

Spring 2016 Capstone

**Modern Urban Renewal and
Residential Segregation in New York City**

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URB 699: Urban Studies Capstone
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June 20, 2016

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Abstract

This capstone addresses the issue of residential segregation, particularly as it pertains to the modern urban renewal projects in New York City to determine if modern urban renewal perpetuates residential segregation.

The case study for this capstone is the 1994 Melrose Urban Renewal Area in the Bronx, a 33-block neighborhood whose boundaries include East 163rd Street on the north; Third, St. Ann's and Brook Avenues on the east; East 156th through East 159th Streets on the south; and Melrose, Courtlandt and Park Avenues on the west. The residents of Melrose organized as Nos Quedamos (We Stay) and formulated a plan that catered to the needs of the existing community and would attract new residents who enhance the socioeconomic character of the community, maintaining the current racial and ethnic levels.

New York City is the most highly segregated metropolitan area in the United States, but has also seen a decrease in segregation in the past 20 years (Glaeser and Vigdor 5). However, traditional segregation metrics are not applicable to individual neighborhoods; therefore, so-called “effects of segregation” are analyzed in this study in an effort to gain a more thorough understanding of the intersection between urban renewal and residential segregation as it affects an individual neighborhood. The negative connotations associated with residential segregation have evolved over time as communities such as Melrose have asserted control over their communities and redefined urban renewal and segregation. Therefore, we conclude that, yes-modern urban renewal can perpetuate segregation, but not in the way that we think, and it is not necessarily a negative outcome of urban renewal. The answer is far more complex and involves further discussion of race, ethnicity, neighborhoods, and historical context.

Introduction

Statement of Problem

In 1966, a conference at the White House concluded that, “the alienation of the ghetto dweller has become a national crisis...public housing and urban renewal have aggravated rather than ameliorated the degree of segregation and congestion” (Goering 130). Urban renewal, the destruction of minority communities and their relocation to isolated areas and public housing, has resulted in high levels of residential segregation that have had a profound effect on the upward mobility of minorities (Carr and Kutty, *Segregation: The Rising Costs for America* 6).

Since that 1966 conference, the President’s Task Force on Urban Renewal issued specific objectives and recommendations for improving urban renewal by aiming to decrease polarization and strive for true integration of neighborhoods (The President's Task Force on Urban Renewal 4). This has resulted in numerous policies and projects intended to address the issue of segregation in urban areas in order to promote the increase of social and economic mobility for residents of segregated and impoverished communities.

One such policy is the practice of setting aside 50% of affordable housing units for neighborhood residents in New York City, often through modern urban renewal policies designed to prevent the displacement of residents and increase affordable housing options in an increasingly unaffordable city. This summer, a discrimination lawsuit against New York City was filed, claiming that this policy limits low-income and minority residents from moving into White, affluent areas, perpetuating residential segregation (Navarro).

The purpose of this capstone is to revisit the issue of residential segregation, particularly as it pertains to the effects of modern urban renewal projects in New York City. My objective is to

determine if modern urban renewal projects continue to perpetuate residential segregation despite the mandates of the President's Task Force on Urban Renewal and other integration policies that have been enacted since 1966.

In this paper, I explore the 1994 Melrose Urban Renewal Area in the Bronx, where residents pushed back against the city's attempts to redevelop the neighborhood without community consultation or consent. The Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area is a 33-block neighborhood whose boundaries include East 163rd Street on the north; Third, St. Ann's and Brook Avenues on the east; East 156th through East 159th Streets on the south; and Melrose, Courtlandt and Park Avenues on the west. The original Melrose Urban Renewal plan would have resulted in desegregation through gentrification and the displacement of the predominately Latino community who remained in the neighborhood throughout the turbulent 1970s and 80s. The residents of Melrose organized as *Nos Quedamos* (We Stay) and formulated a plan that catered to the needs of the existing community and would attract new residents who enhance the socioeconomic character of the community, rather than uproot it and change its demographics.

The research will show that New York City continues to maintain high levels of segregation, but has also seen the highest decrease in segregation in the past 20 years. Traditional segregation metrics are not applicable to individual neighborhoods; therefore, in addition to measuring race and ethnicity, I also study some of the so-called "effects of segregation" in the Melrose Urban Renewal Area. Some of the key findings show increases in educational attainment and median income, with a decrease in the percentage of the population living below the poverty line, all of which are contrary to the negative effects traditionally associated with segregated neighborhoods (Yinger, *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost: The Continuing Costs of Housing Discrimination*).

It is also determined that measurements of race are particularly difficult in Hispanic / Latino communities, because the racial divisions within the community are markedly diverse and subjective. The data shows that the Hispanic / Latino population in Melrose continues to represent the majority of the population after urban renewal, more than any individual race (U.S. Census Bureau via Geolytics).

An important conclusion we have taken from this study is that, yes modern urban renewal can perpetuate segregation, but not in the way that we think. The negative connotations associated with residential segregation have evolved over time as communities like Melrose have asserted control over their communities and redefined urban renewal and residential segregation. These actions have allowed Melrose to maintain the racial and ethnic levels that define the cultural fabric of their community, while improving upon the perceived negative effects of segregation through urban renewal. Therefore, the answer to the question of whether modern urban renewal projects perpetuate neighborhood segregation in NYC is determined by a complex series of factors that vary by race, ethnicity, neighborhood, and historical context.

Definition of Terms

This discussion of segregation and urban development lends itself to the usage of language specific to the field of urban studies that require definition.

Segregation – Merriam Webster defines segregation simply as “the practice or policy of keeping people of different races, religions, etc., separate from each other.” In the United States, this was a legal practice enforced through Jim Crow laws after the reconstruction period following the Civil War and served as the catalyst for the Civil Rights movement. Today the law prohibits segregation, but segregated conditions continue to exist in cities, neighborhoods, schools, churches, sports, and the workplace. The word segregation characterizes the lives of many

minorities in America and is the link to understanding the perpetuation of urban poverty in America, the present lack of affordable housing in safe and economically prosperous suburban communities, and other disparate socio-economic factors (Seitles).

Residential segregation – Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton define residential segregation generally as “the degree to which two or more groups live separately from one another, in different parts of the urban environment” (Denton and Massey 282). A more specific definition comes from their analysis of various metrics used to measure segregation, which is addressed later in this capstone. They consider a group to be residentially segregated if it is “unevenly distributed, tightly clustered, and minimally exposed to majority members” (Denton and Massey 283). For purposes of this study, I am using the scale of the dissimilarity index that measures evenness of racial and ethnic distribution. Therefore, I define a neighborhood as residentially segregated if one race or ethnicity constitutes more than 50% of that neighborhood’s population.

Desegregation – Seeks to make people of color full recipients of the American dream through formal efforts to eliminate policies and practices that effectively promote segregation, regardless of outcome. Desegregation is not necessarily designed to achieve integration and is the opposite of segregation. (Maly 6)

Integration – Creating or sustaining interracial mixing in residential settings in hopes of achieving greater interracial interaction. (Maly 6)

Self-Segregation – For purposes of this capstone, self-segregation is defined the voluntary separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group in specific neighborhood or community. The perceived “fear of hostility” is one of the reasons for self-segregation, along with a desire to live among common customs and languages (Gould Ellen 269).

Gentrification – In this case, Michael T. Maly’s use of the Neil Smith’s definition of gentrification succinctly describes the proposed urban renewal of Melrose by the city of New York before the intervention of Nos Quedamos. In this definition, gentrification is described as “the process by which the poor and working class neighborhoods in the inner city are refurbished via an influx of private capital and middle-class homebuyers and renters in neighborhoods that had previously experienced disinvestment and a middle-class exodus” (Maly 240-241).

