spence 1993). Neighborhoods featuring these developments considered blighted, unfit for economic development or progress, and reflecting a decayed community. Innovative solutions called for thinking beyond the usual "bricks and mortar" focus of HUD by not only creating high quality units, but also

engineering the social and economic stability of public housing residents and their surrounding communities.

The HUD initiation of the HOPE VI program in 1993 was one such solution and is the product of a certain kind of discourse over the last quarter century. One hypothesis or thread of concern is how the clustering of poor people or “poverty concentration” compromises the success of public housing (Fiss 2008; Massey 1993; U.S. GAO 2003; Wacquant 1997; Wilson 1997). “Poverty concentration,” roughly defined as an area in which 40% of the population are poor, is believed to impede positive life outcomes because the residents are cut off from mainstream citizens, culture and opportunities (Jargowsky 1997).¹ Poverty concentration is believed to limit social and economic stability because the poor only interact with others struggling with economic stability. Further, neighborhoods or developments predominantly poor in composition are believed to cultivate lower standards of behavior, less social control and less productive relationships among neighbors (i.e. neighborly contact leading to job sourcing).

Public housing’s effort to reduce poverty concentration is led by two major strategies: 1) the dispersal of public housing residents across lower poverty communities either at low density publicly owned “scattered site” housing or “voucher” subsidized private market rental housing 2) the creation of “planned mixed-income developments” in place of traditional all low-income “projects.”

The \$7 billion HOPE VI program to create planned mixed income public housing

¹ The Bureau of the Census (1970) first defined “low-income” areas as census tracts with 20% of residents falling below the poverty line. This percentage was arbitrarily doubled to designate “high-poverty” areas or what scholarship came to reference as “concentrated poverty.” Jargowsky (1997) then developed a more geographic or spatial approach to concentrated poverty by measuring the proportion of poor people in any given city who live in census tracts of high poverty.

is groundbreaking in its attempt to change almost all facets of traditional public housing administration.

By demolishing, rehabilitating or reconfiguring public housing developments and replacing them with new housing for a range of incomes, one of the HOPE VI goals is to generate more self-sufficient public housing residents and sustainable communities absent of the problems associated with poverty and its concentration (U.S. HUD 1995). Public housing authorities receiving HOPE VI grant money often operationalize HOPE VI goals by constructing high quality units at lower densities, including public, affordable and market rate units, decentralizing the management of properties, and providing social services to public housing residents.

The thesis questions addressed in my research are: *What are the poverty concentration and poverty deconcentration theories supportive of and advanced by public housing's reform and its emblematic program, HOPE VI? What do evaluations and studies of HOPE VI developments tell us about the strategy of poverty deconcentration in practice? What are the implications and recommendations resulting from these findings?* A literature review, an examination of HOPE VI evaluations and interviews of key informants provides an opportunity to synthesize the information available on this topic and serve as a basis for a theoretical critique.

Significance

Over 49,000 public housing residents have been impacted by the HOPE VI program, many of whom are children, elderly or in poor health (U.S. GAO

2003). Original residents of a public housing development utilizing a HOPE VI grant are likely to experience short or long-term disruptions to their lives because HOPE VI is not voluntary, major rehabilitation of existing developments is involved and new, more stringent, resident criteria govern program admission. Because HOPE VI does not require “one for one replacement” when public housing units are demolished or rehabilitated, HOPE VI changes the landscape of public housing as HUD has less “hard” units at its disposal (Schwartz 2006).

In the short-term, when a building is targeted for redevelopment, original residents may sometimes be allowed to stay on-site during construction, but most must move to either another public housing site, the private market with a subsidy voucher, or a scattered-site public housing unit. This may have social or economic implications for residents, as there is no guarantee residents will find housing within the same neighborhood or at all. Proximity to work, transportation options, family or schooling may be severely impacted since there is only a limited amount of public housing within any given city.

Once the public housing is rehabilitated or reconfigured with HOPE VI grant money into mixed-income public housing, original residents are not guaranteed an apartment because this would perpetuate the poverty concentration in the development prior to rehabilitation. Instead, original residents must re-apply and be approved for a spot. HOPE VI eligibility criteria for residency may be different than criteria of the original development and often, it is more stringent, including certain income or job requirements. This means individuals and families may find themselves without housing in a neighborhood they have lived in for years or even in a neighborhood they prefer. They may be forced to

change jobs or schools because the housing they do qualify for is in another part of town. Homelessness or “doubling up” may be a reality as a public housing resident seeks to secure new housing. This disruption in housing may have emotional or economic impacts on public housing residents (Imbroscio 2010; Goetz 2003; Pardee 2005; Popkin et al 2003; Small 2001; Vale 2010).

One justification for this disruption, and one of HOPE VI’s four goals, is the “deconcentration of poverty”. Yet the underpinnings and perceived benefits associated with this goal have yet to be examined fully. With research showing us a clear disconnect between theory and practice and thus, how poverty deconcentration is more of a response to a perceived social crisis than a well-researched solution, the need for this thesis’ theoretical critique only grows (Joseph 2007; Popkin 2004; Smith 2002). Lastly, this theoretical critique is particularly timely with the advent of HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, a program poised to eclipse HOPE VI. Originally piloted in 2010 with \$65 million of HOPE VI appropriations, the program has grown to receive \$120 million in 2012 and HUD requests \$150 million for the program in 2013 (CLPHA 2012; U.S HUD 2010). Like HOPE VI, the grants seek to transform high poverty neighborhoods, yet grantees not only include public housing authorities, but non-profits, local governments, and community development corporations. By highlighting HOPE VI’s theoretical misconceptions of poverty concentration, this thesis may help Choice avoid this pitfall in its program design and implementation

Whether HOPE VI continues or Choice replaces it, public housing residents have been impacted by HOPE VI during the last twenty years. In sum,

HOPE VI has resulted in the net loss of public housing and the privatization of public housing management (Curley 2005). This means that while HOPE VI is seemingly investing in public housing through modernization and improved management, it is simultaneously disinvesting from the program. With this model, fewer public housing options may be available for future families in need. With existing public housing turning to the private management of developments, there is no guarantee the housing will be public in perpetuity. Although poverty is nowhere near eradication in the United States, this approach to housing the poor seems to assume individuals will progressively need less assistance with housing although the downturn and recent unpredictability of the U.S. economy only counter this assumption.

Besides the on-the-ground concerns, this thesis reveals how the fuzzy and unmeasured use of poverty concentration and poverty deconcentration presents a major challenge to local program design and evaluation. Without clear definitions, metrics of success for poverty deconcentration cannot be set by public housing authorities during program design and are therefore widely absent from evaluations. As demonstrated by the evaluations, it is impossible to make “apples to apples” comparisons of poverty deconcentration theories, one of the intended benefits of a national program. Without the ability to compare across different cities and states, it is difficult to know if program design components or other unmeasured variables are influencing the success or failure of a program.

More specifically, poverty concentration theories frame poverty to be the result of social and cultural challenges as opposed to structural inequities like low wages and discrimination. The framework assumes higher income people to be

more socially stable than lower income people. While it is true that higher income neighborhoods have fewer reported crimes and individuals on public welfare, it is important to question whether we generalize too much about poverty concentration always producing less social order or lower quality of life.

