

Chapter 1: Introduction

We know that poverty by itself doesn't cause urban problems. It's the concentration ... that eventually strangles those neighborhoods economically, making it impossible for residents to have access to jobs, good schools, health care, transportation. These are living conditions that can, and too often do, foster hopelessness, despair, and antisocial behavior.

—Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton, 1995

If this concentration in Minneapolis continues at the same rate in the next 10 years as it has in the last 10 years, it will be to the proportion that you have today in Detroit and East Saint Louis—overwhelmingly people of color and certainly an over-concentration of drugs and crime.

—Matt Little, president of the Minneapolis NAACP, 1995

By 9 A.M., the protesters who had stood between the bulldozer and the two-story townhomes had already been arrested and taken away. The more than 300 units of low-cost public housing stood largely vacant, virtually in the shadow of downtown Minneapolis—about a mile from the city's financial and cultural heart. More than 600 other public housing units had already been demolished at the site over the previous three years. Some dated back to 1939; all were the product of previous urban revitalization efforts. By the 1990s, however, these homes showed the wear of 50 years, with structural problems made worse by shifting soil underneath. The neighborhood had become the city's most highly concentrated pocket of poverty, with more than 70 percent of the population living below the federal poverty level, and a median income one-third that of the city as a whole. Many residents lived in constant fear of crime and complained about the declining quality of their apartments and the neighborhood. Yet, on a warm June morning in 1999, the remaining protesters stood behind the construction fence, holding their signs and watching as the bulldozer began to tear through the homes. The prevailing question that day was whether the city was indeed clearing the way for the previous residents to have a chance at a better life or merely clearing the way for a new, more affluent class of residents to occupy this prime parcel of real estate.

The United States is in the middle of a large and coordinated effort to "deconcentrate" its urban poor. As the country's most recent antipoverty strategy, deconcentration raises a number of public policy controversies, ranging from the federal government's culpability in prevailing patterns of racial and class-based residential segregation to the proper role of public authority in shaping residential communities for both the poor and nonpoor. This book examines the premises underlying the deconcentration of poverty, along with its potential effects and political dynamics. While events occurring in cities across the country are discussed to a certain extent, we will focus primarily on a case study of the Minneapolis—Saint Paul metropolitan area.

Concentration of Poverty

The current policy initiative comes from the reality that poverty in America is becoming highly spatially concentrated. The number of neighborhoods in which a majority or near majority of residents live below the federal poverty level has increased dramatically over the past three decades. Unemployment rates in these communities are extremely high. Chances for a productive work life, and even the existence of positive role models in this respect, are relatively rare. Such intense concentration of disadvantage is not restricted, moreover, to our largest and oldest cities, but occurs in cities all over the country.

Various explanations exist for how this growing concentration of poverty came about. Some experts point to a history of racial discrimination and segregation in housing markets, while others point to economic shifts over the past three decades. Evidence shows that the mobility choices of the nonpoor (both black and white) have been a factor. Many have argued that the geographic distribution of subsidized housing in the United States has significantly contributed to concentrated poverty. No one, not even the federal government anymore, contests that in many cities public housing has been systematically placed in the poorest neighborhoods and in neighborhoods with the highest percentage of minority residents. Other publicly subsidized housing developments have also tended to be geographically concentrated in central cities and their more disadvantaged neighborhoods. This concentration of subsidized units has anchored poor and, increasingly, minority residents in these neighborhoods. Home-ownership subsidies, on the other hand, which were targeted to a more affluent and white population, were strictly directed to suburban areas for more than 25 years, facilitating the flow of white middle-class residents out of neighborhoods that were receiving public housing and its housing "cousins."¹

Further, little argument exists about the results of this extreme concentration of poverty. It produces a range of social problems whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For example, school delinquency, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, out-of-wedlock childbirth, violent crime, and drug abuse rates are all greater in these communities than would be predicted by a linear extrapolation of poverty effects. Something about the extreme concentration of disadvantage begets even more community and individual dysfunction. The explanation for such dysfunction is a combination of loosely connected hypotheses that, taken together, can be called the neighborhood-effects arguments. They provide slightly different accounts of the causes behind the effects about which they all agree—that neighborhood environment is critical in determining individuals' opportunities and experiences.