Urban Renewal – Urban renewal is the government program of land acquisition, replanning, demolition or rehabilitation, and resale (The President's Task Force on Urban Renewal). Described earlier as the destruction of minority communities and their forced relocation to isolated areas and public housing, urban renewal has resulted in high levels of segregation that have had a profound effect on the upward mobility of minorities (Carr and Kutty, Segregation: The Rising Costs for America 6). Modern urban renewal intends to reverse the historic impact of segregation on minority communities through desegregation and integration, but is often associated with gentrification and displacement.

Historical Context

In order to analyze topics such as segregation and urban renewal, it will be useful to examine them in their historical context. The United States has a long and storied history of segregation that begins with the abolition of slavery and the ways in which the government and society managed the housing of thousands of “new citizens.” Everything from spatial considerations to employment opportunities to prejudicial attitudes must be taken into account in order to fully consider outcomes of segregation in America.

Interwoven into the issue of segregation in cities lies urban renewal and the legacy that it has established. The term urban renewal implies there is a problem associated with a particular area

that requires a restructuring, renovation, and frequently, the relocation of current residents. This was the case when the first urban renewal projects cleared out racial and ethnic “slum areas,” creating the segregated ghettos with which we are now familiar. Today when cities target historically segregated communities without their consultation for urban renewal, it serves as an insult to the people who live and work in the neighborhoods that they were segregated into and diminishes the value of the work that many communities have put into maintaining and preserving their homes. This has led to community led organization and resistance to urban renewal, such as was the case for Nos Quedamos in Melrose.

While a full account of the complexities of residential segregation and urban renewal is beyond the scope of this project, it is still useful to examine modern iterations of segregation and urban renewal in considering a single neighborhood in New York City. Segregation and urban renewal can be contextualized in a new light and with hopes of igniting further discussion on the subject.

Background

Theoretical Framework

Two of the earliest theorists on segregation and spatial theory in the development of cities are Ernest Burgess and Robert Park. Their work, known as the Chicago School, revolves around theories on urban environment and sociology. Burgess and Park based their theories on ethnographic research that they conducted in the city of Chicago in the early 20th century. They formulated their Concentric Zone Theory through their belief that the urban environment is an ecological environment; lending itself to an organic evolutionary process that is analogous to Darwinian Theory.

Burgess, Park, and another Chicago School theorist, Roderick D. McKenzie authored the book The City, where Park states that “personal tastes and convenience, vocational and economic interests, infallibly tend to segregate and thus to classify the population of great cities...neither designed nor controlled” (Burgess, Park and McKenzie 5). The growth and population distribution of urban areas in particular reflect

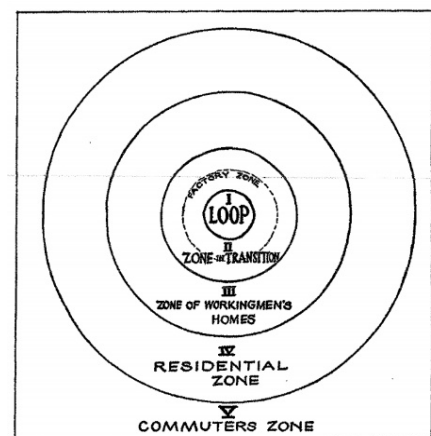


Figure 1: Concentric Zones (Burgess, Park and McKenzie 51)

distinctive attributes that are not indicative of the dynamic prevalent in rural settings.

Some of these attributes include residential mobility, mass transportation, and job opportunities. One of the most significant attributes relative to their differences in the work environment is the urban emphasis on diversity and the wider division of labor in which individuals are compelled to concentrate their efforts on specific, specialized tasks (Park 4). This departure from the traditional agrarian economy lends itself to a significant variance in income, resulting in a spatial

differentiation of urban areas into economic zones (Brown 1). The chart developed by Burgess illustrates these zones as concentric circles representing the growth of a city from its central business district in the center moving outward to encompass a transitional zone with light manufacturing encroachment, a working class zone, a residential zone, and a commuter zone...with each zone generating higher income levels as they move further out.

Another area of significance analyzed through this theory is the creation of natural social groups and social areas. Parks and Burgess are referring to the growing immigrant population at the time and their perceived desire to self-segregate to ease the transition to American language and culture through a familiar environment. As immigrants gain social and economic mobility in their respective cities, they progress from their communities into an advanced economic zone. Parks and Burgess conclude that the geographical design of the city is organic growth; responding to cultural and occupational changes that take place over time (Park 8).

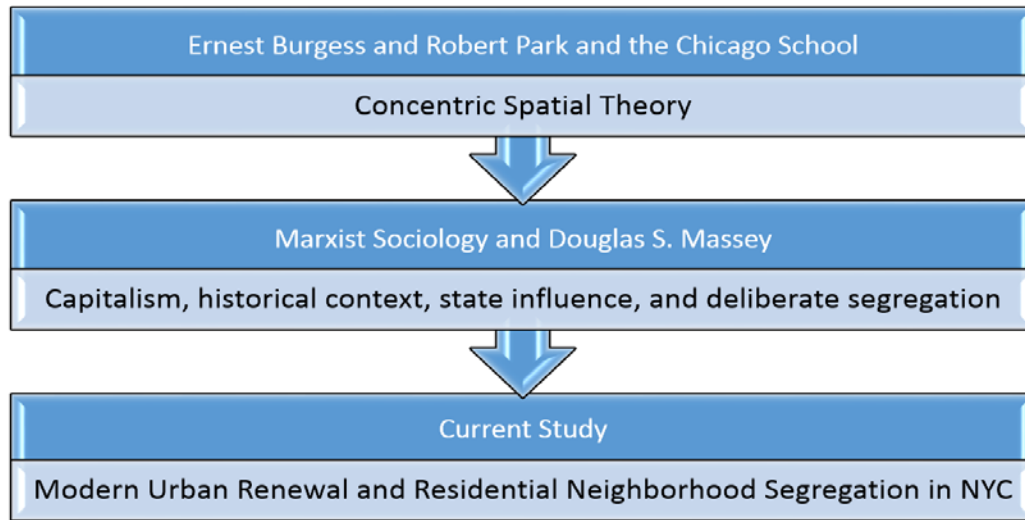
The theories put forth by Parks, Burgess and the Chicago School are classified as neo-classical and are opposed by neo-liberal Marxist sociologists who theorize that the development of cities must be observed through their respective historical context, recognizing the critical role that social and political forces play. Residential segregation in this context is therefore a reflection of an overarching capitalist society, which accounts for the disparities that were prevalent at the time of their research during the mid-century (Bógus 3). Marxist theory recognizes the state as a key player in the spatial composition of cities through its influence over the housing market and land use regulations (Richardson 216-217).

Recent research on segregation builds on Marxist sociology and considers the emancipation of slaves and the Great Migration of free Blacks from the south in the spatial organization of urban areas. Douglas S. Massey, one of the foremost experts in the field of segregation, has written

extensively on this topic and is cited frequently in this study. In his writings, Massey asserts that residential segregation in the United States was far from a natural occurring phenomenon, explicitly influenced by the state and institutional racist practices. Massey emphatically claims that there has been a “series of deliberate historical decisions to deny Blacks full access to urban housing and to enforce their spacial isolation in society” (Massey, *Orgins of Economic Disparities: The Historical Role of Housing Segregation* 39). These decisions were individual, collective, and government policies all designed to fully separate Black families from the rest of White America.

This capstone examines segregation levels in New York City, and the Melrose Urban Renewal Area in particular, to gauge its effects on the community. Residential segregation has historically been perpetrated by government influence and intervention through urban renewal, as per Massey’s theory. However this case provides an alternative view of residential segregation and proposes that the economic and cultural influences highlighted in the Chicago School theory not only result in self-segregation, but shows us that self-segregation can in fact lead to positive growth and development in a community, such as will be shown in the Melrose case study.

