

Promises and pitfalls: A Delphi approach to understanding the effects of mixed income housing in New Orleans post Katrina

J. Sunshine Cowan, PhD, MPH, CHES Assistant Professor University of Central Oklahoma

Background

- Mixed-income models:
 - Those living in poverty as well as middle class residents^{1,2}
 - Focus of the federal government's response to negative public housing issues¹
 - William Julius Wilson: "'underclass' culture" (p. 72) was created in traditional public housing¹
 - Middle- and working-class role models for residents^{3, 1}



Introduction

- Successes and failures among mixed-income housing^{3, 1}
- Improvements "limited" with concern that successes may not be enough to curb the "poverty, joblessness, poor education, and violence and vandalism that characterize public housing in ... the nation" (p. 712)³
- Security and economic attainment viewed positively³
- Leadership changes and renovation investments created hardships³
- Many public housing advocates remain firmly against the mixed-income housing model due to:
 - Large costs of the program; and
 - Low numbers of original residents served⁴
- Problems include restrictive screening policies that punitively 'weed out' residents in great need⁵
- Unintended negative consequences occur when the following policies are misapplied:
 - Federal illegal drug policy;
 - Work requirements;
 - Housekeeping inspections; and
 - Extensive waiting lists⁵
- "Other than providing improved housing, mixed-income developments are unlikely to have social or economic benefits for the lowest-income tenants" (p. 932)⁵

Study Purpose

- This research highlights the effects of employing this type of housing in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina

Methods

- Delphi method:
 - "Rounds" of questions circulated through a panel who provide opinions regarding an issue^{6, 7, 8, 9}
 - Experts have in-depth knowledge or experience¹⁰
- Modified Delphi approach developed to measure key informants':
 - Knowledge, opinions, concerns and predictions on the public housing issue in New Orleans post Katrina
 - Perceptions regarding the ethics of current practices¹¹
- Key informants from areas of environmental law, public housing, community development, disaster recovery, and sociology were contacted¹¹
- Follow-up as a purposive/judgmental sample¹¹
- Qualitative responses gathered in first round, followed by feedback on a scale of 1-5 in subsequent rounds¹¹
- The final round sought consensus on factors where dissensus remained and provided an opportunity for experts to give qualitative feedback on their position¹¹
- Experts provided this information via electronic communication¹¹



