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Mixed-income schools and housing: advancing the neoliberal urban agenda

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This article uses a social justice framework to problematize national and local policies in housing and education which propose to reduce poverty and improve educational performance of low-income students through mixed-income strategies. Drawing on research on Chicago, the article argues mixed-income strategies are part of the neoliberal restructuring of cities which has at its nexus capital accumulation and racial containment and exclusion through gentrification, de-democratization and privatization of public institutions, and displacement of low-income people of color. The ideological basis for these policies lies in racialized cultural deficit theories that negate the cultural and intellectual strengths and undermine the self-determination of low-income communities of color. Neoliberal mixed-income policies are unlikely to reduce inequality in education and housing. They fail to address root causes of poverty and unequal opportunity to learn and may exacerbate spatial exclusion and marginalization of people of color in urban areas. Building on Nancy Fraser's model for social justice, the article concludes with suggestions toward a framework for just housing and education policy centered on economic redistribution (economic restructuring), cultural recognition (cultural transformation), and parity of political representation.

Keywords: neoliberalism; race; housing; mixed-income schools; social justice

Introduction

Chicago, Philadelphia, Denver and a number of other cities in the USA are purposefully creating mixed-income schools. In Chicago and elsewhere, this policy is linked with federal initiatives to dismantle or rehabilitate public housing for very low-income people and replace it with privately owned or managed mixed-income developments. Advocates claim these policies will reduce poverty and the inequitable educational opportunities and outcomes affecting low-income students. They contend that mixed-income schools are important to attract working- and middle-class families to mixed-income developments and to build relationships across class lines. They also maintain that income mixing in the classroom improves the educational performance of low-income children. Socio-economically integrated schools are discursively linked to the democratic purposes of the common school, racial desegregation, educational equity and justice. Thus, mixed-income policies seem, on the surface, to be common-sense and egalitarian solutions to intractable educational and social problems – a possible way out of the morass of concentrated poverty, economically devastated inner city neighborhoods, dysfunctional public housing, and failing public schools that have become iconic for urban poverty in the USA.

However, in this article, I problematize the common sense of mixed-income strategies from the standpoint of social justice. As a starting point, I draw on political philosopher Nancy Fraser's (forthcoming; Fraser and Naples 2004) framework for a social justice agenda. Fraser proposes three essential, interrelated dimensions of social justice: economic redistribution

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(economic restructuring), cultural recognition (cultural transformation), and political representation (parity of participation). I use this model to assess mixed-income strategies, recognizing that Fraser is part of a global dialogue about a social justice agenda for the twenty-first century.

I am not suggesting that mixed-income schools and communities are inherently counter to social justice. Reducing race and class segregation in housing and education has been a target of progressive policy and social justice movements in the USA. However, my reading of the evidence suggests that current policies to create mixed-income schools are unlikely to reduce inequality in education and housing for the majority of low-income people of color. They do not address the root causes of poverty and unequal opportunities to learn and may exacerbate spatial exclusion and marginalization for the majority of low-income people of color who are affected. That is, they perpetuate inequitable distribution of resources. I also argue that they are rooted in deficit notions that negate the cultural and intellectual strengths and undermine the political participation of low-income communities of color. I suggest that mixed-income strategies can best be understood in relation to the construction of neoliberal social and economic arrangements. Specifically, they contribute to an urban agenda which has at its nexus capital accumulation, racial containment, exclusion through gentrification, de-democratization and privatization of public institutions, and displacement of low-income people of color. To illustrate this argument, I turn to Chicago where these housing and school policies are joined, discursively and practically.¹

To examine intersections of education and urban development, I draw on critical scholarship in urban policy and planning, urban sociology, political economy, and race and education policy. My analysis is grounded in a review of research and archival documents on federal housing policy and mixed-income schools, archival data on Chicago's housing and school policies, and data collected through qualitative research (interviews, conversations, participant observations) in collaboration with community organizations and teachers related to Chicago's school policies, beginning in July 2004.² Interviews with parents, teachers, administrators, school staff, and students for a study on the effects of school closings (Lipman, Person, and KOCO 2007) also inform this analysis.

I begin by situating mixed-income policies in relation to neoliberal urban development and briefly describe the Chicago context. I go on to discuss the racialized assumptions and ideological roots of neoliberal mixed-income policies in the USA and the ways in which they limit democracy, and particularly the self-determination and voice of communities of color. I then summarize arguments for mixed-income schools and question the efficacy and opportunity of mixed-income schools for low-income children of color. Finally, drawing on the work of Nancy Fraser, I conclude with thoughts toward an alternative framework for social justice that centers on redistribution, recognition, and representation.