Concerns about the concentration of poverty, therefore, focus on the dysfunctional aspects of poor communities and on the barriers these produce for families trying to make their way out of poverty. However, there are larger fears as well. Concentrated poverty not only affects individual families, but also produces aggregate community effects. Crime rates increase, rates of private investment and economic life (at least legally sanctioned economic activity) decline, and the communities themselves become dysfunctional. Furthermore, residents fear the spread of this blight—its gradual, or not-so-gradual, diffusion throughout larger sections of a city. In Minneapolis, concerned citizens tend to point to the example most geographically proximate—Detroit. Efforts at deconcentrating the poor in Minneapolis stem, to a great extent, from what can be called "the Detroit Scenario." Detroit typifies a city overcome with neighborhoods of high poverty where the middle class has fled to relatively safe and secure havens of racial and class exclusivity. The city is wracked by high property-tax rates on ever-devaluing property, generating insufficient resources to fund essential city services and the elevated level of public and social services necessary to support an impoverished populace. Its schools are underfunded and inadequate, and its streets unsafe as drugs and crime have taken over whole communities. All the while, an affluent ring of suburbs, whose residents benefit from low tax rates because their communities lack a dependent population in need of public and social services, surround the city.

Deconcentration through Dispersal of Subsidized Housing

Given this analysis of urban problems, policymakers have responded with programs designed to deconcentrate the poor through a greater dispersal of subsidized-housing residents. In practice, this has meant

five different, though related, policy initiatives. First is the shifting of housing subsidies from project-based assistance (in which the subsidy is tied to a particular unit that is fixed in space—typically in lower-income neighborhoods) to tenant-based subsidies (in the form of vouchers that allow greater locational choice by families). Second is the federal government's attempt to refine tenant-based subsidies to facilitate the greatest possible dispersal of assisted families. Third is an effort, begun in 1990 and made permanent in 1998, to introduce a greater mix of incomes into existing subsidized public housing developments. Fourth is a small-to-modest effort at dispersing project-based subsidies into neighborhoods and communities that previously had little or none. Fifth is the government's largest effort aimed at demolishing or revitalizing extreme concentrations of public housing, scattering the previous residents with household-based subsidies and converting the project sites into mixed-use, mixed-income developments. Each initiative is present in Minneapolis and the Twin Cities region.

The Shift from Project-Based to Tenant-Based Subsidies

Since the mid-1970s, federal housing budgets have shifted away from funding the construction of new housing units or the rehabilitation of existing units to assisting families through vouchers. Furthermore, existing unit-based subsidies have actually been converted to household-based subsidies. This process typically involves either the demolition of housing units and the provision of household-based subsidies to the families in them, or the conversion of subsidized projects to market rate apartments (also accompanied by tenant-based assistance to the families residing there).

At the same time, the tenant-based subsidies themselves have changed. Section 8 certificates, the original form of tenant-based assistance, were gradually replaced by vouchers during the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, in 1998, Congress merged vouchers and certificates into a single form of assistance—the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher. The current voucher allows families to rent units above the fair market rent (FMR) as long as they pay the difference between the government-established FMR limit and the actual rent. This provision enables Section 8 families to expand their housing search to previously unaffordable neighborhoods.

Refinement of Tenant-Based Assistance

Since the late 1980s, Congress and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have tried to increase the "portability" of Section 8 assistance—that is, the ability of a household given Section 8

in one city to use it in a neighboring community. This policy allows those who receive their assistance from central-city jurisdictions to search suburban areas, thus facilitating a greater spread of assisted households.

Income Mixing in Public Housing

In 1990, Congress authorized a demonstration aimed at exploring the feasibility of introducing a wider mix of incomes into existing public housing projects. Then in 1998, Congress permanently changed the public housing program to require greater income diversity. The experience of the demonstration program is confined to a few cities, while the broader public housing reforms are too recent to have produced any measurable effects. Nevertheless, these initiatives signal a course change in public housing policy based on the deconcentration-of-poverty argument.

Scattered-Site Subsidized Housing

Tenant-based assistance has been instrumental in creating new "mobility" programs in cities around the country. In these programs, families are given vouchers that must be used in neighborhoods of low poverty (or in some cases, with low minority populations). In addition, families are given relocation counseling and assistance, and local agencies aggressively recruit property owners to expand the pool of potential relocation sites.

