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Opposing Viewpoints for Addressing Public Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans

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Opposing Viewpoints for Addressing Public Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans

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 Science
In
Urban Studies
Housing and Community Development

by

Harry Richard Yelton, III

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Abstract

The decision to close and never reopen four public housing projects in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina was a highly contentious issue for people throughout the city and even the nation. This thesis investigates the tensions between those who supported and opposed public housing demolition by highlighting the work and history of two people on either side of the debate, Richard Baron and Bill Quigley. This study of contemporary housing policy draws on the history of public housing in America, and refers to Stacy Seicshnaydre's assertion that public housing policy has been a consistent struggle between "Taking the Housing Now" and "Redevelopment as Blight Removal." This research posits that while this tension has been present, the current debate in New Orleans is more nuanced. In the end, the public housing redevelopment in New Orleans reflects a lack of commitment at the federal level to adequately house low-income people.

Keywords: public housing, HOPE VI, New Orleans, Bill Quigley, Richard Baron

1. Introduction

The decision to close and never reopen four public housing projects in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina was a highly contentious issue for people throughout the city and even the nation. The “Big Four,” as they were referred to, contained about 4,500 public units and experienced varying levels of damage due to Katrina and its resultant flooding. When the federal government, in conjunction with city leaders, announced that the Big Four would be replaced by mixed-income communities, New Orleans residents reached a wide range of conclusions about how this change in policy would affect the city, the public housing neighborhoods, and the poor. Many people, like all members of the New Orleans City Council, Mayor Ray Nagin, and some former public housing tenants, framed the redevelopment as a unique opportunity for the city to transform rundown projects into thriving neighborhoods. But not everyone in the city agreed with such hopeful assessments. Civil rights activists, residents of the closed buildings, and others sought to stop the public housing demolition, which they saw as a conscious effort to rid the Post-Katrina city of its poor.

One astute analysis of this tension was delivered by Stacy E. Seicshnaydre (2007), a professor of law and long-time resident of New Orleans. She argues that the dispute over public housing redevelopment in New Orleans is representative of a larger historical argument about how to proceed with housing the poor in the United States. Seicshnaydre asserts that arguments in New Orleans and throughout the history of public housing policy have created a false dichotomy between two main camps: Get the Segregated Housing Now vs. Redevelopment as Blight Removal. The Housing Now perspective maintains that, in the face of overwhelming national opposition to public housing, the best approach to secure housing for the poor is to hold on to the small amount of public housing that already exists, despite its condition. By contrast,

the Blight Removal perspective is acutely cognizant of the failings of public housing, and views its demolition as an opportunity to rid the neighborhood of blight and become economically viable. Neither position, she suggests, is capable of creating the best ends for the low-income residents of public housing.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the redevelopment of New Orleans public housing through the lens of this false dichotomy. In so doing, there are three major objectives of this thesis: to expand upon the concept of the false dichotomy by tracing the history of federal public housing policy and exploring its results; to use the situation in New Orleans to understand why the tension present in the false dichotomy exists in public housing redevelopment throughout the country; and to explore what different parties are really arguing about when they take up a position of either “Get the Housing Now” or “Redevelopment as Blight Removal.”

The thesis will be divided into four sections, each dealing with the following aspects of the research. Section 2 will focus on defining the false dichotomy. Federal housing policy has a long history of inadequately prioritizing public housing, in essence relegating its position to a distant second to the private market. Indeed, roots of the false dichotomy are evident in the very first federal public housing legislation, the Wagner Act of 1937. In the seven decades of public housing’s existence, the false dichotomy has been present time and again, sometimes creating new problems, sometimes being used to address those problems once again inadequately. This section will specifically address the HOPE VI program and discuss how it is both a response to and continuation of the false dichotomy.

Section 3 will involve a history of public housing in New Orleans, tracing its evolution within the context of changes in federal policy. This section will give an account of how the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) had been shifting direction from conventional

public housing to mixed-income development in the decade preceding Hurricane Katrina. The effect that the hurricane had on public housing policy, it will be noted in this section, was essentially one of speeding up the process rather than a philosophical shift. An account of how the decision was made to raze the Big Four will also be provided.

In section 4, the focus will shift to an examination of how the false dichotomy played out in the decision to demolish the Big Four. In order to achieve this, it will focus on two well-respected leaders who fall on opposite sides of the false dichotomy: public interest attorney Bill Quigley and developer Richard Baron. This section will begin with a discussion of methodology. It will describe the nature of the research, which falls into the multiple-case study approach. The reason for this classification is that the research develops a story and a history of both men in order to provide a deeper exploration into their positions on redevelopment. Bill Quigley has strongly opposed public housing's demolition since the week it became official, while Richard Baron has been a foundational part of the federal HOPE VI program since its inception and has a contract to redevelop one of the Big Four. At the same time, both men are widely recognized for their efforts to battle poverty and inequity, and both have devoted their professional lives to this end. The qualitative study aims to apply the motives of two figures active in the debate to Seicshnaydre's false dichotomy, and thereby measure the accuracy of the construct and examine the intentions, beliefs and historical basis for both positions.

The final section will analyze how well the roles Quigley and Baron played fit into the false dichotomy paradigm. The results discussed herein suggest that the two men have more in common fundamentally than might be initially expected. They both share similar normative visions of neighborhoods where low-income tenants have opportunities and adequate housing that current public housing does not afford them. In fact, their difference is a function of

resource scarcity and two competing views of an optimal net benefit. Bill Quigley views the optimal net benefit to be keeping all tenants in housing first, making gains second. On the contrary, Richard Baron calculates a more utilitarian optimum net benefit, and prioritizes an effective redevelopment of the neighborhood over the ability for all former tenants to return. In conclusion, a slightly altered version of the false dichotomy is proposed: Get the Segregated/Inadequate Housing First vs. Build the Community First.

2. Defining the False Dichotomy

In response to the decisions made by the federal and local governments to redevelop public housing in New Orleans, Stacy E. Seicshnaydre, a professor of law and long-time advocate for just housing policy in the city, urged policymakers not to view their options through the myopic lens of what she termed the “false dichotomy” (Seicshnaydre, 2007a, 3-6, 2007b, 1266-1267). Her false dichotomy refers to the intentional limiting of options for how to rebuild the damaged public housing stock in New Orleans into two main positions: “Get the Segregated Housing Now” vs. “Redevelopment as Blight Removal.” Seicshnaydre points out that while the situation in New Orleans is the product of unique circumstances, public officials have faced limited alternatives throughout the history of public housing in the U.S., resulting in pervasive segregation for blacks and inadequate living conditions for the poor. This section of the thesis will expand upon Seicshnaydre’s definition of the false dichotomy, and illustrate how the entire history of public housing in America has been played out through the context of the false dichotomy.

The history of public housing policy in America is filled with compromises by housing advocates between what they have hoped to secure for the poor and what has been politically feasible. American cities have experienced extreme housing shortages throughout the last hundred years as they have continued to grow and attract new citizens (Sugrue, 1996, Hirsch, 1983, 27). This has often resulted in desperate housing accommodations, marked by overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions. In response, many housing advocates have pushed for improvement, but they have never been able to make housing policy for the poor a federal priority, and have often had to settle for small gains. This willingness to sacrifice more comprehensive long-term solutions for immediate housing assistance will be discussed in greater

detail through this section of the thesis, and it provides a historical backdrop for the “Get The Housing Now” approach.

On the other side of the dichotomy lies a decades-old remedy for ameliorating blight, substandard housing and poverty in America’s cities. This view, dubbed “Redevelopment as Blight Removal,” has historically seen the solution to overcrowded, dirty and unsafe ghettos and their resulting social ills to be wide scale demolition and redevelopment. Political leaders and reformers alike have long attributed unsavory personal behavior to the overcrowded and dirty living conditions of the urban poor. The process of breaking up those slums and allowing them to be redeveloped into more aesthetically pleasing structures has been played out numerous times over the last century.

Entrenchment of the False Dichotomy

In her book *Modern Housing for America*, Gail Radford (1996) points to compromise in the very beginnings of public housing legislation. The U.S. Congress passed the Wagner Public Housing Act in 1937, which created the initial infrastructure for a comprehensive public housing program to be funded by the federal government. The government had stepped in to alleviate housing congestion before, most notably during a severe shortage for war workers in World War I and through Public Works Administration allocations earlier in the 1930’s, but it was not until the Wagner Act that the federal government committed itself to a long-term solution. Radford asserts, however, that both the circumstances leading to this legislation and initial constraints placed upon it limited public housing’s effectiveness from the its very inception. The Wagner Act was proposed during the Great Depression, a period of unparalleled housing woes for the nation. In 1934 alone, housing was being built at one-tenth the level it had been just a decade

before, and nearly one half of mortgages were technically in default (Radford, 1996, 88). The climate in the federal government was one of necessary action. In other words, the creation of public housing in America was less a radical shift in thinking about housing than a pragmatic, even inevitable, response to crisis.

The false dichotomy can be traced back all the way to the Wagner Act. This federal legislation, passed in 1937, marked the beginning of federally subsidized public housing in the United States. The Act established a federal public housing agency (later referred to as authority), which would oversee and allocate financial resources to local housing authorities. Local housing authorities, in turn, were responsible for creating housing developments in their city or community and were ultimately accountable to the federal agency (Hoffman, 2000, 302). Despite the immensity of the housing crisis during the Great Depression, many senators were reluctant to institutionalize a public form of housing. They saw it as a threat to the private housing markets and feared that it would cultivate dependency. These congress people forced its framers to make many important concessions. One such concession was the “equivalent elimination” clause, which required that public housing be built in areas where slum conditions and blight were prevalent. The equivalent elimination clause impacted public housing efficacy in three main ways:

1. It assured developers in the private market that choice parcels of land would not have any competition from public housing
2. It required that public housing construction also include the cost of razing existing buildings
3. The net gain of affordable housing units through public housing would be negligible because its construction often simply replaced units that they had demolished.

Another amendment in the bill capped spending per unit to a number so small as to necessitate housing which was “unnecessarily barracks-like and monotonous” (188-191). This amendment was brought about because national lobbies such as the National Association of Real Estate Board (NAREB) and Lumber Dealers Association opposed the legislation out of concern that federally subsidized housing would impinge upon their market and profitability. Chipping away at specific points in the legislation, these groups succeeded in severely undercutting several goals of the legislation’s formulators. Together, the concessions made in the very first public housing legislation include both elements of the false dichotomy.

