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HOPE VI: A Racial Project for a Colorblind Society

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HOPE VI: A Racial Project for a Colorblind Society

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
The University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts
in
Sociology

by
Erin Kelly Patton
BA Louisiana State University, 2007

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Abstract

Being a low-income person of color trying to survive in a society that subscribes to a colorblind ideology can be more than difficult, it can be impossible. This thesis seeks to examine the racial implications of the racial project of HOPE VI. To demonstrate that impact, I perform a Critical Discourse Analysis on the “The Final Report of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing: A Report to the Congress and the Secretary of housing and Urban Development” and the United States Housing Act of 1937 as it was amended by the “Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998.” I plan to demonstrate how removing race and racism from the national conversation only aids in furthering racial discrimination and inequality.

Keywords: race, neoliberalism, colorblindness, HOPE VI, racial formation, racial projects

Chapter 1: Introduction

When I first began my graduate career at the University of New Orleans, I was primarily interested in pursuing criminology as the center of my studies. Race was a topic that I thought I was well versed in, and had very little interest in studying at the graduate level. When I was finishing my undergraduate degree at Louisiana State University I took an Anthropology class to fill an elective requirement, and in that class we were taught that there is only one race, the human race, and all other conceptions of “race” were simply the products of racist people.

I can recall thinking how enlightened that notion was; race, as conceptualized today, is simply a means to oppress people and the only way to get past that oppression is to stop recognizing it. I bought into that “colorblind” concept wholeheartedly and believed myself to be a better person for doing so. By removing race from my perception of people, I was acting in a righteous manner that would ultimately lead to the end of racism. Or so I thought.

The first elective I had as a graduate student was a gender class; something that was completely foreign to me at the time, as I had never studied gender in my undergraduate career. In that class, we covered the theory of intersectionality: the idea that social constructs such as race, class, and gender interact with each other to produce social inequality. That was the first time I felt that maybe my ideal of colorblindness might not be as righteous as I once thought it was. It was not until we read Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty by Dorothy Roberts that I had my first awakening to the depth of the impact of being colorblind.

Throughout her book, Roberts outlines the history of reproductive oppression imposed upon women of color in the United States. As I was reading the book, I kept underlining

passages, and writing in large letters, “It’s because of class! Not race! She’s making a racial argument when it is clearly based on class!!” It was not until the class discussion of the book that I realized *why* I had such a problem with Roberts’ arguments throughout the book: I was reading it from my colorblind position and through a white woman’s eyes. I could never fully appreciate the struggles Roberts discussed in her book because I kept denying the impact of race, as I had always done.

From that moment, I became interested in race in a way that I had never before; instead of denying race and the impacts of racism on people of color, I began focusing my studies around those concepts. I abandoned my colorblind position, and began seeing the world from a much more race conscious stance. I came to the idea for this paper after reading Brod Bagert’s Master’s Thesis: “HOPE VI and St. Thomas: Smoke, Mirrors and Urban Mercantilism,” and David Harvey’s book *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, in two of my graduate seminars. Combined with my now deflated conceptualization of colorblindness, these two pieces of work solidified my interest in the impacts of colorblindness on the residents of public housing undergoing HOPE VI revitalization.

This thesis seeks to explore the means by which colorblindness is used to obscure the situations faced by the residents of public housing undergoing HOPE VI redevelopment. Furthermore, this thesis investigates the ways in which colorblindness reproduces and reinstitutes racial inequalities when it is utilized in what Omi and Winant (1994) call *racial formation projects*. Federal legislation and policy have embraced the colorblind position claiming this is the only way to move past race and racism, but as I will demonstrate, the colorblind position does more harm to people of color than help. By removing race from the national conversation,

federal legislation and policy also removes the history of race and racism in this country.

Gallagher (2003) describes colorblindness in the following manner:

Colorblindness hides white privilege behind a mask of assumed meritocracy while rendering invisible the institutional arrangements that perpetuate racial inequality. The veneer of equality implied in colorblindness allows whites to present their place in the racialized social structure as one that was earned (pg 6).

After the success of the Civil Rights era and legislation, white America believes US society to have moved beyond overt racism to a social structure that is best described as a meritocracy (Culp 1994; Gallagher 2003). The focus here is on *individual* merit and hard work to succeed, not *group* measures of success. The focus on the individual rather than the group is important as it allows for the proponents of colorblindness to reject macro scale racial group analyses of institutional discrimination, and instead focus on individual stories of success (Guinier and Torres 2002; Gallagher 2003). From the perspective of colorblindness, macro scale racial group analyses are themselves racist as they acknowledge differences based on racial categories (Culp 1994).

The Racial Formation Perspective

Omi and Winant (1994) reconceptualize the transformation of micro racial meanings and macro racial structures. Numerous racial theorists have contributed to racial theory as a whole, but in this thesis, I am focusing on Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation perspective as my overarching theoretical perspective. Their contribution to racial theory marks a departure from focusing on race as either solely cultural markers, or race as an essential construct that is impossible to move beyond. Omi and Winant (1994) instead posit that race be conceptualized as a construct that evolves over time and adapts to the social structure in any given time period.

Omi and Winant (1994) conceived the racial formation perspective to link the micro and macro manifestations of race in the racialized social structure. The perspective conceptualizes race as a construct that is created through *processes* that occur over time throughout changing social structures. Race is not a static construct; it is constantly changing as the social structure changes, and is shaped on all levels of that structure (Omi and Winant 1994). The micro representations of the symbolic meanings of race and the macro social processes that redefine that meaning are incorporated into the social structure and linked in the racial formation process through the implementation of *racial projects*. Racial projects are dynamic concepts that occur on all levels of society, and in all imaginable forms, to make that link between the representations of race and the social structure (Omi and Winant 1994).

The importance of that *link* (between representations of race and the social structure) may not be evident at first. Without making the connection between the ways in which race comes to be represented and how that representation shows up in the social structure, serves to produce an incomplete understanding of race, as well as incomplete racial theories. By focusing only on racial inequalities in the social structure, the history of race and racial meanings and how they change over time are ignored. Consequently the processes and mechanisms that created the present racial hierarchy as it currently operates are removed from discussion (Omi and Winant 1994; Gallagher 2003).

Focusing only on racial inequalities in the social structure delegitimizes the history of race and racial meanings, as does focusing only on race as mere cultural representations. To look at race as simple cultural differences, is to fail to account for “such structural phenomena as racial stratification in the labor market or patterns of residential segregation” (Omi and Winant 1994, pg 56). It is through racial projects that both social structure and cultural representations of

race as “differences” are connected. Thusly, the history of race and racial meanings are accounted for, as are the structural phenomena that divide society along changing racial lines. For a solid summary of the racial formation perspective, I turn to one of the founders of this approach, Howard Winant (2000):

To summarize the racial formation approach: (a) It views the meaning of race and the content of racial identities as unstable and politically contested; (b) It understands racial formation as the intersection/conflict of racial “projects” that combine representational/discursive elements with the structural/institutional ones; (c) It sees these intersections as iterative sequences of interpretations (articulations) of the meaning of race that are open to many types of agency, from the individual to the organizational, from the local, to the global (pg 182).

In the next subsection, I give a definition and explanation of both neoliberalism and colorblindness followed by a brief explanation of why I choose to apply the racial formation perspective theoretically to HOPE VI. After the reader is introduced to these concepts, I lay out my research questions for this thesis before giving an in-depth background to this project.

Neoliberalism, Colorblindness, and HOPE VI

Neoliberalism has come to dominate the local and global social arenas as the prevailing economic, social, and political ideology (Riain 2000; Giroux 2003; Harvey 2005). A working definition of neoliberalism is that it seeks to remove state and federal regulations from the market in order to allow for the free competition of free actors. In simpler terms, it is a “hands off” approach to market forces; once the market has been effectively deregulated, according to neoliberal logic, it will operate in such a manner that it will regulate itself.

Under neoliberalism the focus of the state is no longer on the well being of its citizens, but rather on the creation and maintenance of new markets where previously there had been none (Gotham 2000; Newman and Ashton 2004; Harvey 2005). Neoliberalism seeks to privatize

aspects of social life that were once in the public domain, thusly opening these new markets for competition, which in theory will lead to the well being of the people as they compete and gain in these markets. What neoliberalism fails to recognize is that all groups are not free to compete in the open market.

Under neoliberalism, we see the prevalence and use of the concept of colorblindness. Colorblindness can be understood as the conviction that by not acknowledging race in any aspect, we as a society can transcend race and racial discrimination. Colorblindness seeks to remove all significance of race, by which I mean the social and political power that this social construct has carried with it since the beginning of racial classification. Promoters of colorblindness seek to position all of society in a deracialized social structure free to act however we please without the constraints of race and the racialized history of this country. Omi and Winant (1994) provide a description of colorblindness under neoliberalism when they say: “to speak of race is to enter a terrain where racism is hard to avoid. Better to address racism by ignoring race, at least publically” (pg 148).

Under neoliberalism, when colorblindness removes race from the picture of market discrimination, income is used as a proxy for race. For example, HOPE VI seeks to redevelop severely distressed public housing by deconcentrating poverty. Income, or lack thereof, is used as a code word for race here as studies have shown that poor whites are more likely to live among wealthier households, whereas poor people of color overwhelmingly experience residential segregation (Massey and Eggers 1990). Studies have shown people of color overwhelmingly occupy the distressed housing developments that HOPE VI is aimed at redeveloping (Bickford and Massey 1991). The reason I choose to focus on HOPE VI is due to the fact that a majority of residents who reside in family housing projects are people of color, and

it is these types of housing developments that HOPE VI is aimed at redeveloping (Bickford and Massey 1991).

In this thesis I present the operating assumption that HOPE VI is a neoliberal racial project, and seek to test this claim. The first chapter examines the theoretical background of the racial formation perspective. I use this theory to provide the groundwork for this thesis. I examine Omi and Winant's (1994) conceptualization of the racial formation process and racial projects, paying particular attention to racial formation as social processes across the political spectrum. I introduce the political ideology of neoliberalism and examine the role of colorblindness within that political ideology.

In the second chapter, I present a detailed racialized history of housing in the United States. I do this so that the reader can obtain an understanding of the current situation being faced by people of color living in severely distressed public housing, as well as an understanding of the racialized mechanisms that led them there. In this racialized history, I examine the FHA, GI Bill, and the impact of previous racial projects on residential segregation. This chapter is geared towards building upon the previous chapter's explanation of the racial formation process and racial projects by offering historical examples in the housing structure.

The first two chapters are designed to set up my operating assumption and examine HOPE VI as a functioning racial project. As I move into my analysis and findings chapter, I present my research questions: how is HOPE VI a mechanism of the racial formation process? How does HOPE VI function as a neoliberal racial project? To answer these questions, I employ a Critical Discourse Analysis through which I analyze two data sources, "The National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing's Final Report" (1992) and "The Quality Housing and Work Reform Act of 1998."

Through the denial of race, colorblindness reproduces racial inequalities. I am interested in the ways in which these documents present the conditions facing the residents of severely distressed public housing and determine the policy to address these situations in a colorblind fashion that reproduces racial inequalities. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis, I pay particular attention to the way in which these documents frame the distressed housing developments, and the impact of those frames on the residents of color living in severely distressed public housing.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background: The Racial Formation Perspective

In this section, I describe Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation perspective and conception of racial projects. I also outline the three dimensions on which Omi and Winant (1994) state racial formation processes occur: racial formation in everyday experiences, the evolution of modern racial awareness, and racial formation as social processes in the political spectrum. As this thesis is focused on neoliberal racial projects, I focus mainly on racial formation as social processes in the political spectrum, and only offer brief descriptions of the other two dimensions to offer the reader the full racial formation perspective.

Omi and Winant (1994) propose a way to approach, frame, and interpret race and racial theory. They called their theory the "racial formation perspective." This perspective of racial formation examines race as a *dynamic social construct*; one that is in constant flux and is recreated, reinforced, and destroyed through various social, historical, and institutional forces. Operating under their racial formation perspective, Omi and Winant (1994) define race as "*a concept, which signifies and symbolizes conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies*" (pg 55, emphasis original). As they mention their view of race and racism as socially and historically situated, they developed the notion of a "racial project" to describe the social and historical processes that have helped to create, interpret, and reinforce current racial ideologies. Omi and Winant (1994) encourage us to:

Think of racial formation processes as occurring through a linkage between structure and representations. Racial *projects* do the ideological "work" of making these links. *A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines* (pg 56, original emphasis).

For Omi and Winant (1994) race *symbolizes conflicts and interests* in the social-political arena through hegemonic rule. Hegemony, best theorized by Gramsci, is understood as “the conditions necessary, in a given society, for the achievement and consolidation of rule” (cited in Omi and Winant, 1994, pg 67). Simon (1982) speaks to the notions of *coercion* and *consent* as the ways in which the dominant or ruling classes will integrate and popularize some of the ideals and customs of the subordinate classes into their dominance so that consent to be ruled is given without the continuous use of force. Simon (1982), writing about Gramsci’s life’s work, offered this definition:

The starting-point for Gramsci’s concept of hegemony is that a class and its representatives exercise power over subordinate classes by means of a combination of coercion and persuasion...Hegemony is a relation, not of domination by means of force, but of consent by means of political and ideological leadership. It is the organization of consent (pg 24).

Racial projects constitute racial formation, and are always historically and socially situated. As the meaning of race changes, so too does the hegemonic rule of a society; depending upon the political agenda of the social structure, race can be conceptualized in such a way by those in power as to make the appropriate link to the appropriate structure desired. As the organization of society shifts with changing ideologies, the “organization of consent” Simon (1982) spoke of will also undergo changes.

Omi and Winant (1994) outline three dimensions in which racial formation takes place: in everyday experiences, as social processes in the political spectrum, and through the evolution of modern racial awareness. For this paper the racial formation as social processes in the political spectrum is of particular importance. I discuss briefly Omi and Winant’s (1994) dimension of

racial formation in everyday experiences and the evolution of modern racial awareness to give the reader the complete perspective.

Racial Formation in Everyday Experiences

Omi and Winant (1994) point out “our ability to interpret racial meanings depends on preconceived notions of a racialized social structure” (pg 59). The expectation of fairly specific racial performances is an outcome of a comprehensively racialized social structure, one that is so saturated with racial codes and signifiers that they have become, as Omi and Winant (1994) state, “common sense.” As we are all constantly subjected to this social structure and gain this “common sense” of what race is, when our expectations of racial performances are not met, we experience a sense of cognitive dissonance (Omi and Winant 1994). As Omi and Winant (1994) state:

A vast web of racial projects mediates between the discursive or representational means in which race is identified and signified on the one hand, and the institutional and organizational forms in which it is routinized and standardized on the other. These projects are the heart of the racial formation process (pg 60).

This application of racial formation is a micro-level, discursive one, but as the authors stated these sorts of racial projects “are the heart of the racial formation perspective.” It is only logical that they would set about to anthropomorphize racial formation as it is something that takes on a life of its own; it is constantly growing and changing in scope and nature as it interacts with all levels society. If the micro-level discursive application of the racial formation perspective is the “heart,” then it is also logical that it would be necessarily present in the other spheres Omi and Winant (1994) outline, as it is.