The literature review that follows will provide background on the history of segregation, which supports Massey’s theory but will also show the organic growth of the city as it responds to events and infrastructure growth. Both theories, along with the historical context, play a significant role in the development of the Melrose Urban Renewal Area.



Literature Review

For the background purposes of this study, we will summarize the early stages of modern residential segregation in the United States following the Great Migration of former southern slaves to the growing industrial cities of the North during most of the 20th century. As part of this review, we will look at the urban renewal programs instituted by the state and federal government to contend with the rapidly growing population and the community interventions designed to rehabilitate deteriorating segregated neighborhoods. Next we will discuss the effects of segregation, particularly on education, income, and poverty. Finally, as a lead in to the case study analyzed in this paper, we talk about segregation in the 21st century as it pertains to Hispanics / Latinos, self-segregation, and gentrification.

History of Segregation: The Great Migration, Urban Renewal, and Community Intervention

It is important to note that there was a short-lived period of time during Reconstruction when it appeared that the integration of former slaves into American society was ensuing, but for the withdrawal of federal troops after 1876 and the implementation of Jim Crow laws in the south. The concentric zones described by the scholars of the Chicago School did not yet exist and urban

manufacturing centers were in the beginning stages, therefore, there was “little geographic differentiation between places of work and residence” much less racial segregation (Massey, *Origins of Economic Disparities: The Historical Role of Housing Segregation* 41).

The Great Migration commenced with the rise of industrialization in the North and the onset of the world wars. These events produced an unprecedented need for labor that far exceeded the current immigration population. The implementation of Jim Crow laws provided an additional incentive for Black families to migrate north, where they believed that the racial climate was more accepting for them. What they discovered instead was their newfound role as strikebreakers in the new labor movement, which created conflict and competition for employment. Such conflict coincided with the Great Depression, inviting discrimination from both middle and working class Whites (de Souza Briggs).

Infrastructure development such as highways and public transit provided alternatives to inner city life for business owners, management, and more affluent (White) residents, leading to the development of suburban communities and a phenomenon known as “White Flight” from urban areas. Real estate market practices such as redlining, a method used to determine the appraisal / value of homes based on residential maps that assigned colors to neighborhoods to signify economic and physical conditions, were used to move Whites out of cities and create urban ghettos. Blockbusting was another discriminatory practice that encouraged Whites to relocate by moving Black families into White communities in order to lower property values.

This led to the expansive uncontrolled growth of substandard housing and crowded living conditions known as urban sprawl that made cities undesirable and resulted in financial strain. In order to contend with this, many cities enacted slum clearance and urban renewal programs to relocate Blacks and immigrants from their already segregated communities into designated

remote neighborhoods. Entire neighborhoods were demolished in order to make way for venues such as Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in Manhattan. Many of these urban renewal programs also included the construction of public housing projects and other low income housing developments in these newly segregated areas of the city to accommodate the populations that were displaced.

These urban ghettos suffered from subpar or lack of services from the city, high poverty levels, low performing schools, rising crime rates, and were extremely isolated from the rest of the city (Quillian). Massey notes that “before 1940, no racial or ethnic group in American history had ever experienced an isolation index above 60%, but by 1970 this level was normal for Blacks in large American cities” (Massey, *Origins of Economic Disparities: The Historical Role of Housing Segregation* 75). President Lyndon B. Johnson formally declared a war on poverty and established the Kerner Commission to address the issues facing urban communities. The commission’s report confirmed that segregation had reached an all time high and was perpetuated through institutionalized racism (Maly 29).

Pro-integration movements in cities such as New York took hold, as Black residents came together in an organized effort to take control of their impoverished, crime ridden, segregated communities. Organizations such as the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation worked with the city, state and federal government to provide mixed-income housing, workforce and youth development, small business services, and other resources that the community lacked. While their focus was not on racial integration, this new interventionist approach by these organizations proved that neighborhood stabilization and racial intergration was possible with community involvement (Maly 17). Other segregated neighborhoods soon followed suit and community development corporations have since become the conduit through which many

affordable housing and community projects are instituted today. As part of this study, we will examine the founding of one such organization in the Bronx, Nos Quedamos.

Effects of Segregation: Education, Income, Poverty

Residential segregation physically and socially isolates people and families from the city around them, perpetuating racial and ethnic prejudices. The consequences of residential segregation have far-reaching effects on educational attainment, income, and poverty levels that can persist for generations (M. H. Schill).

John Yinger illustrates the connection between his analyses of elements of discrimination, which is recreated in Figure 2 with the elements reflected in this capstone. The illustration shows that each of these elements affect and are affected by every other element in the chart. The discrimination elements are clearly not indicative of the entirety of the effects of residential segregation – Yinger highlights additional

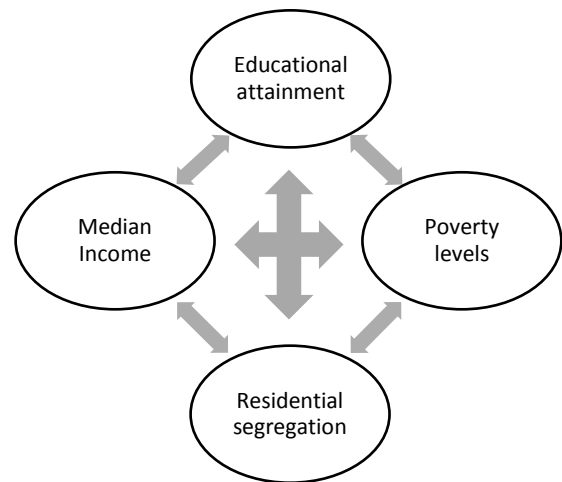


Figure 2: Elements of the Discrimination System – recreated for this study (Yinger, *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost* 137)

elements, which he also notes are not comprehensive. This illustration instead portrays a sampling of the data analyzed for the Melrose neighborhood in this capstone.

To explain the circular effects of segregation for these discrimination elements, we begin with education. Yinger states that the gap in educational attainment levels between Blacks and Whites has closed over the years and is now “considered small by historic standards” but remains significant (Yinger, *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost* 137). Children who live in segregated communities must attend their local schools, which often provide subpar educations.

When children do not receive a quality education, their prospects for higher education diminish, which has a significant effect on their income earning potential later in life. This can cause them to live below the poverty line, which in turn will steer them toward the same segregated neighborhoods, causing their children to attend similar underperforming schools, resulting in a cycle of poverty has the likelihood of passing on to the next generation.

Segregation in the 21st Century: Hispanics / Latinos, self-segregation, and gentrification

In many ways, the picture of segregation in the United States today has changed and in other ways, it has remained very much the same. New housing policies have outlawed long standing residential segregation practices, and in many cities, the newfound desire to live in urban centers has trumped the fear and aversion of living among different races and ethnicities. However, new and less prevalent patterns of segregation have emerged, testing the methods in which we measure segregation and questioning the inherent value of integration efforts.

Ethnic immigrant enclaves of Hispanics / Latinos have maintained steady levels of segregation since the 1980s (Gould Ellen 261). They are less segregated than Blacks are, however they face different types of discrimination due to language barriers and immigration status. Capturing historically accurate data on the segregation of Hispanics / Latinos in particular has proven difficult due to methods that calculate their population against Whites, (which we discuss in the limitations section of this study) as well as the way that the U.S. Census Bureau collects data for the Hispanic / Latino population.

Self-segregated communities have historically existed as transient immigrant communities; however, the rise of community development corporations and a shortage of real estate have resulted in new forms of self-segregated communities. These communities view integration efforts as the first step towards displacement and gentrification of the neighborhoods that they

have worked so hard to maintain. In New York City, neighborhoods such as Harlem and Bedford Stuyvesant had seemingly accepted their segregated status and embarked on efforts to own their communities. Today we have seen the racial composition of these neighborhoods begin to change and real estate prices have displaced numerous businesses and residents. We can see the end result of these changes in neighborhoods such as Williamsburg and other parts of Brooklyn that have fully succumbed to gentrification.