Not only have Congress and HUD introduced these first four policy initiatives through conventional means (i.e., legislation and the creation of new programs), but HUD has also been able to thread these initiatives into the negotiated settlements of several lawsuits filed against the agency in cities across the country over the past 20 years. In several of these negotiated settlements (consent decrees) in cases alleging discrimination in the planning and operation of the public housing program, HUD has "agreed," as a remedy to the complaints, to various combinations of the four initiatives. In most cases, concentrations of public housing have been demolished, and the subsidies converted to tenant-based Section 8 vouchers. Redevelopment of the sites typically incorporates a mixed-income approach. In some cases, mobility programs have been initiated. In other cities, HUD has agreed to a program of scattered-site public housing to reduce concentrations. Thus, these lawsuits, which HUD was facing as a result of its previous policies, and which had been filed in most cases as discrimination lawsuits independent of deconcentration, were nonetheless used by the agency to accomplish deconcentration-policy objectives. In a few cities, including

Minneapolis, the consent decrees incorporated all the elements of the deconcentration strategy.

Redevelopment

The largest single programmatic effort at deconcentrating poverty has been the HOPE VI program. Created in 1992, HOPE VI grew out of a national commission that focused on the worst public housing projects and proposed solutions for improving them. The program funds the re-development of large public housing projects across the country, and for the first few years, HOPE VI grants were restricted to the nation's most "distressed" public housing projects. Over time, however, HOPE VI has moved beyond those projects and now applies to any public housing project for which demolition and redevelopment costs are within 10 percent of rehabilitation costs. Typically, HOPE VI involves demolition of some or all of the units in a particular project and redevelopment of the site as a mixed-use, mixed-income development. The number of public housing units is reduced dramatically, owner-occupied housing is combined with rental housing on the site, and an income mix is achieved. Approximately 100,000 public housing units were scheduled for demolition in the first 10 years of program funding, with the net loss of units projected as high as 60,000 (Keating 2000).

What Is at Stake

Close analysis of a single campaign to deconcentrate the poor, such as the one in Minneapolis, provides us an opportunity to carefully consider the entire edifice of this policy approach. The profile of poverty neighborhoods, as it has emerged in both the social scientific literature and the popular press, is one of a devastated social and economic landscape, with pervasive poverty, an almost complete lack of healthy social and economic characteristics, and prevailing norms of lawlessness and antisocial behavior. The concentration-of-poverty discourse was developed and refined during the height of the nation's war on drugs, when fears of inner-city violent crime, drug-induced criminality, and social breakdown were at their greatest. One issue facing this policy approach, however, is whether or not the concentration-of-poverty scenario exaggerates conditions in poor urban neighborhoods. Are the images of lawlessness and social breakdown, if true even in a limited number of extreme cases, nevertheless a distortion of most poor communities? If so, is deconcentration on a national scale an extreme measure, ill suited to the problems of urban poverty?

A second issue is "choice." Is deconcentration about moving people out

of particular neighborhoods because the neighborhoods have been declared dysfunctional, or is it about providing housing choices for a class of people who have not had them in the past? This question may be, in many ways, the most difficult issue for policymakers and planners to address. It repeats a long-standing tension in federal housing policy and case law: In our policy efforts, are we trying to reduce incidences of discrimination that rob people of full choice in the housing market, or are we trying in a more proactive (and interventionist way) to desegregate? The desirability of forced racial desegregation is a matter of contention among both blacks and whites.

The desirability of forced income segregation in the housing market, however, is equally contentious. The empirical evidence on the effects of concentrated poverty suggests fairly convincingly that such high levels of income segregation negatively impact disadvantaged neighborhoods. Deconcentration, as the term suggests, is about achieving a greater level of income (and—because of the considerable overlap with race—racial) desegregation. However, when this objective is achieved through anything other than voluntary means, it produces significant political conflict. Do all or most of the residents of concentrated subsidized housing want to move to non-concentrated communities? Experience and even common sense might suggest otherwise. Do all or any of the residents of the "receiving communities"—the neighborhoods into which the poor will relocate—welcome the opportunity to increase the diversity of their neighborhoods? Not typically.