Racial Formation: The Evolution of Modern Racial Awareness

Omi and Winant (1994) use the concept of hegemony to illustrate the ways in which race has been problematized in this country, tracing back the United States' roots as a "racial dictatorship" (pg 66). The United States, operating as a racial dictatorship since the beginning, saw to the creation of the 'American' identity as a singularly white identity. In colonial times it was the Native Americans who were 'othered' as numerous tribes and cultures were placed under the singular title of 'native,' while during slavery times all people arriving through the slave trade were labeled 'black' (Omi and Winant 1994). Through this 'othering' of all peoples not white, the racial dictatorship

Organized (albeit sometimes in an incoherent and contradictory fashion) the 'color line' rendering it the fundamental division in U.S. society. The dictatorship elaborated, articulated, and drove racial divisions not only through institutions, but also through psyches, extending up to our own time the racial obsessions of the conquest and slavery periods (Omi and Winant 1994, pg 66).

In both the North and the South, before and after the abolishment of slavery, African Americans would not escape their classification as "children and savages" (Takaki 2000, pg 110). Ever since the abolishment of slavery in 1865 up to today, African Americans have been the victims of residential segregation and racial discrimination; both of which are the products of racial projects under the racial dictatorship of the United States (Omi and Winant 1994; Takaki 2000).

Racial Formation as Social Processes in the Political Spectrum

Omi and Winant (1994) argue that racial projects are occurring across all political spectrums. For the purposes of this thesis, I am only interested in the neoliberal political perspective. From this

end of the political spectrum we see racial projects making the link between the social structures and the representation of race as insignificant through the use of colorblind discourse. In this thesis, the social structure that I am examining is the housing structure. This notion of colorblindness plays a crucial role under neoliberalism, a role that is critical to understand for the purposes of this thesis. I will first lay out the main tenants and ideas behind neoliberalism before I explore the role of colorblindness under that ideology.

Neoliberalism

There are multiple political ideologies that employ and operate multiple racial projects, each tailored to meet the specific goals of that political agenda and ideology. For this paper I focus on the political ideology of neoliberalism. In this section, I aim to show how this particular political ideology utilizes racial projects that seek to link the purported colorblind social structure to the representation of race as something trivial that is easily overcome. Harvey (2005) provides a useful working definition of neoliberalism in his book: A Brief History of Neoliberalism:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices...to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary (2005, p.2).

Neoliberal ideology has come to be the prevailing rationalization for the processes of globalization, state welfare reform, and public morality in the U.S. (O’Riain 2000; Peck and Tickell 2002; Lobao and Hooks 2003; Giroux 2003; Harvey 2005). Neoliberalism has become

the rationalization for the new public morality as the states are no longer held accountable to their citizens' well being (Peck and Tickell 2002; Crump 2002; Giroux 2003; Harvey 2005).

As the new public morality, neoliberalism utilizes the market as the ultimate morality; according to neoliberalism the market does not and cannot discriminate against any individual. The only function of the market is to be open to free competition from free actors. Using Harvey's (2005) definition of neoliberalism, the role of the state is no longer to ensure the well-being of its citizens, but "to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets...if markets do not exist... then they must be created, by state action if necessary" (2005, p.2).

According to Peck and Tickell (2002):

A deeply interventionist agenda is emerging around 'social' issues like crime, immigration, policing, welfare reform, urban order and surveillance, and community regeneration...new discourses of 'reform' are being constructed - often around new policy objectives such as 'welfare dependency' (pg 389).

This statement gets at the heart of the role of states under neoliberalism: the "dismantling of the social State and the correlative hypertrophy of the penal State" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2000, p.2). Neoliberal ideology has already capitalized on the discourse of poverty in the argument against the expansion of welfarist social policy in general (Wacquant 1997, Peck and Tickell 2002). It has also used it to attack a more specific form of that policy: the funding and redevelopment of public housing (Crump 2002; Newman & Ashton 2004). Under neoliberal ideology, social mobility depends on economic mobility, which neoliberalism posits to be a race-neutral process. Let us first explore the concept of class used by neoliberalism, the role of colorblindness under neoliberal racial formation, and the culture of poverty before moving on to the last of Omi and Winant's (1994) defined dimensions under which racial formation takes place: the evolution of modern racial awareness.

Class

There is a question of class that must be addressed before moving forward in this thesis. In neoliberal thought, all inequality in society can be explained through ‘class’ differences: the people who succeed have worked for it, and thus are of higher economic class (Omi and Winant 1994; Crump 2002; Giroux 2003; Harvey 2005). Omi and Winant (1994) explore the “class paradigm of race” in which they state that:

To equate economic structures and processes with *class*, whether understood in the Marxian sense of the relationship to the means of production, or the Weberian sense of relationship to the mode of distribution (giving rise to particular ‘life chances’), is to make a certain analytical leap...the inclusion of ‘neoclassical’ approaches [which confines itself narrowly to market relationships] in the class paradigm does not create insurmountable problems, precisely because such treatments seek to establish the roots *in exchange relationships* of racial inequality. Once we are dealing with any sort of unequal exchange we have a ‘class’ system, although particular analysts might prefer to not use this designation (original emphasis, pg 24).

When neoliberals mention the concept of “class,” they are not referencing any particular sociological theory or analysis of class, but instead are referencing the “unequal exchange relationships” Omi and Winant (1994) describe. This is a market relations approach to race, and one that Omi and Winant (1994) explore further. Market-based models are unable to account for racial discrimination, and race is seen to be an “anomaly in an equilibrium-oriented theoretical system – an obstacle to market processes” (Omi and Winant 1994, pg 25). As Harvey (2005) detailed, the logic of the neoliberals is that through a free and unregulated market system, society would become a more moral and just place.

There are three types of disturbances to market equilibrium that are responsible for generating racial discrimination according to the market relations approach to race under the class paradigm: an irrational prejudice, monopolistic practices, and disruptive state practices (Omi and Winant 1994). The irrational prejudice references the racial segregation of society

where whites and African Americans are partners in commerce, but are “separated by white ‘distaste’ for physical proximity to blacks” (Omi and Winant 1994, pg 25). The second form of disturbance to market equilibrium according to the market relations approach to the class paradigm of race is monopolistic practices. This form of market disturbance takes the form of a society that is geared to the interests of all whites which produces inequalities throughout the social structure. As Omi and Winant (1994) note:

Market forces are understood to be egalitarian, but the monopoly ‘cartel’ which includes all whites is seen to impose inequalities in labor, capital, and consumption good markets in order to maximize white gain (pg 25).

The focus on the ‘cartels’ as the disruptive force to market equilibrium, while market forces are “understood to be egalitarian” is of the utmost importance. Under neoliberal ideology the market, once freed from state intervention and regulation maintains an equilibrium that brings about equality. When there is racial discrimination, neoliberals contend that it is not due to the market, but that it stems from the actions of individuals (Harvey 2005).

The last form of market disturbance will carry the most weight in this thesis, and that is the disruptive state interventionism model. Omi and Winant (1994) state that this form of market disturbance, according to the market relations approach to the class paradigm of race, sees society that is riddled with racial inequality due to state intervention. White workers and/or white unions demand “minimum wage laws, labor law, licensing procedures in labor intensive trades” in order to protect their jobs from “non-whites” (Omi and Winant 1994, pg 26). From this model, resources and minorities of color share a concern in the neoliberal free market system as:

The opportunities which white workers’ immigrant parents and grandparents seized to life themselves out of poverty and to create viable ethnic community institutions (particularly small businesses and trades) are denied to minorities today. This perspective argues that racial politics and ideologies of equality often

mask the fact that concrete economic avenues for advancement are blocked (Omi and Winant 1994, pg 26).

These three forms of market equilibrium disturbances from the market relations approach to race under the class paradigm all posit that all racial inequality in society can be seen to stem from individuals and corrected through the unregulated free market system.

Although the neoliberal notion of “class” does not necessarily stem from historical, sociological conceptions of class analysis, neoliberals use this term “class” to denote the unequal exchange relationships within the market system. Under neoliberalism “class” is equated with income and poverty, and not the sociological understanding of class or class analysis.

Neoliberalism views class as something that can be earned through the free market, or lost because of failure to apply oneself. I revisit this issue of class again when I discuss the Culture of Poverty, but first it is important for the reader to gain an understanding of colorblindness, as well as its role under neoliberalism.

The Role of Colorblindness under Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, as previously mentioned, regards the market as the ultimate morality in society; people are no longer judged by archaic social constructs such as race, only on their merit. A central tenet in neoliberalism, and one that is rationalized for this ideology to appear to be legitimate, is that of colorblindness (Giroux 2003; Harvey 2005).

Colorblindness as a discourse is operationalized daily under this neoliberal regime and centers on placing the individual in an “abstract universe of rights and preferences rather than within an obdurate social structure that may limit or even predetermine a person’s choices” (Guinier & Torres 2002, pg 143). Neoliberalism presents the market structure as colorblind; one

that is incapable of being racist. Race is thereby ostensibly stripped of its political and social power. Giroux (2003) notes that under the “new racism” of neoliberals:

Indifference and cynicism breed contempt and resentment as racial hierarchies now collapse into power-evasive strategies such as blaming minorities of class and color for not working hard enough, or exercising individual initiative...Marketplace ideologies now work to erase the social from the language of public life so as to reduce all racial problems to private issues *such as individual character* (Giroux 2003, pg 193, emphasis added).

Colorblindness places society in this “abstract universe of rights and preferences.” Race and other ascribed constructs are turned into illegitimate determining factors in life choices and opportunities. In order for the free market to be the ultimate moral ground for society that neoliberalism posits it to be, then all members of society must be seen as being equal and playing on an even field. The most effective tool to make this happen is to stake a claim in being colorblind. If race is no longer a factor, then what happens to individuals is of their own doing; personal agency is the key to success in the free market, and nothing more (Giroux 2003).

As Gallagher (2003) states:

The new color-blind ideology does not, however, ignore race, it acknowledges race while disregarding racial hierarchy by taking racially coded styles and products and reducing these symbols to commodities or experiences that whites and racial minorities can purchase and share. It is through such acts of shared consumption that race becomes nothing more than an innocuous cultural signifier (p 5).

Proponents of the free market system contend that the market and its processes will produce a moral society that will be the end product because “individual economic freedom supports the general ability of individuals to become ‘complete’ citizens” (Culp 1994, pg 170-171). Giroux (2003) writes that:

Unlike the old racism, which defined racial differences in terms of fixed biological categories organized hierarchically, the new racism operates in various guises proclaiming among other things race neutrality, asserting culture as a marker of racial difference, or marking race as a private matter...the new racism cynically recodes itself within the vocabulary of the civil rights movement, invoking the language of Martin Luther King, Jr. to argue that individuals should be judged by the ‘content of their character’ and not by the color of their skin (pg 198).

Proponents of colorblindness do not see the usefulness in having public policy and law being race-conscious as the “government’s job is to do no harm...and discrimination perpetrated by governmental action is more pernicious [then through the actions of individuals]” (Culp 1994, pg 175). By removing the ability of the government to step in and take a race-conscious approach to public policy, neoliberal colorblindness allows for private actors to order a “new and different racial status quo if it wishes” (Culp 1994, pg 175). This is a precarious position in regards to poor people of color, as it allows the state to further reduce its involvement in “correcting the effects of racial discrimination, reducing matters of racism to individual concerns” (Giroux 2003, p. 207).

I have discussed neoliberalism, the neoliberal conception of class, and the role of colorblindness under neoliberalism, now I move to a discussion of the culture of poverty. When I discussed the neoliberal conception of class, I noted how neoliberals conceptualize class as merely reflective of income levels. In this next section I will tie that conception of class to the manner in which neoliberalism and free market proponents view the lower classes, or people who live in poverty as belonging to the culture of poverty.

The Culture of Poverty

Anthropologist Oscar Lewis in his book La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty – San Juan and New York popularized the term culture of poverty in 1966 (Caplovitz,

1968, p 140). Lewis proposed the culture of poverty to explain the survival habits of poor people; how exclusion from mainstream society leads poor folks to develop their own habits, customs, priorities, and behavioral patterns that are adaptive to their surroundings and self-perpetuating over generations (Roach and Gursslin 1967; Caplovitz 1968; Parker and Kliener 1970; Steinberg 2001). Parker and Kleiner (1970) state that:

The argument rests on the assumption that this subculture, with its distinct value emphases, is perpetuated primarily by the socialization of the young in unstable families...if this view is widely accepted as true, federal funds could be diverted from the creation of more jobs, better housing and better schools, etc., to programs having a greater social work/educational-psychiatric emphasis (pg 516).

The idea of a culture of poverty presents poor people as having adapted to their circumstances by changing the perspective with which they view themselves and society (Roach and Gursslin 1970). This adaptive behavioral pattern is then passed down through the generations as children of parents who live in this culture of poverty are indoctrinated and socialized into this subculture (Steinberg 2001).

The danger of this notion of a culture of poverty is exactly as the quote from Parker and Kleiner stated. The culture of poverty framework operates under the presumption that poverty stems from the cultural aspects of poor people, not from any structural measures. Colorblindness under neoliberalism positions people in an equal opportunity social structure: those who apply themselves will achieve higher class status (income), and those who do not succeed or are of lower class status (live in poverty) have no one to blame but themselves. The culture of poverty framework coincides with the neoliberal colorblind perspective that the market is the new morality as it is free from discrimination. Neoliberalism views poor people as people who never applied themselves to better their situations: they are living in the culture of poverty.

If there is a culture of poverty that is learned and passed down through the generations, than what is the use of directing federal funds to provide social services and public assistance to these families, as they will not use them to better their situations? Poor people come to be seen – under this notion of a culture of poverty – as the undeserving poor (Crump 2002). As Steinberg (2001) notes:

In other respects too, the culture of poverty appears to be a refined formulation of ordinary stereotypes. The claim that the poor are deficient in their “work ethic” and have low aspirations translates all too easily into the familiar stereotype of the poor as lazy, shiftless, and lacking in ambition (pg 111).

As previously explained, colorblindness under neoliberalism obscures racial hierarchies and views society as being a place of equal opportunity; since the Civil Rights legislation, society is free from institutional level racial discrimination. Being that racial discrimination is now illegal, and markets are unregulated and open to all, the neoliberals argue that the only reason people fail to succeed is a lack of personal agency. This train of neoliberal colorblind logic fits nicely with the concept of a culture of poverty: it is not that poor people of color are poor because they are of color; they are poor because they live in a culture of poverty that does not reward or see the use of applying oneself to achieve more than earlier generations.

It should now be clear that neoliberalism sees society as becoming a more moral and just place through the unregulated free market. Neoliberalism does acknowledge that there are some forms of racial inequality in society, but those forms of discrimination stem from individuals, and white cartels that force the state to intervene and protect their positions of power.

Colorblindness sees society as having moved past race and racism thanks in part to the Civil Rights legislation. Under neoliberalism, colorblindness is used to rationalize the new morality of the market. Under the neoliberal free market and colorblindness, these white cartels and the state

will be prevented from interfering, and equality will be achieved. Since society is now free from racism, the only reason people do not succeed and flourish under the free market is due to their unwillingness to assimilate to mainstream normative culture. Poverty creates poverty, and the only way to stop the cycle and break up the culture is through the deconcentration of poverty. That is the neoliberals colorblind take on the impact of class on racial inequality, and the only viable method for ending inequality.