Neoliberal urbanism

Brenner and Theodore (2002) argue that 'cities have become strategically crucial geographic arenas in which a variety of neoliberal initiatives ... have been articulated' (351). Beginning in the 1970s, 'roll-back' neoliberal policy (Peck and Tickell 2002) reduced federal funding for cities, pushing city governments to cut back public services and disinvest in public institutions and infrastructure. Then, driven by market ideologies, 'roll out' neoliberal policy (Peck and Tickell 2002) replaces Keynesian welfare state institutions with public-private ventures, municipal tax laws that subsidize development,³ and privatization of public services as a way to make up for federal funding shortfalls. These policies are shifting governance and ownership of public institutions and spaces to private interests (N. Smith 2002). Neoliberalization of cities is also driven by economic deregulation and globalization which weaken the tight coupling of urban and

national economies that characterized the industrial era. As cities compete directly in the global economy for international investment, tourism, highly skilled labor, and production facilities, including the producer services that drive globalization (Sassen 2006), marketing cities and specifically their housing and schools has become a hallmark of urban development. Downtown luxury living and gentrified neighborhoods, as well as new 'innovative' schools in gentrified communities and choice within the public school system, are located in this inter-city competition (Lipman 2004).

Facilitated by municipal government, gentrification has become a pivotal sector in neoliberal urban economies (Fainstein 2001; N. Smith 2002; Hackworth 2007) and a critical element in the production of spatial inequality, displacement, homelessness, and racial containment.

Gentrification as a global urban strategy is a consummate expression of neo-liberal urbanism. It mobilizes individual property claims via a market lubricated by state donations and often buried as regeneration. (N. Smith 2002, 446)

As cuts in federal funding pushed cities to rely more on property tax revenues, cities have become more dependent on, and subsidizers of, the real estate market through public giveaways of land and subsidies that funnel public tax dollars to developers. Real estate development is a key speculative activity with properties essentially operating as financial instruments. Speculation, in turn, causes increases in property values and rising property taxes, driving out low-income and working-class renters and home owners.

Within this urban dynamic, Hackworth (2007) argues that the 'inner city' has become a site of extreme transition and a 'soft spot' for neoliberal experimentation. An icon of vilified Keynesian welfare state policies (e.g. subsidized public housing, public health clinics and public hospitals), the 'inner city' is now a focus of 'high profile real estate investment, neoliberal policy experiments, and governance changes' (Hackworth 2007, 13). Areas of the central city that were home to low-income communities of color are the focus of public-private partnerships, gentrification complexes, privatization, and de-democratization through mayoral takeovers of public institutions and corporate-led governance bodies. This context defines the stakes involved in creating schools to market new mixed-income developments to the middle class as well as to legitimate what community residents I have interviewed in Chicago call a 'land grab'.

In the USA, race is pivotal to this process. Racialized discourses of pathology legitimated dismantling the Keynesian welfare state and instituting policies that mandate individual responsibility as an antidote to 'dependency' (Katz 1989; Barlow 2003). These discourses have helped rationalise destruction of public housing, displacement of communities of color and gentrification of their neighborhoods, and new patterns of spatial containment and expulsion of people of color from the city center and out of the city entirely (Haymes 1995).

The Chicago context

In 2004, Chicago launched Renaissance 2010 (hereafter Ren2010), a radical reform that will close 60–70 public schools (all so far are in low-income communities of color) and open 100 new schools of choice, two-thirds of which will be run by outside organizations as charter or contract schools. Ren2010 opens up the third largest school system in the USA to a market model of school choice, privatization, and elimination of school employee unions and elected local school councils. I have argued this reform is linked to the neoliberal development of the city and the exclusion of working-class and low-income people of color (Lipman and Haines 2007; Lipman and Hursh 2007). At the same time, Chicago launched a \$1.6 billion transformation of public housing – the Plan for Transformation (PFT). One of the most extensive revamps of public housing in the USA, the PFT has nearly completed demolition of 22,000 units, including all the remaining 'family' units of three, four, or five bedrooms. On paper, most are to be renovated or

replaced, many as mixed-income developments (Bennett, Smith, and Wright 2006c). However, some research estimates that less than 20% of former residents will be able to return to the new developments (Venkatesh et al. 2004; Wilen and Nayak 2006).

Chicago's housing plan is a local implementation of the federal HOPE VI Act (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere). Launched in 1992, HOPE VI devolved federal responsibility for public housing to local authorities and replaced government housing provision with privatized management of public units. The state essentially moved from being a provider of housing to an agent of the housing market (Smith 2006). The theory driving HOPE VI is that the concentration of very low-income people in dense public housing units has been a major contributor to pathological behaviors and the inability of poor people to rise out of poverty. The Act calls for revitalizing or demolishing 'distressed' units and relocating public housing residents in scattered site housing, giving them vouchers in the private housing market, and financing mixed-income developments as public-private partnerships. These partnerships draw on public tax dollars to subsidise developers. HOPE VI requires self-sufficiency of public housing residents and promotes home ownership. A key revision in 1995 eliminated the requirement of one-to-one replacement, meaning residents can be displaced without guarantee of return to new or revamped units. Public housing is one of the few remaining obstacles to gentrification, and this revision eliminated a significant barrier to its demolition (Hackworth 2007), thus opening up public housing sites to large-scale private, market-rate development.

