people—conservatives, liberals, and progressives. Different meanings result in different goals and objectives for resident management programs, and these differences lead to confusion over what can be expected of resident management and how such programs should be fashioned. No matter which meaning of empowerment is invoked, resident management is neither the best nor necessarily even an appropriate means for achieving it. Because resident management by itself is not an empowering act, it should not be the sole or even the major focus of efforts to revitalize both the residents and the structures of public housing.

A brief history of resident management in U.S. public housing

Resident management, originally called tenant management, appeared in the early 1970s, first in Boston and then in St. Louis when residents were forced to assume control to keep from losing their homes. In Boston, residents at Bromley-Heath, an 1,100-unit development of town houses and high-rise buildings, organized in the mid-1960s to improve health services. In time, they took over operation of social services in the community, formed a crime patrol, and developed a drug center (Hailey 1984). In 1969, the resident organization proposed taking over management of the development, which was accomplished on January 1, 1971. Bromley-Heath is the first of 11 pioneering resident management corporations (ICF 1992) that have been managing their developments since before 1988.[1]

In St. Louis, tenant management grew out of the settlement of a 1969 rent strike. In all, five different developments were involved. Tenant management was initiated at the Carr Square and Darst developments in 1973 and at the Peabody and Webb developments in 1974; a church-related neighborhood corporation began managing Cochran Gardens in 1974 in anticipation of conversion to tenant management, which came about in 1976. The initial funds for the tenant management in St. Louis were provided by the Ford Foundation (Wendel 1975).

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[1] The 11 (see ICF 1992) with their years of incorporation are Bromley-Heath (Boston, 1971), Carr Square (St. Louis, 1973), Stella Wright (Newark, 1975), Cochran Gardens (St. Louis, 1976), A. Harry Moore (Jersey City, 1978), Montgomery Gardens (Jersey City, 1979), Kenilworth-Parkside (Washington, DC, 1982), Clarksdale (Louisville, 1983), Booker T. Washington (Jersey City, 1986), Lakeview Terrace (Cleveland, 1987), and Leclaire Courts (Chicago, 1987). At least one of these, Lakeview Terrace, has had its contract to manage withdrawn by its housing authority since the ICF study (Chandler 1994).

Ford's involvement in St. Louis led to its joint sponsorship with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of a National Tenant Management Demonstration Program. The demonstration operated between 1976 and 1979 and involved seven public housing sites in six cities—Jersey City, Louisville, New Haven, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, and Rochester. In evaluating the program, the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (1981) noted that while at most sites tenant management seemed to have worked as well as housing authority management had, several objective measures, such as rent collections, vacancy rates, and speed of response to maintenance

had come and gone. However, tenant management reemerged in the mid-1980s with a new set of champions, the new name of

Manpower (1981) report. These RMCs performed well in terms of annual inspections, resident move-outs, resident recertifications, and maintenance and maintenance staffing, but less well with respect to tenant accounts and vacancy rates. Residents of developments where the RMC took responsibility for the majority of the management functions had significantly more positive perceptions of the quality of life than residents at comparison sites, but ICF suggested this was due at least in part to poor perceptions at the comparison sites. Operating costs, based on admit-

rhetoric about resident management emphasizes the notion of empowerment. This article reflects on empowerment and on the assumed link between it and resident management and questions whether empowerment is a realistic expectation of resident management efforts.

Different meanings of empowerment

Nearly all advocates of resident management claim it is an empowering act. It is not always clear, however, what they mean by empowerment and just how empowerment occurs when residents become managers. The lack of a clear definition of empowerment allows just about anyone, representing any political persuasion, to use the term and allows others, no matter what their persuasion, to agree.

In my work I have identified three different general meanings of empowerment as it is applied to resident management. Each

higher social order. In this individualistic notion of empowerment, community organization is seen only as a mechanism for attaining individual achievement.

Liberal meaning

The liberal definition is drawn from the urban reform movement of the 1960s, which emphasized citizen involvement and participation. Liberals see successful governance of public housing as evolving out of an inclusionary process in which residents are encouraged to participate. In such a situation, both the housing authority and the residents share responsibility for a development, and resident management is thus viewed as a collaborative partnership between the authority and the resident corporation.

Liberals believe the idea that public housing problems can be solved without substantial federal involvement and support is a "cruel hoax" (Rigby 1990). For example, Robert Rigby (former director of the Jersey City Housing Authority), in speaking about how distressed public housing was turned around, argued for "a working partnership with . . . tenant organisations, the organisation of estate[5] and agency management in a fashion that maximize[s] estate-based capacity and sufficient capital improvements or modernisation" (Rigby 1990, 7).