I have given a review of the racial formation perspective in order to contextualize my operating assumption that HOPE VI is in fact a racial project that contributes to the larger racial formation process. I have also presented the concept of class as it is used under neoliberalism, the role of colorblindness in rationalizing the neoliberal ideology, and finally, the culture of poverty framework which will be used in the analysis of the data. In the next chapter I provide a racialized history of housing in the United States, as this background will give the reader a clear understanding of the centrality of race in the federal and private housing markets

Chapter 3: Historical Background: The Racialized History of Housing in the United States

In the beginning of the twentieth century, there were federally backed national practices and legislation that prevented the mobility of African Americans and condensed poverty into enclaves throughout the country (Gotham 2000; Jones-Correa 2000). Beginning in the 1900's, racially restrictive covenants and residential zoning laws were enacted as means to keep residential areas racially segregated and perpetuate the racial discrimination that African Americans have been facing since they were forcefully brought to this country as chattel.

Jones-Correa (2000) notes that racially and ethnically restrictive covenants were “private agreements barring non-Caucasians from occupying or owning property... [and] were a key element of the segregationist policies in the early twentieth-century United States” (pg 541). Though racially restrictive covenants began as “private agreements,” it was not long before they became federally backed as the way business was done in the real estate industry. These covenants were on the books of the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) and the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) until the 1950's (Stahura 1986; Darden 1995; Jones-Correa 2000; Gotham 2000).

Racially restrictive covenants were in part a response to the Great Migration, the time period between 1910 and 1930 where approximately 1.5 and 2 million African American families left the South for the urban North. With the onset of World War I there was a great demand for labor in the North, and many African Americans, tired of the limits of share-cropping following the devastation of the cotton crop, left the South seeking employment and new lives in the North (Darden 1995; Gotham 2000; Jones-Correa 2000).

With such a rapid influx of African Americans to the North, it was not long before racial tensions gave way to violent racial conflict and riots. Between 1917 and 1921 Jones-Correa (2000) marks 14 major racial conflicts that erupted into violence: fire-bombings, lynching, and beatings were common responses to African Americans competing with whites for jobs and housing. In Chicago specifically, the riots in 1919 were especially heinous and violent, leading to the proliferation of these covenants as a way to restore peace to the area.

It assisted matters that the NAREB offices were located in Chicago at the time, as they were instrumental in nationalizing and institutionalizing racially restrictive covenants as a countermeasure to the increasing numbers of African Americans attempting to move into white residential areas in the North. In efforts to nationalize and institutionalize racially restrictive covenants Jones-Correa (2000) notes that:

In 1924, NAREB adopted an amendment to its "code of ethics" or charter, which read: "A Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood (Jones-Correa 2000 pg.564).

As is evident from the excerpt, it was a commonly held belief following the race riots and conflicts of the time that African Americans moving into an area would negatively affect property values and lead to over-all deterioration of the neighborhood (Stahura 1986; Gotham 2000; Jones-Correa 2000). It was common practice to have clusters of these covenants surrounding areas already populated by African Americans, just as it was to have these agreements enacted around newly developed suburban areas.

The outcome of this was that African American families were kept out of the newly integrating urban areas and kept contained in already minority populated neighborhoods (Stahura 1986; Darden 1995; Gotham 2000; Jones-Correa 2000). These restrictive covenants were not

universally accepted, and most were challenged, but those challenges were temporarily halted after the 1926 Supreme Court case *Corrigan v Buckley*.

In *Corrigan v Buckley* the Supreme Court ruled that while African Americans do have the Constitutional right to “acquire, own, and occupy property,” they were not afforded the right to “compel sale and conveyance to him of any particular private property” (*Corrigan v. Buckley* 271 U.S. 323, 1926). Now it was not only common nationwide practice to establish racially restrictive covenants in order to restrain the mobility of African Americans, but also this racially discriminatory practice was allowed by the Federal government and deemed constitutional. It would not be long after the *Corrigan v Buckley* decision before the Federal government stepped in once again to play a role in the perpetuation of residential segregation and racial discrimination.

The Role of the Federal Housing Authority in Residential Segregation

During the Great Depression, the construction of new homes as well as the sale of already constructed homes came to a standstill as the unemployment rates in the country rose to staggering heights in the early 1930's (Stahura 1986; Darden 1995; Gotham 2000; Jones-Correa 2000). NAREB lead the other housing institutions in clamoring for the federal government to intervene and create a federally regulated financing system in order to revive the faltering institution. The Housing Act was signed into law on June 27th, 1934 and with it came the establishment of the Federal Housing Authority (Stahura 1986; Farley & Frey 1994; Lipsitz 1995; Gotham 2000; Jones-Correa 2000). With the creation of the FHA came the creation of the mortgage; a new way for lower income and working class families to secure the money needed for home ownership. Just as NAREB worked towards nationalizing and institutionalizing

racially restrictive covenants, the FHA also worked towards weaving racially discriminatory practices into the national fabric of mortgage lending. As Gotham (2000) remarks:

the agency's [FHA] home building subsidies and subdivision regulations helped to institutionalize racial residential segregation on a national scale by requiring the use of racially restrictive covenants on government-insured housing and refusing to insure mortgages for homes in predominantly minority areas of the inner city (Gotham 2000 pg 292)

As the FHA was established to standardize lending practices across the nation, all FHA mortgage lenders had to conform to certain practices and adhere to specific standards. Among those practices and standards, mortgage lenders had to ensure all recipients of the newly federally insured mortgages met “minimum property standards and inspections, design of the structure, quality of building materials and construction, appraisal procedures, condition and location of site, and subdivision planning” (Gotham 2000 pg 299). This meant that not only did the physical building material have to be up to code, but the *location* of the building was also taken into consideration, which usually resulted in the rejection of applications from residents living in, or seeking to move into racially mixed neighborhoods or those made up of people of color (Stahura 1986; Farley & Frey 1994; Gotham 2000). As Gotham (2000) points out so poignantly:

With the Housing Act of 1934, federal housing policy became "racialized" through the FHA's racially discriminatory mortgage insurance and lending policies, appraisal guide-lines, and home building subsidies that stimulated high- and moderate-cost housing production by large-scale builders. The FHA excluded African Americans from participation in the federal government's mortgage system and in subsequent decades enabled whites to tap a lucrative and expansive suburban housing market that was created with federal subsidies (Gotham 2000, pg 309).

The federally sanctioned racially restrictive covenants as well as the racially discriminatory practices of the FHA were enough to ensure that African Americans were kept

out of white neighborhoods and concentrated into small pocket neighborhoods that were predominately made up of people of color. These racially discriminatory practices of the FHA had quite arguably the most deleterious effects on residential segregation as “these policies widened the gap between the resources available to whites and those available to aggrieved racial communities” (Lipsitz 1995, pg 372).

It would not be until the 1948 Supreme Court case of *Shelley v Kramer* that the enforcement of racially restrictive covenants by the states was deemed in violation of the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Darden 1995). And as Stahura (1986) points out, “until 1950, FHA regulations specifically forbade issuing loans that would encourage or permit racial integration...[afterwards] the administrative practice of keeping blacks out of white areas continued through the late 1960s” (pg 133). Even after both of these measures were essentially taken off the books, the practices remained intact and African Americans still faced discrimination in the housing market. In fact, the ramifications of these racist practices were to be long felt by African Americans. As Oliver and Shapiro (2006) state:

The disadvantaged status of contemporary African American cannot be divorced from the historical processes that undergird racial inequality. The past has a living effect on the present (p 52).

In chapter one of their book, Oliver and Shapiro (2006) discuss two separate studies conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank in 1991 and again in 1992 of “6.4 million home mortgage applications by race and income...reporting a widespread and systematic pattern of institutional discrimination in the nation’s banking system” (pg 19). These studies are further explored in chapter six, when the authors discuss a lawsuit of a black couple in San Diego. This particular couple applied for a standard home loan and was told they would be able to borrow 80 percent of the home’s value. Bank officials then conducted what was called a “drive-by

appraisal” of the home, and the couple was then offered only a 70 percent loan as the home was located in a neighborhood that suffered from “deteriorating properties and lack of pride in homeownership” (Oliver and Shapiro 2006, pg 140). As the authors note:

This ‘pride in homeownership’ theme is often cited as a reason for rejecting loans on houses in minority neighborhoods, as some lenders credit white neighborhoods with higher levels of such pride. Many prospective homeowners apparently must meet the house- and lawn-care standards of their lenders (Oliver and Shapiro, 2006, pp 140-141).

This African American couple in the example had successfully secured a home loan, but was offered a lesser loan when their potential neighborhood was found to contain “deteriorating properties” that lacked “pride in homeownership” (Oliver and Shapiro, 2006, pp 140-141). Economic well-being is used as a proxy for race in this example by the bank officials’ mention of a deteriorating neighborhood as the reason for the tighter loan. What the bank officials would not say is that the potential home was in a minority neighborhood that they deemed not creditworthy (Oliver and Shapiro 2006). The next barrier to residential mobility of African Americans came in the form of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill.

The GI Bill: False Promises

Signed into law on June 22, 1944 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 set about ‘readjusting’ the returning veterans to civilian life through educational, housing, and employment opportunities and programs designed specifically for them (Onkst 1998; US Public Law 346 accessed on 01/26/2009 online from: <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=76&page=transcript>). Those who qualified for the GI Bill included “those who had served on active duty in the armed forces for at least ninety days

without a dishonorable discharge” (Onkst 1998, p. 518). The GI Bill was broken into four provisions, which Onkst (1998) summarizes as follows:

- The first benefit listed in The GI Bill required the United States Employment Service (USES) to assist returning veterans find jobs matched with their skills (p. 518)
- The second condition provided up to a year’s worth of unemployment benefits for those veterans who were unemployed (p. 518).
- The third provision required the Veterans Administration (VA) to guarantee housing, farming, and business loans to veterans who qualified for the GI Bill (p. 518).
- The fourth and final provision made sure that education and/or vocational training was paid for up to four year for veterans who qualified for the GI Bill (p. 518).

When these service people of color would go to claim their benefits, they found that it would not be as easy as suggested. The first barrier many faced was that their discharge status was often called into question. The GI Bill specifically stated that to qualify veterans must have served for “ninety days in the armed forces without being dishonorably discharged” (Onkst 1998, p. 518). What would routinely happen was that those African American service people who would stand up against the discriminatory treatment while in the service would receive a “general” or “blue discharge” (Onkst 1998, p. 520). These types of discharges were considered by many (white) VA counselors to be indicative of troublemakers, and hence dishonorable.

The VA was required by the GI Bill to find employment that matched the skills level of the veteran in question. If employment was not available at the time, then the veteran was able to invoke the fourth provision of the GI Bill. When the veterans of color would apply for a skilled position and be told there were none available at the time, they would look to the fourth provision that entitled them to unemployment benefits while they were waiting for the skilled position to open up.

They would also run into problems here. Veterans were not eligible for the unemployment benefit unless “he or she was actively seeking employment by registering for a job at his or her local USES office...no veteran could obtain the benefit if he or she refused a job that the USES deemed ‘suitable’” (Onkst 1998, 521). Racially discriminating VA counselors would force the African American veterans to accept low paying, unskilled work.

As for the loans for housing, farming, and business, the VA was only required to *guarantee* these loans, meaning they were little more than cosigners. The problem that the African American veterans faced here was the first step of the process: securing the loans from a bank. Most banks required some form of collateral, and many African American veterans did not have this collateral. Even if they did have the necessary collateral, they still had to face the discriminatory treatment of the banks (Onkst 1998). Working the lowest skilled and paying jobs available, African American veterans - and civilians - were left in the inner city while their white counterparts attained their GI Bill benefits and flocked to the suburbs.

The Impact of Previous Racial Projects on Residential Segregation

The social movement organizing of the 1960s saw to some of the greatest successes of that time period in the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. Even with the Civil Rights Act of 1968, and especially The Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of that Act), housing remained segregated in the United States. Now that overt racial discrimination was outlawed, the discriminatory mechanisms that perpetuated racial inequality changed to keep things separate and unequal. In fact, according to Massey (2001) most African Americans faced severe enough prejudice to keep them out of white areas to the point that “from 1900 to 1960 Black segregation indices rose and stayed between 60 and 80” (pg. 225). The “segregation indices” are measures on the index of dissimilarity (xDy), which measures the “degree of spatial separation between social groups” and

the isolation index (P^*), which is the percentage of African Americans in a given geographical unit (Massey & Eggers 1990, pg. 1160). According to Massey (2001) “dissimilarity indices more than 60 are generally considered high, those between 30 and 60 are considered moderate” meaning that African American segregation was moderate to severe between 1900 and 1960.

After the FHA was pressured to change its underwriting manuals to remove the overtly racist policies and procedures, it developed another method to ensure that property values remained intact: red-lining. Farley and Frey (1994) name red-lining as one of the ways that the FHA encouraged local banks to deny loans to neighborhoods they considered lacking in “credit-worthiness” (pg 25). According to Farley and Frey (1994), the FHA would have local banks develop color-coded maps to determine “credit-worthiness” of neighborhoods, and areas that were coded red were those that were “racially mixed...and neighborhoods likely to undergo racial transitions” (pg 25).

Massey (2001) has noted that African Americans have historically had higher indices of segregation when compared to other racial minorities and that these “high indices...imply a restriction of opportunity for Blacks compared to other groups” (pg 235). Some may offer other explanations as to why our society is segregated along racial lines such as it being a matter of income and poverty, and not race. As previously mentioned one of the major functions of colorblindness is to remove all focus from race and place it on economic well-being; thusly leaving no room to even consider other alternative causes or cures to social problems (Guinier & Torres 2002). Massey and Eggers (1990) explored the link between poverty concentration and race in residential segregation. Their study attempts to “examine levels and trends in poverty and income inequality for specific metropolitan areas and racial/ethnic groups” (Massey & Eggers

1990, pg 1154). They found that among whites poverty is not concentrated as it is in minorities, and among minorities African Americans experience higher levels of poverty concentration.

The Impact of Race and Poverty on Residential Segregation

Looking at economic segregation within each racial and ethnic group – the economic segregation within whites, Asians, Hispanics, and African Americans – Massey and Eggers (1990) found that while all other racial and ethnic groups have experienced a decreasing of economic segregation within their respective racial and ethnic groups over the decades, African Americans are the only racial and ethnic groups to see an increase in poverty segregation. While this supports the idea that African Americans who possess the means to do so move out of low income racially segregated neighborhoods, Massey and Eggers (1990) note that this raises questions as to “the relevance of these trends in explaining the unusually high and growing concentration of poverty among blacks” (pg 1171).

The authors note that if economic segregation were to be the crucial mitigating factor in racial segregation and the concentration of poverty witnessed in African Americans, then “we would expect blacks to display greater segregation by income than other minority groups” (Massey & Eggers 1990, pg 1171). What they actually found was that nationally African Americans experienced a lower level of economic segregation than all other minority groups and whites. This means that even though African Americans saw an increase in economic segregation during the late 1960’s throughout the 1970’s, that increase was still well below the economic segregation of all other racial and ethnic groups. African Americans made some progress in the ability to transfer capital accumulation into residential mobility during that era, as this is the time period after the Civil Rights Era when public policies that were race conscious were put into effect. As Culp (1994) states:

African Americans have made progress relative to whites in various ways (though not as much as some believe). Their progress has been greatest during periods associated with race-conscious public policies... (pg 173).