The national impact of Chicago's PFT was summed up by the MacArthur Foundation, which provided \$50 million in support, including loan guarantees for investors: 'Chicago ... has the potential to demonstrate, at scale, the impact of mixed-income housing on neighbourhood revitalization' (MacArthur Foundation 2005). Ren2010 promises mixed-income schools in these communities. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) launched Ren2010 in the African-American Midsouth area with the goal to 'reinvent the area's 25 schools and make them a magnet for the return of middle-class families' (Olszewski and Sadovi 2003). The MacArthur Foundation underscores the importance of schools in mixed-income developments: 'The city has made a commitment to improving the local schools, without which the success of the new mixed-income communities would be at great risk'. However, some scholars question whether class integration is actually the goal (Bennett and Reed 1999; Bennett 2006; Bennett, Smith, and Wright 2006a), or whether it simply masks (and facilitates) neoliberal urban development and displacement of public housing residents. A telling example is the redevelopment of the ABLA public housing development located in a prime gentrifying area of Chicago. The Chicago Housing Authority was removing ABLA residents at the very time the area was becoming mixed income (Bennett, Hudspeth, and Wright 2006).

Viewed through the lens of neoliberal urbanism, the PFT is part of a development agenda which merges local, national, and transnational capital, in partnership with city government, to make Chicago a first-tier global city (Lipman 2004). The heart of that plan is downtown development, tourism, and gentrification of large sections of working-class and low-income Chicago, particularly communities of color (Demissie 2006). The city's aggressive support for capital accumulation and corporate involvement in city decision-making extends to incentives to developers and corporate and financial interests, public-private partnerships, the city's bid for the 2016 Olympics, cuts in funding for social welfare, control of labor, and privatization of public assets. If downtown development and gentrification are the 'icons of the neoliberal city' (Hackworth 2007, 78), Chicago epitomizes this agenda as working-class communities and public housing have been replaced by condominium developments, refurbished homes, and upscale shops and restaurants.

Although cast as a positive strategy for urban decay and the achievement of social stability, critical urbanists argue that present-day 'third wave' gentrification is driven by finance capital at multiple scales and is a means for the middle and upper-middle classes to claim cultural control

of the city (e.g. Smith 1996; Fainstein 2001; Hackworth 2007). The class and race contours of this process are, as Neil Smith points out, hidden in the language of 'mixed income communities' and 'regeneration'. A global city driven by neoliberal economic and social policies simply has no room for public housing as devised in the 1950s and 1960s (Bennett 2006) or for low-income African Americans who are, from the standpoint of capital, largely superfluous in the new economy and 'threatening' to the corporate and tourist culture. Indeed, public housing and education policies are critical components of Chicago's bid to be a first-tier global city and to restructure its economy on neoliberal lines.

Racialised poverty discourses, and 'democratic deficits'

Underpinning mixed-income school and housing policies is a common set of assumptions about poverty and race rooted in culture of poverty theories (Brophy and Smith 1997) and racialized claims on the city (see Lipman 2007 for a more developed discussion). These theories substitute behavioral explanations of poverty for structural and political causes, 'pathologize' people of color, and promote individual responsibility and market solutions. In the late 1980s, sociologist William Julius Wilson's (1987) theory of 'underclass culture' as a barrier to African-American labor force participation captured the imaginations of neoliberal policy makers. Bruce Katz, of the Brookings Institute, and others (see Massey and Denton 1993) cited Wilson's concentration of poverty theory to support dismantling public housing. The narrative linking spatial concentration of poverty with welfare dependency, single-parent families, and crime and the salutary effect of middle-class role models is pervasive in HOPE VI literature (Brophy and Smith 1997; Popkin et al. 2004).

[T]he intentional mixing of incomes and working status of residents [will] promote the economic and social interaction of low-income families within the broader community, thereby providing greater opportunity for the upward mobility of such families. (US Dept of Housing and Urban Development, in Bennett, Smith, and Wright 2006c, 20)⁴

The argument for mixed-income schools is rooted in a similar set of assumptions. Richard Kahlenberg (2001), key advocate for mixed-income schools, argues, 'Money does matter to educational achievement, but research – and common sense – tells us that the people who make up a school, the students, parents, and teachers matter more' (3). As with mixed-income housing, Kahlenberg argues the putatively superior values and behaviors of the middle class (greater motivation, better language skills, more positive attitudes about school and better behavior) will have a positive influence on low-income students. He makes similar claims for the beneficial influence of middle-class parents who, he asserts, are more involved and effective advocates for their children. They are expected to serve as role models for low-income families, and the school improvements they obtain by virtue of their political power and social capital are expected to benefit low-income students.