Many of these changes can be attributed to population growth and economic prosperity – the organic expansion of cities theorized by the Chicago School. However, many of these changes are also a direct result of government intervention and modern urban renewal. In this capstone, we will look at the overall segregation levels in New York City, and examine one particular community who has successfully countered the city's urban renewal plan with a plan of their own. An examination of the plan will determine if it has achieved its stated goals and an analysis of census data for demographic changes affected by segregation will answer the question: Does modern urban renewal perpetuate segregation in NYC?

Contributions to the Field

Segregation and urban renewal have had a profound impact on physical growth of cities and the sociological development of urban residents. The topic and study of segregation sheds light on the historic role that racism and prejudice have played in the development of cities in this country for decades. The negative effects of segregation and urban renewal are far reaching in terms of education, poverty levels, and median income, however modern urban renewal attempts to desegregate communities may not be the answer. The findings of this study portray residential segregation and urban renewal in a different light by analyzing what happened when one community assumed control of their future and New York City listened. Self-segregation may

not necessarily result in the negative outcomes that we have come to expect. It is not to assert that self-segregated communities are the future of urban renewal, but rather to consider the involvement of minority communities in preserving the culture and character of their neighborhoods. The voices of the community cannot and should not be ignored, and must always be a significant factor in modern urban development.

Methodology

Procedures

In order to determine the impact of urban renewal as it pertains to residential segregation, this capstone looks at the segregation levels in New York City through the dissimilarity index, neighborhood demographics through census data, and anecdotal / historical accounts of the urban renewal process in the Melrose section of the Bronx through ethnographic research. These mixed quantitative and qualitative methods provide a well-rounded analysis of modern urban renewal and residential segregation.

This study applies a standard segregation metric, the dissimilarity index, to New York City in order to establish a baseline of residential segregation or and its comparable east coast cities. This provides a macro level understanding of segregation on a major city such as New York.

The research then extends to the micro level of a neighborhood through an in depth examination of the Melrose Urban Renewal Area in the borough of the Bronx in New York City. A quantitative analysis of socio-economic and demographic data from the U.S. Census before, during, and after the completion of the Melrose Urban Renewal Area informs us of changes in the racial and ethnic makeup of the affected neighborhoods as well as the impact that these changes may or may not have had on education, income, and poverty levels.

In addition, qualitative research adds insight to the quantitative segregation levels and census findings. The ethnographic research includes conversations with members of Nos Quedamos, the community development corporation at the center of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area project, one of the architects of Melrose Commons, residents, and neighborhood observations from a walk through of the community.

An analysis of these data provides a comprehensive understanding of the correlation and possible causation between modern urban renewal and residential segregation in New York City. These methods help us to realize that the answer to the question of modern urban renewal projects perpetuating neighborhood segregation in NYC is determined by a complex series of factors that vary by race, ethnicity, neighborhood, and historical context.

Segregation Metrics

Sociologists have measured residential segregation for decades, dating back to the late nineteenth century. The most widely used measure of segregation is an index scale that typically ranges from zero (the lowest level of segregation – multiracial/ethnic neighborhoods) to 100 (the highest level of segregation – neighborhoods are comprised entirely of one race or ethnicity).

The dissimilarity index is a standard metric that is commonly used to measure racial evenness in a specific geographic area (M. H. Schill 39). This metric analyzes the racial/ethnic disbursement to determine the extent in which the groups are equally distributed. It calculates the proportion of individuals who would need to relocate in order to achieve racial evenness through the following complex formula:

$$\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^N \left| \frac{b_i}{B} - \frac{w_i}{W} \right|$$

Due to the difficulty in calculating this formula, this section of the study incorporates obtained data from studies conducted by Douglas S. Massey, Edward Glaeser, and Jacob Vigdor that have calculated the dissimilarity indices for New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia. This paper uses these dissimilarity indices to determine the change in racial / ethnic composition in the years before, during, and after urban renewal in Melrose.

Census data

In an effort to calculate the segregation levels and the potential effects of segregation for the micro level of the Melrose neighborhood, census data from the four census tracts in Melrose in the 1990, 2000, and 2010 censuses are used. In addition, the study incorporates racial and ethnic demographics from the borough of the Bronx and all of New York City from the 1990, 2000, and 2010 censuses. The Geolytics Neighborhood Change website provided data from 1990 that was not available on the U.S. Census website and was able to account for change in boundaries reflected in the 2010 census.

The racial categories for purposes of this study were classified as White, Black / African American, and Mixed / Other. The category of Mixed / Other reflects a combination of respondents who selected more than one race on their census forms and respondents who selected the smaller categories of Asian, Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander, American Indian / Alaskan, and Other Race that are represented in Melrose.

In order to differentiate ethnicity from race, and to highlight the significant Hispanic / Latino population in Melrose, this study separates ethnic identity data from racial data. The census data used to compare the levels of the Hispanic / Latino population in Melrose, the Bronx, and New York City are Total Hispanic / Latino population and Persons not of Hispanic / Latino Origin.

The last component of census data collected looked at the elements of discrimination that is affected by residential segregation. The data collected looked at the educational attainment levels of persons over 25 in Melrose in 1990, 2000, and 2010 as a percentage of the total population over 25 years of age. The attainment levels are: 0-8 years of school, 9-12 years of school, high school, some college, associate degree, and bachelors / graduate / professional

degree. In addition, data was collected pertaining to median income as well as persons living below the poverty line, two of the other elements of discrimination referenced earlier.

Ethnographic Research

Finally, qualitative data from the ethnographic research in the Melrose neighborhood provide an intimate level of insight to the issue of modern urban renewal and residential segregation from the people who lived through the process. A workshop conducted by Nos Quedamos and one of the architects from the firm that designed the Melrose Common Urban Renewal Area, Magnusson Architecture and Planning (MAP) provided much of the Bronx and Melrose historical information obtained for this capstone. In addition, I collected observational data of the neighborhood buildings and infrastructure during a walking tour of the Melrose, and held informal interviews with residents, community gardeners, and a building superintendent.

Limitations

The research question posed in this study posed a number of limitations from the onset of the research process, including the use of segregation metrics, accounting for ethnicities and mixed populations, and the conventional perceptions surrounding segregation and its effects on residents. Nonetheless, the research employed here provides sufficient data to determine whether modern urban renewal perpetuates residential segregation in areas such as Melrose.

Segregation metrics that measure the racial disparities vary, however the most commonly applied methods, such as the dissimilarity index, measure the distribution levels of a particular race or ethnicity across a large geographic area such as a city. Dissimilarity is calculated through a complex formula that measures the racial and ethnic populations of each neighborhood against each other within the city. The design of these methods do not lend themselves to measuring the

segregation level of an individual neighborhood. Therefore, we used this metric to compare the segregation levels of New York City against similar east coast cities, and looked at the change in segregation levels over time to determine if the urban renewal projects that took place in the 1990s and 2000s affected residential segregation. The residential segregation level in New York City became a baseline for the racial and ethnic disparities in Melrose through use of the same index scale. The scale ranges from zero (the lowest amount of segregation – multiracial/ethnic neighborhoods) to 100 (the highest level of segregation – neighborhoods are comprised entirely of one race or ethnicity). This allowed us to establish the segregation level in Melrose at 50%.

The dissimilarity index has another limitation in its ability to measure the segregation level of more than one race or ethnicity. In the case of a racially diverse community such as Melrose, with a significant Hispanic / Latino population, this proves to be problematic due to the genetic composition of Hispanics / Latinos that embodies three races (White, Black, and Native American). After centuries of blending these races into what is now a Hispanic / Latino ethnicity, it is not possible for a significant portion of the population to categorize themselves into one particular race. Limiting the race selection in census data skews the accuracy of historic race levels in terms of the Hispanic / Latino population, potentially distorting the numbers on residential segregation.