Even with this modest increase in economic segregation, Massey and Eggers (1990) found that it was not a sufficient factor in the creation and maintenance of the concentration of poverty of African Americans. In the end, Massey and Eggers (1990) came to the conclusion that:

Class structure is important, but its role in generating concentrated black poverty is meaningful only in the context of segregation patterns that are determined largely on the basis of race. Racial segregation – *not class segregation* – is the crucial factor accounting for the concentrations of black poverty (Massey and Eggers 1990, pg 1186 emphasis added).

Through their economic and racial analysis Massey and Eggers (1990) concluded that race and not economic status becomes the determining factor for residential segregation and the concentration of poverty; poor whites are “more likely to share a tract with upper-middle-class, even affluent, families” (pg 1178). They also found that other minorities are able to capitalize upon their economic success and move out of lower income communities at a higher rate in comparison to African Americans, which continues the ongoing residential segregation of African Americans (Pearce 1979; Darden 1994).

While Massey and Eggers (1990) used only Isolation and the Index of Dissimilarity to measure economic and racial/ethnic residential segregation, these measurements are not the only means by which to measure residential segregation. Massey (2001) developed five elements of residential segregation on which he compared the segregation indices for Asians, whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. The five elements that Massey (2001) developed are as follows:

1. Evenness: measured by the Index of Dissimilarity, is the relative number of blacks who would have to change geographic units to achieve an even spatial distribution (pg 225).

2. Isolation: measured by the P* Index, is the percentage of Blacks residing in the geographic unit of the average Black person (pg 225).
3. Clustering: is the extent to which minority areas adjoin one another spatially. It is maximized when Black neighborhoods form one large, continuous ghetto; and it is minimized when they are scattered (pg 236).
4. Centralization: is the degree to which Blacks are distributed in and around the center of an urban area, usually defined as the central-business district (pg 236).
5. Concentration: is the relative amount of physical space occupied by Blacks; as segregation increases Blacks are increasingly confined to smaller, geographically compacted areas (pg 236).

When Massey (2001) compared Asians, whites, African Americans, and Hispanics he found that African Americans were undergoing what he termed “hypersegregation;” meaning that they were “not only more segregated than other groups on any single dimension...they are more segregated across all dimensions *simultaneously*” (pg 236). As Massey and Denton (1987) and Massey and Eggers (1990) found, race was the ultimate deciding factor for where groups were located spatially in society, and not income or poverty levels.

Public Housing: Segregation Spills Over

When it was sanctioned in the Housing Act of 1937, public housing was aimed at assisting working class families, not poor and underclass families and individuals. With the Housing Act of 1949 however, the focus was taken off of the working class and “limited public housing to very low-income families...families lost their right to public housing if their income rose above an established limit” (Quercia and Galster 1997, pg. 537). With the United States Housing Act of 1949, the public housing system underwent changes that ensured that it would not compete with the then faltering private housing market. As Turbov and Piper (2005) state:

The law attempted to stimulate the economy without competing with private markets and tied public housing development to the new urban renewal programs. The connection virtually assured that low-income housing would be built in distressed, often undesirable, urban locations (pg 5).

These locations where public housing was constructed were often on the fringes of city centers, and minority neighborhoods. It is also important to note that at this time public housing was still largely segregated and focused on helping low-income *white* families. As Bickford and Massey (1991) state:

The entry of blacks into projects was systematically blocked by a variety of discriminatory mechanisms, including legal segregation, racially motivated site selection, racially biased tenant selection, and the simple refusal of white tenants to share projects with blacks...projects containing blacks were built in or near existing black neighborhoods...(pg 1012).

Although the history of antidiscrimination in housing dates back to the Civil Rights Act of 1886 which was aimed at protecting freedmen during reconstruction, it was not until the Civil Rights Act of 1968 that truly enforceable antidiscrimination law was put into effect (<http://www.usdoj.gov>). Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, referred to as the Fair Housing Act of 1968, banned discrimination based on “race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status...and handicap” (<http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/FHLaws/>).

With the passing of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, public housing was legally desegregated and opened up for all that were eligible, namely the “very low-income families” mentioned in The United States Housing Act of 1949. With its focus on low-income families, and preference given to the neediest of those families, some literature has pointed to these historical federal requirements, public laws, and statutes as the reasons behind the concentration of African American families in extreme poverty in public housing (Goetz 1995; Quercia and Galster 1997; Crump 2002; Popkin et al 2004b).

That may appear to be a legitimate analysis, except that it ignores the reason why so many families of color were low-income and in need of housing assistance. To state that federal preferences for serving the neediest of families causes the current state of poverty concentration

experienced by African American families in public housing, is to disregard the fact that they are all African American and low-income. It is to equate being African American with being low-income. To disregard the mechanisms that lead these families of color to public housing, is to make being low-income essential to being African American (Wacquant 1997).

In their study on racial and ethnic segregation in public housing, Bickford and Massey (1991) examined white, black, Hispanic and Asian residents in both publically owned and privately subsidized public housing developments. When comparing the two types of developments they found that most all publically owned housing developments were centralized and high population developments while the privately subsidized developments were low population and located on scattered sites (Bickford and Massey 1991).

When comparing indexes of dissimilarity and isolation indexes for each group, they came to the conclusion that “public housing generally mirrors broader patterns of racial and ethnic segregation in U.S cities” (Bickford and Massey 1991, pg 1027). As we have already seen from the racialized nature of housing in the United States, residential segregation of African American is so severe that it has been called “hypersegregation.” As Massey (2001) notes:

In a very real way, barriers to spatial mobility are barriers to social mobility; and a racially segregated society cannot logically claim to be “color blind.” The way a group is spatially incorporated into society is as important to its socioeconomic well-being as the manner in which it is incorporated into the labor force (pg. 225, emphasis added).

Bickford and Massey (1991) found that while Hispanic and Asians families were also segregated in both public and privately managed developments, just as Massey and Eggers (1990) and Massey (2001) found in the private residential sector, African Americans suffered higher indexes of Dissimilarity and Isolation than all other racial and ethnic groups studied.

More specifically they found that African American families were “highly concentrated in family projects...owned by a local housing authority” (Bickford and Massey 1991, pg 1034). This mention of African American families being more heavily concentrated in projects that are “owned by a local housing authority” is of great importance, as it is these publically owned housing authority operated developments that are the target of HOPE VI.

HOPE VI: The Redevelopment of Severely Distressed Public Housing

The concept of severely distressed public housing first came to the forefront of the national debate when Title V of The Department of Housing and Urban Development Reform Act of 1989 created the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing and charged it to determine the best methods for addressing severely distressed public housing. The Commission conducted an 18-month long research project into severely distressed public housing, including site visits and interviews with residents, housing authority employees, boards of directors, and industry leaders. The Commission presented Congress with a National Action Plan in August of 1992 to eradicate severely distressed public housing by the year 2000.

With the Commission’s recommendation to Congress, the revitalization of public housing was named the Urban Revitalization Demonstration (URD) before the passing of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (“The QHWR Act of 1998”). Under The QHWR Act of 1998, the provisions of public housing demolition and revitalization grants that first became demonstrative under URD, are federally authorized in the form of HOPE VI (US Public Law 105-276; Salama 1999). Public housing across the nation soon found that it was getting more attention from the federal and local governments than it had received in years.

HOPE VI is race-neutral in the sense that it approaches the problem of poverty concentration from a class-based analysis and seeks to remedy it through an economic-spatial solution: increase the mobility of residents through voucher certificates to be used on the private market. However, African American families already face racial discrimination on the private markets; and those families are free from the stigma attached to public assistance (Darden 1995; Goetz 1995; Jones-Correa 2000; Oliver and Shapiro 2006). Residents of public housing are often seen as the undeserving poor. Crump (2002) states that:

Policymakers and researchers have uncritically adopted the ahistorical and deracialized definition [of the cause and solution to poverty concentration] because it absolves them of all responsibility for the creation of urban ghettos and facilitates the demonization of the urban poor, which provides a basis for demolition ostensibly intended to facilitate the deconcentration of poverty (pg 584).

Each of these institutional contributions to residential segregation I outline are all racial projects that build off of previous racial projects by performing the ideological work to make the link between the representations of race and the social structure. In this time period between the 1940s and 1960s, race is represented as an essential social construct that is impossible to move beyond or ignore, it is linked to the housing structure, and it manifests itself through residential segregation.

Under racially restrictive covenants, race is represented as an essential polarity and connected to a housing structure defined by legally sanctioned separation. Through the NAREB and the FHA's institutionalization of residential segregation, race is represented as being dangerously volatile and connected to a housing structure that is characterized by compulsory separation. As a racial project, the GI Bill connected a more covert racist social structure to the representation of race as differences in ability.

In order to test my operating assumption that HOPE VI is a racial project, I conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis on The Final Report of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing and the Quality Housing and Work Reform Act of 1998. I performed a Critical Discourse Analysis, as I am interested to see the ways in which the HOPE VI policy uses colorblind discourse to frame the options and conditions facing the residents of color living in severely distressed public housing. My operating assumption is that by utilizing a colorblind frame, HOPE VI policy reproduces racial inequality rather than reduces it. I test this operating assumption by conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis and analyzing the data with my two research questions in mind: how is HOPE VI a mechanism of the racial formation process? And how does HOPE VI function as a neoliberal racial project?

Critical Discourse Analysis can be understood as a research technique that examines the discursive frames that are used in instances of textual and verbal communications. The importance of the discursive frames under Critical Discourse Analysis is the ways by which social power is recreated, reinforced, or destroyed through textual and verbal communications. In the first chapter, I described the racial formation perspective that I use as my theoretical background for this thesis. I also described in detail the racialized history of housing in the United States in the second chapter in order to give adequate background to the situation being faced by the residents of severely distressed public housing. In the third chapter I describe my methods for performing a Critical Discourse Analysis, as well as give descriptions of my data as well as an explanation and criterion as to why they were chosen. I also offer an explanation of my codes, and examples of how I coded my data.

Chapter 4: Methods

This chapter first explores the method of Critical Discourse Analysis as I apply it in this thesis. I explain how I utilize Critical Discourse Analysis along with open coding to analyze my data. This chapter also presents the data used in this thesis: “The Final Report of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing” (1992) and “The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998.” I then give background information on both data sources, as well as an explanation as to how I am able to move between the two documents as they are separated by six years in the findings. I close this chapter by presenting the codes I used to code the data, explaining the themes that emerged from the analysis, and exploring the limitations to this study.

HOPE VI is aimed at redeveloping the high density, family housing, authority-owned developments, which Bickford and Massey (1991) have shown are comprised largely of poor people of color. It is my operating assumption that HOPE VI functions as a racial project to perpetuate racial discrimination despite its representation as a means of deconcentrating poverty. My research questions are then: How is HOPE VI a mechanism of the racial formation process? How does HOPE VI function as a neoliberal racial project? To answer my research questions, I utilized Critical Discourse Analysis. In this section, I rely primarily on texts from Teun A. Van Dijk, as he is the prominent scholar in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis, also referred to as Critical Discourse Studies (CDA or CDS) is a form of analytical research that explores the ways in which social power – both dominant and subordinate – is created, reinforced, and resisted in the context of textual and verbal

discourse in both the political and social arenas (Van Dijk 2003). I am primarily interested in whether the colorblind discourse employed in HOPE VI policy does the ideological work of making the link between the structure of public housing and the representations of race. Most all CDA will explore the ways in which:

Specific discourse structures are deployed in the reproduction of social dominance... Thus, the typical vocabulary... in CDA will feature such notions as 'power,' 'dominance,' 'hegemony,' 'ideology,' 'class,' 'gender,' 'race,' 'discrimination,' 'interests,' 'reproduction,' 'institutions,' 'social structure,' or 'social order' (Van Dijk 2003, p. 354).

According to Van Dijk (2002) "Discourse is... understood to mean only a specific communicative event, in general, and a written or oral form of verbal interaction... in particular" (pg 146). There is a more critical aspect inherent in discourse that CDA is aimed at flushing out: the critical power function, which resides in the realm of macro social processes. Van Dijk (2009) discusses the methodological aspect of CDA when he states that:

Such a critical approach not only involves critical *analysis*, but also critical *theory*... CDS is not a method, but rather a critical *perspective, position or attitude* within the discipline of multidisciplinary Discourse Studies. Critical research makes use of a large number of methods, both from Discourse Studies itself, as well as from the humanities, psychology and the social sciences. The critical approach of CDS characterizes scholars rather than their methods: CDS scholars are sociopolitically committed to social equality and justice (pp 62-63).

I am using a critical race perspective, the Racial Formation Perspective, as my theoretical background and use the general social science method of open coding to complete my data analysis (Creswell 2009). Open coding is the process of identifying themes that emerge from coded data, followed by the analysis and interpretation of those themes (Creswell 2009). To ascertain instances of colorblind discourse creating the link between the housing structure and representation of race, I use a set of three predetermined codes. As Creswell (2009) states "a popular approach is to use predetermined codes based on the theory being examined" (p 187). I

coded my data using these predetermined codes to generate “themes for analysis” (Creswell 2009 p 189).

The actual process of coding the data sources involved going through each document and using colored pens to mark off data that was then grouped under a particular code. I created separate word files for each predetermined code and “chunked” data from each data source under the appropriate code file. After I finished coding the data, I then went through each code file and let the themes emerge from the coded data. Two major themes emerged from the coded data. These themes are The Perpetuation of Racial Inequality, and Market Forces at Work. Before I define the three predetermined codes I used and describe the two themes that emerged, I will first describe my data sources and give a rationale for how I move between them in the analysis section. After I describe my data, I will then describe my three large predetermined codes, followed by exploring the themes that emerged.

Data

To answer my research questions I coded two data sources that created the policy of HOPE VI. The documents I used are: “The Final Report of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing: A Report to the Congress and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; August 1992” (hereafter “The Final Report” accessed online at: <http://www.hud.gov/utilities/intercept.cfm?/offices/pih/programs/ph/hope6/aug92.pdf>). The second data source is the “The United States Housing Act of 1937 as Amended by the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998” (hereafter “The QHWR Act” accessed online at: http://search.hud.gov/search?q=us+housing+act+of+1937+as+amended+by+QHWRA+of+1998&btnG=Search&sort=date%3AD%3AL%3Ad1&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&client=hud2009_frontend&proxystylesheet=hud2009_frontend&site=default_collection). In

this next section, I give background and technical information on each data source. I begin with The Final Report and then move on to The QHWR Act of 1998. After I give this background, I present my predetermined codes, followed by a description of the two major themes that emerged and the limitations to this study before I move into the next chapter: Analysis and Findings.

The Final Report

The Final Report is the product of a congressionally appointed Commission comprised of two co-chairmen and 18 members, research assistants, technical consultants and staffers. The Final Report (1992) states that:

Congress established the Commission by enacting Public Law 101-235. Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development appointed Commissioners. The Commissioners are a bi-partisan group from many backgrounds and profession (p xiii).