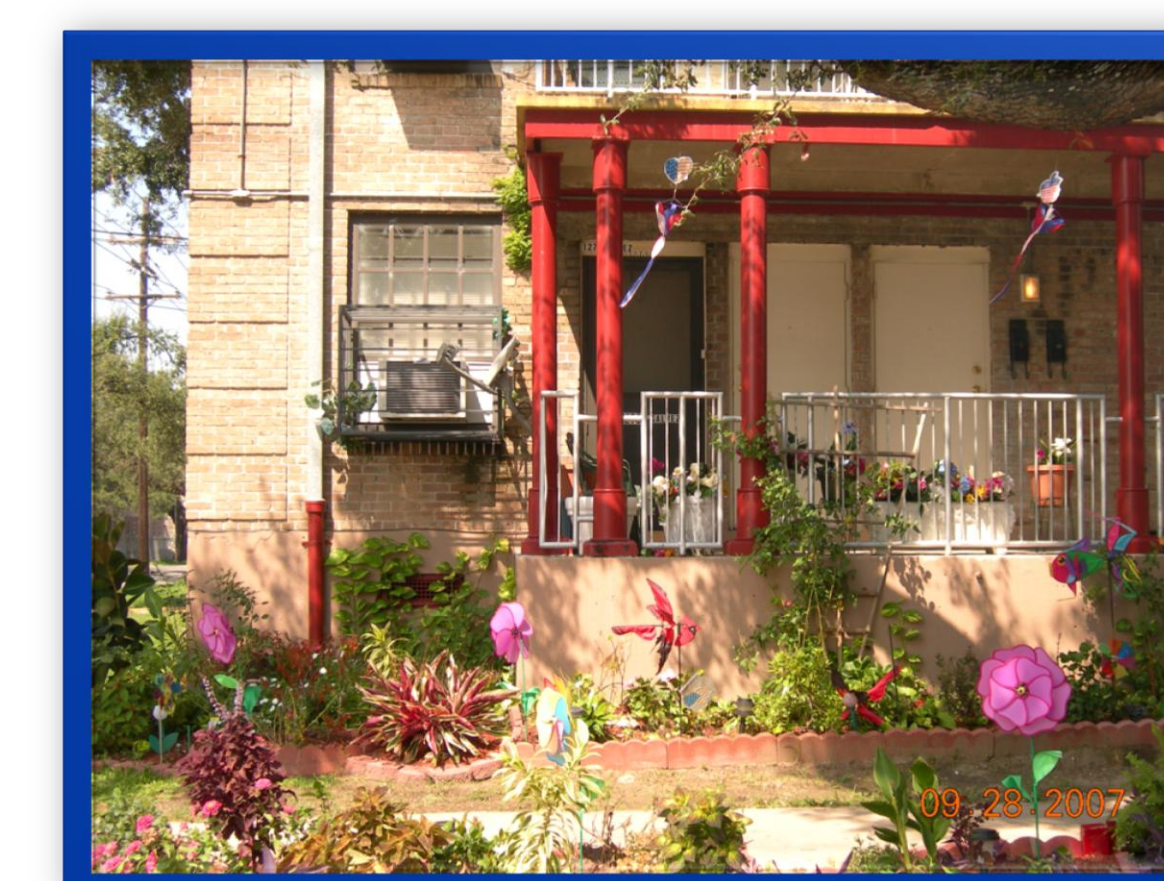
Results¹¹

- Experts agree:
 - Mixed-income communities developed out of the demolition of larger, more traditional housing units
 - A major issue is the lack of public housing resident involvement in decision making
 - Environmental concerns exist among new developments, including the mixed-income communities
 - Less public housing and growing homelessness rates are a result of public housing policies post Katrina
 - Providing affordable housing and getting vacant units opened quickly are primary concerns
 - The current national economic crisis and its impact on redevelopment is worrisome
- One expert stated, "The failure of affording the return of the original residents has been one of the high crimes against those who were displaced following Hurricane Katrina"

Limitations¹¹

- While a high level of consensus was reached, it is only among four experts in the New Orleans' area
- Only the opinions of three key experts were represented in the final round
- The study involved a narrow focus on professionals and advocates in the field
- "Consensus does not mean that the correct answer, opinion or judgment has been found" (p. 1010)¹²
- Rating of Likert scale items took place through electronic communication alone
- This study addressed only one disaster recovery effort at one point in time

Items of consent (final round)	Mean and standard deviation
Of current concern in the area of public housing in New Orleans is the mismanagement of funds.	Agree (X=4.00 s=.00)
Officials who represent populous (and not business) are missing from discussions or planning regarding the future policies and practices of public housing in New Orleans.	Agree (X=4.00 s=.00)
A key public health issue of concern regarding public housing in New Orleans is the displacement of public housing residents.	Strongly Agree (X=5.00 s=.00)



Discussion¹¹

- Mixed-income housing may have improved the quality of public housing (a matter still disputed among experts)
- Quantity of public housing available in New Orleans dramatically and negatively affected
- Many former public housing residents have been unable to return to their home (and cultural roots)
- Others who were on a waiting list prior to Katrina still remain without housing
- One key expert noted that "units are down from 7,200 to about 3,000 or so after redevelopment"
- Such actions create hardships and vulnerability for minorities, people with disabilities, single parent households, and the elderly
- Mixed-income housing creates environmental injustice
- Large public housing units closed although many advocates state that they were repairable (an item of consensus among key experts in this study)
 - Residents forced to evacuate from units and a vast majority have been prevented from returning home
- Mixed-income housing created an environment that is not responding to the vast numbers of citizens in need of public housing
- Some advocates have questioned the public housing decisions in New Orleans:
 - Was this an effort to reduce New Orleans' large population of poverty?
 - Was this used to gain valuable land space?

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