Recent census changes now allow Hispanics / Latinos the option to self-identify with more than one race along with the option of “other” race. This change is critical in compiling an accurate demographic assessment however; some of the data analyzed in this study does not reflect these changes. Furthermore, the method of self-selection as the determining factor in what constitutes a particular race or ethnicity, lends itself to subjective data.

Finally, as with most capstones, the largest limitation in this project the time allotted to conduct research. In an ideal setting, an analysis of multiple case studies of historically segregated neighborhoods and their respective urban renewal projects would support the findings in this study. However, despite all of these limitations, the research shows that New York City continues to maintain high levels of segregation in comparison to similar east coast cities, Melrose continues to maintain high levels of segregation after the implementation of its urban renewal plan, and the so-called “effects of segregation” reflect the influence of segregation in an unexpected manner. From these and other findings, we are able to draw certain conclusions about how modern urban development perpetuates segregation in New York City.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of the research question presented, residential segregation, is defined through the dissimilarity index as well through census data measured on the same scale as the dissimilarity index. Measurements based on this scale that ranges from zero, will categorize a neighborhood as segregated if any race or ethnicity is more than 50% of the population.

This research also measures some of the “effects of segregation,” specifically educational attainment, median income, and poverty levels. The metrics for these elements are measured over a period of 20 years, from 1990 – 2010, the same period as the urban renewal project that is analyzed in this paper.

By looking at the residential segregation levels of New York City and the Melrose neighborhood in conjunction with an analysis of the effects of segregation, this paper provides a comprehensive assessment of residential segregation as it relates to modern urban renewal and the involvement of community development organizations.

Analytical Plan

The mixed methods presented in the procedures section provide four sets of data analysis by which to view modern urban renewal and residential segregation in New York City.

1. Dissimilarity index
2. Racial / ethnic population levels
3. Effects of segregation
4. Anecdotal data from ethnographic research

These analyses cannot be restricted into silos for individual evaluation. Similar to the description of the dissimilarity index formula earlier, these data must be evaluated together to form the larger picture of segregation in the smaller neighborhood of Melrose.

The analysis for this study will consist of a thorough exploration of all of the information presented to determine if:

1. Modern urban renewal perpetuates residential segregation in New York City.
2. Who is responsible for perpetuating residential segregation if it exists?
3. How do the perceived effects of residential segregation affect the residents of Melrose, if at all?

If it appears that modern urban renewal does not perpetuate segregation, then we can conclude that segregation in this instance is not a result of direct government intervention as it once was. Instead, we can view the residential segregation in Melrose through the lens of the Chicago school, as an organic natural process in the growth of a city. However if this case of urban renewal does perpetuate segregation, then we can look at Melrose as a continuance of the Marxist view of intentional segregation, through government and community intervention.

Case Study: Melrose Urban Renewal

In order to appreciate the dramatic change that the Melrose community has seen in recent years and the significance of the community involvement in the urban renewal plan, it is imperative to describe the background of what transpired in the Bronx and Melrose that resulted in the need for urban renewal. What follows is a brief accounting of the history of the South Bronx and the Melrose area in particular during the mid to late 20th century, the plan that the city of New York developed to revive the Melrose community, and how the residents organized and created a plan of their own.

The Disinvestment and Devastation of the South Bronx

Contrary to popular belief, the South Bronx is not an official neighborhood or district. The South Bronx is the name that was bestowed upon a group of neighborhoods in the southwestern section of the borough that suffered tremendous economic and structural devastation in the 1970s and 80s. Today the South Bronx is not so much a geographic area as it is a term that has become synonymous with disrepair, poverty, and social collapse (Jenson 13).

In the 1940s and 50s the borough of the Bronx itself was known as the borough of parks and universities as home to more parkland than any other borough, and colleges such as NYU, Fordham University, Manhattan College, Mercy College, Hunter College, Monroe College, Bronx Community College, College of Mount Saint Vincent, SUNY Maritime, and Albert Einstein School of Medicine. The demographics of the borough was predominately White-ethnic, with immigrants from Germany, Ireland, Italy, and a significant Jewish population.

By the 1960s and 70s, the building of the Cross Bronx Expressway and other highways destroyed neighborhoods and separated South Bronx neighborhoods from each other and the rest

of the borough and the waterfronts. New York City invested heavily in new residential housing developments such as Co-op City and Parkchester, while the Westchester County suburbs grew at a rapid pace due to their increased accessibility by highways. These circumstances strongly encouraged the White population to leave the South Bronx while new residents, primarily Puerto Ricans, moved in and the borough became 50% non-white according to *Nos Quedamos*. While the demographics of the South Bronx changed and diversified, their representation in government did not, and many residents attribute this lack of representation as the reason behind the disinvestments and devastation that followed. As New York City experienced an increased need for homeless shelters, methadone clinics, and waste transfer units, these facilities were built in the South Bronx. Other reasons that are cited for rapid decline of the South Bronx are the defunding of government services in the Bronx, landlords reduced building maintenance, jobs relocated to more profitable areas of the city, crime was rapidly rising, and arson by owners and residents was rampant (Jenson 54).



Nos Quedamos



Joe Conzo Archives 2015



<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/519602875727601256/>

By the 1980s, the Bronx experienced a mass exodus of White and middle / working class residents, a reduction in household income, a loss of more than 97% of buildings in seven different census tracts (Gonzalez), and suffered from a surge in crime that made the borough one of the least desirable places to live in New York City.

New York City's Urban Renewal Plan

In the late 1980s, after decades of devastation and disinvestment, the Koch administration developed an urban renewal plan for a 33 block devastated area of the South Bronx, known as Melrose. The plan consisted of a middle-income, home-ownership-based community, stripping the area of commercial zoning, community gardens, replacing them with gated communities and aluminum sided townhouses set back from the streets. Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer put forth a study on how new housing and commercial development could reshape the Bronx. The study was called “New Directions for the Bronx” and Magnus Magnusson Architects served on the new affordable housing prototype advisory board (Magnusson Architecture and Planning).

Nos Quedamos and the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area

A group of residents learned of the city's plan for their beloved neighborhood and set forth to assemble a strategy to stop the city from taking over and displacing residents and businesses. They felt strongly that the plan should represent the needs of the community and not the desire of the city to change the cultural fabric and identity of the neighborhood while resulting in displacement of longtime residents. After numerous meetings and working with Magnus Magnusson Architects, the group that became known as Nos Quedamos (we stay), presented a plan for the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area. This plan consisted of eight main goals developed to inform the redevelopment of their neighborhood and were obtained from the Magnus Magnusson Architects website, (MAP Architects).

1. The plan should cause no involuntary displacement of the existing community.

The residents understood that there would be some displacement; however, the goal was to minimize the displacement and provide solutions that allowed residents and businesses to remain in the community if relocated.

2. The plan should permit a mixed income community to develop and create a variety of ownership and rental housing.

Calls for the creation of 1700 units of housing that are “woven into the fabric of the existing community,” with affordability to the community as a priority.

3. The plan must provide affordable housing at densities appropriate to an urban community.

The community established a density goal of 60 to 80 units per acre, in hopes of encouraging commercial and institutional development.

4. The plan should utilize architectural design guidelines that maximize the public investment by creating a visually desirable, urban environment that will encourage development.

Requirements were to include a minimum 50-year life cycle and materials that are appropriate for an urban area, environmentally sensitive, and durable as well as design that lends an understanding of the cultural diversity of the urban environment.

5. The plan should promote physical development that is both environmentally conscious and sustainable.

Development of a stormwater retention system, controlled demolition, recycling, compost, access to public transportation, and a pedestrian friendly environment.

6. The proposed open space should be distributed into a system that responds to the community’s concerns of program and security.

Visibility and location of public spaces are identified to address safety concerns, including a 40,000 square foot pedestrian “town center” that will include a college, planning center, community facility, athletic facility, commercial activity and a park.