It is assumed that all members of the Commission, headed by the two co-chairmen William Green and Vincent Lane, compiled and authored the report, as no particular author was noted. William Green, at the time The Final Report was written, was in the House Appropriations Committee and was the senior Republican on the Appropriations Veterans Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Subcommittee. Vincent Lane at the time The Final Report was written, was the chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority and president of the American Community Housing Associates. The remainder of the commissioners occupied positions such as: chairman of the board of directors for housing development corporations, chairmen of housing authorities, deputy chief operating officer of housing developments, Mayor Emeritus, executive directors of housing and finance authorities, charter presidents of Low

Income Housing Coalitions, public housing residents (both current and former residents are represented), and chairmen of planning commissions.

The Final Report is a total of 217 pages, including forwards, letters of intent, and appendices. The document is made up of overview letters to the President of the U.S. Senate (Vice President Dan Quayle) and to Thomas S. Foley, Speaker of the House, and the Secretary of HUD Jack Kemp. The Final Report has a preface, introduction, The National Action Plan, and eight separate chapters that cover all areas of the National Action Plan. The chapters are: overview, resident initiatives and support services, management and operation, capital improvement programs and physical conditions, assessing housing viability, regulatory and statutory barriers, evaluation and performance standards, and nontraditional strategies. There are also five appendices in The Final Report: (A) biography of the Commissioners, (B) definition of severely distressed public housing, (C) locations of site tours, public hearings and case studies, (D) glossary of acronyms, and (E) case study – San Francisco Housing Authority.

The Final Report lists the actions The Commission undertook while conducting its research into severely distressed public housing. Those actions include: site tours and local public hearings at twenty-one locations (three of which were site tours only), four full case studies (not included in The Final Report), nine modified case studies (one of which is included in The Final Report – Robert B. Pitts Plaza in San Francisco, California), and one national public hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The one modified case study of Robert B. Pitts Plaza in San Francisco, California that is included as an appendix to The Final Report is labeled as a “draft site examination report on the San Francisco Housing Authority and the Robert B. Pitts Development – prepared by TAG Associates” (Appendix E, pg E-3).

The QHWR Act of 1998

The other data source that I use is The QHWR Act of 1998. I use this document as it legally institutes HOPE VI as the Federal method for addressing distressed public housing.

The HUD document, “Programs of HUD” (2006) states:

Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (also known as the Public Housing Reform Act): Made significant changes in the Public Housing and Section 8 tenant-based programs. Substantially deregulated high-performing public housing authorities, decreased poverty concentrations in public housing and promoted mixed-income communities, ensured that a threshold share of units and housing vouchers would remain available for the truly needy, and created incentives for residents to become self-sufficient (HUD 2006, pp 120-121).

The QHWR Act of 1998 is Title V of HR 4194, the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Appropriations Act of 1999, which is fully titled: “Making appropriations for the Veterans Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending on September 30, 1999 and for other purposes” (HR 4194). Representative Jerry Lewis of California introduced the legislation on July 8th, 1998. Title V of this appropriations act was originally titled the Public Housing and Tenant-Based Assistance Reform, but given the short title of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. The QHWR Act of 1998 is 162 pages long, but the document that I use is the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 as it is amended by the QHWR ACT of 1998 and it is 224 pages in length.

I decided to use these two specific documents, as they are the central sources for the creation of HOPE VI. HUD has stated that the current manifestation of HOPE VI is a direct consequence of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing and their Final Report (HUD 2006). The Final Report is the document that established the criteria for HOPE VI

as it is currently operating, and for that reason I have used it as one of my data sources.

While presenting my findings in the next chapter, I move between The Final Report (1992) and the QHWR Act of 1998 analytically even though these two documents are separated by over six years. During my research, I read and reviewed a HUD User document, “Programs of HUD: Major Grant, Assistance, and Regulatory Programs – 2006” that stated that HOPE VI, or the Urban Revitalization Demonstration (URD – the first manifestation of HOPE VI) is a direct result of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing’s Final Report in 1992 (accessed online at: <http://www.huduser.org/resources/hudprgs/ProgOfHUD06.pdf>). In this report, under the “Public and Indian Housing” section, HOPE VI is listed as one of the programs. In the section on HOPE VI, the Programs of HUD report (2006) details:

Nature of Program: In 1989, Congress established the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing and charged this Commission with proposing a National Action Plan to eradicate severely distressed public housing by the year 2000. The Urban Revitalization Demonstration (URD) program, or HOPE VI, is a program that was born out of the Commission’s work (HUD, 2006, p 83).

As HUD acknowledges HOPE VI to be a direct result of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing and their Final Report and National Action Plan (which is a chapter in the Final Report), I move between the two documents seamlessly. In this thesis I am focusing on HOPE VI as it operates presently, not as it operated when it was URD or any other previous manifestation.

In the next section, I describe the three large deductive codes I use to code my data by giving thorough definitions of each code. I give these detailed definitions of my three codes as I am following Creswell’s (2009) notion of using predetermined codes derived from a specific theory. Each code contains elements of the racial formation perspective and Critical Discourse Analysis.

After I describe my codes, I will present the themes that emerged and the limitations to this study before moving into Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

Codes

Each document was coded for specific themes that are central to the operating assumption that HOPE VI is a functioning racial project that contributes to the larger racial formation process. I coded each document for specific themes that account for the critical power aspect that CDA seeks to uncover. The specific themes are represented in my three large deductive codes. My three large codes are: *Ahistorical Colorblind Discourse*, *Residents at Fault: Blaming the Victim*, and *The Protection of Private Interests*. In this next section I define each large code as I utilized them in the analysis. I also connect each large code to my methods and research question and provide an example of discourse that is assigned to each code, and an explanation as to why I coded in this way.

Code 1: Ahistorical Colorblind Discourse

I examined the discourse to identify text that ignored the history of the institutional discrimination in the housing structure. What I found throughout both of the documents is that the language in The Final Report and The QHWR Act of 1998 either removes (through the use of colorblind discourse) or ignores the past and present racialized nature of the housing structure. When there are examples of ahistorical colorblind discourse, it often takes the form of class being used as a proxy for race.

This code is geared towards connecting my methods of CDA to my research questions as it seeks to show how the use of colorblind discourse reinforces the power of the neoliberal political structure by removing the historical significance of race and only focusing on economic

well-being. By doing so, the neoliberal political structure is reaffirmed, as is the neoliberal agenda of poverty deconcentration as a means to address poverty as a whole.

Through the use of colorblind discourse, historical institutional discrimination in the housing market is ignored, as is the present racialized nature of the housing structure. In terms of ‘cause’ and ‘effect,’ only the effect is addressed, not the cause of the situation. Disregarding the impact of race on a person’s life experiences allows HOPE VI to connect the image of low- and very low-income people of color to the racialized housing structure as these people of color are marginalized in the private and public sector of the housing markets.

These low- and very low-income people of color are portrayed as people who do not work to better their situations, because under the deregulated free markets, all are free to participate and gain. The concept of a culture of poverty, though never explicitly mentioned, is implied through the deracialized logic of “they must not care enough to try and better themselves” under neoliberal and colorblind ideologies. I now offer examples of Ahistorical Colorblind Discourse in the data sets:

Ahistorical Colorblind Discourse in The Final Report:

Public housing developments have become severely distressed at least partially because the resident population had become increasingly poorer and consists of a high percentage of households whose only source of income is public assistance (pg 103).

I considered this to be an example of ahistorical colorblind discourse as this statement completely ignores the racialized history of housing and poverty in this country. It pays no attention to, or ever mentions the racialized reasons why the resident population has become increasingly poor, or why they rely mainly on public assistance.

Ahistorical Colorblind Discourse in The QHWR Act of 1998:

[For the implementation of new rent structures] so that the rent structures do not create a disincentive for continued residency in public housing by families who are attempting to become economically self sufficient through employment or who have attained a level of self sufficiency through their own efforts (pg 7).

I considered this to be an example of ahistorical colorblind discourse as this statement implies that previously there was a disincentive for public housing residents to become “economically self sufficient” and leave public housing. This statement ignores the impact of racial discrimination in employment and the housing market.

Code 2: Residents at Fault: Blaming the Victim

This code centers on the ways in which the blame for poverty and distress is removed from the PHAs, HUD, and the private market, and placed on the residents themselves. I filed data under this code when the data highlighted the low socioeconomic status of public housing residents while minimizing the impact of past and present racial discrimination, institutional racism, and general neglect when offering an explanation of the situation residents face in severely distressed developments. With this code, I am interested in exploring instances where economic and social ‘shortcomings’ of the resident population are offered as the cause of the state of distress in the housing developments under question.

This code examines the CDA component of how discourse recreates social power as it explores the means by which fault is discursively removed from those with social power, and is placed on those with little social power. CDA focuses on uncovering the ways in which discourse is utilized in “the reproduction of social dominance” (Van Dijk 2003, p. 354). Data is

assigned this code as instances of blame-placing degrade the character of public housing residents, and social power in the form of morality is removed from the resident population.

If the data represent the residents as a population that is incapable of helping themselves, subscribing to the culture of poverty, or able to be economically self-sufficient, then under the “new morality” of the market this population can be painted as “immoral.”

The “new morality” of the market refers to the notion that under the open, unregulated market, all are free to compete and gain (Harvey 2005). As the market is unfettered by regulations it does not discriminate against those who compete in it, and therefore, if a person fails in the free market system it is by no fault but their own. When data represent the resident population as one that has failed, has subscribed to the culture of poverty, or is incapable of being economically self-sufficient, it is placed under this large code, as it is an example of social power being stripped from the resident population. I developed this code to assist in answering my research question as to how HOPE VI is a mechanism of the racial formation process. I am seeking to explore instances in which HOPE VI lends itself to the larger racial formation process by successfully completing and reproducing a racial project. This code is aimed at presenting the structural side of the racial project definition, as it shows the current public housing structure as distressed and inadequate, leading to the call for redevelopment. I will now give an example from each data source of this code .

Residents at Fault: Blaming the Victim in The Final Report:

PHAs are required to give preference to public housing applicants who have the greatest need for housing. The significance of this overall practice is that an increasing number of residents receive public assistance, and thus the rental income PHAs can obtain to cover the cost of operation public housing is reduced (pg 39).

I considered this to be an example of residents being at fault as this statement is referring to how the poverty of the residents contributes to the distress. This statement disregards the role of the PHAs and HUD that allowed both public housing residents and the developments to become so distressed.

Residents at Fault: Blaming the Victim in The QHWR Act of 1998:

Decreases in income for failure to comply - if the welfare or public assistance benefits of a covered family are reduced because of any failure of any member of the family to comply with the conditions under the assistance program requiring participation in an economic self-sufficiency program or imposing a work activities requirement, the amount required to be paid by the family as a monthly contribution toward rent may not be decreased during the period of reduction, as a result of any decrease in the income of the family (to the extent that the decrease in income is a result of the benefits reduction) (pg 107).

I considered this to be an example of residents at fault as this statement places the blame on the resident for not complying with welfare or other public assistance benefits requirements for economic self-sufficiency programs or work requirements without taking into account the circumstances surrounding the non-compliance. For example, under recent welfare reforms, recipients are required to accept the first job that they are offered, without regards to what the job is, where it is, or how they are to get there. Some welfare recipients lose these jobs due to childcare or transportation issues, and as a consequence temporarily lose their welfare benefits. If they are not offered a reduction in rent when these deductions of benefits occur, they will be evicted from the developments for not paying rent under the QHWR Act of 1998. Now I will present my final large code, *The Protection of Private Interests*, before I move on to the Findings section of this thesis.

Code 3: The Protection of Private Interests

This code aims to catch the ways in which the revitalization process is designed with private interests in mind, often at the expense of the residents themselves. Private interests refer to the private developers, financiers, management corporations and entities, and businesses that are brought into the redevelopment process under HOPE VI grant guidelines. Private interests also refer to the private housing market that is taken into consideration under HOPE VI legislation and policy.

The United States Housing Act of 1937 is the legislation that creates public housing, but it is the United States Housing Act of 1949 that produced the most public housing units to date (HUD 2006). By creating housing for struggling, low-income workers, the United States Housing Act of 1949 not only provided housing for those in need, it also aided in revitalizing the housing construction industry, and job creation (Oliver and Shapiro, 2006). But in order to avoid negatively impacting the private housing market, income maximums for prospective residents of this new public housing were set at a very low rate (Salama 1999; Popkin et al 2004b).

Some have noted this federal preference for those most in need of housing, and mandatory low income level requirements, as the reason the public housing program is in such a state of distress (Popkin et al 2004ab, Turner et al 2004). This federal preference came about at the behest of private construction businesses as a way to avoid taking business away from a recovering construction industry and the private housing market. This is an example of federal housing policy that takes into account the private interests of the private housing market. It is this sort of instance that I aim to identify with this code. This code lends itself to the CDA methods as it is also constructed to demonstrate how the social power of the dominant group is reinforced.

By taking into consideration the protection of private interests, HOPE VI policy focuses on creating situations where these private interests can capitalize on the public sectors investment (Bagert 2002). The public sector invests through the HOPE VI grant, which is then used to leverage private funding by offering financial incentives.

It is instances such as this that this code is aimed at capturing; situations where the social power of the dominant group – the private sector – is reinforced, while the social power of the subordinate group – the public housing residents – is stripped away. Instances such as this also answer my research question as they demonstrate how HOPE VI functions as a racial project. It is the functioning properties of the racial project of HOPE VI that I am interested in exploring. HOPE VI makes the ideological link – through the use of colorblind discourse – between the representations of race as insignificant to the social structure of public housing. My goal with this code is to show *how HOPE VI functions* to successfully become a racial project.

I assign this code to discourse describing policy or legislation that allows for the generation of wealth by the private sector, as that generation of wealth comes to be priority over resident well-being. When the private sector is brought into the redevelopment and revitalization process, it is understandable that some form of wealth accumulation is expected to incentivize these private actors into participating. What I am interested in with this code is when the data places, allows, or create instances where wealth is to be generated *at the cost* of resident well-being. I will now offer an example of this code in both documents before moving on to the Themes section of this chapter.

The Protection of Private Interests in The Final Report:

The process for implementing changes of the income mix in severely distressed housing developments should be undertaken in conjunction with a review of appropriate changes in Federal preferences for selecting households that apply for public housing (p 25).

This is an example of the protection of private interests as income mixing is aimed not only at deconcentrating poverty, but also at generating wealth for the private sector actors involved in the management of the newly revitalized developments. There is more to be made from the construction and sale/rental of market rate units than there is in partially subsidized low-income or public housing units.

The Protection of Private Interests in The QHWR Act of 1998:

Prohibition of skipping - in developing admission procedures, the Secretary shall prohibit project owners from selecting families for residence in an order different from the order on the waiting list for the purpose of selecting relatively higher income families for residence. Nothing in this paragraph may be construed to prevent an owner of housing assisted under a contract for project-based assistance from establishing a preference for occupancy in such housing for families containing a member who is employed (pg 129).

I considered this to be an example of the protection of private interests as it allows for the owner of a project to set a preference for families with a working member. This means that all former residents of a development that has undergone redevelopment that rely on public assistance for their income will not be guaranteed admission to the new development. In the next section, I present the themes that emerged from the coded data and the framework I used to analyze the data before presenting the limitations to this study. After this, we move to Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings.