Because the benefits of “deconcentrating poverty” are not being realized at this stage of policy implementation, HOPE VI’s 19th year, this thesis urges policy makers and practitioners to remove it from HOPE VI goals and reconsider its relevance to its successor, the 2010 HUD-initiated Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. Further, as this thesis uncovers, the use of poverty concentration and deconcentration is fraught with biased notions of the urban poor and the neighborhoods they live in and, as Loic Wacquant argues, reinforces the precarious American belief that all of the poor are pathologically disorganized and deficient instead of simply part of and reflective of our total society (1997).

Organization of Thesis

The next chapter of this thesis explains the methodology used for this study. A literature review, an analysis of HOPE VI evaluations and other place-based poverty deconcentration programs as well as interviews of key informants are the general components of this study. Chapter three explores theories on the causes of poverty concentration, the theories on the consequences of poverty concentration as well as the theories on de-concentration as a strategy. This chapter lays the foundation for analyzing HOPE VI evaluations in Chapter four.

Chapter four examines how poverty concentration and deconcentration theories have played out in HOPE VI developments and other similar programs. The chapter will analyze HOPE VI evaluations and studies of housing developments which hold the deconcentration of poverty as a central tenet to the site's establishment. The input from housing administrators and policy makers, as well as interviews with key informants, are woven into the analysis in order to provide perspective on the theories in practice.

Chapter five presents implications and recommendations emerging from this study. There are several important concerns and recommendations for researchers and policy makers.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study is based on several components, including a literature review of the theories on the causes of poverty concentration in urban public housing, a review of empirical evidence on the impacts of high poverty neighborhoods, and a review of how the strategy of poverty deconcentration is posited to work between people and their neighborhood. The articles and research reports used for this thesis are published in several journals: *Housing Policy Debate* and *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, *Urban Affairs Review*, and *Journal of Urban Affairs*. Research by the Urban Institute proved invaluable. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) documents provided policy details and notable quotes of public administrators.

A review of empirical evidence available on the socialization models through the federal HOPE VI program and other similar, state or city developed program was conducted to see if interaction was occurring between low-income and higher income residents as posited by policy makers. Additionally, in-person, phone or email interviews were conducted with 16 key informants who have practical experiences with public housing policy or residents, mixed-income housing or HOPE VI, and with the idea of poverty de-concentration. Empirical and interview findings were then synthesized together.

Interviews were conducted with individuals who have experience with administering mixed-income housing policies or HOPE VI or have published research related to mixed-income housing and poverty concentration. Researchers or professors interviewed were selected based on their expertise

revealed by the literature. Still other key informants were recommended by other key informants. However, my residency in Boston and attendance of a Boston area university did increase access to the Boston Housing Authority, as well as Boston area community development corporations and university professors. My previous internship with the City of Chicago helped connect me with representatives from the Chicago Housing Authority. All interviews were conducted by me in person, via email or over the phone between March 21, 2008 and April 28, 2008.

Interviewees included:

- Joseph Bamberg, Senior Project Manager, Real Estate Development
Boston Housing Authority
- Kathy Carton, Senior Planner
Boston Housing Authority
- Deb Morse
Director, Real Estate Development
Boston Housing Authority
- Bryan Zises, Communications Director
Chicago Housing Authority (CHA)
- Mary Doyle, Director of Policy and Program Development
Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP)
- Chris Norris, Executive Director
Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP)
- Ann Verrilli, Director of Research,
Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (Massachusetts)
- Mike Feloney, Executive Director
Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation
- Robin Finnegan, Executive Director
MissionWorks (Service Provider to 3 Boston HOPE VI developments)

- David Price, Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel
Madison Park Development Corporation (Boston)
- Mel King, Former Director of Community Fellows Program, MIT
Political and Social Activist
- Mark Joseph
Professor and Researcher
Case Western Reserve University
- Sherri Lawson-Clark
Sociology Professor and Researcher
Duke University
- Lawrence Vale
Professor and Researcher
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Sheila Crowley
President
National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)
- Jon Gottlieb
Vice President, Development
Michaels Development Company

The interview questions included the following:

- What are the motivations behind creating mixed-income public housing in major American cities? (and if applicable, specific to your locality?)
- What is “concentrated poverty”?
- What are the indicators of poverty deconcentration?
- What outcomes are policy makers looking for when measuring the success or failure of a mixed-income public housing development or program such as HOPE VI?
- Do you believe public housing residents living with higher income residents will improve their social networks, social capital or be exposed to role modeling? Will any of these alleviate their poverty?
- What are some of the challenges of HOPE VI or mixed-income public housing policy in practice?

Key informants cited the actual or perceived failures of urban public housing, primarily distressed residents and poor physical maintenance, as the major motivator behind HOPE VI and other programs aimed to reform public housing. Interviewees did believe Congressional members or those removed from “on the ground” experience were motivated to reform public housing because of the terrible face of poverty concentration or “ghettos”. More than other interviewees, Bryan Zises from the Chicago Housing Authority emphasized how Chicago will be more vibrant and healthy through socio-economic integration. Overall, key informants revealed how data was not used to motivate the shift in public housing, but more anecdotal evidence and newspaper articles about the extreme public housing cases in major cities.

Besides Mark Joseph who referred to the Moving to Opportunity program’s definition of poverty concentration (neighborhoods where at least 40% of residents live below the poverty line), interviewees tended to avoid trying to define poverty concentration. All were familiar with the term, but treated it more as a catchall term rather than absolute science. Interestingly, the Boston Housing Authority does not include poverty deconcentration as an explicit goal of its redevelopment projects. Instead, BHA interviewees framed it as sometimes being a byproduct of the market-based approach of HOPE VI. Because HUD now leans on private developers and managers, there is an increase in the development of mixed-income housing at former public housing sites. Further, the BHA asserted that they do not deny location preferences of public housing residents if they are interested in living in a neighborhood with many families living in poverty.

Chris Norris and Mary Doyle from the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership believe poverty deconcentration is difficult to define and track. They assert access to housing choice for families living in poverty, both location and type, should be the emphasis of housing policy as opposed to strategic movement of poor people. Mike Feloney believes the “jury is still out” on the benefits of poverty deconcentration. Diane Yentel of the National Low Income Housing Coalition thinks poverty deconcentration is a scientific term which doesn’t take into account the distinct issues facing families in poverty nor the basic economic supports these families need regardless of having a higher income neighbor.

Time limitations prevent this study from including the voices of those impacted by HOPE VI’s mixed-income public housing. However, I did identify and utilize scholarship reflecting these voices, such as Mark Joseph’s work in Chicago and Rachel Kleit’s work in Seattle.² Future research on the theory and application of poverty concentration within public housing’s HOPE VI program should better include the voices of public housing residents. These residents have first-hand experience with the strategy of poverty deconcentration and may provide insight on it.

² See Mark L. Joseph, "Early Resident Experiences at at New Mixed-Income Development in Chicago" (2008); ———. "Reinventing Older Communities through Mixed-Income Development: What are we Learning from Chicago Public Housing Transformation?" (2008); Rachel Kleit, "HOPE VI New Communities: Neighborhood Relationships in Mixed-Income Housing. *Environment and Planning A* 37, (2005), 1413.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL UNDERPININGS OF HOPE VI

This chapter will explore the first thesis question: *What are the theories of poverty concentration reflecting and advancing public housing's reform and its current emblematic program, HOPE VI?* The term poverty concentration and its perceived role in public housing's failure requires examination since both serve as a catalyst for public housing's costly and impactful reform over the last four decades. Theories on the scope, causes and consequences of poverty concentration, particularly in public housing, are traced in tandem with the theoretical benefits of poverty deconcentration. The chapter illuminates how poverty concentration increasingly gained the attention of researchers and policy makers because of its perceived detrimental effects. Despite the lack of clarity on any causal relationship between poverty, its concentration, and its symptoms, the demand for a paradigm shift in public housing led to the backing of poverty deconcentration as a strategy. Ultimately, this chapter traces the shaky underpinnings of the poverty deconcentration strategy. This context is relevant to the examination of HOPE VI evaluation findings in Chapter 4 and provides a platform for the critique presented in the final chapter.