There were two clear camps in regard to the Wagner Act. The first was the “Blight Removal” position. The Wagner Act clearly identified the creation of public housing as an opportunity to clear slums, instead of an opportunity to significantly increase the number of housing units available for poor and working-class Americans. Public housing was placed in a clearly ancillary position to the private market through the Wagner Act, and created the beginning for what Radford termed, “The Two Tiers of U.S. Housing Policy” (191).

Meanwhile, the “Housing Now” position was also present in the passage of the Wagner Act. Radford discusses the goals of Catherine Bauer, Lewis Mumford and other “Housers” who saw the Act as an opportunity to institutionalize public or “social” housing in ways similar to what was being done in Europe. They foresaw sweeping changes in terms of public investment in housing and a lessening reliance on the private market for such highly speculative securities. However, due to the concessions that had to be made in order to get the Wagner Act passed, the “Housers” settled for what was politically feasible; an underfunded and secondary provision of housing for working class and poor Americans. One proponent for public housing during that period, Charles Abrams, said about the legislation: “In retrospect, I believe the compromises that

were made in the 1937 debate on the public housing measure lastingly impaired it and will ultimately contribute to its demise” (190).

While Radford (1996) describes the foundations for the false dichotomy, several other historians have traced how those underpinnings have shaped the evolution of public housing policy. Roger Biles (2000) points out that slum clearance was a fundamental aspect of housing policy in the post-World War II era. During this period of Urban Renewal, the revitalization of downtown areas became a national focus, with federal priority given to projects such as office buildings, parking garages, and luxury apartments instead of programs such as public housing (Biles, 2000, 143-147). Moreover, the specific role and physical presence of public housing changed dramatically during this period. Two pieces of legislation ensured that the false dichotomy would become the entrenched role for public housing.

The Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 effectively worked in tandem to turn public housing into repositories for the poor (Biles, 2000, 143-147; Hirsch, 2000, 159). They allocated large amounts of money to cities in order to fund projects designed to revitalize their local economies, but in so doing they required that localities “launch a massive assault on slums and blight in America’s cities” (Biles, 2000, 146; Gotham, 2001, 297). The result of this assault led to a much more serious housing crisis for those people who lived in what were referred to by city leaders as blighted neighborhoods. In cities throughout America, poor and working class neighborhoods were wiped out to make way for new grandiose city projects, and many of those former residents were left homeless (Sugrue, 1996, 50-51). Federal and local leaders aimed to ameliorate this pervasive housing shortage by creating enormous high-rise complexes designed to fit as many people as possible into very small plots of land (Venkatesh, 2000, 7-8).

Urban Renewal policy solidified public housing's false dichotomy by, once again, legally linking it to blight removal. This time, however, the ramifications for the poor, increasingly black, people who moved into the high-rise projects were worse than before. The quality of these units was very low, while the concentration of residents was very high. In fact, public housing was less an effort to adequately house poor Americans than it was a reflexive policy which became necessary in the face of blight removal. In keeping with public housing's relative unimportance during this period, city and federal officials allocated a minimal budget to create it (Biles, 2000, 148). Units were designed with an unprecedented level of frugality, and parsimonious housing authorities sacrificed conveniences such as closets, or even elevators that stop at every floor (von Hoffman, 2000b, 195). In addition to the low building standards, public housing during the period of urban renewal became increasingly segregated, a phenomenon which was clearly not the product of chance but intention (Fuerst, 2005; Hirsch, 1983). This is because the vast majority of neighborhoods torn down during Urban Renewal were black communities, and these people often could only find refuge in the new high-rise public housing (Sugrue, 1996; Venkatesh, 2000).¹ The families who moved into public housing during this period did not have a voice in the future of their community. They were forced to either "Take the Segregated/Inadequate Housing Now" or not. In the end, hundreds of thousands of families chose to take the housing offered to them, despite its substandard and often insulting condition.

The history of public housing in the United States is certainly more complex and in-depth than has been presented above, but the Wagner Act of 1937 and the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 were seminal pieces of legislation for public housing, and they have done much to shape its

¹ An introduction to the history of housing restrictions faced by African Americans can be found in Arnold Hirsch's *Making of the Second Ghetto*. Hirsch's account of intentional segregation focuses on practices in Chicago from 1940-1960, and is discussed in more detail in this section of the thesis. Further descriptions of racial covenants, "redlining practices," and other intentional segregation can be found in Thomas Sugrue's history of Twentieth Century Detroit. His book is *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (1996).

priority, influence, funding, and – eventually – its efficacy. These laws and the way they were implemented led Catherine Bauer, author of *Modern Housing* to conclude in 1958 that “after more than two decades, [public housing] still drags along in a kind of limbo, continually controversial, not dead but never more than half alive” (Bauer, 1957; quoted in Biles, 2000, 147). Clearly, public housing in the United States never evolved into the supported and integrated system that she and other housing advocates envisioned. They had hoped for public housing which would present a reasonable alternative to market-rate housing for those people who could not afford high rents. They had hoped for a similar proportion of the housing stock to be subsidized in the U.S. as was subsidized in other European countries. Finally, they hoped that the public housing in the U.S. would be high quality and attractive places worthy of pride. Instead, the public investment for this housing was paltry, and Bauer lamented that, “life in the usual public housing projects is just not the way most American families want to live” (Bauer, 1957; Biles, 2000, 147).

These are the roots of the false dichotomy. Policy makers, beginning with those who framed public housing’s creation, have always been leery of a federally subsidized housing program. This ambivalence has led them to consistently pass legislation designed to limit the public housing program from gaining too prominent a role in the marketplace. In so doing, they have relegated public housing’s position to that of slum clearance or substandard/segregated living. So absolutely has this false dichotomy been intertwined with public housing policy that it has become difficult to see subsidized housing being successful. But there have been options for public housing other than the policy decisions which the U.S. has pursued. Compared to other European Countries, the percentage of public housing in the United States is incredibly small (Radford, 1996, 200). Public housing in America could have avoided becoming repositories for

the poor if policy makers made it a priority (Fuerst, 2000). Original proponents of public housing knew that in order for it to work, the program could not afford the stigma of becoming housing for only the very poor (von Hoffman, 2000, 302). If a larger percentage of the American populous was able to enroll in the public housing program, it is likely that country would be more supportive of public housing. Instead, federal legislators created and fostered this negative stigma by continually undercutting and isolating only the poorest Americans.

Responding to the Effects of the False Dichotomy

The second half of the Twentieth Century was not a good period for these public housing complexes. A slow but obvious deterioration occurred in both the quality newly constructed public housing and conditions of existing complexes throughout the country. So too did the experience and potential for upward mobility of public housing residents continue to gradually worsen through this period. With the Housing Now vs. Blight Removal dichotomy firmly in place, inner-city public housing complexes were home to the most poor, desperate, vulnerable and almost entirely black people as residents (Bickford and Massey, 1991, 1017-1019).² This brought a level of isolation never before seen in America's cities. It was in reference to this social isolation and its effects that scholars and policymakers began to study the "concentration of poverty," and methods for alleviating it.

² During this period, public housing complexes became housing for the poorest residents for a couple reasons. One reason is a clause in Housing Act of 1954 which relaxed standards for people who were displaced from Slum Clearance to get into public housing. Standards and strict behavior policies for public housing residents did exist in units prior to that legislation, but many more people were allowed to enter public housing without the same level of rules following 1954. Another factor that ensured that public housing would serve only the very poorest citizens was legislation putting an income-ceiling on residents. Many people who were in the working class, but employed found themselves ineligible for public housing due to income restrictions. For further reading on this subject, read Bickford and Massey (1991) and von Hoffman (2000).

In 1983, historian Aronld R. Hirsch offered a new way of looking at black urban poverty in America. His book, *Making the Second Ghetto* examined the history of housing in Chicago and asserted that the segregation which developed in the Mid-Twentieth Century was different than that which occurred earlier in the century. Enclaves of poor blacks sprung up in American cities from 1890-1930 because of the enormous migration of southern blacks in search of work. These “first ghettos” were the product of both segregation and the cost of land, and they resulted in almost completely isolating the burgeoning black population (Hirsch, 1983, 2-3). But Hirsch focused on the development of what he called the Second Ghetto, which he attributed to the period between 1940-1960. During this time, the isolation that kept blacks in compartmentalized parts of the city relied heavily on state intervention. Federal and local laws buttressed the intention of many whites to segregate themselves from blacks through de jure definitions and containment of urban ghettos (30-36). Hirsch suggested that the Second Ghetto was more effective at isolating poor blacks than it otherwise could have been because it was supported through public policy. In Hirsch’s words: “The ghetto was to be reinforced with taxpayers’ dollars and shored up with the power of the state” (1983, 10).

A new definition of urban poverty in America can be traced by to the seminal work *The Truly Disadvantaged* by William Julius Wilson (1987). His book addresses the phenomenon of inner city isolation through the lens of a restructuring American economy away from the manufacturing base which had attracted so many newcomers to cities throughout the Twentieth Century. He addressed the prevalence of welfare, teen pregnancy, crime and female-headed households in the ghettos and others began to account for them as results of a “spatial mismatch.” The spatial mismatch suggests that as job opportunities became more abundant in suburban areas in order to take advantage of lower costs and a higher skill-base, inner city

neighborhoods found themselves unable to attract high-skill and high-wage employment (Wilson, 1987; Joseph et al, 2007, 374). According to this theory, the declining economies of poor urban neighborhoods and its resultant lack of opportunity were some of the most important isolating forces. Christopher Jencks' comment is representative of Wilson's view: "The history suggests to me that the idleness among young black men is largely attributable to the fact that we have stopped running the economy at full throttle" (Jencks, 1992, 125).

Alongside Wilson's thesis on urban poverty, and largely because of it, researchers began in the 1980's and 1990's to explore the relationship between entrenched poverty and other social forces. These studies aimed to better understand the "neighborhood effects" that poverty imposed upon poor inner city communities, but more specifically, they tried to determine the extent to which neighborhood poverty affects the life chance and potential for the poor. They set out to study relationships between the second ghettos and crime, teen pregnancy, school dropout rates, educational attainment, to name just a few factors (Small and Newman, 2002, 29-30).³ Most of these studies failed to clearly identify or fully explain a causal relationship, but the correlations made clear that "neighborhood *matters*" (Curley, 2005, 101). Through the myriad studies pointing to undeniable correlations between poor neighborhoods and social ills, the concept of concentrated poverty has been developed by social scientists as the foremost challenge facing poor inner city residents (Lewis and Sinha, 2007, 142-145).