Themes

Once I completed the coding of the data, I read over the individual code word files and let the themes emerge. The first theme that emerged was the Perpetuation of Racial Inequality. This theme centers on the ways in which HOPE VI, although claiming to be deconcentrating poverty, actually perpetuates racial inequality in the housing structure. HOPE VI envisions the housing structure to be deracialized and characterized by equal opportunity. HOPE VI policy's stated aim is to boost the mobility of public housing residents through the redevelopment of severely distressed public housing and introduction of mixed income families in the developments. What I found was that HOPE VI policy, through its diagnosis of the situation being faced by the residents in severely distressed public housing and the recommendations put forth, utilizes colorblind ideology to perpetuate the ongoing racial inequality in the racialized housing structure. HOPE VI policy views the residents of severely distressed public housing from the culture of poverty perspective, and only offers solutions that would presume to change the resident's cultural deficiencies.

The second theme that emerged from the coded data was Market Forces at work. My first theme of the Perpetuation of Racial Inequality explores the deracialized diagnoses that the Commission offers of severely distressed public housing. This second theme of Market Forces at work explores how the Commission's deracialized diagnoses produces racialized outcomes in the treatments that The QHWR Act of 1998 codifies in HOPE VI. I explain these themes in-depth in chapter 4: Analysis and Findings. I will now present analytical framework and the limitations to this study before moving into the next Chapter: Analysis and Findings.

Analytic Framework

When analyzing the data, I used the culture of poverty framework as a lens through which I read the data. I make the argument throughout the Findings section that HOPE VI policy views the residents as ascribing to this culture of poverty. The policy approaches the conditions the residents of severely distressed public housing face from a colorblind perspective. HOPE VI policy also offers solutions based on the assumption of a cultural deficiency of the residents of severely distressed public housing.

Limitations

This project is limited in a number of ways. The documents that I used as my data could have been expanded to include all of the United States Housing Acts and amendments; given more time, I would have liked to trace the full development of public housing revitalization and redevelopment, but with time restrictions I have to settle on the most recent incarnation: HOPE VI. This study also did not explore independently the different groups of peoples of color other than African Americans. I mainly focused on African Americans, and use the terms “people of color” interchangeably with African Americans. As such this study has also turned into a racial project. I have effectively connected the colorblind representation of African Americans to the social structure of public housing. I examined the entirety of the HOPE VI program, but I was not able to provide site-specific qualitative or quantitative data³. Had I been able to do so, I might have been able to give more empirical evidence to the operation of the racial project of

³ On February 13th, 2009 I met with housing rights lawyers at Loyola University in order to get information as to how I should go about trying to collect empirical data on public housing residents. These lawyers, two women, were patient with me and gracious to take time out of their day and meet with me. When I explained that I wanted to collect data from one of the HOPE VI redeveloped sites in New Orleans, data such as numbers of residents, age, sex, income, and income sources in order to track the lowest income resident through the redevelopment process, both women laughed at me. They explained that prior to Hurricane Katrina, HANO was bad at keeping and divulging records, and since Hurricane Katrina what little data HANO had it was not sharing. I was told my best bet was to go to HANO everyday in a low-cut shirt and try and flirt my way into the records room. Faced with that, I changed the direction of this study.

HOPE VI. As the study is now, I am only able to hypothesize that what I describe in general terms what happens in all HOPE VI redevelopments.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings

During the data analysis, there were two substantive themes that emerged through the coding process. Those themes are The Perpetuation of Racial Inequality and Market Forces at Work. The theme of The Perpetuation of Racial Inequality hones in on the way that HOPE VI policy, though aimed at deconcentrating poverty and boosting the mobility of the residents of severely distressed public housing, actually produces outcomes that will perpetuate the racial inequality in the housing market. My second theme, Market Forces at Work, focuses on the deracialized economic and spatial recommendations that The Final Report put forth, and The QHWR Act of 1998 eventually codified through HOPE VI. In my first theme of The Perpetuation of Racial Inequality, I investigate How HOPE VI policy views the residents of severely distressed public housing from the lens of the culture of poverty. Both of these themes are geared towards answering my research questions of how HOPE VI is a mechanism of the racial formation process, and how HOPE VI functions as a racial project. After I present my findings across both themes, I move into the final chapter: Conclusions.

The Perpetuation of Racial Inequality

The first major theme that emerged from the analysis of the two documents was the Perpetuation of Racial Inequality. This theme has three main points that perpetuate racial inequality that I discuss here: the disregarding of the racialized history of housing in the U.S., the focus on the distressed nature of the residents as leading to the distress of the developments, and lastly, the race-neutral assumption of the current housing structure. I am interested in exploring how HOPE VI makes the ideological link between the representations of race and the structure of public housing through colorblind discourse. In this section, I examine the means by which HOPE VI makes those links, and how it lends itself to the larger racial formation process.

The first point in this theme is the way in which HOPE VI policy disregards the racialized history of housing in the United States. I use this as my first point for how HOPE VI policy perpetuates racial inequality as the policy cannot account for the current manifestation of the racialized housing structure if it never acknowledges the history that has led to the current state of distress in public housing. The Final Report presents the situation residents face in severely distressed public housing in a colorblind fashion, while the QHWR Act of 1998 codifies the recommendations of the Commission that presuppose a deracialized housing structure. The manner in which The Final Report diagnoses the situation the residents of severely distressed public housing face directly impacts the treatments it prescribes, and that The QHWR Act of 1998 eventually codifies. I now present an example from HOPE VI policy to illustrate my point.

The Final Report (1992) offered The National Action Plan for addressing and eliminating severely distressed public housing. Although there are eight chapters in The Final Report, all of the information each chapter covers is condensed and placed in The National Action Plan. In the beginning pages of The National Action Plan, the Commission declares:

This Plan is not simply an empty call to action: it is a call to action with a very clear set of steps to guide the Nation in correcting conditions in severely distressed public housing not primarily out of concern for the physical structures but more out of concern for the people who live in and near them (p 10).

The “conditions” that the Commission states the nation must address in severely distressed public housing stem from the racialized history of housing in this country. White flight to the suburbs, red-lining to guarantee that people of color would not be able to purchase a home in a “credit-worthy” neighborhood that would eventually accumulate wealth, and the building of public housing developments in African American neighborhoods are just a few examples of the racialized history of housing in the U.S. (Farley and Frey 1994; Darden 1995; Oliver and Shapiro 2006).

All of these racial projects produced and upheld residential segregation over time, and with this segregation came private and public disinvestment in neighborhoods of color. The Commission mentions this private and public disinvestment in Chapter Three: Management and Operation of The Final Report (1992), when it states:

Developments are often constructed at undesirable locations, which are removed from the city center and thus community services; public transportation, police protection, and institutional facilities such as schools and health services are often severely lacking in these communities and the level and type of services offered to severely distressed public housing developments are insufficient (pg. 64).

Institutional and private efforts effectively kept African American families out of public housing until the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was put into effect. It was at this time that public housing began the course to becoming the severely distressed developments HOPE VI is focused on redeveloping. But The Final Report makes no mention of this, and as such The QHWR Act of 1998 does not take into account the racialized history that has led to the public housing program being operated in isolation from both the private sector and other public sector projects. The “undesirable locations” mentioned above were racially motivated site locations for public housing. Once public housing was effectively “desegregated” by the Civil Rights Act of 1968, elite land developers and white neighborhoods ensured that these “black projects” would not be built around them (Bickford and Massey 1991).

When comparing indexes of dissimilarity and isolation indexes for public housing residents of publically owned housing developments, Bickford and Massey (1991) came to the conclusion that “public housing generally mirrors broader patterns of racial and ethnic segregation in U.S cities” (pg 1027), meaning that a large proportion of residents in publically owned housing developments are female-headed families and people of color. The turnover from white residents to families of color coincided with white flight to the suburbs; and with those

white families went the institutions and community services the Final Report notes as lacking in the “undesirable locations.” As Bickford and Massey (1991) state:

As minority access to projects improved through pressure from civil rights groups, projects containing blacks were typically built in or near existing black neighborhoods, reinforcing existing patterns of segregation. Allegations of discrimination in the location and occupancy of public housing projects continue to the present day (pg 1012).

The Commission stated that the conditions in severely distressed public housing needed to be corrected not “primarily out of concern for the physical structures but more out of concern for the people who live in and near them” (The Final Report 1992, The National Action Plan, p 10). This “concern for the people” that reside in severely distressed public housing becomes the focus of The Final Report as it spends a considerable amount of time in describing the distressed nature of the residents. I address this focus in the next point in the theme of The Perpetuation of Racial Inequality.

The second point to the theme of The Perpetuation of Racial Inequality is how the policy focuses on the distressed nature of the residents as being a contributing factor to the distress in the developments. This focus on the distressed nature of the residents perpetuates racial inequality as The Final Report views the residents of severely distressed public housing from a culture of poverty framework. Operating under that framework, The Final Report can only offer solutions (that The QHWR Act of 1998 codifies) that address the residents supposed cultural deficiencies. When describing this distress in the residents in Chapter One: Overview, The Final Report (1992) states:

The Commission notes that conditions in severely distressed public housing do not relate only to the distressed physical conditions but also to the distressed conditions of the households residing in the developments. These conditions of distress are characterized by poverty brought on by high unemployment, an unstable family structure, high indices of crime, lack of education, and lack of support services (p 38)

These “conditions of distress” each contain a racialized aspect that HOPE VI policy does not acknowledge or address either in The Final Report’s research, or The QHWR Act of 1998’s remedies. “High unemployment” as a characteristic of distress is racialized as race interacts with the employment market to produce disparate results between the races. Employment does not always translate into wealth accumulation, and as Oliver and Shapiro (2006) note: “employment supplies income, but by itself does not diminish inequality among those who work” (p 117).

When comparing “good jobs, bad jobs, race, and wealth⁴,” Oliver and Shapiro (2006) found that while African Americans and whites were somewhat comparable in the “bad jobs,” or periphery industries, whites dominate the “good jobs” in the core industries (pp 118-119). Core industries include steel, chemicals, and automobiles, while periphery industries include textiles, personal services, and retail sales and “pay poorly, provide few benefits, are more likely temporary and unstable” (Oliver and Shapiro 2006, p 86). In the periphery industries, African Americans represented 42 percent while whites represented 39 percent. In the core industries, African Americans also represented 42 percent whereas whites represented 49 percent. The income difference between whites and African Americans in the periphery industries is \$10,280 and in the core industries is \$12,616.

With more people of color represented in the periphery industries that are “more likely temporary and unstable” we can see how these residents of color of severely distressed public housing might experience a higher level of unemployment. Even when they are employed, people of color can work the same jobs as their white counterparts and still earn less income (Oliver and Shapiro 2006). When the Commission lists ‘high unemployment’ as a characteristic

⁴ Data is from the SIPP (Survey of Income and Program Participation) from the U.S. Census Bureau, the 1987 panel which followed and interviewed 11,257 households every four months from June 1987 to June 1987

of distress, it is listing it as a characteristic of distress in families of color. The next characteristic of distress that the Commission notes in the residents of severely distressed public housing is an “unstable family structure.”

In my subsection “the culture of poverty⁵”, Geismar and Gerhart (1968), Parker and Kliener (1970), and Collins (1989) all make mention that the Moynihan Report viewed the “unstable family structure” as the center of the problem with African American families. The Moynihan Report implied that African American families would cycle this cultural deficiency through the generations, as the parents would socialize their children in these “unstable” families to the culture of poverty. The notion of “unstable family structure” refers to the female-headed households that largely comprise these severely distressed public housing developments that HOPE VI is aimed at redeveloping (Bickford and Massey 1991).

The next characterization of distress listed by the Commission is “high indices of crime.” In their article, “Young Black Men and Urban Policing in the United States,” Brunson and Miller (2006) interview 40 African American males between the ages of 13 and 19 in St. Louis, Missouri. They found that urban African American males were the targets of proactive policing due to racial discrimination, unfounded racial beliefs, and pure prejudice. When they asked their respondents if they have ever been the victims of police harassment, 83% responded yes (Brunson and Miller 2006). If urban African American males are policed more heavily, harassed, and arrested more often it is not that they are committing more crimes than sub/urban white males, it is that they are targeted more often and therefore have higher rates of incarceration.

When the Commission lists “higher indices of crime” as a characteristic of distress, it is viewing the resident population of severely distressed public housing as suffering from some

⁵ In chapter two, starting on page 19

cultural deficiency that compels them to commit criminal acts instead of participating in the job market. Because it views the residents of severely distressed public housing from the culture of poverty framework, HOPE VI policy cannot account for the racialized aspects to the residents' distress as the culture of poverty avoids racial analysis and focuses instead of supposed cultural deficiencies.

The Commission has already stated that the concern is not for the physical buildings, but for the families who reside in them. In The National Action Plan, the Commission notes that:

These families also tend to be more vulnerable to the activities of gangs, drug dealers, and other negative elements that have a profound destabilizing influence in the lives and property of public housing communities and on safe family life (p 10).

What is it that makes the families living in severely distressed public housing more vulnerable to criminal activity? HOPE VI policy seems to infer that because these families are living in this culture of poverty they lack basic normative culture that values and rewards work. According to HOPE VI policy, these families are more likely to commit criminal acts as they are distressed and suffer from high unemployment, unstable family structures, and high criminal indices. By using such racialized characterizations of distress, HOPE VI policy has just stated that because there are poor black families living in these developments, they are severely distressed.

The Final Report also paints the distressed nature of the residents as being a barrier to the proper management by the PHAs of the severely distressed housing development. In this light, the residents' distress becomes one of the main factors contributing to distress in the housing developments. In Chapter Six: Regulatory and Statutory Barriers, The Final Report (1992) notes:

Public housing developments have become severely distressed at least partially because the resident population has become increasingly poorer and consists of a high percentage of households whose only source of income is public assistance. Isolating this income group creates a stagnant environment of the poorest of the

poor, *whose despair is self-perpetuating*; creates an image of public housing as the “housing of the last resort” (emphasis added, p 103).

Not only has The Final Report just equated the racialized distress of the residents to the cause for the housing development distress, but also it has also just placed the residents in the culture of poverty. According to HOPE VI policy having this concentration of families of color living in poverty (“isolating this income group”) creates a hopeless environments “*whose despair is self-perpetuating.*” The Final Report actually uses the language of the Moynihan Report⁶ when describing the residents of severely distressed public housing. As HOPE VI policy has thus far applied colorblind frames and the culture of poverty rhetoric when describing the residents of severely distressed public housing, it should not be surprising that the solution they offer is economically and spatially based.

The last point under the theme of The Perpetuation of Racial Inequality is how HOPE VI policy views the current housing structure as being race-neutral. As I discussed in the first point under this theme, HOPE VI policy ignores the racialized history of housing in this country and as such it cannot account for the current racialized housing structure. The impact of this eliding of the past is doubled when it is combined with the colorblind and culture of poverty framework HOPE VI policy uses to assess the situation in severely distressed public housing. The solution HOPE VI arrives at to combat the distress in the public housing developments is to combat the distress found in the residents. As HOPE VI policy views the residents through colorblind and culture of poverty frameworks, it offers solutions that address the economic and spatial elements of the residents’ distress: through the deconcentration of poverty. In section 16: Income Eligibility for Public Housing, The QHWR Act of 1998 addresses the Commission’s belief that

⁶ The Moynihan Report stated that the African American community was characterized “by a tangle of pathology that is capable of perpetuating itself” (Collins 1989, p 877).

the residents of severely distressed public housing will be best served through the economic and spatial solution of poverty deconcentration and income-mixing within the housing developments. In chapter Three of The Final Report, Management and Operations, the Commission notes that lessening the concentration of poverty in the housing developments will lead to removing the distress when it states:

Families that live in public housing units tend to have very low incomes and to receive public assistance. It appears that public housing communities are less difficult to manage and that it is easier to provide greater benefits to all residents if there is a mix of incomes to include a greater number of households with members who are employed (The Final Report, 1992, pg 69).