7. The plan should respect the street pattern and movement patterns within the community.

The community opposed the grid street structure originally proposed by the city, removing the east/west flow of traffic that currently exists.

8. The plan should provide for an appropriate distribution of commercial space and services and enable community residents and businesses to increase their earnings potential and expand their economic opportunities.

The commercial uses for Melrose are local in nature, as the area is not served by major mass transit, therefore the proposed economic development activities must respond the residential community. Development must include basic services such as retail, grocery, banking, medical, education, cultural, and social services, which create jobs and business opportunities for local residents.

The New York City Council voted to implement the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area plan in 1994, despite objections from newly elected Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, which are further outlined in the findings. The first new residential buildings in Melrose were open for occupancy in the year 2000.

Findings: 1990-2010

Segregation Metrics and Comparisons

As stated earlier, the dissimilarity index is a metric that sociologists commonly utilize to measure racial evenness in a specific geographic area and is the metric that measured the citywide findings presented in this capstone. The dissimilarity index data in these findings incorporates calculations found in two separate studies. The first study, conducted by Douglas S. Massey, looks at trends in Black segregation and isolation in the 30 metropolitan areas with the largest Black populations from 1970 – 1990. He calculates both the dissimilarity index and lesser-used isolation index which is we do not consider in this study.

Massey’s data, while extensive in geographic scope, does not extend into the census years of 2000 and 2010, which are essential for this capstone’s scope of work. Therefore, we look to a second set of data, compiled by Edward Glaeser and Jacob Vigdor in their research at the Manhattan Institute. This data looks at segregation in the nation’s 10 largest metropolitan areas from 2000 – 2010, using the same dissimilarity index. Table 1 below outlines the combined findings.

Table 1: Dissimilarity Indices in Selected Cities (percentage)

City / Year	1990	2000	2010	% change
New York	82.2	68.7	64.7	-21%
Boston	68.2	62.6	57.6	-16%
Philadelphia	77.2	67.0	62.6	-19%

(Glaeser and Vigdor 5)

(Massey, Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Conditions in U.S. Metropolitan Areas)

These findings show that New York City has the greatest decrease in segregation, 21% compared to the similar east coast cities of Boston at 16% and Philadelphia at 19%. However, in

comparison to these same cities, New York City continues to maintain elevated segregation levels, at consistently higher levels than Boston and Philadelphia. The current 2010 dissimilarity index of 65 suggests that 65% of Blacks in New York City must relocate in order to achieve a racially even population throughout the city. On the index scale of zero to 100, an index of 65 is well over the identified segregation level of 50% for purposes of this paper.

We conclude from these findings that New York City remains one of the more highly populated cities in the northeast and the entire country - according further data in these studies (Massey, Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Conditions in U.S. Metropolitan Areas) (Glaeser and Vigdor). It is from this macro level of findings where we can assume that many of the individual neighborhoods within New York City are also racially segregated. We will confirm this in the findings presented in the next section that outline and compare the ethnic and racial change in Melrose, the Bronx, and New York City.

Ethnic and Racial Changes

The racial and ethnic changes that took place during this urban renewal period of 1990 – 2010 are in the data below collected from the U.S. Census via the Geolytics Neighborhood Database. The first set of data looks at the race population for Whites, Blacks / African American, and Mixed / Other Race during the 1990, 2000, and 2010 census years. The second set of data looks at the Hispanic / Latino ethnic population during the 1990, 2000, and 2010 census years. Each table with the sets show the race population for a different geographic area (Melrose, the Bronx, and New York City) for comparison purposes.

Table 2A is the race population for the Melrose section of the Bronx in census tracts 69, 71, 141, and 143. The earlier data accounts for the change in census tract boundaries in the 2010 census. Table 2B is the race population for the larger geographic area of the borough of the Bronx,

including the Melrose section. Finally, Table 2C is the race population for the entire city of New York, which encompasses all five boroughs of the city, including the Bronx. In order to accommodate for the exponential population growth of 64% in Melrose, the percentages that are listed for each race indicate the percentage of the total population at that time, and the percent change is the difference in the percentages, not the population.

Table 2A: Melrose Race Population (*census tracts 69, 71, 141, 143*)

Race	1990 Census		2000 Census		2010 Census		% Change 1990 - 2010
White	1,135	13%	1,877	20%	3,086	22%	9%
Black / African American	3,764	44%	3,999	43%	6,590	47%	3%
Mixed / Other Race	3,569	42%	3,460	37%	4,235	30%	-12%
Total Population:	8,468		9,336		13,911		64% growth

Table 2B: Bronx Race Population

Race	1990 Census		2000 Census		2010 Census		% Change 1990 - 2010
White	431,318	36%	430,719	32%	151,209	11%	-25%
Black / African American	451,641	38%	509,547	38%	416,695	30%	-8%
Mixed / Other Race	320,830	27%	392,384	29%	817,204	59%	32%
Total Population:	1,203,789		1,332,650		1,385,108		15% growth

Table 2C: NYC Race Population

Race	1990 Census		2000 Census		2010 Census		% Change 1990 - 2010
White	3,832,004	52%	3,741,953	47%	2,722,904	33%	-19%
Black / African American	2,107,139	29%	2,265,738	28%	1,861,295	23%	-6%
Mixed / Other Race	1,383,527	19%	2,000,587	25%	3,590,934	44%	25%
Total Population:	7,322,670		8,008,278		8,175,133		12% growth

These findings show that the White population for Melrose has increased by 9% from 1990 – 2010, but has decreased by 25% and 19% in the Bronx and New York City during that same timeframe. Despite the increase in the White population, Whites remain the minority race in Melrose in 2010 at 22%, while Blacks account for nearly 50% of the population in Melrose since 1990. Finally, the percentage of those who classify themselves in more than one racial category,

or as a race other than White or Black, has decreased by 12% since 1990, and constitutes a smaller percentage of the Melrose population in 1990 at 30%, but still larger than the 22% White population.

The Hispanic / Latino population data are displayed in the same manner as the race population above. In the tables 3A – C below, we note that the Hispanic / Latino population has maintained a 60-61% majority in Melrose from 1990 – 2010. The concentration of Hispanics / Latinos in Melrose is twice the amount than in New York City as a whole, but remains even with the Bronx. This shows that the Hispanic / Latino population is ethnically segregated in Melrose and the Bronx overall. It is important to note here that the racial segregation levels of Hispanics / Latinos are difficult to determine due to the various metrics used by the U.S. Census to determine racial and ethnic populations addressed in the limitations section.

Table 4A: Melrose Hispanic / Latino Population (*census tracts 69, 71, 141, 143*)

Ethnicity	1990 Census		2000 Census		2010 Census		% Change 1990 - 2010
Hispanic or Latino	5,081	60%	5,771	62%	8,535	61%	1%
Other Ethnicity	3,387	40%	3,565	38%	5,376	39%	19%
Total Population:	8,468		9,336		13,911		64% growth