The work of Wilson and those who added to it has served as a theoretical basis through which a larger scholarly discussion about concentrated poverty has commenced. And nowhere

³ For a more comprehensive introduction to the research done on neighborhood effects and their shaping of urban poverty theory, read "Theories of Urban Poverty and Implications for Housing Policy" by Alexandra Curley. A more comprehensive analysis of these studies can be found in "Urban Poverty After *The Truly Disadvantaged*: The Rediscovery of Family, the Neighborhood, and Culture," by Mario Louis Small and Katherine Newman.

in America's cities are the effects of concentrated poverty as overwhelming and trenchant as in urban public housing (Goering et al, 1997, 724-727; Joseph et al, 2007, 375). For reasons described earlier and solidified through the development of public housing's false dichotomy, public housing is the clearest known example of concentrated poverty. While extreme concentrated poverty tends to exist generally in central cities, it is most prevalent in urban public housing complexes, where unemployment rates are extremely high and where, often, generations of families continue to live (Joseph et al, 2007, 375). Because of this, public housing has often found itself the focal point of discourse on poverty concentration and solutions.

It is in this context of poverty concentration that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) explored new policy options for housing poor Americans. The broad body of research made clear not just the negative effects of concentrated poverty, but that federal government's very own policies over the decades were largely responsible for the worst of it in public housing (von Hoffman, 2000, 317-322; Joseph et al, 2007, 374). Therefore, HUD set out, beginning in the 1970's and continuing with more ubiquity today, to de-concentrate poverty in two main ways: by dispersing public housing tenants throughout a metropolitan area (referred to as dispersal strategies); and via mixed-income development (Popkin et al, 2000, 913).

Dispersal strategies constituted HUD's first attempt at addressing the deteriorating conditions and concentrated poverty. The first and most prevalent measure was called the Section 8 program. This system, established in 1974 and still widely used today, provides public housing residents with vouchers to rent apartments from the private market (Fischer, 2001). At this time of the program's creation, the country was experiencing its most severe housing recession since World War II, and Congress was searching for policies that would strengthen the private housing market (Treater and Kondrat, 2005, 74). HUD, therefore, established the Section

8 program, with dual goals of stimulating the private market and breaking cycles of entrenched poverty.

The dispersal approach gained momentum through a relatively small effort in Chicago known as the Gautreaux Program. This program was the product of a legal case that went to the Supreme Court, whereby the Court ruled that the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) was acting illegally by housing residents in a racially segregated environment. While this decision resulted in fewer meaningful changes in CHA practice than advocates hoped, it did succeed in creating a mobility program for 7,100 families to move out of segregated public housing and into predominantly white, middle and upper-income neighborhoods throughout metropolitan Chicago (Polikoff, 2006, ; Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum, 2000, 23-27, 66). This program, due to some of its positive results for participating families, became the template for more dispersal strategies, including HUD's Moving To Opportunity (MTO) pilot program. MTO began in 1994 in five cities, and randomly assigned some public housing residents to receive housing vouchers for areas in higher-income areas, and some residents to get regular Section 8 vouchers, and a final group to remain in public housing. Research to this point has suggested that those who received vouchers for higher-income neighborhoods have fared best (Fiens and Shroder, 2005, 1295; Katz et al, 2001, 648-651).

Most relevant to the discussion in this paper is HUD's use of mixed-income redevelopment, mostly through the HOPE VI program. HUD instituted HOPE VI in 1993 to deal with "severely distressed housing," but also with the express intent of de-concentrating the poor (Popkin et al, 2004, 14-16). The program facilitates this goal by allocating grants to local Housing Authorities so they can, in turn, hire private developers to demolish those public housing complexes which are in particularly deplorable condition. Through HOPE VI, instead

of rebuilding public housing on that property, the Authorities hire contractors to build a variety of different kinds of housing, including (in no set proportions) market-rate, luxury, low-income, and elderly units. By providing housing for people of “mixed-incomes” within the same neighborhood, HUD aims to revitalize these intensely poor areas and allow them to better attract monetary and social capital (Bagert, 2002, 12-13). By re-introducing middle-class families into the communities, creators of the mixed-income model hope to re-establish the economic base and social stability that had been lost (Popkin et al, 2004, 15-16).

While dispersal strategies and mixed-income development are two distinct programs, they are inter-connected. This is specifically because HOPE VI redevelopment necessitates a smaller number of low-income units on land where traditional public housing existed. Thus, the HOPE VI process inherently requires that a larger proportion of tenants be moved from the traditional complex, and it relies on Section 8 housing vouchers to re-house many of the former tenants.

The False Dichotomy Today: Poverty De-Concentration or Re-Concentration?

HUD’s current attempts to de-concentrate poverty are precisely what Seicshnaydre warned against when she pointed to the false dichotomy between “Blight Removal” and “Inadequate/Segregated Housing.” She points out that the effects of mixed-income development in the Twenty-First Century are likely to mimic those of Urban Renewal for most of America’s urban poor. Though HOPE VI’s agenda to de-concentrate poverty is quite dissimilar from Urban Renewal’s goal of redeveloping downtown central business districts, the methodologies employed in both situations are often similar (Keating, 2000, 386). In fact, public housing

legislation today is in many ways the same today as it has been throughout its history. The false dichotomy established in the development of public housing policy is evident in HOPE VI planning.

The “Blight Removal” element can be easily seen in HOPE VI vision. One of HUD’s main goals with the program is to redevelop “severely distressed public housing,” and create nicer, safer, better communities. This goal is laudable, but the effects of the redevelopment have led many to wonder who the intended recipients of these benefits are. Critics of HOPE VI point to its gentrifying effects and the fact that, often, more housing becomes available for middle and upper-income residents than for the poor people who had resided there before. In fact, case studies of numerous HOPE VI projects have illustrated that frequently site selection for redevelopment is in line with larger economic interests for the municipality (Bagert, 2002, 17-19; Popkin et al., 2004, 45). For instance, in his analysis of the Techwood/Clark Howell redevelopment in Atlanta, Larry Keating reveals that officials from both Coca-Cola and Georgia Tech University had pressured city officials for decades to demolish the housing project due to its blighting and potentially violent effect on their nearby facilities (Keating, 2000, 387).⁴ This story and the many similar to it suggest that the relationship between gentrification and HOPE VI redevelopment is often not coincidental.

Blight removal constitutes, in the opinion of some experts, the only undeniable success within the HOPE VI program. While de-concentration of poverty and the creation of opportunity for the poor are stated goals of the program, the program’s effectiveness in reaching such ends has remained mainly unexamined by scholarly research. Even for the limited amount

⁴ It may be important to note that Techwood/Clark Howell redevelopment described by Keating was done by the firm McCormack Baron Salazar. This firm, and its CEO are described in-depth in sections 4 and 5 of this thesis.

of tenants who get to remain on a site once it is redeveloped, the proposed advantages of living among wealthier neighbors may be exaggerated (Joseph et al, 2007, 369-370).⁵ The aesthetic improvements to the public complex and surrounding neighborhoods, however, are hard to miss, and too often it appears that analysts allow these physical improvements to account for the efficacy of uplifting the lives of the poor. In an article evaluating current housing policy, Popkin et al conclude: “Certainly, our research suggests reason to be concerned about how the poorest tenants will fare as public housing is transformed. Although research has documented that mixed income dispersal strategies can lead to well-managed, attractive developments and better neighborhood environments, there is little evidence that they consistently produce desirable social or economic outcomes for even less troubled low-income residents” (Popkin et al, 2000, 933).

This concern is coupled with research that suggests the HOPE VI redevelopments have led to higher levels of homelessness within their host cities, and more over-crowding in existing conventional public housing complexes. The Section 8 housing voucher program designed to accommodate displaced tenants has been incapable of fully picking up this slack in many cities. The program has had waiting lists for decades, and the added need stemming from displaced HOPE VI residents has served only to compound the difficulty of finding placement (Fischer, 2001; Popkin et al, 2004, 36; Brazley and Gilderbloom, 2007, 439-441). Problems with the voucher system are compounded by the fact that private landlords are often unwilling to accept vouchers in lieu of more traditional tenants (Thompson, 2006, 278-289).⁶ Neither HUD nor any

⁵ Joseph et al, provide a thorough introduction to the underpinning assumptions behind mixed-income development as well as a critical examination of their efficacy. It is important to note, however, that this study did conclude that low-income residents found employment opportunities more readily available in the mixed-income setting, though not due to factors such as relationships with upper-income people or role modeling.

⁶ There are various reasons that landlords in the private market may choose, and often do, to avoid renting to persons with housing vouchers (Thompson, 2006). One simple cause is fear or disdain landlords have for the program

other agency has an accurate or comprehensive understanding about where displaced residents go, but numerous personal accounts of unmet housing needs have surfaced (Lang and Morton, 2002). In fact, a recent statistical analysis of various dispersal strategies suggests that low-income families frequently end up “in neighborhoods like the ones they came from – and in some cases back to their old neighborhoods” (Clark, 2008, 532).

Such is the basis for Seischnaydre’s claim that public housing redevelopment in the United States is inherently tied to a long-standing history of slum-clearance. But heretofore, only one element of the false dichotomy has been roundly presented. The other half, the Get the Housing Now perspective, is in many ways what makes the false dichotomy so destructive. This approach advocates for no other viable alternative to the Blight Removal paradigm. Instead, those who advocate for Housing Now fear that redevelopment as Blight Removal will not yield positive consequences for public housing tenants, and they resist programs such as HOPE VI.

The current Housing Now stance is similar to that which Catherine Bauer and other “Housers” took in the development of public housing policy. Both groups sacrificed their normative vision for public housing in order to maintain what they knew was a compromised system. But the modern and historical Housing Now positions are also very different. As public housing policy developed in the mid-Twentieth Century, housing advocates usually chose to work within the limits of the system, understanding that while they may not agree with the way public housing was being built, at least it was creating housing for poor families. Advocates knew that the policies were far from ideal for urban black families, but they were all that housing advocates felt they could secure. This is to be distinguished from the Housing Now perspective

based on their perceptions of low-income renters. Racial prejudice is also a contributing factor, but it is not the only cause; landlords often simply see the voucher system as an unnecessary bureaucratic process, as the program requires them to do paperwork not called for in the private market. Finally, vouchers are often unable to offer the landlord the same amount of monthly rent that the private rental market will fetch.

that exists today in cities throughout the nation, where housing advocates have taken a stand in opposition to the local and federal decisions to tear down housing developments. Unlike the 1950's and 1960's, public housing construction is not increasing. In fact, the number of public housing units is dramatically decreasing as a result of the aforementioned poverty de-concentration policies. The Housing Now response is one of maintaining the units that currently exist because, while existing public housing is not perfect, it is housing and it will not be rebuilt in the same proportion once it is demolished.