The Final Report is assuming that by introducing a mix of income within the public housing development, residents will in some manner assimilate to mainstream, white, normative culture that values hard work and sacrifice. HOPE VI policy places the residents within this culture of poverty that is thought of as having cultural deficiencies, especially when it comes to what white, middle-class America values (Collins 1989). By this logic, introducing a mix of incomes would immerse the residents of color who are allowed back into the redeveloped public housing development into white, middle-class culture and values, thus breaking their supposed self-perpetuating culture of poverty. The QHWR Act of 1998 takes up The Final Report diagnosis of the residents as needing to be assimilated into mainstream, white, middle-class culture by mandating that all newly redeveloped HOPE VI sites enforce a deconcentration of poverty. In section 16, Income Eligibility for Public Housing, The QHWR Act of 1998 orders:

DECONCENTRATION. —
IN GENERAL. —A public housing agency shall submit with its annual public housing agency plan under section 5A an admissions policy designed to provide for deconcentration of poverty and income-mixing by bringing higher income tenants into lower income projects and lower income tenants into higher income projects. This clause may not be construed to impose or require any specific income or racial quotas for any project or projects (The QHRW Act 1998; United States Public 105-276, 112 Stat. 2518; Section 16(3)(B), p 127).

This policy of deconcentration not only applies to redeveloped sites, but also to all public housing developments. As most of the families living in severely distressed public housing are of color, this deconcentration mandate will produce differential racial outcomes, as many residents will not return to the redeveloped site, as that will just reconcentrate the poverty. HOPE VI policy is using colorblind frames as it assesses the concentration of poverty as stemming from a culture of poverty and not racism and institutional discrimination. As Crump (2002) states:

Policymakers and researchers have uncritically adopted the ahistorical and deracialized definition [of poverty concentration] because it absolves them from all responsibility for the creation of urban ghettos and facilitates the demonization of the urban poor, which provides a basis for demolition ostensibly intended to facilitate the deconcentration of poverty (pg 584).

In the “HOPE VI Panel Study: Baseline Report” Popkin et al (2002) studied the living conditions of 500 families from 5 different sites (100 each from New Jersey, Illinois, North Carolina, California, and Washington D.C.). Popkin et al (2002) notes “the HOPE VI programs affects some of the nation’s most disadvantaged families, including large numbers of single female-headed families with young children (pg 25).” This study “describes the status of residents at the baseline, prior to relocation” (Popkin et al 2002, pg 5). When examining the resident characteristics of the 500 families studied in this report, Popkin et al (2002) found that 443 of the 500 families were African American, single, female heads of households with children. That is 88.6% of the families in the study.

This is significant as most of the original residents of developments undergoing redevelopment will either be moved into other public housing developments, or receive vouchers

to use on the open market. The QHWR Act of 1998 states in Section 33: Required Conversion of Distressed Public Housing to Tenant-based Assistance:

Conversion requirement: each family displaced by such action [redevelopment of severely distressed public housing] will be offered comparable housing that meets housing quality standards and may include: tenant-based assistance, project-based assistance (p 199).

The residents who are moved to other housing developments will likely stay there as the new deconcentration policies will not allow for a majority of them to return. For those residents who are given vouchers to use on the open market, the long history and on-going instances of residential segregation and discrimination faced by people of color in the open housing market are the first thing they must overcome. In her article comparing the dual agenda's of fair and affordable housing advocates, Sidney (2005) states that:

Studies that analyze neighborhood differences for black and white HUD Section 8 voucher holders point to the independent effect of race on housing options; for example, black households with housing assistance are more likely to live in distressed neighborhoods than other assisted households (pg 268).

Even if households of color are able to find housing on the open market that is not located in distressed neighborhoods, The QHRW Act of 1998 mandates that the owner of the assisted housing select tenants. Moreover, the owner is legally sanctioned to skip over families on the waiting list to get to a family whose main source of income is not public assistance. This may appear to be an economic factor rather than a racial one, but acknowledging the interaction of race with employment and income makes it clear that this is a raced stipulation.

As Oliver and Shapiro (2006) mentioned, even when working the same periphery industry job, African American's still earned considerably less than white workers. The periphery industry is characterized by jobs such as textiles, personal services, and retail work, all of which would be hard to find in the institutionally abandoned locations that most all severely

distressed public housing developments are said to inhabit (The Final Report 1992; Oliver and Shapiro 2006). The Final also notes that these undesirable locations were lacking in basic transportation services. It is not hard to see how very difficult it can be for residents of severely distressed public housing not only to find but also to get to a job that offers a living wage.

Those original residents who are given vouchers to use in the open market are exposed to the tenant selection preference of the owner, who has the legal right to skip over families whose main source of income is public assistance. According to Popkin et al (2002), 30.8% of the 500 families from five different sites studied for the Baseline Report are receiving welfare (154 out of 500), and 24.6% are on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI – 123 of the 500 families). Combined, that is 55.4% of original residents that could receive housing vouchers and could potentially be skipped over due to their dependence on public assistance.

In “The HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study: A Snapshot of the current Living Situations of Original Residents from Eight Sites” Buron et al (2002) track 818 households from eight different sites undergoing HOPE VI redevelopment. The purpose of this study is to assess the living conditions and well-being of former residents of properties undergoing HOPE VI redevelopment (Buron et al 2002). The sites were located in: Colorado, New Jersey, Illinois, California, Kentucky, Arizona, and New York. It is important to note that none of these sites were the same sites that were used in the “HOPE VI Baseline Report.” Buron et al found that nationally, 37% of original residents were relocated to other public housing developments, 35% used housing vouchers on the open market, and only 14% returned to the redeveloped HOPE VI site, while another 14% “left assisted housing altogether” (Buron et al 2002, pg 4). No mention is made throughout this report as to whether or not this 14% that left assisted housing altogether did so out of increased income, or because they simply fell off the grid.

The structural measures that leads to people and families of color being classified as distressed: racial discrimination in employment, wages, housing, education, and the criminal justice system, are never directly addressed in HOPE VI policy. Instead, HOPE VI policy only focuses on addressing supposed cultural deficiencies in the resident population by offering services that would combat the culture of poverty all families of color are assumed to be living under. In example, The QHWR Act of 1998 lists the supportive services that all resident will be offered. This list serves to show the assumed pathology of the families of color as this list only addresses the assumed lack of assimilation to mainstream, white, and middle-class culture.

- (A) child care
- (B) transportation necessary to receive services
- (C) remedial education
- (D) education for completion of high school
- (E) job training and preparation
- (F) *substance abuse treatment and counseling*
- (G) *training in homemaking and parenting skills*
- (H) *training in money management*
- (I) *training in household management* (QHRW Act 1998;US Pub. L. 105-276, 112 Stat. 2518; Sec 23 “Family Self-Sufficiency Program (c)(2), emphasis added).

HOPE VI policy only addresses what it assumes is the lack of assimilation to mainstream white culture by the families of color living in the distressed public housing developments as is made obvious by items F through I. By only addressing what it assumes is lacking in the character of the residents of severely distressed public housing, HOPE VI policy perpetuates racial inequality as it does not address the actual structural forces that lead the residents to living in the state of distress. In the next section, I explore my second theme of Market Forces at Work.

Market Forces at Work

The second theme that emerged was the theme of Market Forces at Work. This themes has three main points that I will discuss, and those three points are: HOPE VI policy calling for the

creation of a new market in the redevelopment of severely distressed public housing, the opening up of public housing to the public/private partnerships that brings new financing structures, and the deregulation of the new market.

When The Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing was established in 1989 through Congress, the nation was already in the midst of the political ideological shift that ushered in neoliberalism; public housing was still a sphere of public life that had not been opened up to market forces or private competition. The Final Report uses language that sets the stage for the private-public partnerships that neoliberalism calls for, while The QHWR Act of 1998 takes that very language and sanctions it as federal policy. The new market is created in public housing as The Final Report frames the situation facing public housing in such a way that demands public-private partnerships as the only acceptable solution.

The first point under the theme of Market Forces at Work is HOPE VI policy calling for the creation of a new market in the redevelopment of severely distressed public housing. The Final Report mentions how traditional methods of revitalizing public housing has failed. This leads to the call for a more entrepreneurial approach to redeveloping severely distressed public housing. In The National Action Plan it is noted that:

The problems of severely distressed public housing developments are enormous and require *a dynamic view to be treated effectively*. The Commission is concerned with treating these housing developments effectively so that *improvements made will be sustained*. During its site tours and research, the Commission found cases in which *significant public investment* in housing resulted in only *short-term* improvements (The Final Report 1992, pg 26, emphasis added).

The Final Report is calling for a “dynamic” method of addressing severely distressed public housing. Something that has not been done before, as the Commission notes the “significant public investment in housing has only related in short-term improvements. When listing the

variables that lead to the distressed nature of public housing, The Final Report notes in Chapter Three, Management and Operations, that:

Traditionally, public housing management concerns have centered on ‘bricks and mortar’ issues. However, the increase in the poverty level among public housing residents is accompanied by social service needs...because of a combination of factors ranging from a history of neglect to changes in resident population, severely distressed developments present management challenges that point out the weaknesses in traditional public housing management (Final Report 1992, pgs 62-63).

The Commission has successfully stated that large numbers of poor people residing in a public housing development place a strain on PHAs in their management duties. Mention is made to the “history of neglect” without recognizing the racialized history of that neglect. By only addressing class based issues of distress, and not allowing for a history of neglect resulting from the entrance of people of color into public housing, the Commission is providing recommendations that will continue the cycle of racial inequality. This continuation of racial inequality emerges, as the prescriptions focus on resident residential mobility and job readiness without accounting for the mechanisms of racial discrimination the residents of color will face.

Taken in context, The Final Report is stating that the traditional method of publically funding and operation of public housing revitalization has only produced short term results, and that a more dynamic approach is needed if the improvements are to be sustainable. Here, the creation of a new market is created in the redevelopment of public housing. Now that this new market has been created to do away with the federal regulations that only led to short term improvements, public and private partnerships are introduced into this new market, and with them come a new financing structure. According to The Final Report:

The Commission recommends a more entrepreneurial approach to meeting the needs of severely distressed public housing; such an approach will address conditions that go beyond the direct rehabilitation and management needs of the

properties...to attract additional private and public investments in a communitywide revitalization effort (The Final Report 1992, p 26).

The second point under this theme of Market Forces at Work is the new financing structure that comes with the opening up of public housing to public and private partnerships. The additional private funds that the Commission recommends be attracted are leveraged through the use of financial incentives given to private sector investors for their part in the revitalization of severely distressed public housing. The most common form of these financial incentives comes in the form of low-income housing tax credits (Bagert 2002). Low-income housing tax credits are given as a form of federal subsidy to PHAs that manage housing for low- and very low-income residents. Under the new mixed-finance approach of HOPE VI, PHAs are required to leverage additional private funds for the redevelopment of distressed public housing. PHAs that best demonstrate their ability to leverage outside funds are the ones that are awarded HOPE VI Grants (Bagert 2002). As The QHWR Act of 1998 states:

In selecting projects to receive redevelopment grants, the Secretary shall make such selection on the basis of the extent of non-Federal public and private financial or other contributions that reduce the amount of assistance necessary...(Sec 17 (5)(A) rental rehabilitation and development grants, pg 136).

Under the mixed-finance approach of HOPE VI, PHAs are able to enter into “joint ventures, partnerships, or other business arrangements with respect to the administration of the programs of the public housing agency” (QHRW Act 1998;US Pub. L. 105-276, 112 Stat. 2518 Sec 13 p 109). Private developers agree to develop a certain percentage of low-income and public housing units on the original site in order to be eligible for those tax credits. Under HOPE VI Grant regulations, once the private developers present a plan that meets the low-income and

public housing unit quota and receive the tax credits, they can move those units off site (Bagert 2002).

The last point of the theme of Market Forces at Work is how this newly created market become deregulated. Deregulation here is meant to imply the incredible flexibility inherent in the HOPE VI policy. As an example of the flexibility, I will now explore the definition of “severely distressed” that The QHWR Act uses. The flexible, or deregulated nature of this definition is important as it marks the beginning of the deregulation of the new market that has been created in the redevelopment of severely distressed public housing.

- (2) Severely Distressed Public Housing – The term “severely distressed public housing” means a public housing project (or building in a project) –
- (A) That – (i) Requires major redesign, reconstruction or redevelopment, or partial or total demolition to correct serious deficiencies in the original design (including inappropriately *high population density*), deferred maintenance, physical deterioration or obsolescence of major systems and other deficiencies in the physical plant of the project;
- (ii) Is a significant contributing factor to the physical decline of and disinvestment by public and private entities in the surrounding neighborhood;
- (iii)(I) Is occupied *predominately by families who are very low-income families with children, are unemployed, and dependent on various forms of public assistance*;(II) Has a high rate of vandalism and *criminal activity* (including drug-related criminal activity) in comparison to other housing in the area (QHRW Act 1998;United States Public 105-276, 112 Stat. 2518; Sec 24(2)).

Item (ii) takes the deracialized history of neglect and disinvestment one step further by positioning the language in such a way that the surrounding neighborhood need not be an “undesirable location” that lacks all the private and public sector services as was the case in the Commission’s definition. Here, The QHWR Act of 1998 reverses the racialized history of site selection and institutional abandonments by stating that a development can be considered “severely distressed” if the development is a significant contributing factor to the physical decline of and disinvestment by public and private entities in the surrounding neighborhood; not

the other way around. This effectively opens up the market for competition by land developers trying to realize the potential of investing in a mixed-income development. The market is opened up for competition and investments by the private sector when The QHWR Act of 1998 mandates that:

Consistent with the objectives of this title [QHWR Act], to vest in public housing agencies that perform well, the maximum amount of responsibility and flexibility in program administration (QHRW Act 1998;United States Public 105-276, 112 Stat. 2518; Section 2(1)).

Throughout the Final Report, the Commission repeatedly listed the micromanagement PHAs by HUD as a contributing factor to distress. With this clause in the QHWR Act of 1998, PHAs were allowed to manage their revitalization projects, as they deemed necessary. This included the leveraging of redevelopment funds and low-income tax credits for the investment of private finances for the redevelopment and operation of severely distressed public housing. In fact, the leveraging of private funds is also mandated as a requirement of receiving a HOPE VI grant:

The Secretary shall establish selection criteria for the awards of grants under this section and shall include such factors as: (G) the amount of funds and other resources to be leveraged by the grant QHRW Act 1998;United States Public 105-276, 112 Stat. 2518; Section 24 (3)(G)).

Thus “maximum amount of responsibility and flexibility” given to PHAs by the QHWR Act of 1998 does not always translate into successful redevelopments. In fact, the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) released a series of reports evaluating the HOPE VI program between November 2002 and November 2003. In the second report released by the GAO in May of 2003 titled “HUD’s Oversight of HOPE VI Needs to be More Consistent,” it lists among the failures of the program the lack of clear regulations:

The HOPE VI program, as it is currently set up, does not have a clear and consistent system for determining if grantees are not in compliance with grant

requirements, nor does it offer clear incentives for grantees to change behavior or correct undesirable conditions (GAO-03-555 2003, pg 34).