Yet, were we to limit our deconcentration efforts to expanding the mobility "choices" of the poor, what might be the result? Mobility choices are the result of a myriad of considerations by households, and depend on a constellation of market and social factors. Neighborhoods, for instance, provide a package of amenities, including employment access, parks, shopping, public transportation, and other public services. In addition, personal support networks and such market factors as the availability of desired rents and certain types of housing units affect location decisions. The poor relate to many of these amenities in ways fundamentally different from more affluent families. For example, buses are less important to the affluent than to poor families without a car. True choice in the housing market means more than providing a poor household with a rent subsidy. A Section 8 voucher may allow a poor family to afford an apartment that costs an additional \$300 per month. However, such a voucher does not put a bus line in front of the building, relocate the community college or affordable day care nearby, and bring along the family's network of friends and relatives for emotional and material support. Housing "choice" is a variable term in any market, highly constrained by factors

that deconcentration policy as currently formulated does not begin to address. Thus, whether the objective is desegregation or, more fundamentally, greater choice in the housing market, deconcentration efforts face significant constraints.

Third, efforts to deconcentrate the poor lead inevitably to discussions of the proper role of government in shaping neighborhoods and influencing the housing choice and mobility decisions of all households. This question spans the entire range of housing market interventions, from decisions to forcibly move and relocate poor people on the one hand, to using regulatory power to induce or discourage the development of low-cost housing in suburban areas on the other. What principles should guide such intervention—the desire for specific outcomes (i.e., desegregation) or the concern for equitable processes (i.e., antidiscrimination)? Strongly interventionist efforts such as deconcentration (and urban renewal before it) engage us in fundamental questions of community planning. What is the proper use of public authority when it comes to building communities? What are the public purposes involved in such intervention?

Deconcentration efforts require that communities with little or no low-cost housing make room for subsidized families from high-poverty, central-city neighborhoods. No long and rich history of this exists in the United States, however. Suburban communities have traditionally used their local control over land use to limit low-cost and subsidized housing. To succeed at a significant scale, deconcentration would require a modification of that approach. Modifications of local zoning and development prerogatives have been attempted only through regional governance or state growth management, both extremely rare. Instead, deconcentration policy has been about moving the poor, and only about moving the poor.

While deconcentration was designed to help rectify conditions in America's worst neighborhoods, housing markets since the late 1990s have become very heated, even in or near neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Efforts at deconcentration must walk a fine line between having enough impact to reverse neighborhood decline and establish a viable multi-income community on the one hand, and triggering gentrification on the other. Though gentrification may represent to some the ultimate success, the ultimate turnaround for a high-poverty neighborhood, it will not appreciably deconcentrate poverty as much as simply moving those concentrations to other places.

Beyond these more macro-level concerns, several notable issues arise at the strategy and policy level. The most overriding is the implicit

decision within a deconcentration approach that community development approaches are inadequate at best and outright failures at worst. In his widely read account of a half-century of urban community development policy, Nicholas Lemann (1994) pronounced that these policies had failed. Despite the expenditure of millions of dollars and decades of efforts, America's urban neighborhoods continued to decline. To some extent, this analysis complements the 1980s neoconservative attack on the antipoverty programs of the 1960s. According to Murray (1984), for example, these attempts to end poverty in place not only failed, but also actually exacerbated the problem by creating dependency among people and places on government assistance. Other experts, even those who do not quite share Murray's opinion, nevertheless suggest that community development has come up wanting. Orfield (1997), for example, argues that even community development efforts that are considered successful within the field have failed to turn around their central-city communities. Rusk (1999) argues that the "inside game" (community development) is destined to fail without a complementary strong "outside game" (regional efforts). The debate over addressing poverty in place as opposed to facilitating residents' exit from poor neighborhoods is not new. Nor has the question been resolved in any final sense. Forced deconcentration, however, is an emphatic statement. It stakes out a strong position on one side of the question. Deconcentration says that households should leave their central-city neighborhoods for their own good—that they would be better-off in neighborhoods shared with more affluent families.

Finally, disregarding alternative approaches or questions about the premises of deconcentration itself produces more questions. First, is deconcentration of poverty a step back from a fundamental attempt to eliminate poverty to a less-ambitious attempt to merely spread it around? Have we retreated from our effort to attack those processes, whatever they may be, that produce poverty? Proponents of deconcentration would argue that this is not wholly the case. The concentration-of-poverty argument suggests that living in these environments begets even greater social dysfunction than being poor in a predominantly nonpoor community. Thus, there are individual and social benefits to deconcentrating poverty. Troublesome social problems are reduced, and individual families may be better able to work their way out of poverty. They will be closer to jobs, less afraid to venture out to find work. They will benefit from better schools and richer (literally and figuratively) networks of social capital. In addition, their children will be better socialized to succeed. Therefore, according to proponents, deconcentrating poverty will also reduce poverty.