The construction of poverty as social pathology is linked to the supposedly restorative and disciplining effects of the market to promote individual responsibility and initiative, self-discipline, and regeneration of decaying public institutions. According to this neoliberal logic, while public housing and public schools breed dysfunction and failure, private management, the market, and public-private partnerships foster excellence through entrepreneurship, competition, and choice. In the USA, 'public' and 'private' have become racialized signifiers, with the private associated with what is 'good' and 'white' and the public associated with what is 'bad' and 'black' (Haymes 1995, 20). Black public spaces are constructed as pathological and in need of social control, and mixed-income schools/housing perform this function. This logic is operationalized under the 1998 Quality Housing and Work Reform Act, which institutionalises the policing of low-income tenants in new HOPE VI mixed-income developments through rigorous applicant

screenings and strict work and behavior rules (Wilén and Nayak 2006).⁵ Similarly, racially coded mixed-income schools with a majority of middle-class students are assumed to provide the work ethic and behavior standards necessary to transform and discipline low-income students.

In Chicago and other cities, the transformation of public housing and schools is designed without real input from the communities affected. This reflects the coercive and de-democratizing tendencies of the neoliberal state, both to streamline the process of implementing neoliberal policy without ‘interference’ from a democratic polity and to squelch potential resistance (Gill 2003; Harvey 2005). The plan for Ren2010 originated with the Commercial Club of Chicago (an organization of the city’s most powerful corporate, financial, and civic elites). Public hearings about school closings have been called with less than one week of notice and have had no impact on decisions, despite the fact that at every school hearing I observed, parents and students argued to keep their schools open (see Lipman and Haines 2007). Ren2010 also eliminates elected Local School Councils in favor of appointed boards, and a corporate body created by the Commercial Club partners with CPS to select new Ren2010 schools and evaluate them. Exclusion of communities and teachers from Ren2010 decisions is a major theme in my data from community meetings and teacher interviews (Lipman and Haines 2007; Lipman, Person, and KOCO 2007).

Data on experiences of public housing residents in Chicago show a similar pattern. Bennett, Hudspeth, and Wright (2006) write in their study of the transformation of public housing in Chicago: ‘From the standpoint of the city and the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), effective dialogue with public housing residents appears to be consultation in which the residents, at the outset and throughout the process, agree to premises advanced by city and public housing agency officials’ (202). CHA resident organizations had to pry their way into participation in the PFT through demonstrations, noisy public hearings, persistent tenant organizing, law suits, and even the intervention of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing (Wright 2006). The Chicago experience mirrors reports from other HOPE VI cities (e.g. Pitcoff 1999). The state’s superficial solicitation of community input, its creation of appointed advisory boards, and the exclusion of parents and residents from genuine participation in decisions reflect the ‘democratic deficits’ of neoliberal regimes (Fraser forthcoming). In the case of mixed-income school and housing policy, these democratic deficits particularly disenfranchise low-income people of color who are the primary residents of public housing and are 92% of the school population.

At the same time, the seemingly democratic and inclusive discourse of mixed-income communities and schools masks the nexus of racialized public policy and investment decisions that produced deindustrialization, disinvestment, unemployment, and degradation of public health, the built environment, and education in inner-city neighborhoods and schools over the past 30 years. Our interviews with teachers and administrators in Chicago’s African-American Midsouth area produced a narrative of declining resources and lack of support from district officials that exacerbated problems in schools in disinvested communities (Lipman, Person, and KOCO 2007). Once devalued, schools are identified as failing, closed without community input (Lipman and Haines 2007; Lipman, Person, and KOCO 2007), and reopened and rebranded with distinctions that mark them as middle class (e.g. Montessori schools) and that appeal to whites even when initial ‘gentrifiers’ are African American, as in the Midsouth (Boyd 2005). This process is facilitated by an urban mythology ‘that has identified Blacks with disorder and danger in the city’ (Haymes 1995) and African-American schools with discourses of violence and dysfunction.

In this process Black urban communities are viewed simply as sites of capital accumulation (investment and real estate development), emptied of their meanings as spaces of identity, solidarity, cultural and political resistance, and material survival (Haymes 1995). Not only does displacement disrupt the material places in which people live, learn, and work, but also what

Fullilove (2005) calls a human ecosystem, 'a web of connections – a way of being' (4). This is what is at stake when families, students, and teachers are uprooted and relocated to communities and schools not of their own choosing. The cavalier attitude of policy makers who presume to know what is best for communities of color is illustrated by Alexander Polikoff, senior staff council of Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, a policy group backing mixed-income development in Chicago: '... so persuaded am I of the life-blighting consequences of [William Julius] Wilson's concentrated poverty circumstances, that I do not view even homelessness as clearly a greater evil' (quoted in Wright 2006, 159–60).

Evidence for mixed-income schools

Richard Kahlenberg (2001),⁶ a leading proponent of mixed-income schools, asserts a good education 'is best guaranteed by the presence of a majority middle-class student body' (1) to whom, as I note above, he attributes a range of behavioral and attitudinal virtues. Evoking the democratic aims of the Common School, Kahlenberg proposes large-scale reform of public schools to create mixed-income schools with a majority of middle-class students and 'ability grouping' for 'faster' students. The evidence for this proposal rests on the correlation between academic achievement and social class (or in USA literature, socio-economic status – SES). Kahlenberg also extrapolates from research on peer influence to argue for the positive impact of middle-class students on their low-income classmates.