Today's Housing Now advocates come from a broad spectrum of the population and cannot be singularly defined. They consist of scholars, activists, preservationists and public housing tenants. They are not necessarily unrealistic about the conditions of public housing in America, but aware of the historical track record for improving low-income housing. The Housing Now perspective is inherently reflexive and urgent, mainly focusing on resisting public housing demolition. In fairness to this mentality, there is valid cause for desperation when advocating for affordable housing in America's inner cities. The cost of housing throughout the country has risen dramatically and has become, in the opinion of many scholars, an affordable housing crisis (Freeman, 2002, 709-710). Just as people who would have been otherwise homeless have done since the onset of the public housing system, the Housing Now perspective is one of avoiding worst-case scenarios.

3. Examining the False Dichotomy in Action: Public Housing in New Orleans

The redevelopment of public housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans stands out from other HOPE VI redevelopment occurring throughout major cities in America for a couple reasons. First, both the size and speed redevelopment is unprecedented. Never before have four large complexes been completely razed and rebuilt simultaneously in such a short period. This undertaking is also attention-grabbing because it was planned in the aftermath of a city-wide disaster that forced these public housing residents, and the rest of the city, to leave their homes. But as this section of the thesis will point out, the direction of public housing policy in New Orleans had been shifting for over a decade before Katrina.

During the summer of 2005 before Hurricane Katrina struck, The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) had already embarked upon a wide-scale transition. On one hand, it was the managing body over a an aging public housing stock in need of upgrade. Five of the Housing Authority's ten active public housing complexes had been constructed by 1941 without any significant upgrade or renovation since, and many more were suffering from decades of neglect (Maloney, 1990, 1269; Jackson, 2007). On the other hand, HANO had been following the federal poverty de-concentration trend, and was moving away from conventional public housing for the decade preceding Katrina. By 2005, the Authority had already re-developed a significant amount of its public housing supply. Three housing complexes, St. Thomas, Fischer and Desire, had already been torn down to make way for mixed-income developments by that time. Some of the other complexes had redevelopment plans in the pipeline. Forces were clearly moving in the direction of public housing demolition.

History of Public Housing in New Orleans

Substandard and inadequate were not always the adjectives used to describe New Orleans public housing. In fact, the opposite could be said when most of the stock was constructed between the years 1938-1941, following passage of the Federal Housing Act of 1937 (See Table 1 for age and size of HANO developments) (Audit, 2001, 1). The newly formed Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) used this legislation to build high quality housing for the city's residents, black and white, who could otherwise not afford or find it. Planners designed these apartments for strength and durability in mind, having them raised in order to avoid flooding and building them out of brick and concrete. The brick (in many cases, red brick) also had the effect of making these apartments quite attractive. Beauty was a specific part of the design. Each unit in the Lafitte and Iberville developments, for example, had its own front porch or balcony. In the St. Bernard Projects, there were fifty different types of trees and plants during its initial years of operation (Ouroussoff, 2006).

The public housing of New Orleans did not resemble the anonymous sky-scrapers which were described in the previous section and which were so prevalent in cities like Chicago and New York (Ouroussoff, 2006). High-rise complexes became common in major cities throughout the U.S. during the 1950's and 1960's as a product of Urban Renewal. As mentioned in Section 2, these massive structures essentially served as containers for the large number of poor people who were uprooted for city-improvement projects. But in New Orleans, very little public housing was built during this time period. Of the ten HANO complexes, only two (the Fischer and Guste Projects) included high-rises, and even these consisted of smaller buildings and one tower per development. HANO's stock, by contrast, consisted mainly of two and three story buildings, each with access to its own grassy courtyard (Mahoney, 1990, 1268).

However, this rosy image of public housing was a distant memory long before the days of Katrina. By all accounts, the public housing in New Orleans was failing to offer its residents sufficient access to resources, or to even adequately house them. This is in large part because the complexes were marked by extremes in both poverty and segregation. HANO reports from 2002 suggest that of the 18,707 residents of public housing, only 23 of them were not African-Americans (Pardee and Gotham, 2005, 9). Furthermore, by HANO's own account, their residents' "living standards and economic conditions are inadequate and continue to decline" (HANO, 1995, E.S. xi).

In an interesting shift of events, the very design of the public housing complexes helped encourage much of this isolation. Once designed to be a beautiful landscape of brick buildings and greenery, the units were spaced out so as to create, in essence, a large neighborhood. In the early days of the city's public housing, various clubs and social gatherings took place in the developments and were provided by HANO. This helped to create a positive sense of community. However, as public housing in New Orleans became the home to poorer, more desperate and more isolated tenants, the large complexes were unable to serve the same role. Their sprawling size turned from asset to liability. The units suffered from deferred maintenance and a lack of any investment in aesthetics or community-building. Critics began to assert that public housing segregation was aided and abetted by the "super-block" nature of the units' construction. The super-block, which characterized such large complexes like St. Bernard and C.J. Peete, refers to a method of construction whereby housing is built in high density and often requires that through-streets be removed, essentially taking the project off the standard street grid. In addition, public housing residents were further removed from the world outside "the projects" by the sheer size of each development. The St. Bernard project, for instance, consisted

only of 1460 apartment units sprawled over 53.4 acres – no stores, no schools, and few playgrounds (HANO, 1995, St. Bernard 1). These factors together contributed to a pervasive isolation of low-income public housing residents.

In addition to these inherent design flaws, the public housing of New Orleans was also suffering from years of neglect. Much of the deteriorating conditions can be traced back to the federal government's lack of investment in public housing, as is described in Section 2. But HANO had also exhibited decades worth of imprudent and ineffective budgeting, which led to their eventual receivership by HUD in 2002. This joint ineptitude resulted in problems such as roofs not being fixed and unit repairs not being addressed. This inaction took its toll on the ten HANO complexes, all of which dated back to at least 1965 (Audit, 1994).

Table 1: New Orleans Conventional Public Housing, Pre-Katrina

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year built</u>	<u># of Units Originally</u>	<u># demolished as of 2005</u>
Lafitte*	1939-1941	896	0
C.J. Peete (Magnolia)*	1939-1941, 1953-1956	1403	172 (72 unaccounted for)
B.W. Cooper*	1939-1941	1550	48
St. Bernard*	1939-1941	1460	24
Iberville	1939-1941	858	0
Fischer	1963-1965	1002	373
Desire	1954	1860	1800
Florida	1941-1946, 1953	734	244
St. Thomas	1938-1941	1510	1365
Guste	1961-1964	993	0

*denotes developments affected by Post-Katrina HOPE VI plans

Sources: HANO Strategic Plan, 1995; HANO Comprehensive Revitalization Plan (in Pardee and Gotham, 2005, 14)

HANO and HOPE VI

In the wake of a particularly damning analysis of HANO procedures and public housing conditions by HUD's Inspector General in 1994, the Housing Authority officially began a process of transforming "both HANO and its properties" (HANO 1995, E. S. v). They created a strategic plan designed to begin the process of ameliorating the deplorable conditions of their public housing stock. This plan relied heavily on the utilization of HOPE VI grants, aiming to demolish first, units in the worst condition. HANO decided to focus initially on the Desire (considered "worst of the worst" by HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros), St. Thomas and Fischer developments (Audit, 2001, 29). HANO was awarded HOPE VI grants for each of these by 2001. HANO had also begun utilizing HOPE VI grants to demolish units in the Guste, Fischer and C.J. Peete developments prior to Katrina (HANO, 2007, 2).

St. Thomas

Of the five HANO developments affected by HOPE VI before Hurricane Katrina, the redevelopment of St. Thomas grabbed the collective attention of the New Orleans population more than any other. This may be in part because of the development's prime location in the Lower Garden District, or because the developer chosen by HANO was a native New Orleanian with whom people were familiar. Whatever the reasons, understanding the way St. Thomas' redevelopment affected HOPE VI discourse in New Orleans is imperative for comprehending the false dichotomy in New Orleans today. The transformation from the St. Thomas projects to the River Garden Apartments presents a glimpse into how the profit motive can pervert the HOPE VI intention to improve the lives of public housing residents (Popkin et al., 2004, 1-2). It also provides a contextual backdrop for why many housing advocates have vehemently opposed subsequent redevelopment proposals in the city.

The redevelopment process of St. Thomas has spanned two decades. To developers, the central location of St. Thomas within New Orleans represented a barrier between the wealthy uptown neighborhood and the heart of downtown. St. Thomas tenants knew that redevelopment was imminent, and they aimed to position themselves in such a way as to affect the outcome in a meaningful way (Reichl, 1999, 178). But as two studies have demonstrated, the residents were effective in some ways, but were ultimately unsuccessful in shaping the redevelopment's future.

Scholarly research has both touted the St. Thomas redevelopment process as a case study of effective resident participation, and lamented it as an example of market forces trumping the interests of the poor. In 1999, Alexander Reichl wrote that this HOPE VI project was noteworthy because of the "significant impact that the residents themselves have had on the planning process and the development agenda" (Reichl, 1999, 176). This is because the St. Thomas Resident Council played a key role in deciding who would get the contract, and was able to clearly and poignantly articulate their priorities. Four years later, however, the storyline was far different. HUD rejected the HOPE VI contract which residents had played such a large role in developing for reasons which were trivial at best (Bagert, 2002, 20-22).⁷ A new HOPE VI grant was then awarded to a developer who was far less interested in facilitating the requests of St. Thomas residents.

In the end, results for the New St. Thomas - called River Garden - appear to have failed to improve the lives of the former tenants. Despite having been interrupted by a change in contracts and Hurricane Katrina, the building at River Garden is nearing completion. When

⁷ In Bagert's account of the process to redevelop St. Thomas, he notes that the original HOPE VI contract went to a company called Creative Choice Homes, a group whose plan tenants and HANO officials alike supported. A year after Creative Choice Homes won the contract, it was taken from them by HUD. HUD cited four reasons for pulling the contract, including a conflict of interest that Bagert assesses to be bogus. Another reason HUD pulled the contract was because they believed, residents "did not appear qualified to choose a developer" (HUD cited in Bagert, 2002, 21).

complete, River Garden will have yielded out of the former 1510 public units a total of 899 market-rate apartments and 276 subsidized units, with 100 of the subsidized units being located off-site (Pardee and Gotham, 2005, 12). Researchers have suggested that the closing of St. Thomas and other developments in New Orleans has overwhelmed HANO's ability to house its former residents prior to Katrina. The waiting list for Section 8 apartments far outpaced HANO's ability to accommodate the applicants and the number of homeless had risen. In addition, some former tenants left their public units in St. Thomas and moved in with family members in other public neighborhoods across town (Pardee and Gotham, 2005, p 15-16).