The relative emphasis on forced versus voluntary deconcentration is a

central issue. Voluntary mobility avoids many of the more problematic aspects of forced relocation, yet voluntary mobility will probably never achieve the scale necessary to have the impact that proponents desire. The issue of scale is central. The proper and necessary scale for these programs is probably several orders of magnitude higher than what can be achieved purely through voluntary means, and higher, too, than what is politically acceptable to most parties. Political opposition to deconcentration comes from both the right and the left; it comes from both the receiving communities and the communities being deconcentrated. Receiving communities want strict limits to the number of very low income families that are relocated in their midst. The high-poverty communities, too, are quite likely to resist large-scale deconcentration—on several grounds.

A final controversy generated by deconcentration revolves around its impact on the families involved and the communities affected. Proponents point to evidence that deconcentration leads to improvements in employment, education, neighborhood satisfaction, and sense of safety. Opponents point to examples of families in new communities experiencing harassment, higher levels of social isolation, and greater dissatisfaction with public services, such as public transportation, on which the poor rely heavily. Opponents also point to the potential detrimental impacts of subsidized housing units (or families) in receiving communities. Do these families (or units) devalue property, trigger decline in the public schools, or increase incivilities? Proponents suggest that research by and large does not support these claims, and that healthy communities can absorb these families and remain healthy.

The Consent Decree in *Hollman v. Cisneros*

In order to investigate the issues related to deconcentration in a comprehensive manner, this book examines closely one particular case. The city of Minneapolis pursued a deconcentration strategy through most of the 1990s. The initiative's centerpiece, though by no means the only element, was the consent decree in *Hollman v. Cisneros* (originally *Hollman v. Kemp*).

In 1992, attorneys for the Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court, alleging that the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA), HUD, and the city discriminated in siting public housing. The attorneys provided information that they felt showed a clear pattern among Minneapolis and HUD officials of concentrating family public housing projects in the near north neighborhood, the traditional center of the African-American community in the city. The plaintiffs were alleging what had already been

demonstrated for Chicago in the Gautreaux cases,² and what most who were knowledgeable about public housing nationwide knew characterized the program in many cities. When Bill Clinton took office, the law-suit's name was changed to reflect the new HUD secretary and the change of administration. However, settlement negotiations took a new direction, too.

The "new HUD" in 1993 wanted to take a fresh look at its subsidized (and especially public) housing programs. Part of that fresh look was a willingness to admit past mistakes in concentrating housing units and to attempt to correct those mistakes. HUD officials moved to settle a number of other cases against the agency essentially alleging the same thing: discrimination in the siting and placement of public housing in ways that furthered segregation. This approach was part of HUD's new theory about urban problems, based on the concentration-of-poverty argument.

In Minneapolis, what had been initiated as a discrimination lawsuit on behalf of public housing residents whose housing choices were restricted by the concentration of assisted units on the near north side became, during the process of settlement negotiations, an effort to deconcentrate poverty, facilitate a greater geographic spread of assisted units and assisted families, and reduce the number of public housing units on that site. Referring back to the time when the suit was first filed, the lead attorney for the plaintiffs remarked, "I don't think any of us had heard the term 'concentration of poverty'" (Furst 1996a). However, by the time the settlement was reached, deconcentrating poverty was its main objective.

The Hollman settlement-negotiation process fit seamlessly with the objectives of both HUD and the city of Minneapolis at the time. Many of the local officials who were ostensibly defendants in the process, from the city council to MPHA and HUD, shared with the plaintiffs the central goals of the agreement: reducing the concentration of public housing units on-site, and dispersing the very low income residents throughout the local housing market. An element of this consensus was a fundamental agreement that the reuse of the site should include a significantly reduced concentration of public housing units.

In January 1995, the agreement between the parties was announced, and HUD promised to allocate \$100 million toward settling the case (Diaz 1995). The agreement, ratified by all parties in April, covered four separate public housing projects—the Sumner Field townhomes, the Olson townhomes, and the Glenwood and Lyndale townhome projects. In all, these projects and the public land on which they stood encompassed 73 acres located just one mile from downtown

Minneapolis, directly adjacent to Interstate 94 and bisected by Olson Memorial Highway (State Highway 55).