Research generally supports a correlation between social class and educational experiences and outcomes (see Knapp and Woolverton 2004; Sirin 2005 for a review), but the evidence for benefits of moving low-income students to low-poverty schools and to suburbs is actually mixed. Studies show a strong correlation between family SES and the school and classroom environment the student has access to (Reynolds and Walberg 1992), school quality (e.g. teacher quality, instructional resources, teacher–student ratio) (Wenglinsky 1998), and the relationship between school personnel and parents (Watkins 1997). The specific correlation between poverty and low academic performance, school completion, and other education indicators is also well-documented (Anyon 2005), as is the relationship between race/ethnicity and educational outcomes (Darling-Hammond 2004). These correlations are, however, moderated by various factors such as school location, race, and school level (Sirin 2005). Some research found positive effects of moving low-income students to suburbs under the Chicago Gatreux housing desegregation program (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2002). However, results from the national Moving to Opportunity program appear to show no significant increase in test scores at any age for students who were assigned housing vouchers to move from public housing to lower poverty neighborhoods (Sandbonmatsu 2006).

Although there may be student social class composition effects on educational outcomes, we do not know why. Kahlenberg and others contend the benefits for low-income students of being in a middle-class school are due to the positive influence of middle-class students and parents; however, they might just as well be attributed to the superior instructional and material resources, better prepared teachers, and higher academic expectations in these schools. If the latter is the case, then equitable funding (rather than income mixing) would seem to be an important remedy for educational disparities due to social class, particularly given stark disparities in school funding in the USA between affluent school districts and those with a high percentage of low-income students.⁷ In fact, studies published in the past 15 years show that higher school funding has a positive effect on student learning, regardless of school composition, particularly when funding is used to obtain better quality instruction and resources for instruction (Darling-Hammond 2004).

The contention that lower income students will benefit from proximity to middle-class students evokes cultural deficit theories that situate educational outcomes in the characteristics of

students rather than the constellation of structural, cultural, and pedagogical factors that perpetuate race and class inequalities in educational experiences and outcomes (Darling-Hammond 2004; Knapp and Woolverton 2004). Evidence of the persistence of these factors (e.g. tracking, teacher attitudes and expectations, and eurocentric curricula) in mixed-race, mixed-income schools indicates that they continue to produce disparities in academic achievement, assignment to academic tracks, and punishment between white students and students of color despite strong pro-school attitudes among students of color (Minority Achievement Network; Lipman 1998; Ferguson 2002). Indeed, academic tracking is built into Kahlenberg's proposal. In particular, 'mixed-income' proposals deflect attention from the centrality of racial subordination and marginalization in the production of educational inequality, although race and putative deficiencies of low-income children and families of color are quite clearly the subtext of proposals for 'economic integration' (Henderson 2001; Orfield 2001). Mixed-income proposals neither acknowledge the intellectual and cultural strengths of low-income students of color nor consider the extensive literature on the importance of culture, language, race, and ethnicity in schooling. Proposals to reform low-income students (in fact largely students of color) by exposing them to middle-class norms and behaviors run counter to 30 years of critical scholarship on multicultural, multilingual education and on the role of racial and ethnic subordination in the perpetuation of educational disparities and inequities (Banks and Banks 2004).

The assumption that the presence of middle-class parents will benefit low-income students is also questionable in light of evidence showing that middle-class families deploy their material and cultural resources to secure educational advantages for *their* children (McGrath and Kuriloff 1999; André-Bechely 2005), particularly in the context of school choice (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz 1995; Fuller with Orfield 1996; Ball 2003; Butler with Robson 2003). There is also evidence that middle-class parents seek to insulate their children from lower achieving students and lower income students of color (Sieber 1982; Oakes et al. 1997). Evidence from HOPE VI reveals a similar pattern of social segregation in mixed-income developments. Bennett, Hudspeth, and Wright (2006) could identify only a 'smattering of evidence' that mixed-income communities improve the life chances of low-income people. Studies of HOPE VI mixed-income developments indicate little social interaction across class, little inter-class or inter-racial 'mixing' with low-income students, and in some cases conflict between public housing residents and homeowners (Raffel et al. 2003; Varady et al. 2005). In the most extensive study of mixed-income housing, comparing seven mixed-income developments, there were low or very low levels of 'neighboring' and few market-rate tenants attending building activities (J. Smith 2002.) In the Orchard Park development, adjoining Cabrini Green public housing in Chicago, developers erected a fence to separate market rate from African-American occupied public housing.

In sum, the contention that mixed-income schools will benefit low-income students because of proximity to middle-class students conflates correlation and causality. The correlation of educational experiences and outcomes with social class and race is in fact a multifaceted phenomenon that can be attributed to an array of sedimented equalities, school structures, ideologies, and cultural practices that advantage middle-class students and schools. Framed in the language of class, the argument that low-income students will benefit from exposure to middle-class students is fundamentally a cultural deficit argument about students of color. Mixed-income solutions do not account for persistent low achievement of students of color and working-class students in mixed-income settings.