Table 4B: Bronx Latino Population

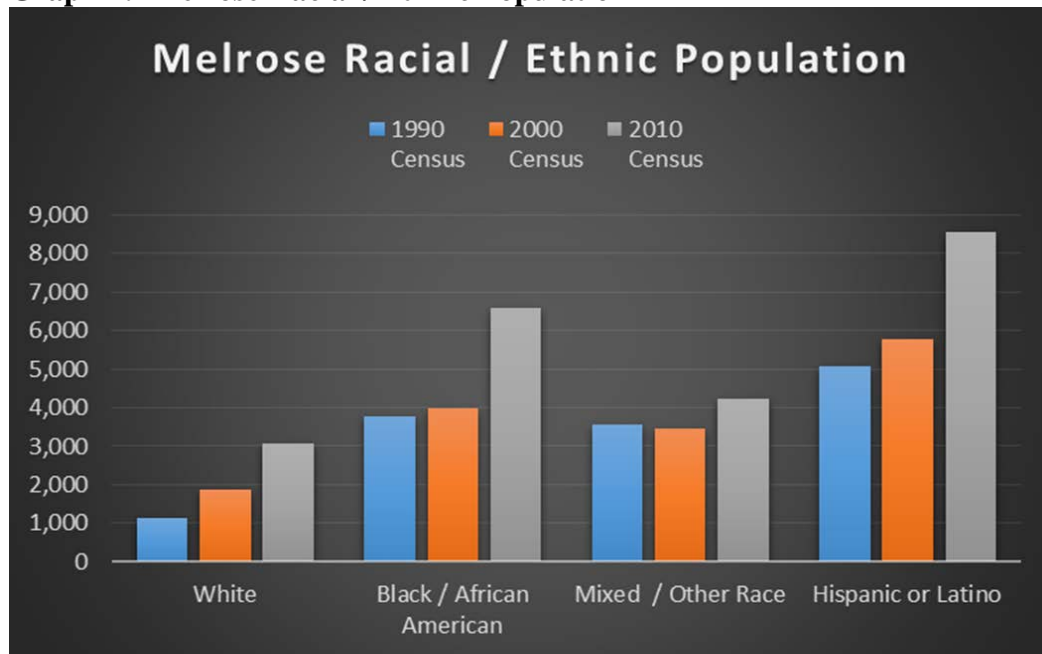
Ethnicity	1990 Census		2000 Census		2010 Census		% Change 1990 - 2010
Hispanic or Latino	508,866	42%	645,222	54%	741,413	62%	20%
Other Ethnicity	694,923	58%	687,428	52%	643,695	46%	-12%
Total Population:	1,203,789		1,332,650		1,385,108		15% growth

Table 4C: NYC Latino Population

Ethnicity	1990 Census		2000 Census		2010 Census		% Change 1990 - 2010
Hispanic or Latino	1,737,934	24%	2,161,530	30%	2,336,076	32%	8%
Other Ethnicity	5,584,736	76%	5,846,748	73%	5,839,057	71%	-5%
Total Population:	7,322,670		8,008,278		8,175,133		12% growth

Although the differences between race and ethnicity in relation to the Hispanic / Latino population have been outlined earlier in this paper, it is helpful to view the population data side by side. This perception allows for a wider look the demographic makeup of Melrose. In Graph 1 below, we find that the population of the Hispanic / Latino community in Melrose far outpaces that of all the individual races from 1990 – 2010.

Graph 1: Melrose Racial / Ethnic Population



Educational Attainment

The level of educational attainment is one of the factors that many consider an effect of residential segregation. Educational attainment of bachelors / graduate / professional degrees has seen the highest level of increase in Melrose from 1990 – 2010, though slight increases have been seen in some college and associate degrees. Decreases have been seen in attainment of only 0-8 years of school and 9-12 years of school, while high school diploma attainment remain the same. Tables 6A and B reflect these findings below.

Table 6A: Educational Attainment - Melrose population 25 and above

Census year	0-8 years of school	9-12 years of school	High school	Some college	Associate degree	Bachelor / graduate / professional degree	Total population 25 and above
1990	1,197	1,429	930	292	141	137	4,126
2000	1,064	1,413	1,021	537	109	302	4,446
2010	1,303	1,254	1,261	869	160	708	5,555

Table 6B: Percentage of Educational attainment - Melrose population 25 and above

Census year	0-8 years of school	9-12 years of school	High school	Some college	Associate degree	Bachelor / graduate / professional degree
1990	29%	35%	23%	7%	3%	3%
2000	24%	32%	23%	12%	2%	7%
2010	23%	23%	23%	16%	3%	13%

Many factors can be attributed to the increase in educational attainment in Melrose. We can look to the community involvement in the renewal process that may have ignited a desire to further education. It can also be attributed to the overall population increase, which may have moved in residents with higher educational attainment. Finally, we can look to the relocation of Boricua College to Melrose Commons as a centerpiece of the community that inspires further education by its presence and brings college students to the neighborhood. However, regardless of the reason, a 19% increase in some level of higher education over a twenty-year span is significant, and is a positive outcome of one of the so-called negative effects of segregation.

Income Disparities

The income level of New York City residents is extremely important due to the high cost of living that forces many families in high poverty situations to choose between food and rent.

Melrose is located in the heart of country's poorest Congressional district and in the city's poorest borough.

Median family income is an effect of segregation and plays a significant role in upward mobility of residents in segregated neighborhoods. This is because median family income is the main qualifying factor for most affordable housing programs. The findings in Table 7 shows us the change in the median income of Melrose residents from the years of 1990 – 2010.

Table 7: Median Family Income - Melrose

Census year	Median family income	Total Families
1990	\$9,847.50	2,001
2000	\$11,837.00	2,042
2010	\$28,407.50	2,476

The data show us that median family income has risen during the twenty-year urban renewal period that this capstone covers, however it does not take inflation into account nor does it account for the significant increase in population during that timeframe.

Poverty levels

The poverty level is a federal indicator that tells us the amount of people who are eligible for federal funding and how much funding the state can receive on their behalf. The data in tables 8 shows the level of poverty in Melrose from 1990 – 2010.

Table 8: Total Persons Below the Poverty Level - Melrose

Census year	Total persons below the poverty level	Total Population	Percentage of the Population
1990	4,504	8,468	53%
2000	5,049	9,336	54%
2010	4,651	13,911	33%

These findings show that the poverty level has dropped by 20% over the past twenty years since the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area was conceptualized and implemented. Considering the dire conditions that existed prior to the urban renewal plan, it is significant to note this decrease in poverty levels as an indicator of the success of the community driven plan to revitalize the Melrose community.

Ethnographic Research

The ethnographic research conducted in Melrose provided a plethora of first-hand information of how and why this community embarked on this mission to organize and resist the city's plans to change their community. One of the architects from Magnusson Architecture and Planning (MAP) led a discussion in the offices of Nos Quedamos on the history of Melrose and the efforts of the community to have their voices heard by the city. Following the discussion, the architect led us on a walk through of Melrose Commons where we saw residential buildings and businesses that were allowed to remain as part of the urban renewal plan, new buildings that were designed with the input of residents, and the community gardens that make up the heart of this section of the South Bronx. It was on this walk that I was able to have informal conversations with residents, gardeners, and the superintendent of one of the new residential buildings, El Jardin de Selene, a mixed-income building with a gold level LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification pictured here.



Nos Quedamos

The discussion at Nos Quedamos led by a MAP architect, took us through a timeline of the history of the Bronx, most of which is covered in the case study section of this capstone. He focused however, on the political and cultural dynamic in the community that led to the

opposition to the city plan for redevelopment and the creation of Nos Quedamos. The stories of some of the founders of Nos Quedamos were told: Yolanda Garcia, whose family had the first Puerto Rican owned carpet store in NYC; Delores DeSante, a community gardener; and Pedro Cintron, a longtime community resident. These and other residents felt strongly that their willingness to remain in the community throughout the turmoil of the 1970s and 80s was significant and they refused to be displaced by the city. With Yolanda leading the way, Nos Quedamos met twice a week with members of the community, Petr Strand from MAP and Lee Weintraub of Weintraub & diDomenico to develop their own renewal plan. Their primary goal was to prevent displacement of longtime residents and businesses and to preserve the culture, scale, and urban atmosphere of Melrose. Some specific issues were: the city's plans for a large park area, which the community saw as potential drug haven; the misplacement of the community center by the city in the southern area of Melrose, which the community saw as further north near the landmarked courthouse; and the lack of plans for the Metro North Rail Road, which the community viewed as critical to the development of Melrose Commons. The city was planning to develop for the new middle income residents that they wanted to move into Melrose, while Nos Quedamos was planning for the current, low income, Puerto Rican community that already existed. The desire to gentrify the community with White (non Latino / Hispanic) residents by the city was a clear undertone in the discussions about the Spanish names of buildings, the need for bodegas, and the desire to retain community gardens and their "casitas" (little houses) which are staples of the community that the city did not see a need for.