The Near North Side Neighborhood

The near north side site is favorably positioned relative to the city's core and well served by transportation routes. At the same time, however, Interstates 94 and 394 and railroad tracks to the south of the site serve as important physical barriers between the near north side and downtown. In fact, in 1995 the site was virtually surrounded by major transportation routes or industrial properties. Furthermore, several other subsidized housing developments were also adjacent to the site. The Bryant high-rises (for seniors) were located immediately east of the Sumner Field and Olson projects, while several privately owned but publicly subsidized buildings were located northwest of the site.

There was little question that the city's greatest concentration of poverty was located at this site. As mentioned earlier, median household income was one-third that of the city as a whole, and more than 70 percent of all households functioned below the federal poverty level (the typical threshold in identifying areas of concentrated poverty is 40 percent). The percentage of the population receiving public assistance was six times that of the city as a whole. In addition, the residents of the project site were overwhelmingly (94 percent) nonwhite in a city that was 78 percent European-American at the time. There was little argument that the city over time had concentrated its public housing in that area, and in the near north side more generally. The site was home to four of the five family public housing townhome projects that existed in the city. In fact, the project area contained more than 900 units of public housing, 25 percent of the total non—scattered-site inventory owned by MPHA.

Census data for 1990 showed that concentration of poverty among African Americans was greater in the Minneapolis—Saint Paul region than in most other cities in the United States. In fact, as a whole, minorities in the Twin Cities were more likely to live in poverty than in any other major metropolitan area in the country (Draper 1993). The proportion of African Americans living in high-poverty areas of Minneapolis—Saint Paul had increased from 27 to 47 percent between 1980 and 1990 (Jargowsky 1996). The city's siting pattern had concentrated public housing developments not only on the city's near north side, but also along corridors on either side of Interstate 35W on the city's south side. These same neighborhoods housed the highest concentration of Section 8 participants as well. They were home to just 20 percent of the city's total population, but 51 percent of certificate

and voucher holders. Furthermore, these neighborhoods were 57 percent nonwhite in a city that was 78 percent white. At the time the lawsuit was filed, 58 percent of all scattered-site units were located in predominantly minority census tracts (Thompson 1996, 244). Thus, the evidence was clear on a number of dimensions that serious problems of residential segregation characterized the public housing program in Minneapolis, and affected minority populations in particular.

Conditions on the North Side

By 1995, the units in the aging north side project site were suffering from physical decline, neglect, and a host of design problems. Few housing officials or advocates were ready to contest such a characterization. The Star Tribune, the city's leading daily newspaper, ran stories of mice and cockroaches overwhelming some residents. According to one of the plaintiffs, "[Cockroaches are] inside my washer, they're in my radio, they're in my telephone, and when I turn on my microwave, they come running out. The roaches even used to get up in the smoke detector and set the thing off" (Morrison 1995).

The projects had been built on a floodplain through which Bassett Creek had run. When the projects were built, the creek was diverted through a storm sewer to connect with the nearby Mississippi River. Over the decades, the unstable soil of the former creek bed had led to shifting and cracking in the Sumner Field project buildings until, in some units, one could allegedly see outside through the cracks. The nature of the soils would later play a prominent role in the decision to demolish all the public housing units on the site (the consent decree only explicitly called for the demolition of the Sumner Field project).

Project building and site designs were also criticized. The HUD HOPE VI program officially adopted the view that much public housing built between 1930 and 1980 in the modernist tradition significantly and negatively affected residents' quality of life. The north side projects were offered as examples. Front doors were indistinguishable from back doors, and, as one Minneapolis reporter put it,

Garbage carts are as likely to stand by the one that looks most like the front door. Doors open directly to the outside, without a vestibule or any way to personalize the entry. Most of the original canopies have rotted away. Yards belong to everybody and, therefore, no one. And the 5.2 miles of sidewalks that crisscross the six square block project make all spaces open to strangers (Mack 1995).

The site included three square blocks (a so-called superblock) that interrupted the street grid and isolated the projects from the residential neighborhood to its west. All these features had, by the 1990s, come

to be seen as destructive of good community life, and obstacles to a safe residential experience. The federal government's official public housing revitalization program, HOPE VI, had officially condemned these design features and adopted the principles of "new urbanism," calling for the return of street grids and personalized spaces, and reintegration of public housing with its surrounding communities.