In terms of local economic development in the River Garden neighborhood, the former acreage of St. Thomas now includes a Wal-Mart. The developer, Historic Restoration Incorporated (HRI), secured through both Tax-Incremental Financing (TIF) and Payment-in-lieu-of taxes (PILOT) a contract with the New Orleans City Council which will bring \$20 million to the development over the next 25 years (Bagert, 2002, 23). This will have debatable effects on the neighborhood's capacity to create and sustain self-sufficient business opportunities.

Post-Katrina

When Hurricane Katrina struck and the city subsequently flooded, all residents of New Orleans were evacuated. New Orleans was effectively emptied of all surviving residents in the days following August 29, 2005, leaving emergency workers to address the widespread flooding. By the time the city finally dried out over a month later, nearly every home had been vacated by its evacuated occupants.

Included in the number of evacuated homes was each of the city's public housing units. HANO emptied and closed each of the facilities. The winds of Katrina and the flooding that followed affected each of the developments to varying degrees. Some of the projects were

severely flooded, such as the recently redeveloped Desire Projects. Other developments flooded minimally, with some units not experiencing any standing water. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, however, HANO closed all its units to allow the agency time to assess damage and make necessary repairs. One assessment was made clear from the beginning: in a trip to Houston not more than a month after the storm, HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson stated that New Orleans “is not going to be as black as it was for a long time, if ever again” (Rodriguez and Manaya, 2006). Meanwhile, all residents of HANO properties were forced to find accommodations in places other than New Orleans. HANO officials set up satellite locations immediately following the evacuation to assist tenants in finding shelter, and many of those families were placed in subsidized housing units in the respective cities to which they evacuated (HANO, 2007, 2).

More than nine months had elapsed following Katrina before HUD and HANO officially announced their plans for addressing the public housing stock. This period was tense for a multitude of reasons. The first reason was because many of the tenants of those developments wanted to get home as quickly as possible (Quigley et al., 2006). As long as the units were closed, residents who relied on them could not get back. Even those who may not have been interested in returning for emotional reasons might well have been lured back to New Orleans by the access to lucrative employment. The city was experiencing a labor shortage, and even normally low-paying service jobs were offering a premium. To make matters more frustrating, the labor shortage was mostly a function of the housing shortage (further intensified by lack of public housing) (Filosa, 2006a). The second reason emotions ran so high in this period is because residents and advocates feared and partially expected total demolition of all the projects. This was exacerbated by the fact that many (but not all) tenants who were able to get home and

inspect their belongings often found little to no physical damage to their properties. Some just begged for the opportunity to clean out their own units. Nevertheless, it took some time for residents' frustration to come to a head. On April 4, 2006, aggravated former residents and other activists physically forced their way into the St. Bernard Projects, the first of a multitude of protests to come (Filosa, 2006b)

On June 14, 2006, HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson announced that four housing developments, Lafitte, C.J. Peete, St. Bernard, and B.W. Cooper, were going to be entirely razed to the ground and that HANO would be allocated the resources to have them redeveloped into mixed-income communities (Saulny, 2006). This news produced a groundswell of reaction from people in different camps. For their part, three civil rights attorneys with a proven reputation for defending the rights of the poor in New Orleans must have expected this pronouncement. By June 27, 2006, Bill Quigley, Tracie Washington and Judson Mitchell had filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of public housing residents calling for the re-opening of the Big Four units (Quigley et al, 2006).

HUD's plans were made more complicated by the assertion on the part of Quigley and others that analyses within HUD had determined that fixing up the units would be a more cost-effective and faster method to get families home. In addition, John Fernandez, an architecture faculty member at MIT, did his own analysis of 140 units and testified in court that "no structural or nonstructural damage was found that could reasonably warrant any cost-effective building demolition..." (Fernandez, 2006). This appraisal ran contrary to statements by HUD and HANO that they were simply making the best financial decision they could. Instead, officials from HUD were forced to use other criteria to justify their decision. They, instead, focused on

quality-of-life reasons and a more standard anti- concentrated poverty rationale for redevelopment. This shift in approach damaged their credibility with opponents of demolition.

The lawsuit by Quigley, Washington and Mitchell took more than a year, during which time the Big Four were sequestered and untouchable by bulldozers or developers. A decision was finally made in the fall of 2007. In some aspects the plaintiffs were successful. Their lawsuit had made several claims, and some of the smaller ones, such as making HANO pay for section 8 tenants' utility bills, were granted class-action status. In the end, however, the plaintiffs fell short of their primary goal to keep the Big Four open. The court ruled that HUD and HANO be permitted to continue with their plan to demolish and redevelop the Big Four.

In a last-ditch effort of sorts, Quigley and Washington pointed out in court that the redevelopment plans of HUD and HANO had never been officially voted on by the New Orleans City Council (Filosa, 2007, 1). In order for the plans to be acted upon, the majority of the city council would have to vote in favor of redevelopment. The city council meeting was set for Wednesday, December 19, 2007. When the meeting occurred that day, it was attended by hundreds of protestors. There were so many, in fact, that the council chambers were filled to capacity and many people were forced to stay on property outside city hall. Inside the chamber, housing advocates were screaming and chanting. Emotions ran high, and members of the New Orleans Police Department tasered some of the opponents to demolition. In short, the scene was angry and frantic, so much so that it received national media attention. The interruptions caused the city council meeting to last six hours, but the council did eventually vote that day. The decision was a unanimous 7-0 in favor of HANO and HUD. Following the Meeting, Mayor Ray Nagin held a televised press conference whereby he offered his deep congratulations and appreciation of the city council's vote.

At present, the process of demolition is underway. The first units were bulldozed at C.J. Peete in February of 2008, and demolition there is nearly complete. Likewise, St. Bernard has been almost entirely demolished, with the exception of a few buildings to remain for historical preservation purposes. Demolition is also occurring at B.W. Cooper and Lafitte. When the land is cleared, the next step will be to rebuild.

4. The False Dichotomy Personified in Post-Katrina New Orleans

Many people and agencies were engaged in the eventual decision to demolish the Big Four in favor of mixed-income development. As has been discussed earlier, the federal government has directed this sort of urban development for years across the United States through HUD and their HOPE VI grants. The federal government's role in New Orleans should not be underestimated. But local authorities also are responsible for this decision. The New Orleans city council was in unanimous support of demolition, as was Mayor Ray Nagin, while HANO, under federal receivership, proposed the redevelopment. Local media fanned the flames of redevelopment by calling into question the existence of a housing crisis within the city, and by giving voice to those public housing tenants who were in favor of knocking down "the projects." Likewise, numerous groups represented the other side of the debate. Preservationists from far and near urged HUD and HANO to re-think their plans, citing the historical significance of the developments. Former public housing tenants formed groups to protest the decision in the face of widespread housing shortages throughout the city, and many human rights advocates took up the struggle with them. In the end, all of these forces have yielded the current outcome for public housing in New Orleans.

Given the complexities of this phenomenon, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to boil the debate down to two main perspectives. After all, different people and agencies had their hands in the pot for different reasons. However, the purpose of this thesis is to better understand the false dichotomy between Getting the Inadequate/Segregated Housing Now and Redevelopment as Blight Removal. These two perspectives may seem like impersonal and closed-minded ideologies, but people have reached these conclusions time and again throughout the history of public housing, including this situation in New Orleans. A thorough examination of the ideology

and goals behind each perspective will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the false dichotomy and why it has occurred with such regularity throughout the history of public housing policy.

Methodology

In order to allow for a better examination into the goals and frames of reference for the two perspectives of the false dichotomy, this section of the thesis will attempt to elucidate the personal reflections of two people who have been active participants in shaping public policy in New Orleans. Both Bill Quigley, a Civil Rights attorney and professor of law at Loyola University New Orleans, and Richard Baron, the Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of the development firm McCormack Baron Salazar, have played significant roles in the eventual demolition and redevelopment of the Big Four developments in New Orleans. Both have written extensively and, more importantly, acted in support of two opposing outcomes for the public housing stock. Quigley objected to the Big Four's demolition vociferously, by organizing former tenants and others in opposition to the plans, and by filing a class-action lawsuit questioning the constitutionality of HUD/HANO plans. For his part, Richard Baron was not in the public eye when it came to public housing discourse in New Orleans, but he has played a role nevertheless. Baron's McCormack Baron Salazar (hereafter MBS) bid on and received the contract to redevelop C.J. Peete, one of the projects demolished Post-Katrina. When complete, this HOPE VI redevelopment will be one of many completed by Baron's firm, a national leader in building mixed-income communities.

At first glance it may seem inappropriate to compare the work and ideology of two men who have never publicly argued each other, and who may have never even met. A comparison

may appear especially curious because these two people worked on completely separate projects with respect to demolition of the Big Four: Quigley actively fought the demolition of all four developments while Baron's firm developed a proposal for redevelopment of just one of the projects. These are fair criticisms. But it is my assertion that Baron and Quigley share more in common than may be initially apparent. Both people have compiled a long history of advocating the rights of the poor and for working to create more just solutions to inequality and social injustice. Likewise, both have earned reputations for making those solutions a reality and for bettering the conditions of the poor. In short, the men share some similarities. However, in the case of public housing policy in New Orleans and in America more generally, Quigley and Baron fall into two opposing camps. Quigley was perhaps the clearest embodiment of the Get the Housing Now viewpoint, while Baron's position would be classified by the false dichotomy as the Housing as Blight Removal perspective. In examining these two perspectives, this thesis will aim to better understand how two people on opposing sides of the public housing debate can both view their positions as best for the urban poor, the extent to which the whole false dichotomy classification system accurately represents on-the-ground realities in New Orleans, and how the false dichotomy fails to yield the best outcome for public housing residents.

The research for this thesis will fall into the category of the multiple-case study design. Researcher Robert K. Yin notes that the case-study strategy is appropriate, among other times, when one aims to describe "why" a phenomenon occurred, and also when one links on-the-ground data to existing theory in the pursuit of theoretical development (1994, 9-26). Both elements are present in this thesis. By developing a more thorough understanding of the goals and priorities of both Baron and Quigley, this thesis addresses two broader research questions: does Seicshynaydre's false dichotomy concept accurately describe what happened in New

Orleans?; and what is at the heart of the opposing viewpoints for addressing New Orleans public housing? Thus, the research uses the views of Quigley and Baron to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the false dichotomy construct as well as to shed light on why this false dichotomy exists in New Orleans.