Empowerment thus means bringing residents into the system and giving them a voice in making decisions about the present and planning for the future. The liberal notion of resident management is often expressed through the policy of "dual management." The term "dual management" seems to have first been used in reference to the transitional period of resident management at Leclaire Courts in Chicago, during which the housing authority gradually relinquished management control to the RMC (Peterman 1993).

Subsequently housing authorities, including the Chicago Hous-

(Chicago Housing Authority 1989). When residents chose to perform a limited set of functions under full management, they usually chose site-related activities such as maintenance, rent collection, and tenant screening.

Progressive meaning

Progressives equate empowerment with the notion of community organization and control. To them, the community, not individuals, is the focus of empowerment. Bratt (1989), for example, argues for "a new housing policy built on empowering community groups and low-income households" and providing "more than shelter" (p. 5). Leadership is an outgrowth of community empowerment, and one role for leaders is to take control of management. Resident management is thus not a means of empowerment, but rather a possible outcome of community organization.

Progressives reject the notion that form of tenure (whether a household owns or rents) constitutes a primary determinant of social status (Perin 1977). They view actual ownership of the developments as either irrelevant or problematical. Since ownership schemes tend to emphasize personal empowerment, progressives are likely to view them as antithetical to community building, except for the creation of cooperatives, which is seen as a way of engendering community solidarity.

Since who has power and who is in control are key issues for progressives, they are skeptical about any form of partnership or dual management. Traditionally in community organizing there is always an "enemy," and in the case of public housing, the enemy is the housing authority. Sharing management control with the enemy is undesirable. Progressives argue that the only time an RMC should share management responsibilities with a housing authority is during a period of transition to full control.

Can resident management really empower public housing residents?

Empowering residents is often seen as an essential element of any workable future public housing policy. Thus it seems an appropriate topic for our discussions. But whose version of empowerment should we consider? Do all versions lead to better public housing? Do any?

Chandler (1991) notes that early resident management efforts, including the National Tenant Management Demonstration Program, neither used the term "empowerment" nor had it as a goal. Instead, resident management was viewed as a "means to decentralize some housing authority responsibilities and to create a bit more stability in the resident population" (Chandler 1991, 137). She points out that the NCNE first suggested a relationship between empowerment and resident management. Liberals and progressives, however, were quick to join their conservative counterparts in claiming that empowerment was also associated with their notions of resident management.

But how are resident management and empowerment linked? Chandler (1991) argues that the link is community organization. This position is echoed by Monti, who, after reviewing 11

purchasers reported that mortgage payments were causing a strain on their budgets.

Resident-owned cooperatives are often suggested as an alternative form of ownership. However, when I was exploring options for management at Leclaire Courts in Chicago, a feasibility analysis showed that converting the development to a resident-owned cooperative would result in monthly charges (rents) that were much higher than residents could afford. Most residents would not be able, without subsidy, to own their development even in the limited sense of cooperative ownership.

Resident management cannot be considered a successful means to homeownership if so few tenants could become owners. This limitation lends credibility to those (e.g., Clay 1990; Silver, McDonald, and Ortiz 1985) who argue that conservative proponents of resident management are more interested in getting the federal government out of the housing business than in helping poor people. It is also likely that any indiscriminate implementation of ownership schemes could result in failures and foreclosures, leaving some housing in worse shape than it was under housing authority ownership. Such was the case in Chicago when Altgeld Gardens was converted to a resident-owned cooperative in the 1970s. The cooperative failed shortly thereafter when extensive roof repairs were needed and reserve funds were not available. Today Altgeld Gardens remains one of the worst of Chicago's garden-style public housing developments.[7]

Whether the liberal shared management notion of resident management results in empowerment is also open to question. Its supporters stress the need for good working relationships between the tenant organization and the housing authority. Both Manpower (1981) and Kolodny (1981), for example, conclude that a cooperative relationship was essential to RMC success in the demonstration project. The more recent ICF evaluation similarly found that "in general, the stronger [the] working relationships were, the better the RMCs tended to perform" (ICF 1992, 9).

These conclusions, however, are contradicted by Monti (1989), who argues that a "creative tension" is essential to resident management success. An RMC's relationship with its housing authority must be neither "too cozy nor too hostile" (Monti 1989).

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[7] The experience of selling units to residents in Great Britain is often pointed to as an example of successful conversion to ownership. The situation is different in Great Britain, however. Most of the successful sales have involved houses, not units in larger developments, and the new homeowners are generally more affluent than the typical U.S. public housing resident.