Exclusion of low-income students and families from mixed-income housing/schools

A larger question is whether mixed-income schools and housing are actually aimed at benefiting low-income families and children. Displacement, housing and school policies, and informal

social and cultural mechanisms may work to exclude low-income students of color in substantial numbers from new mixed-income schools. Chicago illustrates this point. Unlike regular public schools which must admit neighborhood students, many Ren2010 schools accept applications city-wide, limit enrollments, use selection procedures including lotteries or charter school criteria, do not reserve seats for displaced students, may not offer the same grades as the closed school, and set admission deadlines— a factor that disadvantages low-income families who have less certainty about their housing (see Cuchierra, this issue, for similar processes in Philadelphia). Informal selection mechanisms also benefit middle-class school consumers who deploy their cultural capital and social connections to secure places for their children through school choice plans (e.g. Ball 2003; André-Bechely 2005).

The discourse of opportunity to move to better performing new mixed-income schools conceals the reality of displacement and exclusion in Chicago and elsewhere. Plans to link mixed-income housing and schools make it clear that guaranteeing middle-class families slots in mixed-income magnet schools is a priority, and marketing schools to these ‘consumers’ is taken for granted (Raffel et al. 2003). This is evident in discussions about schools in HOPE VI reports (Varady and Raffel 1995; Raffel et al. 2003). In Chicago, most displaced public housing students have been relocated to schools academically and demographically similar to those they left, with 84% attending schools with below the average district test scores and 44% in schools on probation for low test scores (Catalyst Chicago 2007). In the Midsouth area, most low-income students are attending neighborhood schools that are overwhelmingly low-income while two schools that were closed and have been reopened as new Ren2010 schools have significantly fewer low-income students than the original schools. Concerns about mixed-income schools as a tool of permanent displacement are a central theme in my field notes from community meetings, public hearings, press conferences, and rallies opposing Ren2010 across the city (see also Nyden, Edlynn, and Davis 2006). Research on HOPE VI developments elsewhere suggests these fears may be well founded as original residents’ children are not attending the new schools because of displacement (Raffel et al. 2003; Varady et al. 2005).

While HOPE VI has transformed some public housing units into more attractive buildings and communities and improved living conditions for some public housing residents, many original residents have not benefited (Popkin et al. 2004; Venkatesh et al. 2004). Most significantly, elimination of the one-to-one replacement requirement means many displaced residents do not have access to new mixed-income housing in HOPE VI developments (Pitcoff 1999; Raffel et al. 2003). In Chicago, demolition has far outpaced replacement construction, and Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) officials admit they do not have funding to replace all public housing units (Sharon Gilliam, CEO of CHA, Gateaux at 40 Forum, field notes, 3 March 2006). About 19,000 units of public housing were demolished, but in the first six years of the PFT (up to September 2005), only 766 public housing units were constructed or rehabilitated in mixed-income communities (Wilen and Nayak, 2006, 219), and the CHA’s 2006 annual report lists only an additional 304 for that year (Chicago Housing Authority 2006).

This outcome is driven by the interwoven logics of capital and race – the inexorable drive to maximize returns on real estate investments and the ‘pathologizing’ of African-American public housing residents. In the 1990s, private developers exerted pressure to change the formula from one-to-one replacement to a ‘tipping point’ of one-third public housing residents. They claimed a larger percentage would drive away market-rate and affordable housing buyers (Bennett, Hudspeth, and Wright 2006). Renée Glover, CEO, Atlanta Housing Authority (Glover 2005) said, with competition to attract market rate renters the priority, ‘the long-term success of mixed-income communities must be driven by the same market factors that drive the success of every other real estate development’ – in this case that means the principle of keeping public housing residents below 40%. Chicago’s developments follow the formula one-third public housing, one-third

affordable, and one-third market rate units. Janet Smith (2006) concludes, 'We can expect poverty to go down in some of these new mixed-income communities but not necessarily because poor people have escaped poverty – rather because poor people have been moved out and replaced by higher income families' (277). Public housing residents are mainly relocating to racially segregated, low-income communities, out of the city altogether, or they are going homeless (Bennett, Hudspeth, and Wright 2006). An official report on CHA relocation in 2003 stated that 'vertical ghettos from which the families are being removed are being replaced with horizontal ghettos, located in well-defined, highly segregated neighbourhoods on the west and south sides of Chicago' (Bennett, Smith and Wright 2006b, 307). Thus, displacement and relocation due to the PFT maintains racial containment and exclusion despite a discourse of mixed-income development.

Families in areas experiencing mixed-income development have few real choices. The majority will not be admitted to new developments and must negotiate an extremely tight market for affordable housing. Children are transferred from one school to the next with few good schools available and no guarantee of a place in new mixed-income or charter schools. In short, the discourse of mixed-income housing and schools reframes the reality of disinvestment, displacement, subsidies to developers, and racial exclusion as opportunity for low-income people of color.