Despite public housing's 50 years of operation, policy makers and political leaders deemed it a failure by the late 1980's. A call to action to re-make it grew in popularity (Brophy 1997; Curley 2005; Goetz 2003; Popkin et al 2004; Schwartz 2006). While many public housing authorities across the country provided sufficient housing, challenges of urban public housing developments caught the attention of the public, and the U.S. Congress. According to National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) President Sheila Crowley, the

“spectacular disasters,” often covered by the media, came to overshadow any successes of the public housing program (phone interview by author, Boston, MA, 25 March 2008). Soon, the first Clinton administration reached bipartisan agreement on the failure of public housing and promises were made to “end public housing as we know it (Brophy 1997; John Gottlieb, phone interview by author, Boston, MA, 24 March 2008).

But what is “public housing as we know it”? Several major American cities featured public housing developments or “projects” with serious physical disrepair, criminal danger and blighted surrounding streets. The National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing (1992) conducted full case studies on two sites in Chicago and one site each in Boston, Cleveland and New Orleans. Site examinations included nine sites including New York City, San Francisco, Washington DC and Miami. Residents of these projects reflected disproportionately high rates of unemployment, health concerns and poverty (Popkin et al 2004; U.S GAO 1992). Crime, low education attainment and teenage pregnancy were negative resident behaviors often occurring in these large urban developments and cited as a reason for the neighborhood’s decay. This type of public housing was viewed as a liability to mainstream behavior norms and a compromise of the whole promise of the program: to temporarily and adequately house the neediest Americans.

When public housing was deemed a failure, innovative solutions called for thinking beyond the usual “bricks and mortar” focus of HUD by not only creating high quality units, but also engineering the stability of public housing residents and their surrounding communities. One strategy proposed to increase the

stability of developments and the life outcomes of public housing residents is poverty deconcentration. Traditional public housing was criticized for suffering from the effects of poverty concentration, a density of poor residents believed to cultivate less social order, opportunities and enfranchisement. Therefore, the reform movement of public housing calls for creating a mix of incomes in public housing developments and thereby disperse poverty's ills throughout communities.

HOPE VI

Since HOPE VI represents a policy response to the failure of public housing or “public housing as we know it,” examining the conception of the program provides needed context. HOPE VI is the result of Congress commissioning The National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing (NCSDPH) in 1989 to investigate the problems of troubled public housing developments. After a three year study, the Commission presented a final report to Congress recommending dramatic changes to public housing policy and practice. The Commission advocated for a ten year plan to not only improve the dilapidated buildings, but also the quality of life for residents and neighborhood vitality of the development. This plan became HOPE VI in 1993 and is now in its 19th year of existence.

First, to understand how Congress perceived the failure of public housing, we will start in 1992 when the Commission reported out its findings and recommendations on public housing to Congress (U.S HUD 1992). Of the 1.3 million public housing units across the country, the report declared about 86,000

units or 6% of the stock “severely distressed” or most in need of improvements.

This 6% was located in mostly large cities. The report defined “severely distressed” as public housing exhibiting one or more of the following indicators:

- Families living in distress
- Rates of serious crimes in the development or the surrounding neighborhood
- Barriers to managing the environment
- Physical deterioration of buildings

Each indicator includes approximately three quantifiable measures used to rate the level at which each development demonstrated each indicator. The indicator “families living in distress” is important to this thesis because its definition includes poverty concentration. The report defines “families living in distress” as 1) lacking social and supportive services and employment opportunities in the area as well as 2) the “high concentration of very low income families living on a relatively small site” (U.S. HUD 1992, 41). To determine if a family was “living in distress,” data on education levels, employment rates, and household incomes was collected. There was no threshold provided for what constitutes a high concentration of poverty, like a percent of people below the area median income per square mile or relative to other census tracts in the area. There was no measurement provided for what constitutes “a relatively small site” nor a mechanism provided for understanding how this would cause a family to live in distress.

This discovery is significant to this thesis because it reveals how poverty concentration was a concern of researchers and policy makers early on in the current reform of public housing. Perhaps more importantly, as we see with this example, poverty concentration's definition and measurement are not well defined even in a three year report that contributed significantly to the design and implementation of a large national program like HOPE VI. Nonetheless, as we see below, avoiding poverty concentration becomes one of HOPE VI's four goals.

Sponsored by U.S Senators Barbara Mikulski of Maryland and Kit Bond of Missouri, the recommendations of the Commission's report turned into the 1993 Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program now known as Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere or HOPE VI. With a \$5 billion dollar budget, HOPE VI was intended to be much more comprehensive than previous public housing policy. Grant money to local public housing authorities (PHAs) have the following goals:

- To improve the living environment for residents of severely distressed public housing through the demolition, rehabilitation, reconfiguration, or replacement of obsolete projects (or portions thereof);
- To revitalize sites on which such public housing projects are located and contribute to the improvement of the surrounding neighborhood;
- To provide housing that will avoid or decrease the concentration of very low- income families; and
- To build sustainable communities (U.S. HUD 1992)

The HOPE VI goals represented an ambitious agenda for HUD, an agency that had traditionally been producers and managers of buildings. With the operationalization of HOPE VI goals, HUD is definitely no longer just “bricks and mortar.” HUD is shifting away from a sole focus on housing and delving into engineering the social needs or infrastructure of those living in poverty.

While buildings are part of the equation presented in HOPE VI (“demolition, rehabilitation...”), it is clear the solution emphasizes people (“...improve living environments for *residents*...”; “avoid or decrease the concentration of very low-income *families*”; “...build sustainable *communities*”). As can be expected, the language of the goals is broad with reference to large concepts like “environment,” “neighborhood,” and “communities.” In contrast, “...avoid or decrease the concentration of very low-income families” is noticeably more specific. We are provided with “the how” and “what” of measuring success through the verbs “avoid or decrease” and a description of the issue, “concentration of very low-income families.” Because of these details provided about the goal, it presents as well-researched or understood. And because only four goals are used to outline HOPE VI, its inclusion sends the message that poverty concentration is a negative component of public housing.

So what is the rationale for poverty concentration being included in the Commission’s report and then HUD’s largest program to date, HOPE VI? To understand why, we must review how researchers and hence, policy makers, have come to think about those living in poverty, who are often the same people living in public housing. While there is some debate, the predominant lens leans

towards classifying poverty as a condition needing treatment versus a term used to describe those earning minimal income.

The next section will shed light on how “urban persistent poverty” is not just describing location, duration and at what income, but also a laundry list of negative behaviors which create “problem people.” So while the next section provides evidence on how poverty concentration came to be, its significance to this thesis is really in how its theories have been interpreted and used to influence public housing policy. From the below section, we learn how “getting public housing right,” in the view of public housing policy makers, became not just about re-committing to foundational pieces like adequately funding, creating and managing buildings, but about trying to alleviate the negative behaviors associated with poverty. Let’s take a look at how the leading thoughts about the causes of urban persistent poverty developed into conclusions about its impact, particularly at public housing developments.