In describing the various research materials used for case studies, Yin refers to the “six sources of evidence” (1994, 80). These include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts. Of these sources of evidence, this thesis consists of both documentation and archival research. This includes a wide range of written material that is publicly available both by and about Quigley and Baron. Quigley’s stance on public housing in New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina, as his opposition was public and vociferous, has taken the form of internet blogging, essays, and legal documents. These personal reflections of Quigley fall into the category of archival sources, as they are qualitatively different from both the documentation of facts and a personal interview. This written material, in conjunction with newspaper articles and other documents highlighting his role in opposing demolition, renders a clear portrayal of Quigley’s fears of redevelopment. Meanwhile, information regarding Baron’s specific stance on redevelopment in New Orleans is more scarce. Research on his perspective for public housing redevelopment will instead be based on his efforts to redevelop public housing complexes throughout the nation over the previous three decades. Much has been written about his work in other cities and his general approach to creating mixed-income communities. As such, the case study of Baron is built largely on the documentation form of evidence.

Relying on publicly available documentation for the research includes distinctive strengths and weaknesses (Yin, 1994, 80). Two benefits are that this material is both stable and

unobtrusive. This means that the material, on account of its public dissemination, existed before the research for this thesis was conducted, and it is unlikely to change throughout the research process. The documentation is also exact, meaning that it “contains exact names, references and details of an event” (Yin, 1984, 80). Finally, this research benefits from being drawn from a broad range of sources, from academic journals, to personal writings, to legal briefs. By focusing on the documentation-form of evidence, this research casts a wide net of available information.

But while this study is strengthened by the wide array of publicly available documentation, it likewise is constrained by inherent limitations. The most obvious of these is that the only information cited in this thesis is that which is publicly available. Therefore, any material that may be relevant but not publicly accessible is not included in this research. Yin points out that often material is kept for the public record for privacy reasons, and that this can lead to a lack of depth into understanding a phenomenon (1984, 80). And this reference to control of an available source leads to the second primary concern in this documentation and archival research. The written material used as research for this thesis is inevitably colored by its author’s bias. This can be especially problematic when one attempts to use someone’s opinion on a phenomenon and treats it as if its objective fact. In other words, the constraint placed upon this form of research is that it is only as accurate as the sources it cites.

While the above-mentioned concerns of documentation and archival research are relevant for this thesis, the problem of bias is mitigated by the way the research is used. This is because the sources for this thesis are used to build up two distinct narratives about how both Richard Baron and Bill Quigley view public housing demolition. Therefore, to the extent that this research is biased, that is clearly noted in the context of each person’s views.

When compiled and aggregated, the articles that make up this research serve to provide an intricate and developed understanding of how Baron and Quigley formulated their positions with regard to the redevelopment of public housing in New Orleans. Any one article, vignette or highlighted news story may provide a glimpse into a person's ideology, but it will not likely discuss one's historical framework that led to that perspective. Nor is one article capable of fully illustrating the breadth of one's grasp of any issue. With this in mind, the research undertaken in this thesis aims to tell a story, or more specifically, two stories. By intertwining case studies written about Baron with his own words and words said by others to describe him, this research is designed to create a nuanced depiction of him and his role with respect to the HOPE VI program. Likewise, Bill Quigley is more than a character who spontaneously appeared one day to oppose the system and protect the residents of public housing. This research will demonstrate, through a critical reading of his own writings and a focus on his professional background, the extent to which Quigley is well-versed in the social justice issues that have long faced New Orleans public housing residents.

The Roles of Richard Baron and Bill Quigley

This section will explore how two seemingly dissimilar and unrelated figures hold more in common than one might expect. Both have spent their professional lives in pursuit of economic justice and equity, and yet the false dichotomy places their work into opposing camps.

Richard Baron

“More than any other single person, Richard’s ideas helped shape HOPE VI.” - Henry Cisneros, HUD Secretary, 1993-1997 (in Kimura, 2008)

“The design and reintegration of housing into a community has to be broad – it has to encompass streets and parks, jobs and education – so that housing itself can begin to re-knit an area.” – Richard Baron (in Reid, 2006, 9)

Richard Baron is the veritable poster child for effective mixed-income development which both turns urban blight into functioning neighborhoods and uses housing as a vehicle to provide opportunity for low-income residents (Matthews, 2004, 10-13; Turnbov and Barry, 1999, 6-10; Economist, 2008). The firm he co-founded, MBS, has worked in affordable housing construction since 1973 and represents one of the oldest and most experienced companies of its kind. During that time, the company reports having been responsible for developing “124 projects in 33 cities with development costs in excess of \$1.8 billion which includes more than 13,895 residential units and one million square feet of commercial space” (MBS, 2008). Perhaps more important than his company’s accolades, however, is the extent to which his vision and goals have helped to shape the concept of mixed-income development practice in the United States.

Baron is one of the most prolific innovators in public housing redevelopment. His work has earned him the Urban Land Institute’s prestigious J.C. Nichol’s Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development in 2004 (ULI, 2005). And among other prominent fiduciary board duties, Baron helped to establish and is currently a member of the Advisory Board for the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for Urban Redevelopment Excellence (UPENN, 2007; MBS, 2008). He has built his reputation around a personal focus and commitment to improve all facets of the neighborhoods where his projects take place, and not simply by improving the housing. His vision for over three decades has been to think comprehensively or as he refers to it, horizontally,

about the needs of low-income urban communities and work to incorporate them into his developments (Reid, 2006, 9). Baron's approach to redevelopment is born out of a passion to make these neighborhoods "work" for the residents, and is the product of an understanding of the challenges public housing tenants face.

Baron's first professional experience with public housing came when he moved to St. Louis in 1968 after earning a law degree from the University of Michigan. He worked for the Legal Aid Society and represented tenants of public housing, including those who resided in some of the nation's poorest planned complexes such as Pruitt-Igoe. After learning firsthand what his clients were facing in the projects, Baron changed professions in 1973. He started a development company with a friend named Terry McCormack, who was himself a labor leader and homebuilder. Their goal was to provide housing options for all people, regardless of income. As their firm grew and evolved, McCormack Baron (now McCormack Baron Salazar) took on larger projects and began to incorporate their vision of creating self-sustaining and healthy communities (Matthews, 2004, 11; MBS, 2008).

Baron's broad vision for urban community development has characterized his firm throughout its existence. Evidence of this mentality is clearly stated in a journal article he wrote for the St. Louis Law Review in 1978:

A successful intervention program for distressed low and moderate- income neighborhoods, therefore, must consider the program areas of housing and community development, employment, education, security, and related social services as integral reinforcing elements of a long-term program designed to attack deficiencies in the "bundle" of essential neighborhood resources and to revive household confidence and commitment to a viable neighborhood. This "bundle" of concerns which collectively accounts for the neighborhood succession process must form the basis for a new policy

focus which should be directed to specific neighborhoods, and to the interrelated problems of housing stock condition, security, quality of education in the neighborhood schools, municipal and social services, and employment (Baron in Salsich, 1999, 588-589).

This paragraph plainly reveals that Baron understands the negative social role that concentrated poverty plays in a neighborhood. It is relevant to note that his call for a new policy to deal with poor inner cities was made before much scholarly attention was ever paid to the subject.⁸ The requests made in this paragraph really are ahead of their time and, in fact, they are pre-cursors to the federal policy decisions that eventually were made.

The work of MBS since its inception has attempted to address the social goals specified in Baron's 1978 article. Specifically, the firm's projects are widely hailed for their ability to bring better schools, better safety and more job opportunities to the neighborhoods they redevelop. In addition, their developments have been largely successful at increasing real estate value in the area (Cytron, 2006, 20; Imbs, 2005). MBS developments also stand out for the innovative funding structures used to get them completed. They were among the first to leverage the capital of various private and public entities and they helped innovate the way mixed-income development is financed today (Salsich, 1999, 589-594). For their success in all these aspects, developers of the HOPE VI Program used the work of MBS as a model for their program (Kimura, 2008). In fact, Richard Baron and his associate Kevin McCormack were the first to approach HUD Secretary Cisneros with a proposal for mixed-income communities that eventually laid the groundwork for the entire HOPE VI program (MBS, 2008). Cisneros said of Baron, "He contributed hugely to the framework of the program" (Kimura, 2008).

⁸ See Section 2 for a brief history of academic responses to concentrated poverty

In the 15 years that HOPE VI has been in existence, Baron's MBS has been involved in 19 developments (Kimura, 2008). His mark upon the public housing policy throughout the last 35 years has been substantial, and he has remained committed to his goal of turning inadequate and segregated neighborhoods into communities with opportunity and promise.

Bill Quigley

"[I]f the test of a society is how it treats its weakest and most vulnerable members, the aftermath of Katrina earns us all a failing grade." - Bill Quigley (2008).

Though William P. (hereafter, Bill) Quigley has not earned the prestigious reputation in law that Baron has in real estate development, he is famous nationally and internationally for his work as a public interest and social justice lawyer. Quigley's work has taken him across the globe, and he has advocated for the rights of people throughout the western hemisphere. While both his scholarly writing and litigation involvement has spanned a wide-range of issues, Quigley's goals and passion have been consistent throughout his career (Loyola, 2008).

In addition to the countless cases he has taken on in cities across the U.S, Quigley has made significant contributions to public interest law in New Orleans. After earning his Juris Doctor from Loyola University New Orleans in 1977, he embarked upon a career in law not often chosen by those who pass the bar. Quigley chose to use his law degree to represent the poor, and he did this primarily in the New Orleans and throughout Louisiana. His 30 year career has included work ranging from post-conviction representation of people on death row, to cases concerning statewide voting policy, to civil rights cases. He has worked on cases with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. and the Advancement Project, and served as the General Counsel for the ACLU of Louisiana for more than fifteen years (Loyola, 2008a). And while he has humbly joked of his record, "If you want to go to jail, I'm your lawyer,"

Quigley's record is filled with success, made all the more incredible by the seemingly insurmountable odds against many of the cases he has taken (Loyola, 2008b).

Today, Quigley is the Janet Mary Riley Distinguished Professor of Law at Loyola University, where he teaches classes in poverty law and Catholic Social Teaching as it relates to law. He is also Director of both the Gills Long Poverty Law Center and the Law Clinic at Loyola University, where he guides law students as they practically apply their studies to representing the poor in New Orleans. He also has written extensively on the legality of many social justice issues around the world. His work has earned him many awards, including the Pope Paul VI Teacher of Peace Award from Pax Christi USA.