Given the ease with which a PHA can now claim one of its developments to be severely distressed, the more difficult part of being awarded a HOPE VI grant is to show that the PHA can leverage outside, private funds.

A final example of the deregulation of the new market in the redevelopment of severely distressed public housing happens with the PHAs ability to change their public housing agency plan once it has been approved. In the section 5, which covers the required Public Housing Agency Plan, The QHWR Act of 1998 states:

Amendments and Modifications to Plans – nothing in this section shall preclude a public housing agency, after submitting a plan to the Secretary in accordance with this section, from amending or modifying any policy, rule, regulation, or plan of the public housing agency, except that a significant amendment or modification may not (A) be adopted other than at a duly called meeting of the board of directors (or similar governing body) of the public housing agency that is open to the public (Sec 5A (g)(1) p 32).

This allows for the PHAs to change their public housing agency plans once the Secretary of HUD has approved them so long as they give public notice and hold a public meeting.

Once the original plan is changed and these units are moved off site, they are now longer funded under the HOPE VI Revitalization Grant, but instead are required to find funding from other, outside sources. The private developers receive a large public subsidy to then develop fewer than the originally promised low-income and public housing units and more market rate units. The public sector has just subsidized the development of private, market rate units (Bagert 2002).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Conclusion

This thesis examined the racial formation perspective as it operates under neoliberalism and how it uses colorblindness to accomplish its racial project of HOPE VI. If we revisit the definition of a racial project by Omi and Winant (1994):

A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines (pg 56).

The racial project of HOPE VI is an explanation of racial dynamics as it uses colorblind frames to remove the impact of the history of racialized housing in this country and paints the residents of severely distressed public housing as living in a culture of poverty. HOPE VI is able to manipulate the situation so that spatial, economical, and cultural solutions are offered as a substitution for addressing the actual structural forces that have led to this population being distressed. HOPE VI is a successful effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along racial lines as it removes families of color from being allowed back into the newly redeveloped public housing developments through its economic and spatial solutions to their distress. By allowing all of these families of color back into the developments, poverty would be reconcentrated and according to HOPE VI policy logic, the distressed residents would not assimilate to mainstream, middle-class, and white culture.

I also described the history of housing in the United States and how that history has a deeply racialized nature, regardless of the fact that it is being disregarded through the colorblind ideology. Through the use of colorblindness, race is stripped of its political and social power, leaving the residents of color of severely distressed public housing to be placed in a cycle of removal and marginalization. The residents of the developments that HOPE VI is aimed at

redeveloping are largely low-income people of color; once the process of redevelopment has begun they will find themselves either moved to another development on its way to being designated as severely distressed, or on the open market with a housing voucher (Popkin et al 2002; Buron et al 2002). I have shown how the owners of tenant-based assisted housing have the right to skip over families who rely on public assistance, leaving the lowest-income residents of color to fend for themselves.

My first research question was: How is HOPE VI a mechanism of the racial formation process? This question was answered through the promulgation of the first emergent theme of the Perpetuation of Racial Inequality. I delineated the means by which HOPE VI lends itself to the larger racial formation process when I explored the theme of the Perpetuation of Racial Inequality. In that theme, I examined how HOPE VI presupposes that the current housing structure is free from the racist constraints of the past housing structure that created the current situation of distress. By operating under this false assumption, HOPE VI is a mechanism of the larger racial formation process as it builds off of previous racial projects. HOPE VI functions as a racial project as it uses colorblind discourse to make the ideological link between the structures of public housing, and the housing structure at large to the conception of race and racism as something society has moved beyond. HOPE VI also represents people of color as living in a culture of poverty and connects that representation to a housing structure that does not need to address any structural discriminatory issues, but rather only needs to address these people of color's lack of cultural assimilation.

My second research question was: how does HOPE VI function as a neoliberal racial project? I addressed this question through the examination of my second emergent theme Market Forces at Work. Following the neoliberal prescription of market deregulation, the new market

that has been created in public housing was effectively deregulated through HOPE VI policy. All the focus is placed on the benefits of market competition, i.e. wealth generation, and not on the well being of the residents that HOPE VI purports to help. In fact, the income mix that The Final Report recommends and The QHWR Act of 1998 codifies is directly linked to the generation of wealth, as these new higher income residents are able to pay more in rent.

Through the use of market forces, the historical discrimination that people of color faced in the housing structure is recycled and reenacted under different guises. Operating from a neoliberal colorblind perspective, HOPE VI policy denies that there is a racialized nature to the current (and historic) housing structure. By denying the racialized nature of the housing structure, focusing more on the generation of wealth for private investors rather than resident well being, HOPE VI is functioning as a neoliberal racial project to recycle racial discrimination. As HOPE VI is only aimed at redeveloping the housing authority owned developments, which Bickford and Massey (1991) have shown are comprised largely of poor people of color, HOPE VI functions as a neoliberal racial project to perpetuate racial discrimination under the guise of the deconcentration of poverty.

With the stringency of the new occupation requirements for the new mixed-income developments that are to replace the severely distressed developments, most of the original residents – most of whom are people of color – will not be allowed back (Popkin et al 2002; Buron et al 2002). This was the case in the HOPE VI redevelopment of the St. Thomas Public Housing Development in New Orleans, Louisiana. Brod Bagert wrote his Masters Dissertation for the London School of Economic on St. Thomas: “HOPE VI and St. Thomas: Smoke, Mirrors and Urban Mercantilism.” Examining the HOPE VI redevelopment of the St. Thomas housing project here in New Orleans, Louisiana, Bagert (2002) found that the redeveloped St. Thomas

would only have “78 units that rent at the income levels within the reach of the 806 former St. Thomas residents” (p 2).

The original HOPE VI grant required the “development of 563 units of public and low-income housing on the St. Thomas site, 292 of which would be public housing and 271 of which would be affordable units and subsidized for-sale homes” (Bagert 2002, pg 1). Bagert (2002) charges the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) with distorting the actual number of public and low-income housing that were to be built on the actual site of St. Thomas in order to make the redevelopment eligible for the low-income housing tax credits. As I mentioned earlier, once these public and low-income units are moved off site, they are no longer covered by the original grant (Bagert 2002). The PHA – which now includes the private developers – must leverage additional funds to develop these units. In addition to this large public subsidy for the construction of private, market rate units, Bagert (2002) notes that:

HRI [Historic Restoration, Inc.] has convinced the City of New Orleans to allocate a further public subsidy of \$20 million to the redevelopment in the form of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) on the sales tax of Wal-Mart Supercenter to be built on land adjacent to the residential site. Final approval is still pending, but if it is improved, the cost to the public sector per low-income unit will be exorbitant (pg 3).

This is one example from one HOPE VI redeveloped site, but I suspect that further examination of other HOPE VI sites will produce the same conclusions. The reason for this is due to the nature of HOPE VI policy. Being a neoliberal racial project, HOPE VI is more focused on generating wealth than on the well being of the residents who reside in the severely distressed public housing. Given the vagueness of the definition of severely distressed public housing, it will not be long before the residents who are moved from developments undergoing HOPE VI

revitalization to other public housing developments will find the process starting over in their new host developments.

Through the racial project of HOPE VI, the deconcentration of poverty is equated with the deconcentration of color. Lower-income people of color are removed from their homes and scattered, while higher income families are brought in to reap the rewards of the revitalization of the severely distressed housing development and neighborhood. The racial project of HOPE VI, through the use of colorblind discourse, attempts to focus on class as the catalyst to distress, as well as the solution to the problem. Colorblindness produces negative impacts against low-income people of color in the name of poverty deconcentration and revitalization. By not addressing the true racialized causes of the distress in the developments, neighborhoods, and most importantly, the residents themselves, the racial project of HOPE VI has contributed to the inequality produced by the current generations racial formation.

Significance of Study

Even with the limitations I outlined in my methods chapter, this study contributes to the larger knowledge about the racial formation perspective, neoliberalism, colorblindness, and the current public housing policy in the United States. I have shown the analytical consequences of taking a colorblind position in the case of public housing redevelopment. This study can be used to further research on this topic as it lays the historical and theoretical groundwork. Whereas there are other studies that focus on the inequality perpetuated by HOPE VI (Popkin et al 2002, Buron et al 2002, Popkin et al 2004(a)(b)), no other study to my knowledge approaches the subject matter from a racial formation perspective. By approaching the subject from a racial formation perspective, I have shown how the dynamic concept of race not only changes over time, but how each manifestation is connected to the social structure.

Future Directions

Future research on this subject matter could be designed to include qualitative and/or quantitative data from actual sites undergoing HOPE VI redevelopments. By using actual site data, my operating assumption that HOPE VI is a racial project could be empirically tested through the data. With the empirical limitations of this thesis, my operating assumption that HOPE VI is a functioning racial project that reproduces racial inequality rather than reduces it can best be tested by future research. The type of future research that would best test this operating assumption would be research that first collects data from all the original residents in a housing development undergoing HOPE VI redevelopment. In both the “HOPE VI Baseline Report” and “HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study” data was collected on original residents both before they were relocated, and through the redevelopment process. This data was collected across 13 different sites at different times from different cohorts during the redevelopment process instead of following a resident cohort from one or more particular sites through the entire redevelopment process in the same time frame (Popkin et al 2002; Buron et al 2002).

Data that should be collected includes data such as age, sex, race, income level, educational attainment, civil and criminal penal records, and marital status of the residents before relocation. Data similar to what was collected in the “HOPE VI Baseline Report.” After data has been collected, future research could track the residents through the redevelopment process and examine the following:

1. Which residents are given housing choice vouchers for use in the open market compared to the residents sent to live in other housing developments? Comparing the social characteristics of the residents who were given housing vouchers compared to the residents sent to live in other public housing developments could give valuable insight as to how HOPE VI functions as a racial

project. The insight into how HOPE VI functions as a racial project would be seen as HOPE VI is connecting the representation of race as people of color belonging to this culture of poverty. If more low- and very low-income residents are sent to live in other public housing developments, then those new host developments could easily become severely distressed and the process of redevelopment begins again. If more low- and very low-income residents are sent to the open housing market with vouchers, then they are likely to be skipped over, as they are reliant of forms of public assistance (Popkin et al 2002).

2. Of the residents sent out on the open market with vouchers: residents with which types of social characteristics find housing the quickest? Which residents stay in the same housing the longest? Which residents move around the most, or are rejected ("skipped over") the most? By examining the social characteristics of residents sent out on the open market with housing vouchers who find housing the quickest, a better sense of the racialized nature of the housing structure could be ascertained. If residents who find housing the quickest have higher incomes (i.e. are not reliant on public assistance for income) then an examination of the interactive effects of the racialized employment and housing market could better explain why residents of color with lower incomes or reliance on public assistance are skipped over. By looking into the social characteristics of residents who remain in the same housing for extended periods of time would offer a look into the interactive effects of the criminal justice system, racialized employment and housing market. I say this because I assume that residents of color who bounce around from home to home are ones who have low- or very low-incomes, are reliant upon various forms of public assistance, and have a criminal record. The over-policing of people of color has led to people of color having criminal records compared to white people who do not experience racial

profiling even though The Final Report mentions that police protection is missing from severely distressed public housing (Brunson and Miller 2006).

Another avenue for future research, and one that would test the success or failure of HOPE VI would be to look at one development that has been declared severely distressed, but has not yet relocated residents or begun the redevelopment process. Also in this study would be an examination of residents who are displaced during a HOPE VI redevelopment in another housing development. By examining the one group of residents still residing in the distressed development to the other group of residents being displaced by the HOPE VI redevelopment process, resident well being could be tested. Measures of well being could include the educational attainment of the children of families from both groups, employment rates of working age household members, and rates of poverty and crime in any new neighborhoods the displaced residents are moved too.

Future research could also be expanded to focus on different groups of color specifically to document the process of racial formation that is specific to their particular races. In this study, I only focused on African Americans, and even here I equated their story to the story of all people of color. Future research could gather hard data from specific cites on African American families residing in public housing undergoing HOPE VI redevelopment to offer a more complete and accurate account of their experiences. Another avenue future research could explore would be to document the process from start to finish for different groups of color to attempt to gain more precise knowledge as to what happens before, during, and after redevelopment. No previous study has thus far been able to produce such complete results and data.

“The HOPE VI Baseline Report” and “HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study” have provided the most complete data collection and results that I have seen, but as I have already noted these two reports draw data from thirteen different sites and one thousand and eighteen different residents. These data and reports are tremendously valuable in the information that they provide, but following residents both before relocation and after the redevelopment process has begun would offer a more accurate picture of what the residents of severely distressed public housing undergo during redevelopment.

Policy Recommendations

HOPE VI was designed to alleviate the concentration of poverty in severely distressed public housing. I have examined my operating assumption that HOPE VI functions as a racial project that reproduces rather than reduces racial inequality. For HOPE VI to address its reproduction of racial inequality, I offer the following policy recommendations:

1. Revoke legislation that allows for PHAs to change their approved HOPE VI redevelopment plans.

As it stands now, HOPE VI policy (Section 5A: “Public Housing Agency Plans” in the QHWR Act of 1998) allows for PHAs to change their redevelopment plans after the Secretary of HUD has approved them so long as they give proper notice, call a meeting of the board of directors of the housing authority, and hold a public meeting. This allows for the “bait and switch” methods that were seen in the St. Thomas redevelopment (Bagert 2002). It should not be permitted to move the low- and very low-income housing units off site, especially since the private developers are still able to retain the Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. By revoking this section of the legislation, HOPE VI could move a step closer to having more transparency in the process of redevelopment.

2. Revoke legislation that allows for owners of tenant-assisted housing to “skip” over families who rely on public assistance.

The QHWR Act of 1998 contains legislation that allows for the owner of tenant-assisted housing to skip over families who's main source of income is public assistance. This does not take into account the interactive effects of the racialized employment and housing markets. By revoking this part of the legislation HOPE VI policy could begin to account for the racialized nature of the employment and housing market, and start correcting the deleterious effects of the interaction of the two.

3. Account for racism in the redevelopment process

By far the biggest policy recommendation, HOPE VI needs to account for the racialized nature of the social structure in the redevelopment process. In order for HOPE VI to account for the racialized nature of the housing structure, it would first have to conduct studies that take into account the race of the residents and account for the racialized history and current racist state of housing in the United States. By first researching from a perspective that takes into account the race of the residents and the racialized history of the United States, HOPE VI can change its policy to account for racism in the housing market. Once studies such as the ones I suggested in the Future Directions section of this chapter are conducted, HOPE VI can be empirically shown to be a functioning racial project and steps can be taken to correct that. Steps such as: changing the definition of “severely distressed” so that it does not include single, female-headed families as evident of distress, making the definition more stringent so that shipping more low- and very low-income residents from one site to another does not automatically condemn the new host development to severely distressed status, removing the deconcentration of poverty requirement for all redeveloped sites as it has a negative impact on the original residents of color from returning to the newly redeveloped sites. If HOPE VI truly wants to address the well-being of the resident of severely distressed public housing, these are a few of the policy changes politicians can enact to see that the residents are not prone to the racism inherent in the housing structure.

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