Interest in resident management usually arises when an authority fails to satisfactorily do its job, and this interest becomes focused when residents organize. Relationships between a developing community organization and its housing authority are bound to be strained because the inadequacy of the housing authority is the reason for the change. However, for an RMC to be ultimately effective, it must turn the situation into one of "creative tension," for it must be both a manager and a community leader (Monti 1989).

Proponents of shared management reject the idea of creative

The dilemma of cooperation versus creative tension is a variation of a common issue faced in most low-income communities. Leaders of community-based advocacy organizations contend that the "establishment" must be confronted if a low-income community's demands are to be met, while leaders of community-based economic and housing development organizations contend that the community must learn to play by establishment rules if the resources needed for redevelopment are to be obtained. Organizers argue that playing by the rules ensures continuing second-class status for a community, but developers respond that confrontation leads to only limited gains (Keating 1989). Shared management seems to adopt the developers' perspective and therefore supports the more modest goal of improving management, which creates a better environment for tenants. Chandler (1991) attributes acceptance of shared management to the original National Tenant Management Demonstration Program rather than to the more expansive process of community empowerment.

Since community empowerment is central to the progressive version of resident management, it is tempting to conclude that this is the appropriate model. But there is a potentially fatal flaw here also. In the progressive model, resident management is a means, not an end. In creating and maintaining an RMC, means and ends often become confused, and in the confusion the lofty goal of community empowerment is lost.

Monti (1989) concludes that community organizing and the creation of a strong board or resident council are more important to the development of an effective RMC than a strong individual leader. But it appears that attention too often becomes focused on a strong leader, while community organization and board development are neglected. This situation results either in a weak organization unable to use the power it has or in an organization dominated by a leader who becomes disconnected from the community.

While it may be possible to correct problems associated with community organizing and board development, it remains questionable whether management is an activity compatible with social control and empowerment. The struggle to improve a troubled development is often realized through community organization, and the promise of resident management can be a powerful organizing tool. Once resident management is established, the resident organization must identify new goals of community empowerment if momentum and community interest are to be retained.

Unfortunately this process is rarely completed because once the organization gains management control, energy and talent must be diverted to the technical task of managing. This diversion can easily sap the energies of the organization, turning its attention from the original goal of community empowerment to the goal of organizational survival.

Even though none of the three versions of resident management seems to be directly related to its version of empowerment, the possibility remains that through the building of resident self-esteem and assurance, resident management—no matter which version—leads to positive outcomes for both residents and communities. Both Manpower (1981) and ICF (1992) report that residents in resident-managed developments are more satisfied with their managers and with their development. Rohe and Stegman (1994) have found that when low-income residents in Baltimore became homeowners, their life satisfaction was greater. But such good feelings do not automatically lead to

organizations. As a way of balancing the double bottom line, more and more nonprofit organizations are contracting out management services when good outside management agents are available to take on low-income housing. This option may also be appropriate for resident management groups. Contracting for management with a private or even another nonprofit firm might help avoid problems relating to conflicting interests that can arise when boards of directors and their management staffs are all residents and neighbors.

Resident satisfaction should be the basis of any program to improve public housing, argues Stanley Horn (reported in Peterman and Young 1991), former director of the Clarence Darrow Center and a major participant in creating resident management at Chicago's Leclaire Courts.[8] Although supportive of resident management, Horn contends that residents should be less concerned about who is managing than with how good the management is. While resident control may be the only way to ensure good management in some circumstances, the deciding factor should always be whether management provides the basis for a livable, healthy community.

Resident management is attractive because it promises a livable, healthy community and possibilities for individuals to improve themselves. However, several housing experts I interviewed during a 1991 review of alternatives to conventional public housing management (Peterman and Young 1991) believe that such results are too much to expect and that neither community nor personal improvement is necessarily an outcome of managing a development.

Some cynical observers suggest that resident management is a

Others, notably professional housing managers, argue that management is a technical task best left to professionals. They believe residents would do better to focus their energies on personal growth issues or on important community concerns such as education, crime, and programs for young people (Peterman and Young 1991).

Resident managers have been able to perform as well as conventional housing authority managers on some evaluation measures and even better on a few others (ICF 1992; Manpower 1981). But

Resident management is sometimes an appropriate form of
public housing management. However, simply creating an RMC
does little to empower residents, and placing too much concen-
tration on the activities of management can detract residents
from more critical issues facing their community. Public housing
management policy needs to have a clearer goal, and it should
not target resident management as the prime or only option.
Instead, it should provide for a variety of management and
empowerment strategies.

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