His other work notwithstanding, Quigley is relevant to the discussion of public housing in New Orleans because of the opposition he presented to its demolition. It is important to note that *Anderson V. Jackson*, the class action suit opposing demolition, was not Quigley's first foray into housing issues in New Orleans. His work with public housing in the city dates back to 1978, and it includes two cases where tenants, with Quigley as lead council, successfully sued for better public housing conditions (Loyola, 2008b). Those suits certainly suggest that Quigley has been acutely aware of inadequate public housing conditions for years. Nevertheless, he served as co-council on *Anderson v. Jackson* to block demolition of the Big Four. In fact, Quigley was in many ways the figurehead of demolition's resistance, as he was cited numerous times in local newspapers and often blamed by demolition supporters as responsible for "destroying" the city (Filosa, 2007b).⁹ While he clearly understood the challenges associated with the public

⁹ In the "comments" section of the Time Picayune's article about public housing on December 19, 2007 – the day the city council voted unanimously in favor of demolition, the comment was written by someone with the surname "unworthless" : "Bill Quigley. You should be fired by Loyola.... Maybe one of these thugs that you love to support sooooo much will one day rob you and possibly shoot you as you go to an ATM to get money. Thanks for destroying what was once the crown city of the south. Scumbag!!" (Filosa, 2008).

housing stock, Quigley decided that getting the Segregated/Inadequate Housing Now was a better option than Redevelopment as Slum Clearance.

Two Perspectives, Two Analyses

As the previous section suggests, Bill Quigley and Richard Baron share more in common foundationally and philosophically than their contrary positions in the false dichotomy would suggest. Both men have devoted their careers to advancing the prospect for economic justice and opportunity for the disadvantaged. Even in the philosophy of adequately housing the poor, their professional work would indicate that they share some common ground. In practice, however, Quigley and Baron advocate for opposite policy solutions for addressing public housing. They came to these different conclusions on demolition largely because they were each willing to make different concessions, and they justified these concessions through the way they understood mixed-income development. This section of the thesis will attempt to take a more in-depth view into how these men fell into opposing camps by exploring how each of the two viewed various elements of the situation.

Two Definitions of Mixed-Income Development

Perhaps the most significant and largest incompatibility between Baron and Quigley can be found in the way they reference mixed-income development conceptually. For Baron, the tearing down of the projects in order to build stronger communities is a hopeful prospect. It represents an opportunity to replace stigmatized, isolated and generally inadequate housing with a new form of construction, one that inserts the “bundle” of resources, as he referred to it, directly into the very fabric of the housing. Bill Quigley, on the other hand, does not feel hope nor opportunity when he thinks about razing and redeveloping public housing. How could these

two people have such different critiques for the way mixed-income development affects poor communities? The answer to that question lies in their experience.

As described in Chapter 3 of this thesis, New Orleans has experienced HOPE VI redevelopment of its public housing before. The most notable and frequently discussed of these undertakings was the project to redevelop St. Thomas. As this transformation began, Quigley was never far removed from it and the effect it was having on tenants. His colleagues in the city were finding that former public housing tenants were not given the necessary tools to find new accommodations, and a few successfully sued HANO to change that (Webster, 2007; Quigley et al, 2006, 18; Shriver Center, 2005). For his part, Quigley's analysis was that this process was not helping to improve the life chances of the poor in New Orleans. In fact, he suggested strongly on different occasions that the demolition of public housing in New Orleans has been a deliberate attempt by various government agencies and others with power to remove and displace the majority black poor of the city (Quigley et al, 2006, 3, 18-20; Quigley, 2008a).

Clear evidence in Quigley's own writing suggests that any time he thinks of the Big Four's demolition, he does so in the context of the HOPE VI redevelopments that took place in New Orleans prior to Katrina, and especially what happened at St. Thomas. In two published scholarly articles and two contributing articles for online political magazines, Quigley specifically mentions the St. Thomas redevelopment in articles on post-Katrina public housing redevelopment (Quigley, 2006a; Quigley, 2006b; Quigley, 2007a, 407; Quigley, 2007b, 13). This excerpt from one of those articles reflects his sentiments on St. Thomas, and the effects he attributes to it:

“New Orleans has suffered through the experience of HUD's “mixed-income” policies before....The demolition of St. Thomas is hailed as a mostly-good outcome by nearby

developers and some of the young professionals who moved into the surrounding neighborhood knowing what was coming. What do the 1400+ families who moved out and not allowed to return think? Don't ask – no one else is" (2006b).

With this frame of reference for how mixed-income development treats the poor residents, Quigley's response to demolishing the Big Four seems a completely suitable and appropriate response for a public interest lawyer. Quigley's definition of mixed-income development affords very little, if any, emphasis to its capacity to actually help the poor. It represents for him one of many tactics that those in power use to disaffect the powerless (Quigley, 2007c). But this characterization of the program could not be farther away from the way Baron and his company view it. He has had a completely different experience of HOPE VI, and it has shaped his perspective of it.

The main reason that Baron and his firm are widely cited as models for mixed-income redevelopment is because they are among the most successful in making positive change for the community in ways other than increased real estate value. This is to say that MBS has a history of standing behind its rhetoric about creating opportunity in the way of better employment opportunities, education, street safety and other social services. One need not look far to find evidence of HOPE VI developers who make promises in this arena that often fall far short of the community's expectations. MBS, however, can point to concrete attempts through the course of its developments to address the stated goals of HOPE VI. Whereas Quigley refers to St. Thomas when he discusses HOPE VI, Baron refers to a very different kind of example.

The work for which MBS has been often cited revolves around their efforts to invest over the long-term in neighborhood schools. One particular example is the Jefferson Elementary School in Murphy Park, St. Louis. It was a failing public school in an extremely poor part of the

city in the 1990's when Baron's company got a HOPE VI contract to redevelop the public housing in the neighborhood. Aiming to both attract market-rate renters to their development as well as to provide quality education to all children in the neighborhood, Baron worked to transform the school into a positive learning community (Turnham and Khadduri, 2004, 8). He felt that a high-quality school would act as a cornerstone for the new neighborhood. Baron, therefore, worked to create relationships with area non-profits and corporations, asking them to commit resources to improving the school. His fundraising efforts were successful and yielded \$5 million in private and public money to be used for capital investment and better infrastructure for Jefferson School. The school's turnaround was substantial: "In 1999, only 1.6 per cent of third graders were categorized as 'advanced and proficient' in science. By 2003, 44.4 per cent of the students were so categorized, nearly reaching the state average of 47.8" (Katz, 2004, 24). This statistic is made more impressive by the fact that prior to the school's transformation, most of the neighborhood's kids were bussed to other schools, and following the school's renovation 75 % of Jefferson's students are from Murphy Park (Katz, 2004, 24).

Willingness to Concede Housing Units in the Name of Improving the Community

The discrepancy in the very definition of mixed-income development presents the most foundational disagreement between how Baron and Quigley view public housing transformation in New Orleans. In concrete terms, two sticking points keeps Quigley from trusting the HOPE VI plans for New Orleans: the substantial number of housing units which will be lost in the transformation; and the reality that a reduction in low-income housing units will result in many New Orleanians from being barred from returning post-Katrina. While official numbers are difficult to come by and subject to change as rebuilding gets underway, approximately 20 per cent of the 4,500 units demolished will become available as public housing. This is a dramatic

decrease by any measure, and it is exacerbated by the unprecedented damage the hurricane brought to the city's entire housing stock. Section 2 of this thesis discusses the challenges faced by the many public housing families who are forced to find other accommodations. Given the burden that the program will have on so many, it may seem surprising that Baron would be willing to participate in it.

In fact, Baron was among the first to advocate against one-for-one replacement in public housing redevelopment (Turbov, 2006, 180-182). Federal law used to require that a new public housing unit be built or otherwise acquired for every one demolished. This clause, however, presented a frustrating challenge to developers creating mixed-income communities. The most obvious challenge was that the public housing complexes to be demolished were often high-density developments built on limited amount of land. In order to avoid recreating the poverty concentration problems that afflicted the old public housing, developers including Richard Baron called for removal of the one-for-one clause.

It is in this context that MBS's current redevelopment plans for the C.J. Peete complex in New Orleans call for a reduction in public housing units. Baron's firm is charged with doing their project well, which they define as creating high-quality housing and creating new opportunities to revitalize the depressed neighborhood. MBS would face additional burdens if they also had the task of replacing all 521 public units at his C.J. Peete Development, the most obvious being space and money. The HOPE VI grants and other tax credits available for public housing redevelopment simply do not provide enough financial resources to build housing for all the 521 families who lived there pre-Katrina. In addition, there is not enough physical space on the existing land to put that amount of public units back, while also facilitating the joint goals of adding market-rate development and creating a spatial layout that avoids the concentrated

clustering that used to exist at C.J. Peete. In short, Baron has to worry about creating an environment that will both positively transform the area and attract buyers to his market-rate housing.

While Baron views the net loss of public housing units as a necessary result of his project to better the community, Quigley sees all the units lost in New Orleans as an inexcusable attempt to rid the city of its poor people. This difference in perspective reflects two levels of viewing the dilemma. On the one hand, Richard Baron is able to look at the specifics of his particular project, and he can point to the various ways he wants to use it as a vehicle for improving the community. He is able to focus on how changing the streetscape, creating more usable space, and centering the project around a YMCA and school will begin to improve the quality of life. But Baron is never in a position where he is required to be accountable for the large number of former public housing tenants who will not have the resources to return to C.J. Peete. The HOPE VI program does not charge the developers with being responsible for that. On the other hand, when Bill Quigley accuses HUD of systematically dispossessing the poor, he is thinking about the aggregate effects that the HOPE VI project has on those who cannot return to New Orleans.

Yet, there is a more normative discrepancy at the heart of this debate than simply analyzing how the C.J. Peete redevelopment will affect its host neighborhood vs. analyzing the larger effect that public housing redevelopment will have on all former New Orleans public housing residents. This discrepancy refers to how one constitutes success in public housing redevelopment. It also refers to the difference between working within the system vs. working to change the system. Finally, the differences presented here highlight a difference in focus. Baron works within the strictures of federal public housing policy, in fact helped shape this policy, because his unit of analysis is the neighborhood. Similar to the Blight Removal stance taken

throughout the Twentieth Century, Baron's work is motivated by a commitment to revitalizing depressed and underserved neighborhoods. He is proud to say that "We've never wandered out of the cities...We're always in the cities" (Kimura, 2007). To be sure, his goals are far more focused on equity than his predecessors who advocated the Urban Renewal movements of the 1950's and 60's. Nevertheless, Baron's success is measured by the extent to which he is able to weave an isolated neighborhood back into the fabric of the city.

But while Baron's ultimate goal is to transform the *landscape* in order to provide better lives for the people who reside there, Quigley places priority on adequately housing *people*. Revitalizing neighborhoods, in Quigley's view, may be a laudable goal, but not at the cost of barring thousands of families who used to live there from returning. Even more fundamentally, Quigley doubts that the HOPE VI program intends to create better lives for the poor. His references to St. Thomas and other HOPE VI iterations in New Orleans emphasize that he believes public housing redevelopment aims to gentrify the homes of low-income people. As such, he is diametrically opposed to the policies of HUD and has worked to stop them from being realized.