Causes and Consequences of Poverty Concentration

By the mid-1960’s researchers across the country began to identify how poverty was increasing in central cities, and particularly for African-Americans (Jargowsky 1992). Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, a family or household is determined to be living in poverty if their income before taxes falls below a certain threshold. This threshold stays the same regardless of geography.

Kasarda’s research on poverty tracts and distressed areas using the 1970 and 1980 census data found the most poverty tracts and distressed areas in the 100

largest American cities (1993). In fact, by 1980, these large cities were considered the home of almost 80% of those living in poverty (Ricketts 1988). Scholarly research began to look for reasons to explain this data and the mechanisms behind its growth.

William Julius Wilson's seminal book *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) presents two major events as significant to the increase and concentration of urban poverty. First, Wilson argues that the exodus of manufacturing jobs from the city to the suburbs or to other countries was a major catalyst in altering urban neighborhoods, and especially black neighborhoods. Job stability and opportunities decreased, thereby complicating the ability to provide for oneself or a family. This explains the drop in earnings in central American cities.

Secondly, middle-income, working class and low-income blacks had lived together in the same city neighborhoods, but many stable black families left the cities during the 1970's for the suburbs. Wilson believes proximity to higher income blacks had provided lower-income blacks with referrals to employment and educational opportunities as well as inclusion into community life, otherwise known as social capital. Because social segregation was alive and well at this time, these relationships or establishment of social capital were not replicated between low-income blacks and higher income non-blacks. Consequently, blacks were not only slipping in income, but in social traction and community networking. Wilson argues this is why the poor start to display negative or counterculture behaviors.

But what is the connection of Wilson's research to public housing? As we will see below, housing choices were limited for the poor and non-whites. Public

housing became a permanent home versus a temporary spot, the original intention of the program. For policy makers, concerns about poverty became tangled with concerns about public housing because they were viewed as “one and the same.” This provides needed context on why programs like HOPE VI take on both concerns. The below research shows how the urban poor Wilson studied became the people living in public housing.

Poverty Concentration in Public Housing

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) created as a result of the National Housing Act of 1934 is blamed for codifying discrimination in housing and is believed to have played a major hand in concentrating the poor and most often, poor blacks, in public housing. Massey and Denton (1993) and Leventhal et al. (1997) emphasize the institutional discrimination faced by the urban poor and minorities particularly with housing choice.

For instance, the FHA used discriminatory practices when it developed standards for the types of properties it would insure (Schwartz 2006, 49). Maps created by the federal Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) denoted areas not worthy of investment. This “redlining” was mostly based on the race of neighborhoods, but also the income of residents (Massey & Denton 1993). Consequently, minorities and low-income people able to purchase homes were not granted mortgages or were only granted mortgages in certain urban neighborhoods. This caused public housing to be a practical option for many poor families. And according to Massey and Denton a “culture of segregation,” not a

“culture of poverty” created the arena for warehousing the very poor in public housing developments (1993).

This is an important intersection of research on poverty and research on housing because the concerns about poverty became tangled with “place” or environment. Consensus was reached on the importance of a neighborhood and how neighborhood poverty plays a role in life outcomes (Curley, 101). Soon, there was a push by social scientists to try to understand the impacts on individuals and neighborhoods as a result of this type of poverty.

Empirical Evidence on Poverty Concentration

Multidisciplinary research sought to understand the impacts of high poverty neighborhoods. The research has been inconclusive in finding a causal relationship between a poor neighborhood and high levels of unemployment, school dropouts, crime and teenage pregnancy (Curley; Small & Newman 2001). These studies have struggled to define and measure a neighborhood and what may compromise it. But more of a link has been made between how poverty impacts the development of children.

Brooks-Gunn et al (1993) studied the effects of both the neighborhood and parents on the development of children. Poor cognitive development, low educational attainment and behavioral problems of children were linked with poverty, single female-headed households, minority populations, and low maternal education. Further, the “concentration of affluent families in a child’s neighborhood was a significant predictor of cognitive development, perhaps because of the greater resources and opportunities...” (Brooks-Gunn 281).

Galster, Quercia, Cortes (2000) found family influence to have more of an impact on individuals than neighborhood influence, but the neighborhood environment proved more influential the lower the income of the individual. Hogan and Kitagawa (1985) determined that low quality neighborhoods made it 1/3 more likely for a female teenager to become pregnant.

Crane (1991) used a sample of approximately 93,000 teenagers to examine the link between poverty, educational attainment and early childbearing. Teens are at risk of dropping out of school as the percentage of professionals decreases in the neighborhood. The risk of dropping out along with the probability of teenage pregnancy largely increased if the neighborhood drops below 3.5% middle class (Galster, 32).

Ellen, Mijanovich and Dillman (2001) have found that living in substandard housing and dangerous neighborhoods exacts a mental health toll on people called “weathering” where there is constant stress brought on by the existence of danger. Related to this, parents in poor dangerous neighborhoods are more likely to use harsh parenting which can affect children’s development (Leventhal 2003). For children, violence is believed to impact their cognitive and emotional development (Garbarino 1991).

Although research on neighborhoods has determined that the collective neighborhood environment does have an impact on the lives of individuals, research has been inconclusive in determining exactly *what* aspects of a neighborhood matter the most and *how* exactly the neighborhood influences an individual (Gould 1997). Nonetheless, since poverty was believed to be the largest contributing factor to the problems of individuals in a neighborhood, more

scholarship began to focus on the interactive mechanisms by which neighbors influence each other and the institutional mechanisms affecting the resources of a neighborhood. This next section will explain the mechanisms thought to hinder high poverty neighborhoods or developments because they are used to justify poverty deconcentration in public housing, whether dispersal or place-based in mixed-income housing.

Theories of Poverty Deconcentration

According to Wilson, the loss of manufacturing jobs and the flight of the middle class to the suburbs is just the beginning of the story for the urban poor. As time passed, this group of poor individuals became more and more isolated from mainstream ideals of behavior, employment and education. This “underclass” was no longer connected to job opportunities, resources or hard working role models. In turn, according to Wilson, those living in urban centers suffered from “concentration effects.” An increase in crime, out-of-wedlock births, joblessness, welfare dependency and teenage pregnancy the characteristics of these effects.

One theory used to explain these “effects” is the *networks isolation* model. It advances how opportunities for adults, like employment, are limited by a neighborhood of all low-income people because there is not enough social capital (Joseph 2007; Small 2001). Putnam (1993) defines social capital as “... features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.” Theoretically, low-income people all living together are not able to help each other because they are not tied in to a network

of working people or a network that values social and economic productivity. Acquaintance relationships or “weak ties” between people are believed to provide access to job opportunities more than close family or friend ties (Granovetter 1983). It is concluded that poor neighborhoods create isolation and by living here, one will not know the “right” people to connect them to jobs. Therefore, there is nothing mutually beneficial, in the economic sense, to the relationships in high poverty neighborhoods.

While the first two models focus on social interaction or exposure between adults, collective socialization and institutional models stem from research on how adults influence children. The *collective socialization* model, very much advanced by Wilson, posits the influence of neighborhood adults on children who are not their own (1987). Financially successful adults will serve as role models to children by displaying behaviors and skills necessary for financial success (Brooks-Gunn, et al 1997). Conversely, if children are only exposed to poor adults, they may not develop a vision or plan for future success because no adult has shared one with them.