[I]nequitable real estate development in cities is the knife-edge of neoliberal urbanism, reflecting a wider shift toward a more individualist and market-driven political economy in cities. Gentrification, publicly funded projects for private benefit, and the demolition of affordable housing are part of this knife-edge ... (Hackworth 2007, 192)

Closing schools in gentrifying areas, displacing students, and opening mixed-income schools of choice that appeal to new middle-class residents are also part of this knife-edge.

Conclusion: toward a social justice framework

Connecting unemployed people and low-income families to new educational opportunities and jobs is essential if we are to reduce poverty, as is upgrading and expanding the deplorable stock of affordable housing and reinvesting in communities that have been profoundly disinvested in for the past 30 years. That youth and their families need excellent health care and schools, good housing, rich opportunities for leisure and recreation, safe neighborhoods, and inexpensive and easily accessible transportation is a truism. But neoliberal plans for mixed-income schools/housing are distant from these goals. The contrived mixed-income developments spawned by neoliberal national and local policy are a far cry from organic and egalitarian communities. Nor are they an outgrowth of greater racial tolerance or reduced poverty or equalization of resources. In fact, they codify and institutionalize social separation and stigma through separate sets of rules and surveillance, educational tracking and magnet schools, and formal and informal selection mechanisms.

The evidence on HOPE VI and plans for mixed-income schools raise questions about who is served by projects that are framed as race and class uplift. They disperse and thus dilute the political power of low-income people of color and attract middle-class consumers of gentrification while legitimating the displacement of those who formerly lived there, on the premise of bettering them. They shift millions in tax dollars to developers and investors and fuel the speculative financialization of the urban economy. The centrality of real estate development and gentrification to capital accumulation in urban areas and the politics of racial exclusion and containment are rationalized by pathologizing African-American urban spaces and denying the humanity of people dislocated from their homes, schools, and communities.

These policies discursively shift the terrain of public policy from economic redistribution to behavior modification. This obligates the state to do nothing about the root causes of poverty, racism, substandard and scarce affordable housing, and failing schools. Like education standards

and high stakes accountability, mixed-income schools and housing, as well as vouchers in the private housing market, require no additional outlay of funds to repair decades of disinvestment and inequality. Nor do they require critical examination of dominant ideologies that perpetuate poverty and educational inequality and marginalization of low-income students of color. Moving students into mixed-income schools is a strategy that leaves unquestioned the curricula, pedagogies and school structures, cultures, and practices *within* schools that have been shown to produce unequal opportunities to learn and that reproduce broader social inequalities. Similarly, HOPE VI mixed-income strategies do not account for the economic and social forces that have historically shaped where poor people live— that is, race and class exclusion and market forces that obstruct affordable and mixed-income housing (Smith 2000).

Challenging neoliberal explanations of poverty and educational ‘failure’ is an important step toward an alternative policy agenda. Darling-Hammond (2004) proposes a shift from presumed student deficits to policies that guarantee every student the right to equitable education.⁸ More broadly, Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that we need a paradigm shift from the ‘achievement gap’, which focuses on students, to the ‘education debt’ owed to African Americans and other people of color. She argues this debt, which has accumulated over time, can only be rectified by collectively addressing its full spectrum of historical, economic, socio-political, and moral components. The same can be said for neoliberal education and housing policies which shift the discussion from the social debt to individual behaviors (naturalized to racialized social groups). These policies frame the right to quality affordable housing and education as choice in the education and housing marketplace.

Counter to claims that nobody knows how to fix poor schools (Kahlenberg 2001), significant redistributive remedies have never been tried. There has been no substantive effort to equalize school resources or transform structural aspects of schools that reproduce inequality and marginalize students of color. This is also true for providing quality housing and other basic human needs and eliminating poverty, although these remedies are well within the scope of the productive resources of the USA and other advanced capitalist societies. Anyon (2005) argues that to get to the roots of inequitable educational opportunities and outcomes we need an expanded education policy paradigm.

What *should* count as education policy would include strategies to increase the minimum wage, invest in urban job creation and training, provide funds for college completion to those who cannot afford it, and enforce laws that would end racial segregation in housing and hiring. (13)

However, the roots of educational inequality, mis-education, and subordination are also located in cultural and political marginalization. Returning to Nancy Fraser’s (forthcoming; Fraser and Naples 2004) framework, social justice requires three interrelated dimensions: (1) economic redistribution through political-economic restructuring; (2) cultural recognition which extends beyond recognizing cultural differences to transforming what counts as valorized culture and knowledge for all (cultural transformation); and (3) political representation (parity of participation) through radical democratization. This framework resonates with demands of working-class parents and communities of color in Chicago who call for equitable distribution of material resources and challenge who benefits from public resources, valorization of their cultural identities and centering their collective knowledge in policies about school and youth development, and genuine democratic participation in the decisions affecting their lives (Lipman and Haines 2007; Lipman, Person, and KOCO 2007).