The concrete impasse present in this example exhibits how public housing's false dichotomy remains intact after more than eighty years. One perspective, that of Richard Baron and MBS, clearly reflects an understanding about what will be necessary to help a neighborhood like that of C.J. Peete become more functional and healthy. One might debate the extent to which his company brings about the desired goals of change, but the company clearly recognizes the challenges faced by the neighborhood and presents an attempt at addressing them. Quigley, on the other hand, represents a side of the debate that is constantly on the defensive. His litigation record demonstrates that he also acknowledges the deplorable conditions of public

housing in New Orleans. He has brought forth suits against HANO in the past calling for improvements in the facilities and removal of toxins such as lead paint. But in this situation, Quigley and fellow housing advocates call for the status quo ante, realizing that while bad, this housing at least provided poor families with the chance to move back to their homes in the wake of Katrina.

5. Conclusion: Different Definitions of Optimal Net Benefit

The perspectives of Bill Quigley and Richard Baron represent a difference in dealing with priorities and constraints for how to address public housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans. They do not, however, necessarily represent a fundamental disagreement about what constitutes a healthy, viable, and strong neighborhood. Neither would assert that the public housing in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina met those levels of functionality. In this sense, the two men have far more in common than their differences suggest. Perhaps the most interesting conclusion to this research is that the two men represent opposing views of the false dichotomy despite being largely in agreement about what these neighborhoods need to flourish. The essential disagreement, when it comes to the application of their philosophies in the face of scarce funding resources, is a difference in prioritizing the number of poor served by a project versus the amount of benefits the eventual beneficiaries receive.

The reality understood by both Quigley and Baron is that by all social indications, public housing before Katrina was failing. Section 2 discusses that social indicators such as high school drop-out, incarceration, and unemployment rates are much higher in neighborhoods with public housing than more affluent neighborhoods in cities throughout the country. This, by all accounts, is a social justice issue. It is a product of many factors, including the historical ones described earlier in this thesis. Both men would concur that this substandard and segregated housing represented a glaring social problem in need of a solution.

In order to provide a more precise qualitative analysis about how Quigley and Baron wanted to address the issue of Inadequate/Segregated public housing, it may be helpful to view their priorities as a formula. This exercise, while inexact and by no means designed to be

empirical or binding, will allow for a visual description for how the two men reached opposite conclusions for public housing redevelopment.

Based on both Quigley's and Baron's track record regarding public housing, let us assume that there are certain identifiable goals to make public housing neighborhoods better environments. Four goals (while there are probably others) would include improving housing conditions for low-income residents (H), improved neighborhood aesthetics such as improved streetscapes and more accessible roads (S), better educational opportunities for neighborhood children (E), and more employment opportunities for neighborhood residents (M). They represent objectives for addressing urban poverty that Baron and/or Quigley have a history of addressing. Other goals, such as lowering the incarceration rate, reducing crime, increasing health care options, increasing home ownership, and increasing small business ownership are probably important goals for redeveloping failing public neighborhoods, but there is less record of Baron or Quigley directly addressing these issues. In terms of the above-mentioned goals, Baron and Quigley would both likely create similar equations for improving the life chances of the poor (O). The equation would look like this:

$$\text{Q and B: } H + S + E + M = O$$

The views of Quigley and Baron become quickly divergent when a new variable, the number of residents returning (R), is added to the equation. Quigley firmly believes that all citizens of public housing in Pre-Katrina New Orleans must be allowed back. The Right-To-Return, he has stated numerous times, is not just a fundamental human right, but is actually stated in international laws. Therefore, any redevelopment of public housing would have to built on the premise that one-to-one replacement be provided. From his perspective, he has seen

public housing before, and he has seen it fail the poor. But for Quigley, even if public housing redevelopment did improve the lot of those who moved in to it and improved the surrounding neighborhood, he would still be concerned for those who could not move back. A fundamental principle of Catholic Social Teaching, which Quigley has taught and practiced throughout his career, is the Preferential Option for the Poor and Oppressed. The Preferential Option requires Catholics to make their priority the well-being of the poorest of the poor. In the case of public housing redevelopment through this lens, no redevelopment can produce truly optimal ends without taking into consideration the least of the least – those who would lose their homes. Therefore, Quigley is working with the constraint that any time public housing is redeveloped, it must include one-for-one replacement. An equation for his optimal net benefit from public housing redevelopment includes all residents returning (R_{sub0}).

$$Q: R_{sub0} + H + S + E + M = O$$

On the other hand, Baron is more flexible with the percentage of former tenants who are able to return to redeveloped public housing neighborhoods. His goal is to transform these communities, and his projects reflect a deep commitment to making that happen. But in order to reach that end, Baron takes a view that is more pragmatic than Quigley's. He realizes that neither the money nor the space exists to create a mixed-income community that would make space for all former tenants. In the face of this realization, Baron is willing to sacrifice one-to-one replacement so he can ensure that his redevelopment effectively addresses conditions that lead to better lives for the urban poor. It is also important to note that while his developments decrease the number of public units, there are limits to the amount of units lost. The Murphy Park development mentioned in Section 4, for example, has fifty-five per cent of its units reserved for low-income residents (Matthews, 2004, 12). That said, Baron does not apologize

for the inability of his developments to retain all former residents. He views the optimal net benefit for his projects to transform the development and the community. Therefore, Baron's equation for how to redevelop public housing would be:

$$B: R_{sub1} + H + S + E + M = O$$

The equations presented above demonstrate that the main, if not only, difference between the Quigley's and Baron's vision for redeveloping public housing is a disparity in the number of returning residents their equation allows for. For Quigley, the number of residents is constant, whereas Baron allows the number of residents who return to be variable. Both men are defining their optimal net benefit differently.

A Different False Dichotomy

This thesis was inspired by Seicshnaydre's (2007) identification of public housing redevelopment in New Orleans as an example of the historical false dichotomy between Segregated/Inadequate Housing vs. Redevelopment as Blight Removal. She points out that neither the positions of housing advocates who have opposed demolition nor those of the groups who supported it have a solution that will really benefit public housing residents. She notes that while public housing redevelopment in the U.S. has led to frequently worse situations for public housing tenants, the alternative of not addressing public housing has led to pervasive segregation and poverty.

On one hand, this research suggests that the specific differences between Bill Quigley and Richard Baron are more nuanced. In this particular case study, neither person wholly fits

their respective positions in the false dichotomy. In fact, both men are opposed to the inadequate/segregated nature of public housing and have spent much of their careers fighting it. In this case, perhaps a different false dichotomy exists: Get the Segregated/Inadequate Housing First vs. Build the Community First.

At the same time that this example is slightly different than the historical Housing Now/Blight Removal template, the two perspectives of Quigley and Baron are also very similar to that dynamic. For example, despite his previous history of working through lawsuits to change the conditions of public housing complexes, he was in this case supporting the status quo ante. He was forced into a reactionary position when HANO announced the Big Four's demolition, much like the many housing advocates had been before him throughout the history of public housing. And in this case, while he may not have been satisfied by public housing conditions, he made a decision to take the inadequate housing now, improve it later. Meanwhile, Baron will spend years on the land that used to house the C.J. Peete projects to create housing that attractively replaces the dilapidated and aging buildings that used to stand. Despite all the evidence that suggests that he and his firm will do all in their power to improve the lives of the low-income people who will live in and around their new development, the reality still exists that blight removal is one of the few ubiquitous and concrete successes that all HOPE VI projects share.

It is also important to point out that this study into the perspectives of Bill Quigley and Richard Baron is just that: a study of two men. Both men are internationally known in their fields, but Quigley does not represent the view of any other of the hundreds of people who actively demonstrated in opposition to the demolition of public housing. Nor should Baron's intentions and successes with HOPE VI be confused with any other developer's track record. He

helped create the program, and he understands what the program can be at its best, but that certainly does not mean that other developers emphasize the role of community development as much as he.

While this study can be used to broaden the understanding of Seicshnaydre's false dichotomy concept, it does have constraints. One limitation is that the conclusions of this thesis should not be generalized to all developers and all housing advocates. There is no reason to believe that the motives behind actors in other public housing redevelopments will match, or even be similar, to those of Baron and Quigley. In fact, this same cautionary statement should be made about the other people who played a role in this debate in New Orleans. This is a qualitative study. It expanded on Seicshnaydre's concept of public housing's false dichotomy by examining the extent to which it is accurately reflected in the motives of Baron and Quigley. In order to more fully flesh out the false dichotomy, I recommend that further research explore the motives of a wider group than this thesis' focus of two people.

There is one conclusion that can be made from this study of the false dichotomy in Post-Katrina New Orleans. In the end, scarcity of resources and a lack of political will to find homes in New Orleans for all public housing residents put two men with similar goals on opposite sides of an issue. As Seicshnaydre noted, the history of public housing demonstrates that the resource scarcity we are currently experiencing has been similarly present since public housing's inception. It is clear that the federal government has not allocated enough funding to both revitalize public housing communities *and* ensure that these benefits reach all (or even the majority of) low-income people. In the case of post-Katrina New Orleans, as well as most other cities, the goal of transforming land has taken the priority over providing housing for people. To put it another way, Baron's goal of helping some has won out over Quigley's goal of retaining

housing for all. It was not the purpose of this thesis to propose a concrete solution this false dichotomy, but there are nevertheless some conclusions to be made. The most obvious is that level of investment for redeveloping public housing in New Orleans is not nearly enough to meet the housing needs of the many people who called public housing home before Katrina. The Big Four may have been aging and in bad need of repair, but their demolition and plans for redevelopment will likely bar a significant proportion of New Orleanians from returning to their city. I do not assert that HOPE VI is incapable of de-concentrating poverty, but its own premises rely on viable alternatives for those residents who are not invited back to redeveloped sites. Currently, the New Orleans housing stock does not allow for such alternatives. If this decision is to be (or even can be) ameliorated, HUD and HANO must commit to providing significantly more housing options for low-income people.

Time will tell if the mixed-income housing that springs up over the next few years in New Orleans will provide the type of life-changing opportunities to the poor that HOPE VI advocates supporters claim. Likewise, there is no way of knowing whether the former public housing tenants will be able to find their way back home or up the social ladder. As these questions abound, one thing that this research suggests is that the best way to move away from the false dichotomy is by providing the public housing system with the investment adequate to serve all those who need it.

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Vita

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