The *institutional* model holds the influence of adults from outside the neighborhood on children as a socialization mechanism. The types of teachers, youth coaches, police officers and other adults children come in contact with at school, camp or their first job will influence their opportunities or life chances. The assumption is that higher income areas will attract more competent and stable adults to work with children whereas lower income areas will not feature these types of adults. Also, it is held that lower income kids are not valued as much by

teachers and police officers thereby decreasing the quality of education they receive and increasing their likelihood of arrest (Joseph 2007; Goetz 2003).

How children affect each other rounds out the theories on how and why neighborhoods or public housing developments of all low-income people create an at-risk environment. The *epidemic* model focuses on the way peers influence peers. Who “kids run with” is believed to influence the choices each individual child will make for themselves. For instance, if the friends of a child in a neighborhood all carry a knife or always do their homework right after school, it is highly likely for the child to do the same. Therefore, if a public housing development already has negative behaviors prevalent among the youth, it will likely grow and become the norm.

The networks isolation, collective socialization, institutional and epidemic models focus on the relationships among neighbors or how interaction between humans shapes behavior and hence, whether an environment cultivates positive or negative behaviors. According to former Chicago Dwellings Association President and CEO Christine Oliver, “... we have a history of isolating and concentrating the poor outside the social mainstream...mixed-income housing provides an opportunity to embrace them and bring them back into the social mainstream” (Ceraso 1995). Theoretically, poverty deconcentration will tap into the potential of positive interactions by creating housing with higher income, more positive peers, adults and elders.

Theories on purchasing and political power focus on the interaction between neighbors and outside players, namely the market. The theories posit that having higher income residents in a neighborhood will prevent a

neighborhood from becoming devoid of private or public services and infrastructure. First, higher income people are believed to have more disposable income which enables them to demand more from the market. This buying power will result in attracting and sustaining supermarkets, general merchandise stores, restaurants and service industries such as banking. All of these goods and services are believed to anchor a community by meeting the material demands of the community, providing jobs, and creating a sense of place with the built environment. Further, as spenders in the local private market, higher income residents will demand more of public services like schools, public safety, transportation and public officials. The combination of buying and political power will create stability of resources available for neighbors to live as comfortably as possible.

It is important to note that although research on neighborhoods has determined that the collective neighborhood environment does have an impact on the lives of individuals, research has been inconclusive in determining exactly *what* aspects of a neighborhood matter the most and *how* exactly the neighborhood influences an individual (Ellen 1997). As stated earlier, this highlights one of the major concerns of this thesis: how despite no conclusive research on how poverty concentration is detrimental, its antithesis, poverty deconcentration, is held as a solution. The research we have reviewed does not show a causal relationship between poverty concentration and negative behaviors, yet programs like HOPE VI actively suggest this relationship. Given this, how does poverty concentration and poverty deconcentration play out in practice? The next chapter will focus on this question.

CHAPTER 4: PLACE-BASED POVERTY DECONCENTRATION IN PRACTICE

The previous chapter explored the first thesis question: *What are the theories associated with poverty deconcentration?* In Chapter Three, we learned how poverty concentration or the dense grouping of low-income people developed in urban areas and how policy makers came to see it as a contributing factor in public housing's failure. Further, we unpacked how the reform of public housing, as most visibly represented by the \$6.7 billion dollar HOPE VI program, is not just about improving the physical and management health of buildings. Reform efforts including HOPE VI aim to decrease poverty concentration. Theoretically, the strategy of deconcentrating poverty or trying to house public housing residents with those of higher incomes will alleviate the symptoms of poverty by providing public housing residents with access to social capital, role models and the benefits of an enfranchised community such as services and businesses. Interaction between the lower and higher income residents will cultivate social order and improve the social and economic stability of lower income residents.

Despite the lack of clarity on the causal relationship between poverty, its concentration, and its perceived symptoms, we know HOPE VI and other housing programs have identified poverty concentration as a problem and held the strategy of poverty deconcentration as a solution. But how has the strategy fared? This chapter will answer the second thesis question: *What do program evaluations of HOPE VI developments and other similar programs tell us about poverty*

deconcentration theories in practice? Is there evidence to support the viability of the strategy? This chapter will analyze evaluations and studies of housing developments which hold income mixing and the deconcentration of poverty as a central tenet to the site's establishment. The evaluations are purposely focused on urban developments as this is cited to be where poverty concentration has had the worst impact on residents, public housing administration and communities. The voices of housing administrators and policy makers as well as interviews with key informants will be woven into the analysis in order to provide perspective on the theory and practice of poverty deconcentration.

Because HOPE VI is a national effort to deconcentrate poverty and targets the worst examples of poverty concentration, HOPE VI evaluations will be reviewed first. HOPE VI has changed the lives of close to 50,000 people, cost taxpayers approximately \$7 billion dollars and completely altered the landscape of public housing administration with its mixed-finance and private management approach. Original residents of a public housing development utilizing HOPE VI grant money experience both short and long-term disruptions to their lives. HOPE VI is not voluntary, but residents may be asked to relocate for several months or years to other neighborhoods and with no guarantee of admission into the public housing development once it completes rehabilitation. Because of the net loss of public housing and the privatization of its management through HOPE VI, the neediest families may not continue receiving access to housing and may experience displacement (Curley 2005). Further, privatization of public housing means profitability may drive all decisions, instead of the overall welfare of residents. For instance, if a public housing resident is destructive to their unit, a

private company may choose to evict the resident immediately because damage is costly. In contrast, a public housing authority may focus on keeping the destructive resident housed and work with the resident to alter their behavior before eviction. Because of these implications to people's lives, determining the merit of the poverty deconcentration strategy is critical.

As reviewed, public housing was determined to be a failure with Congress, policy makers and public administrators pushing for an overhaul. The hypothesis that all poor people living together does not benefit public housing residents is not new. *The Boston's Globe's* associate editor Ian Menzies reflects in 1972 on how to improve public housing: "The obvious answer is dilution; to mix high, middle and low income people, that may learn from the others; yes, even help each other in the struggles toward a better life." But how might people "learn" from each other? What does this entail?

As reviewed in Chapter Three, prolonged stays in all low-income public housing supposedly isolates residents, cutting them off from mainstream behavior and opportunities. In particular, this isolation limits the social capital of public housing residents because they are not tied in with economically successful adults. One theory on housing public housing residents in mixed-income developments is the growth in positive and productive social networks. Ultimately, through interaction with higher income neighbors, public housing residents may have an opportunity to hear of job opportunities or beneficial information aiding life stability.

But critics of the above arguments cite a few concerns with its lens. First, the focus of scholarship and media on the deviant behaviors of public housing

residents or those living in poverty has grown to dominate the discourse in a disproportionate way (Goetz 2000). Ultimately, as Loic Wacquant argues, this results in the “exoticizing” of the ghetto or the tendency to deem extreme cases of counter-culture behavior in poor neighborhoods as representative of the whole (1997). The framework is criticized for not recognizing the positive or productive relationships already in existence within public housing development or poor neighborhoods. For example, public housing residents in Chicago, New Orleans, Minneapolis and Boston have fought to stay in their communities by organizing compelling campaigns (Goetz 2003, Imbroscio 2008; Miller 2008; Pardee 2005; Small 2001; Wacquant 1997).

Nonetheless, with HOPE VI dispersing public housing residents to live closer to those of more means, evaluations have sought to understand if there is any type of interaction or relationship building going on between lower and higher income neighbors. Interaction is posited to be one way lower income residents will build positive social networks lacking in poor communities.