Deconcentration "Unwrapped"

This book analyzes recent efforts to deconcentrate poverty. In particular, the Minneapolis case is presented within the context of the national effort to disperse poor people throughout metropolitan areas. The argument presented here is based both on the Hollman consent decree, and, more generally, on the changes in local revitalization efforts triggered by the concentration-of-poverty argument. Chapter 2 lays out the concentration-of-poverty argument. The empirical and theoretical underpinnings of deconcentration are examined, as are the historical contextual conditions that gave rise to it. The strengths and the limits of the neighborhood-effects arguments also are discussed, as are arguments that are corollary to deconcentration, such as the impact of community design on community life.

Chapter 3 looks at the policy history—the evolution of public, mainly federal, efforts to provide poor families with housing choice and reduce concentrations of poverty. This history dates to the Johnson administration, although the first meaningful steps in this direction were taken in Nixon's first term. Though poverty deconcentration is a fairly recent initiative, its heritage is rooted in a range of policies that have evolved since the 1960s. The tour through these initiatives will take us from the efforts to produce scattered-site public housing to the regional initiatives of the 1970s and on to the development of the Section 8 program in 1974. This chapter also surveys the importance of the Gautreaux cases in Chicago and more recent policy shifts in tenant-based assistance. We will also briefly look at the development of the HOPE VI program. Finally, the chapter examines the impact of dispersal and deconcentration efforts in cities across the country. Studies of Gautreaux in Chicago, HUD's evaluation of Moving To Opportunity (MTO), collected evidence regarding scattered-site housing, and smaller studies of "vouchering out" and lawsuit settlements across the country provide substantial data on the effectiveness of these approaches. We evaluate deconcentration on its own terms: Does it improve the lives of the families deconcentrated, does it have benign effects on the receiving communities, and does it improve conditions in the target communities? Indeed, does deconcentration clear the way for poor families to improve their lot in life?

Chapter 4 shifts our analysis to Minneapolis. The Twin Cities region is home to one of the nation's leading advocates of deconcentration, Democratic State Senator Myron Orfield. As a state representative from a south side district during the early 1990s, Orfield successfully shepherded regional fair-share housing legislation through the Minnesota legislature three years in a row. In particular, his efforts were notable for their comprehensiveness. He advocated tax-base sharing; reform of the regional governing body, the Metropolitan Council; and efforts to rationalize regional funding for infrastructure as well. All these initiatives were aimed at a better share of costs, responsibilities, and development support between the center of the region and its fast-growing periphery. Orfield's lasting political contribution was the realization that inner-ring suburbs were facing many of the same issues of decline that central cities had been facing for decades. He molded a winning legislative coalition out of central-city representatives and legislators from the inner-ring suburbs. Though Orfield's legislation was vetoed three years running by a governor whose political base was in the developing suburbs, Orfield has had a profound and lasting impact on the politics of the Twin Cities. In fact, in 1995 the legislature passed and the governor signed a compromise fair-share law (written by two other legislators, but dubbed "Orfield Lite" by locals in tribute to its obvious lineage). The implementation of this law and continuing efforts to get suburban communities to accept low-income housing are the subject of chapter 4.

During Orfield's years of tireless advocacy for regional equity, he spread the word among countless community organizations in the suburbs and the two central cities. The spread of this message, coinciding as it did with an unprecedented rise in violent crime in Minneapolis—much of which the public associated with gangs and drugs—was wide and far. By 1995, few community activists and even fewer local politicians were unfamiliar with the dangers of concentrated poverty. This pervasive concentration-of-poverty argument fundamentally shaped local community development politics in the city for the rest of the decade and beyond.

Chapter 5 examines the "new community development" resulting from these changing circumstances and the new awareness of concentrated poverty that shaped local revitalization efforts in the 1990s. Central-city community groups feared more low-cost housing in their neighborhoods, arguing that they had done their fair share already. Minneapolis and Saint Paul council members began to talk about the need for regional approaches to affordable housing, often as a substitute for their own efforts. Officials in the central cities and in

some suburban areas began to favor the demolition of some subsidized and low-cost developments in the name of deconcentrating poverty. Affordable-housing advocates found themselves on the defensive, even in communities that had traditionally supported housing rehabilitation efforts.