Nos Quedamos knew that their lack of representation in city and state government was what allowed the South Bronx to decline in the way that it had in the first place, and that is where they needed to show their power in order for their voices to be heard. Therefore, one of their first acts

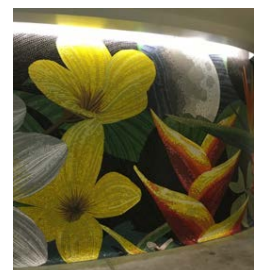
was to register community members to vote at every meeting, which made a difference. Before long, the New York Times was covering their meetings and soon elected officials began to attend as well. One elected official was not on board with the plan, and attempted to stop the plan right before its passage by the NYC Council in 1994. Newly elected Mayor Rudolph Giuliani wanted to develop Melrose with small homes and buildings, reducing the density of the neighborhood, making it more suburbanlike because he did not believe that the low population of Melrose could sustain 5 - 6 story buildings. However, the NYC Council had already scheduled the plan for a vote after approval by the community boards and the city planning commission. Mayor Giuliani issued an action stating that any urban renewal areas did not see development within two years of passage; the city could override the plans without going through URLURP (Uniform Land Use Review Procedure). Fortunately, Nos Quedamos received a planning grant from the New York State Council on the Arts in 1995 to begin the development process and by 1998, Melrose Commons broke ground on its first residential development. Plaza de Los Angeles consists of 35 three family homes on four separate sites. The New York City Housing



(MAP Architects)

Partnership program and Department of Housing Preservation and Development provided the funding and Bronx based Procida Realty & Construction Corporation built the homes (MAP Architects).

The tour and photos that I took of the community highlighted the new developments of Melrose Commons such as Plaza de Los Angeles, which reflect the collective desires of the community to represent the urban atmosphere and Latino culture of Melrose. The buildings have multicolored



brick exteriors of different textures and designs, art deco murals, Spanish names, are sustainable,

affordable, and have quality construction. These buildings juxtapose with old buildings, houses, businesses, and community gardens that give this community a unique diversified landscape of old and new; rural and urban; and Puerto Rico and New York.



It was midafternoon, and I observed children in a playground, teenagers playing basketball, parents walking home children from school, a younger resident assisting an elderly woman crossing the street. Most people appeared to know each other and were friendly towards our tour group. As I spoke to people, the love and passion that residents have for Melrose was evident. One community gardener exclaimed that he has worked in the garden for 30 years and it is all he knows. He said that the residents of the community look forward to the harvest so that they can get fresh produce and herbs and during the summer, they have cookouts at the garden, starting on Mother's Day with a pernil (pig) roast. They city continues to lower the amount of community gardens by dividing them or reducing their land, "It is a constant battle, but we will never give up our gardens. We love them."



Nos Quedamos continues discussions with the city to prevent the displacement of the gardens and push for other areas of the Melrose that need to be developed. When asked about the effects that Melrose has seen of the city's urban renewal efforts on other parts of the city, the architect pointed out old rail tracks and other lots that have been sold to private developers who are holding out for funding. "They are waiting to see what happens in other areas of the Bronx, so they can decide if they should build affordable housing or a Starbucks. We want affordable, sustainable housing." One building superintendent proudly showed off his well-maintained, eco-friendly building. "The people who live here appreciate it. People think that just because you are poor, you won't take care of a nice building, but they take care of this place."

These findings portray a different perspective of residential segregation through modern urban renewal with community involvement. Residents are increasing educational attainment levels, median income is on the rise, and poverty levels have decreased. Most importantly, the residents of Melrose Common are proud of the new neighborhood that they helped to create and maintain through urban renewal.

Discussion

The research conducted for this capstone brings forth a great deal of information surrounding the issues of urban renewal and residential segregation in New York City and does not present a simple answer to the initial research question – Does modern urban renewal perpetuate residential segregation in New York City?

The key findings of this research tell us:

1. New York City is one of the most segregated cities in the northeast and the country.
2. Melrose may not have been a historically segregated community, but has become self-segregated (intentionally or not) through elements in its community designed urban renewal plan.
3. Melrose is considered by numerous accounts to be a successful urban renewal project that has had a positive influence in some of the effects of segregation.
4. The residents of Melrose have successfully implemented their vision for their neighborhood and had a newfound sense of pride in their community.

These findings tell us a number of things about segregation, urban renewal, and the influence of community organizations. As has been previously noted, segregation has an understandably negative connotation due to the historical implications that are evident in some of the elements of discrimination discussed in the literature review. Many historically segregated neighborhoods suffer from poor educational attainment, high poverty levels, and low median income. At its lowest point in the 1970s, Melrose suffered from extreme poverty, high levels of crime, rampant drug use, and an arson wave that decimated the neighborhood. However, the community

involvement in the urban renewal process has essentially changed the game in terms of residential segregation and urban renewal.

Further study on this subject will likely show findings of the educational, poverty, and income levels in Melrose in comparison the rest of the Bronx and New York City and point out that these indicators continue to fall well below the city average, which would indicate a lack of success in the Melrose plan. This is the reason that these factors cannot be viewed and examined in isolation and the reason for the collection of the data in the manner presented in this capstone. These findings capture data over a time span of 20 years to reflect the time period before, during, and after the urban renewal process, measure race and ethnicity, and draw comparisons, contrasts, and conclusions from the combined data. Furthermore, it impractical to believe that any urban renewal project that perpetuates segregation or desegregation, will immediately reverse the impact of 60 plus years of forced residential segregation and the devastation that urban renewal has caused.

The lessons that we can learn from the Melrose and Nos Quedamos case study, is that community involvement urban renewal can have a significant impact if the city allows it. The decision of a residentially segregated community to preserve its character should be respected by the city and woven into urban renewal plans that will allow the neighborhood to grow at a pace that makes sense for residents and businesses. This is not to suggest that residential discrimination is endorsed in this study, but instead to point out that municipalities should heed the lessons drawn from the legacy of residential segregation alongside the outcomes of neighborhoods such as Melrose. In doing so, cities will grow at a natural and organic pace, not necessarily reminiscent of the structure of the concentric circle theory, but indicative of the larger nature-centric views of the Chicago School theorists.

It is clear from the historical account of segregation and urban renewal, that the involvement of the state in areas of residential growth can be detrimental to the social and economic growth of the segregated communities. We need only to look at the modern urban renewals of Williamsburg and the Lower East Side to observe the wave of displacement and gentrification that has all but reinvented the identity of those communities. Nos Quedamos foresaw this impending change in their community and were able to successfully rally against it. This model of successful urban renewal can and should be replicated throughout the city and the country.

Conclusion

Author Michael T. Maly points out that, “the only problem with all Black or all Latino communities is not that they are homogenous, it is that under a discriminatory systems such communities have unequal access to jobs, good schools, and quality housing” (Maly 6). In the case of Melrose Commons, we see that this Latino community is thriving and working hard on a daily basis to ensure that they have equal access to jobs, good schools, and quality housing. New York City may continue to maintain high segregation levels but communities like Melrose have changed the negative perception of a segregated community by taking control of the urban renewal process to make it work for them.

What would the implications of community directed urban renewal be on residential segregation in other areas? This could not be answered with certainty because not all communities would / should intentionally direct their renewal plans to attract / deter particular racial and ethnic groups. In some cases, integration may be welcomed and encouraged, while other communities may look to increase low-income affordable housing to cater to their current population, thus attracting similar demographics. The time constraints of this project, prevented further examination into such cases, but this capstone was able to lay the groundwork for future study of this complicated, significant issue to urban areas in the United States.

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