HOPE VI Evaluations

Sherri Lawson Clark became involved researching the transformation of the Washington, DC Ellen Wilson Dwellings to the HOPE VI Townhomes on Capitol Hill (TOCH) in 1995. Rehabilitation of Ellen Wilson included the vacating of all original residents. Clark spent two years interviewing a variety of residents and administrators. According to the 15 public housing residents Clark interviewed, no relationships were perceived to be established between the more

affluent residents and the low-income residents. A few interviewees indicated that they keep in touch with former residents of the public housing development who are not living at TOCH.

This caused Clark to conclude that the former residents already had networks established and weren't necessary looking for higher income residents to help develop them. Clark also concluded in a phone interview with me that she believes community building is more helpful to low-income residents trying to find stability on meager earnings, not interaction with higher earning adults. She didn't find interviewees "inspired" to work more or harder by having higher income residents nearby (Sherri Lawson Clark, phone interview by author, Boston, MA, 23 March 2008). This reinforces the thinking of the NLIHC's Sheila Crowley. She believes impoverished families need an individualized and strategic approach to their situation, not policy hoping to create opportunity through social networking.

Similarly to Clark, the Buron et al. (2002) Abt Associates and Urban Institute joint evaluation of 8 HOPE VI developments including the cities of Denver, Newark, and San Francisco found low levels of interaction between neighbors of different income levels. Across the sites, greetings were often the extent of the interaction. Like Clark, the researchers did find interaction between public housing residents who had previously lived together in the old development. Because poverty concentration is posited to create environments with high unemployment, the researchers of this study also looked at this data point. They found an already existing high level of employment by public housing residents. Low wages was the reason residents needed assistance with housing,

not unemployment. Jon Gottlieb, a 25 year developer of affordable and mixed-income including serving as Project Director for five HOPE VI efforts, believes public housing residents are not as socially isolated as portrayed by public agencies or the media. Gottlieb doesn't think lack of employment is always the issue, but more the challenges of trying to take care of one's family on limited earnings with expensive products and services. He does think economically and socially diverse communities can be a positive thing, but it doesn't establish economic stability for all (Jon Gottlieb).

The study by Varady et al. (2005) analyzing four HOPE VI sites in Cincinnati, Louisville, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. aimed to understand how middle-class families were attracted and retained at HOPE VI sites to achieve the goal of income mixing. Besides collecting data on resident demographics pre and post-HOPE VI, the researchers conducted 28 in person and telephone interviews of housing authority staff, residents and government officials. Interestingly, separate from their research goals, the study reveals insight on resident interaction germane to this thesis. In Louisville, income mixing has been achieved. But, "efforts to promote a social mix between owners and renters have created conflicts that may make it difficult to achieved the presumed benefits of income and tenure mixing" (160). For instance, separate neighborhood associations were spawned when homeowners came to dominate the original neighborhood association and renters felt less heard. In Baltimore, the majority of market rate units were bought by moderate-income families (incomes with 60-80% area median income) with the rest of the units occupied by public housing residents. Researchers note that "a major rift has emerged" between public housing tenants

and homeowners. This is attributed to homeowners not being aware that public housing tenants would be returning to the site and public housing residents feeling homeowners treated them as inferior. Overall, no meaningful interaction was found to exist at any of these sites.

In Seattle, Kleit (2004, 2005) has probably done the most thorough job of measuring the interaction between higher and lower income residents at HOPE VI sites. Her evaluations prioritized it by unpacking the terms interaction and neighboring in her methodology. Kleit (2005) collected 105 phone interviews of the 426 households in NewHolly Phase I. The breakdown was evenly split with 35 public housing residents, 35 tax credit renters and 35 homeowners. Phone interviews were only done if there was an English speaker in the household. Six native-language focus groups with an average group size of seven was the other collection method.

The telephone interview specifically asked participants to name how many neighbors they felt comfortable saying hello to and then asked them to name any of these neighbors. With this information, the interviewer asked about these interactions and the context of knowing these neighbors. Kleit concludes that interaction is often determined by language, family composition and culture as opposed to close proximity. At New Holly, many of the public housing and subsidized residents shared the same language or family composition which led to interaction. Ultimately, there was little interaction between public housing or subsidized renters and homeowners. Kleit concludes that although there is proximity between public housing residents and higher income residents, there is

in no meaningful interaction because there are differences in family composition, language and use of shared facilities.

Despite the absence of evidence, Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) Communications Director Bryan Zises believes “interaction is subtle, but profound” at mixed-income developments (phone interview by author, Boston, MA, 28 April 2008). While he doesn’t believe people have to be close friends or invite each other to barbeques, he does believe integration of public housing residents into more parts of the city “works on a personal, structural and economic level.” David Price of Madison Park Development Corporation in Boston believes “some benefits are psychological, not quantifiable” (in-person interview by author, Boston, MA, 2 April 2008). Since only poverty deconcentration findings from HOPE VI evaluations have been reviewed thus far, the next section will review other programs prioritizing poverty deconcentration to explore whether program design or other factors determine outcomes.

Other Program Evaluations

Before HOPE VI, state and city housing agencies created similar smaller scale place-based housing with an intentional mix of incomes. These mixed-income developments are important to study because although they may have fewer public housing tenants or more of a variety in income groups, they still emphasize the theories of poverty concentration and poverty deconcentration. While no two programs reviewed below are exactly alike in design, context or time period, each held income mixing central to their mission and feature evaluations that sought to measure poverty deconcentration. Inclusion of these

evaluations in this chapter's analysis allow for a deeper look at the theories and themes examined in this thesis and serve as a platform for implications shared in Chapter five.

One early leader in promoting the mix of incomes at developments is Massachusetts. In 1966, MassHousing was created to fund a variety of these initiatives (Brophy 1997). One of the first evaluations conducted by Ryan et al. in 1974 prioritized measuring interaction, but found little significant interaction at income diverse developments. Most importantly, Ryan included a comparison group of developments without an income mix and found the same minimal interaction.

In 1997 Paul Brophy and Rhonda Smith analyzed a diverse group of seven multi-family mixed-income housing developments including the urban developments of Harbor Point (Dorchester neighborhood, Boston), Tent City (South End neighborhood, Boston) and The Residences at Ninth Square (New Haven, CT). Each development held income mixing as central to the development's purpose and plan. The authors wanted to know if lower and higher income tenants are interacting at these developments, and if so, net results. The authors visited each development, interviewing residents, developers and property managers to better understand what made the development successful and if upward mobility was more possible for lower income tenants after interacting with higher income people.

Harbor Point

Formerly Columbia Point, a Boston Housing Authority development with nearly 1,500 vacated units due to dilapidation and crime, Harbor Point is now representative of a major transformation. By 1988, it turned into a 1,300-unit development where 70% of units are market-rate housing and 30% are subsidized housing. Brophy et al found little meaningful interaction between tenants of different incomes. The market rate and subsidized residents “co-exist,” according to management of the development.

The physical layout of Harbor Point contributes to separation of the income groups. Whereas few of the market-rate units have children, the subsidized units average two children. The three- and four-bedroom units ideal for families are grouped together in a particular area of the development and the one- and two-bedroom units for individuals or couples are grouped in another area of the development. There is only a modest amount of participation by market-rate residents in the development’s youth mentoring program and there has been a trend of market-rate tenants transferring to townhouses where there are more market-rate tenants (7-9). Lastly, management attributes the vandalism of market rate tenant cars by subsidized household teens to animosity between these two groups (Brophy 1997).