The main event in deconcentrating the poor in Minneapolis, discussed in chapter 6, was the consent decree in *Hollman v. Cisneros*. Settled in 1995, the Hollman decree incorporates every form of deconcentration extant: demolition and forced displacement, mixed-income redevelopment, scattered-site subsidized development, and voluntary mobility. Though not the only site in the country to adopt all these approaches, Minneapolis is the one in which implementation has progressed most rapidly. Thus, the north side of Minneapolis provides a perfect opportunity to analyze the effects of these different approaches and the politics of a comprehensive deconcentration strategy.

In 1995 the north side site was home to more than 900 units of public housing, by far the city's largest concentration of poverty. By 2000, every one of those units had been demolished and the families relocated to other homes and apartments throughout the region. Such massive dislocation did not occur without political conflict—considerable political conflict, as it turned out. Three groups, in particular, opposed demolition and redevelopment. Southeast Asian immigrants, who by 1995 made up the largest single ethnic group in the north side public housing, opposed demolition because, for them, spatial concentration was an asset. African-American activists on the north side opposed redevelopment because they feared gentrification and the loss of a historically black community. Affordable-housing activists also opposed demolition because of the loss of 700 units of low-cost housing at a time when the city was experiencing double-digit appreciation in housing values and the vacancy rate in rental units was less than 2 percent. The public debate on deconcentration was, by most measures, well informed and intelligent. The debate illustrated virtually all the potential controversies inherent in the strategy and is the subject of chapter 6.

Chapter 7 examines the implementation of Hollman deconcentration efforts, including relocation of north side families, construction of replacement housing in "non-concentrated" parts of the metropolitan area, and the Special Mobility Program (SMP) that moved families into these non-concentrated neighborhoods. Relocation progressed rapidly to facilitate demolition. Families were not restricted as to where they could move, though relocation counselors tried to facilitate moves to preferred neighborhoods and housing units. Both replacement housing

and the SMP, however, involve the placement of housing and families in non-concentrated neighborhoods. In that respect, officials implementing these elements of the decree have faced significant geographical limits. And while replacement housing developments have come about slowly and met with stiff resistance, the Twin Cities' experience does exemplify metrowide cooperation. The progress of this particular element in the decree has been greater in the Twin Cities, in fact, than in most other regions in the country. The Special Mobility Program, however, has fared quite differently. While HUD made more than 900 vouchers and certificates available for SMP candidates, fewer than 100 have been successfully used, even after six years. This chapter examines the difficulties of implementing both replacement housing and the Special Mobility Program.

"Hollman families"—those displaced on the north side and those using mobility certificates and living in replacement units—have been scattered throughout the metropolitan area. Some have participated voluntarily; they signed up to participate in the program and used a mobility certificate or moved into one of the replacement units. Others have participated because a bulldozer knocked down their public housing apartment. Chapter 8 discusses what has happened to these families and how they feel about it.

The concluding chapter assesses the deconcentration of poverty, not only on its own terms (how well it serves the families and the neighborhoods involved), but also by other criteria. Critics of deconcentration argue that it constitutes a misguided repetition of previous mistakes from urban renewal, when government power cleared the way for reuse of valuable urban land near the core of American cities. Does deconcentration repeat past mistakes? Can deconcentration efforts, as they are currently conceived, ever achieve the scale necessary to make a measurable dent in the country's race- and class-based settlement patterns? What are the political implications? How does the language of deconcentration change neighborhood planning and politics?

Messy Business

After giving a public talk on deconcentration in 1996, I was asked whether it was not simply overwhelmingly self-evident that the problems of America's central-city neighborhoods of poverty should be solved by deconcentration. The empirical evidence had, by then, shown quite convincingly that such concentrations are bad. Other empirical evidence (at that point, primarily the Gautreaux program) had shown that deconcentration benefits families that participate. I agreed then and still do, for that matter, that the logic is compelling.

What the Minneapolis case provides, however, is an understanding of the difference between that rather clean logic of deconcentration on the one hand, and its messy reality on the other. Deconcentration, as it happens to people and communities, is not a clean process. As it plays out on the streets, deconcentration exposes fundamental questions of urban planning and politics. Those in a position to decide whether deconcentration remains a policy option should, at the very least, regard these questions as seriously as they regard the logic behind the strategy.

NOTES

1. Other housing programs include subsidy programs for low-income people, such as Section 221 (d)(3) and Section 236.

2. In 1969, a U.S. district court ruled in *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority* that the Chicago Housing Authority had discriminated in the placement and leasing of public housing in Chicago. In a related case, *Gautreaux v. Harris*, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered a regional remedy for the discrimination. See chapter 3.