Drawing on Fraser’s framework, to rectify gross inequalities in educational resources requires economic redistribution policies that expand educational funding to ensure the highest quality education for everyone *and* that reduce poverty. This is quite different from remedies that move students around but leave economic inequalities in place. Counter to the colonizing cultural deficit

approach of improving low-income children by mixing them with middle-class students, cultural recognition might include culturally relevant curricula and critical examinations of difference, symbolic forms of power, and the multiple histories and experiences of peoples in the USA and globally. This would be a step toward reconstructing knowledge, curriculum, and what counts as valued cultural capital for all students. A social justice approach to reconstructing schools and housing requires the full participation and self-determination of those affected – public housing residents and families, community members, youth, and committed teachers. Fraser calls this form of political representation a ‘post-bourgeois’ model of the public sphere that draws on the histories of women, workers, immigrants, and ‘ethnic minorities’ to build alternative discursive spaces in which to develop oppositional interpretations of their needs, or ‘counter publics’.

In relation to public housing, Janet Smith (2002) argues, ‘the goal should be to put real control in the hands of the people we are planning with to help them identify and implement real alternatives’ (3). In Fraser’s terms, this is ‘the politics of needs interpretation’ (9) – the power of marginalized communities to define their own needs. However, the ideal of full participation runs up against unequal material and cultural resources. Thus, full political representation requires economic and cultural reconstruction as well: ‘inclusion *per se* is not sufficient for democratic legitimacy; rather, *parity of participation* [emphasis original] is also required. Parity of participation, in turn, depends on two further social conditions: fair distribution of resources and reciprocal recognition of participants’ social standing’ (Fraser forthcoming, 11).

Such an alternative framework may seem utopian in a period in which neoliberal discourse limits policy to what is possible and ‘efficient’, and neoliberal solutions are posed as inevitable. From the standpoint of social justice, transcending this fatalism may be the most essential task. At the end of his life, Paulo Freire wrote against ‘an immobilising ideology of fatalism, with its flighty postmodern pragmatism, which insists that we can do nothing to change the march of social-historical and cultural reality because that is how the world is anyway. The most dominant contemporary version of fatalism is neoliberalism’ (1998, 26–7). Yet, the essence of an alternative vision is concretely present in Chicago in the voices of public housing residents, displaced families, and parents who have insisted on full participation in decisions which affect them, recognition of their knowledge and community wisdom, and a just distribution of resources.

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Notes

1. This is reflected in various forums and symposia that convene housing and school officials, key foundations, and local political actors — for example, Building Successful Mixed Income Communities: Education and Quality Schools, Invitational forum co-sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation and Metropolitan Planning Council in coordination with the Chicago Housing Authority, 17 November 2005.
2. Between July 2004 and September 2005 we attended and/or participated in monthly school board meetings, CPS public hearings, rallies and pickets, press conferences, community organization and teacher meetings and forums, coalition meetings, planning meetings, and congressional task force meetings. We had regular conversations with teachers and community organizations. From September 2005 to June 2006 Lipman participated in monthly coalition meetings and numerous community hearings and discussions with community organization members, teachers, parents, and local school staff.
3. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a development tool. The city declares an area ‘blighted’ and unlikely to be developed without the diversion of tax revenues. Once declared a TIF, property tax revenues for schools, libraries, parks and other public works are frozen for 23 years, and all growth in revenues above

this level is put in a TIF fund. TIF funds subsidize developers directly and pay for development infrastructure costs. As of fall 2007, Chicago had created 153 TIFs, many in the downtown and areas already undergoing real estate development (Smith 2006, 291). For extensive coverage of Chicago TIFs see *The Reader TIF Archive*: <http://www.chicagoreader.com/tifarchive/>.

4. For a counter perspective, see Schwartz and Tajbakhsh 1997; Bennett 1998; Bennett and Reed 1999; Smith 2000.
5. Non-exempt heads of household must work a minimum of 30 hours per week and all other non-exempt family members between ages of 18 and 61 must also work 30 hours per week or be in qualified alternative activities (e.g. enrollment in education program, training, verified job search, etc.) Public housing tenants are subject to drug testing housing keeping checks, specific behaviour rules, and exclusion if there are convicted felons in the family.
6. Kahlenberg is a fellow of the Century Foundation, a liberal think tank that supports 'a marriage of capitalism and democracy': <http://www.tcf.org/about.asp>.
7. Funding disparities range from annual per pupil expenditures of more than \$15,000 to less than \$4000 (Biddle and Berliner 2002). The wealthiest 10% of school districts spend almost 10 times more than the poorest 10% (Darling-Hammond 2004, 608). Spending in Illinois varies from a high of almost \$23,700 to a low of less than \$4500, which is almost \$2000 below the amount the state's Education Funding Advisory Board determined was necessary for an adequate education in the state (Center for Tax and Budget Accountability 2006).
8. These include: equalization of financial resources ('opportunity to learn' standards), changes in curriculum and testing (ending tracking to differentiate curriculum and reforming assessments and their use to focus on improving teaching rather than sorting students), investing in good teaching for all students (strengthening the knowledge base for teaching and ensuring that students have equal access to competent, caring, and supported teachers).

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