Since interaction with higher income residents is the mechanism believed necessary for lower income residents to improve their social and economic conditions, its absence challenges this theory of mixed-income housing. But let’s consider other resident characteristics besides income. The market rate tenants tend to be fairly transient professionals and students with a turnover rate of 50%

per year. More than half of these tenants are minorities or foreign, with 43% of the market rate tenants being classified as white. About 6% of these tenants have children. In contrast, the subsidized tenants are predominantly minority and permanent residents with only a 6% average turnover rate per year. About 70% of the subsidized tenants are former residents of Columbia Point, the former public housing complex.

A few things surface when analyzing this study's evidence and considering the resident characteristics of Harbor Point. First, it is possible that the current resident configuration at Harbor Point contributes to more neighboring or social relationships within instead of between each income group. Right now, it is simply easier to interact with someone of the same income because the apartments are in the same area. The transiency of the market rate tenants may play a factor in their level of involvement in the complex or their level of interest in being a neighbor.

Households with children tend to interact more with other households with children (see Kleit 2005, 1415). Since almost three quarters of the subsidized tenants are from the former public housing project, these tenants are more likely to know each other, especially since many bonded together to forge the new Harbor Point. Social interactions and relationships have been attributed to homogeneity so the two income groups may be too different in too many different areas. The mentoring program for the development's youth, has the possibility of bringing together the two groups for a shared purpose, but again, the market rate tenants barely participate in this program. Lastly, unlike several HOPE VI evaluations, Brophy's study was conducted ten years into Harbor Point's

existence. This counters an argument that interaction between high and low-income residents takes time and reinforces Kleit's conclusion in Seattle that other factors such as a common language or culture influence the interaction between individuals.

Tent City

In 1998 Tent City was completed in the South End neighborhood of Boston with 25% market-rate, 50% moderate income and 25% very low income units (Brophy 1997). There is little interaction between market-rate tenants and subsidized tenants. Almost 2/3 of the market rate tenants are graduate students and 34% of these units turn over each year compared to 5% of the subsidized units. Almost none of the market rate units have children where most of the subsidized units have children. Additionally, preference for the subsidized units is given to former residents of the adjacent South End neighborhood or those displaced by the increase in the area's rent. Market-rate tenants do not participate in building or neighborhood activities, nor are they very connected to the development's mixed-income mission. Problems between income groups are not common. The noise level of children has occasionally been an issue for tenants who are students (14-16).

Similar to Harbor Point, there are more differences between the market and subsidized tenants than just their incomes. Brophy found that the subsidized tenants typically have a prior tie to the neighborhood and may already have established relationships in the building. Further, these residents have children, with many using the on-site daycare and after school program for teenagers. A

steering committee of subsidized residents is active in contributing to ongoing improvement of the development and social service counseling is provided on-site for subsidized residents. Because low-income residents may possibly have childcare, the steering committee, and social services in common, there are inevitably more opportunities for these residents to interact whereas researchers found the market rate tenants are more anonymous and barely interact amongst themselves.

Ninth Square

The Residences at Ninth Square in New Haven, CT have a bigger spread of incomes than the Harbor Point or Tent City. Only 19% of units are market rate, with the remaining 81% of units subsidized. The majority of subsidized units are low income and there are some residents who earn no income. While there is a strict screening of prospective tenants to ensure a fit with the development's culture and rules, there has been limited interaction noted at Ninth Square. There is a high number of children at Ninth Square with all but one child living in a subsidized unit. Management does organize community events, but these events are poorly attended. Brophy and Smith did find one low-income resident at the New Haven Residences at Ninth Square who heard of a job through a higher income resident, but there does not seem to be any regularity to this occurrence.

A major finding of these three case studies is that despite the differences in programs and contexts like income spread or building type and location, the interaction between incomes remains low. Boston Housing Authority (BHA)

administrators site the high turnover rate of market rate tenants in their mixed-income housing developments as a reason to have low expectations for resident interaction or neighboring among incomes. Instead, they see market rate units as a way to get a development built, but “have not fully embraced the idea that income mixing is good just on its own benefits low-income residents” (Joe Bamberg and Kathy Carton, in person interview by author, Boston, MA 10 April 2008).

If the theories of interaction and role modeling are not happening in planned mixed-income settings, what is happening? The most convincing evidence of improved environments for public housing residents living in mixed-income developments has been in an improved perception of social control, namely less crime and violence. Rosenbaum et al. (1998) surveyed residents at Lake Parc Place about the development’s rules and enforcement. Higher income residents supported the rules and enforcements more than lower income residents.

While studies have identified “successful” mixed-income housing, it is unclear whether all public housing residents are benefiting from mixed-income housing, or just those who meet particular admission criteria and who follow traditional social such s marriage or economical norm like full-time employment (Andersson 2007; Curley 2005; Finkel 2000; Joseph 2007; Rosenbaum 1998; Smith 2002). This thesis reveals several implications and areas of concern.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis examines the theory and application of poverty concentration and deconcentration as promoted and demonstrated by the federal HOPE VI program. To this end, we reviewed the theories on the causes and consequences of poverty concentration in central American cities. We learned how poverty concentration became synonymous with public housing and ultimately, sparked an overhaul of the program in the late 1980's. We examined the rationales used to justify HOPE VI's employment of poverty deconcentration, namely the mechanisms allowing public housing residents to benefit from living in close proximity to higher income individuals. The benefits anticipated may be in the form of improved social networks leading to job sourcing, working role models, improved social order and better access to public and private services. Lastly, we reviewed the evidence available on these theories in practice. We find that although no causal relationship exists between poverty, its concentration, and the negative behaviors associated with it, the HOPE VI program intimates causality by contending how avoiding poverty concentration will lessen the distress of families and lead to more positive behaviors and life outcomes for these individuals.

This study does not find sufficient evidence, based on a review of the extant literature, assessments of formal evaluation studies, or interviews with key informants, to support the viability of poverty deconcentration to help improve the social and economic stability of public housing residents. The assessment prompts several important concerns and recommendations for researchers and policy makers. This chapter will answer the third and final thesis question: *What*

are the conclusions and recommendations resulting from this examination of poverty concentration and poverty deconcentration in public housing?

The disconnect between theory and practice is the overarching concern of the HOPE VI poverty deconcentration goal and any housing program that touts the theoretical rationales for poverty deconcentration. First, most strikingly, is how the promotion of poverty concentration and deconcentration theories ignores empirical evidence available on the topic. None of the research is able to establish how poverty concentration causes negative resident behaviors or outcomes nor how deconcentration will lead to the opposite result. We know high poverty neighborhoods can feature higher unemployment rates, teenage pregnancies and reported crimes than lower poverty neighborhoods, but the exact cause cannot be attributed to poverty concentration. Unfortunately, this does not stop the HOPE VI program from intimating the causal relationship.

Likewise, HOPE VI ignores evidence from past evaluations measuring poverty deconcentration in practice such as Harbor Point and Tent City in Boston. Despite revealing limited results for deconcentration theories, HOPE VI promotes the benefits. The promotion of policy interventions using the premise of poverty concentration and deconcentration misrepresents research and ignores research's aim: to accurately inform our understanding of complex issues and our development of solutions.

Equally or possibly more unsettling is the frequent, yet flagrant, use by HOPE VI and public housing research and literature of the terms poverty concentration and deconcentration. Throughout the research and literature, there is no consistent understanding or definition of either and limited measurement of

both yet there are expectations for its benefits. HOPE VI cites the “high concentration of very low income families living on a relatively small site” as an indicator of “families living in distress” but never provides a definition of poverty concentration nor justifies why its existence causes distress. Without HUD providing clear definitions for poverty concentration and deconcentration nor providing established metrics of success for the poverty deconcentration strategy, it is difficult for local public housing authorities to consistently operationalize this HOPE VI goal in local program design, execution and evaluation. This means public housing residents in different cities or states are experiencing the program in different ways based on how poverty deconcentration is interpreted locally. For a program so focused on improving the lives of residents, this variation means some residents may be benefiting while others are not.

HOPE VI’s support of poverty concentration theories causes legislators, practitioners and the public to have a skewed vision of the capabilities of the program. There is no evidence supporting the poverty deconcentration strategy as a means to alleviate poverty. Therefore, administrators should not count on the program to meet this expectation and must continue to address the structural inequities causing poverty. Residents impacted by HOPE VI should be provided with these findings to increase HUD transparency and allow for more informed participation of residents in shaping the future of housing programs.

Many HOPE VI evaluations do not include poverty concentration and deconcentration as an indicator of program success. It is simply not mentioned or measured. This is likely due to the unclear nature of what should be measured and because the deconcentration goal is widely absent from local programs. This

is concerning because programs goals and evaluations typically work in tandem where the evaluation is able to test for outcomes of the goals. In this instance, there is a missed opportunity to learn about the goal in practice, and to make “apples to apples” comparisons in the hopes of identifying trends and best practices in the field.

But since HOPE VI is supposed to improve the lives of public housing residents, this thesis is most concerned with how HOPE VI’s advancement of poverty concentration and deconcentration theories hurts the very people it aims to help: those living in poverty. First, we will unpack how advancing the logic and language of poverty deconcentration theories promotes a patronizing, hierarchal society where income determines someone’s worth as a person.

Although poverty is persistent in the United States and is closely linked to structural inequities like low wages and discrimination, poverty concentration theories link it to negative behaviors and thus advances poverty as being a culture or reflective of a certain type of person, not an income bracket. This ignores the actions or structures of the American government and market that create income stratification. In turn, this pathologizing of poverty unduly shifts the blame to people. We see this embedded in poverty deconcentration language and mechanisms which provide a prescriptive treatment plan whereby low-income individuals “learn” from higher income individuals.

As we know, the strategy takes a spatial approach to poverty concentration in public housing by integrating public housing residents into housing with higher income individuals in order to tap into a few socio-interactive and institutional mechanisms like social capital, role modeling, peer influence as well as

purchasing and political power. But this framework is inherently flawed as the logic assumes higher income people have more to contribute socially simply because they are higher earners. For example, the push to deconcentrate poverty emphasizes the need for public housing residents to grow or increase their social capital in order to hear about job opportunities. But most public housing residents are employed, just at low wages. It posits the poor do not have their own networks or ways of communicating about opportunities, but what data validates this assertion?

Lastly, this idea of “sharing social capital” may not be possible if there is a skills mismatch between neighbors. For instance, a high earning attorney working in a law office in need of a new partner will not be able to assist an out-of-work lower income neighbor who does not have a college degree, for example. It is quite possible a public housing resident earns low wages because they do not have the appropriate skills or education for a particular job. This requires a longer- term solution like education or job training, not just simply interaction with a high earning neighbor.

The collective socialization model posits higher income neighbors will be role models for lower income earners because they will model a “culture of work.” Again, this assumes public housing residents do not work and presumes someone who earns a high salary has more to impart to society when really, we do not know who they are as people, just as earners. While it is true that higher income neighborhoods have less reported crimes and less dependency on public welfare, it is important to question whether we generalize too much about poverty concentration producing less social order or an absence of work ethic.

The overemphasis on poverty concentration is also questionable because of how it is used as a screen for HUD's history of disinvestment, mismanagement and corruption of public housing. By focusing on the negative behaviors of a minority of the program's population, there is less focus on how HUD allowed such havoc to create a poor image of all public housing residents. Public housing did not just become the "housing of last resort" because all residents were the most disenfranchised or undesirable tenants. There were low expectations for building, maintaining and managing these buildings. For years, developments sunk into disrepair and illegal behaviors like drug dealing, squatting, prostitution and gang crime were permitted to take place. It is easy for stakeholders to focus on this negative behavior at public housing developments, and to only blame the residents, but the complete story reveals the need to hold administrators accountable, too. Therefore, an overall recommendation of this thesis is to strike poverty concentration and deconcentration from the HOPE VI goals and literature. As this study documents and analyzes, there is no clear understanding of either, limited measurement of both, and as we uncovered with HOPE VI, a subjective use of the terms. While removing the terms does not truly suffice because it is the promotion of the theories and application of the terms, this is a first step to making sure the focus is on the systemic causes and effects of poverty, not "the culture of poverty" notion.

Another recommendation for policy makers and city leaders is to take a closer look at who is benefiting from poverty deconcentration in practice since HOPE VI is presumably designed to benefit the poor. For instance, a PHA may decide to use HOPE VI grant money to demolish an existing public housing

development or project. This may be because it is dilapidated and because the PHA must satisfy the requirement of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA) of 1998 that stipulates only 40% of units in public housing developments are allowed to be occupied by extremely low-income households (Schwartz 2006). This means the PHA needs to find other income levels to fill 60% of the units. If the PHA decides it would like to attract affordable and market rate tenants, it may demolish the development and build elsewhere. In this case, the poverty deconcentration priority results in the net loss of public housing units. To the benefit of affordable or market rate renters, there are now apartments available that would have otherwise not have been.

Further, if a PHA decides not to build on the original site, there may be several city stakeholders who benefit from this change. Many public housing developments were built in disinvested central city locations. Due to the exodus of the population and real estate market to the suburbs, land values declined. But starting in the late 1990's many central cities have adjusted to the new economy, and have reinvented themselves. A boom in real estate values ensued. When a public housing development is demolished today, the once undesirable land may be very desirable to a private developer. Or, if the demographics of a neighborhood changes significantly and the public housing is out of favor with neighbors, a politician may solidify votes if she is able to convince the PHA to sell the property. This policy agenda to deconcentrate poverty often forgets to ask who is benefiting and pretends the urban poor has the most to gain, when this is clearly a skewed perspective of those in charge (Imbroscio 2003; Goetz 2003).

This chapter's conclusions and recommendations are not only relevant to HOPE VI, but to the newest federal programs working with poor urban neighborhoods: HUD's Choice Neighborhoods initiative and the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods. Both programs present an opportunity to remedy several of the concerns raised about HOPE VI in this study, namely the overstated benefits of poverty deconcentration, the pathologizing of the poor and the disempowering, prescriptive nature of moving people out of their neighborhood despite resident preference.

Poverty concentration is presented as a challenge in the 2010 HUD-initiated Choice Neighborhoods program, the unofficial successor of HOPE VI, but poverty deconcentration is prudently not presented as the solution (HUD 2010). And the 2010 Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods program, a "cradle to college to career" comprehensive neighborhood investment strategy modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone is focused on improving the lives of children already living in the neighborhood (DOE 2012). Because both programs are "place-based" initiatives, grant money invests in the existing neighborhood's housing, education, job training and healthcare. Individually and collectively, the programs represent an important re-orientation of how to address the needs of those living in poverty. While it is too early to measure the outcomes of the new programs, the lessons learned from this study support the initial framework of Choice and Promise Neighborhoods where the approach is asset based, inclusive and comprehensive in design. This is a much more progressive approach to addressing the needs of those living in poverty than HOPE VI.

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