Published in final edited form as:

Hous Policy Debate. 2016 ; 26(1): 210–230. doi:10.1080/10511482.2015.1043837.

“We Need to Have a Meeting”: Public Housing Demolition and Collective Agency in Atlanta, Georgia

Danya E. Keene*

Yale School of Public Health, Division of Social Behavioral Sciences, New Haven, CT, USA

Abstract

The last two decades have witnessed widespread demolition of public housing and a large-scale relocation of public housing residents. Much of the current literature has examined the impact of demolition on relocated residents, focusing primarily on individual outcomes such as employment, housing quality, and health. This article examines the potential collective consequences of relocation by using data from 40 in-depth interviews conducted with relocated public housing residents in Atlanta, Georgia, to examine experiences of civic engagement and tenant activism before and after relocation. Participants describe frequent experiences of civic engagement and tenant activism in their public housing communities prior to demolition and also discuss how these collective actions often translated into meaningful gains for their communities. Participants also describe challenges associated with reestablishing these sources of collective agency in their new, post demolition, private-market rental communities where opportunities for civic engagement and tenant activism were perceived to be limited, where stigma was a barrier to social interaction, and where they experienced significant residential instability.

Keywords

public housing; minorities; civic engagement; tenant activism

Over the last two decades, public and political dissatisfaction with public housing projects and an increasing emphasis on poverty deconcentration has resulted in widespread demolition of public housing and large-scale relocation of public housing residents (Crump, 2003; Goetz, 2000; 2013). Funded primarily by the HOPE VI program, publically owned and operated public housing developments in many U.S. cities have been replaced by mixed-income communities that typically house only a fraction of their former tenants (National Housing Law Project, 2002). The HOPE VI program, which ended in 2010, sought to revitalize some of the nation’s most distressed public housing developments. In other cities,

* danya.keene@yale.edu.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

¹Renee Glover was the executive director of the Atlanta Housing Authority from 1994 to 2013. Shirley Franklin was the mayor of Atlanta from 2002 to 2010.

Notes on Contributor

Danya Keene is an Assistant Professor of Social Behavioral Sciences at the Yale School of Public Health. Her mixed-methods research broadly explores how social policies contribute to health inequality, with a particular focus on issues related to housing, neighborhoods and place.

demolition extended beyond the goals and time frame of this program. For example, the city of Atlanta, Georgia recently demolished all of its traditional public housing without replacement, representing a broader shift toward a tenant-based system of rental assistance where residents use housing vouchers to subsidize private market units (Oakley, Ruel, & Reid, 2013).

A growing body of research has examined the consequences of relocation and demolition for public housing residents (Bennett, Hudspeth, & Wright, 2006; Buron, Levy, & Gallagher, 2007; Clampet-Lundquist, 2010; Goetz & Chapple, 2010; Greenbaum, Hathaway, Rodriguez, Spalding, & Ward, 2008; Keating, 2000; Keene & Geronimus, 2011; Kleit & Manzo, 2006; Manzo, Kleit, & Couch, 2008; Oakley et al., 2013; Popkin, Eisemann, & Cove, 2004). Relocation from public housing is widely presumed to benefit relocated families by providing an escape from distressed neighborhoods and housing conditions (Austin Turner, Popkin, Kingsley, & Kaye, 2004; Popkin & Cove, 2007). However, current research suggests that relocated public housing residents are often unable to access neighborhoods and dwellings that are significantly better than those that they left behind, particularly in gentrifying city centers where tight housing markets can make it difficult to find affordable units and landlords who accept vouchers (Fischer, 2001; Goetz, 2010; Oakley & Burchfield, 2009).

Furthermore, research points to less tangible losses that have occurred when public housing communities are uprooted and their residents are displaced (Clampet-Lundquist, 2010; Greenbaum, 2008; Keene & Geronimus, 2011; Kleit & Manzo, 2006). A stated goal of the HOPE VI program, and public housing revitalization more broadly, is to decrease the social isolation of public housing residents and to increase their social capital through exposure to more diverse social ties (Popkin, Katz, & Cunningham, 2004). However, as several critics of these efforts have noted, the dominant discourse surrounding revitalization and demolition has often failed to recognize the existence of strong social ties within public housing developments (Bennett & Reed, 1999; Goetz, 2013; Greenbaum, 2008; Slater, 2013). Qualitative and ethnographic studies of public housing communities point to the ways that networks of mutual exchange provide or provided important day-to-day sources of support for their residents including child care, food, rides to the doctor, emotional support, and feelings of safety (Clampet-Lundquist, 2010; De Souza Briggs, 1998; Greenbaum, 2008; Keene & Geronimus, 2011; Kissane & Clampet-Lundquist, 2012; Kleit & Manzo, 2006). Research also suggests that residents face challenges in rebuilding these networks of exchange in their new communities where they do not have the benefit of long-term residence, and where they may face stigma related to negative representations of their former homes (Clampet-Lundquist, 2007; Keene, Padilla, & Geronimus, 2010; McCormick, Joseph, & Chaskin, 2012).

In addition to these day-to-day practical losses, public housing demolition may disrupt collective processes that have implications for both individual and community well-being. Despite a dominant image of public housing developments as socially disorganized places, the existing literature contains many examples of social organization and participation in collective life within public housing developments (Bennett & Reed, 1999; Greenbaum, 2008; Venkatesh, 2000); a broad phenomenon that has been referred to as civic engagement

(Putnam, 2000). This literature also contains examples of tenant activism (Dreier, 1982), where residents organize and advocate on behalf of their collective rights and well-being, often challenging structures of power (Bennett & Reed, 1999; Feldman & Stall, 1990; Hackworth, 2005; Venkatesh, 2000; Williams, 2004; Wright, 2006). The implications of demolition for these forms of collective agency have been largely unexamined in the current literature (for an exception, see Howard, 2014).

This article attempts to fill this gap by using in-depth interviews to examine accounts of civic engagement and tenant activism among former public housing residents in Atlanta. Experiences of civic engagement and tenant activism emerged from these interviews as salient aspects of public housing life, and many participants described the loss of these resources as one consequence of relocation. Participants also described the challenges to re-establishing these sources of collective agency in their new, private market rental communities where formal opportunities for civic engagement and tenant activism were perceived to be limited, where stigma was a barrier to social interaction, and where residential instability threatened the development of long-term neighborhood ties.

Background

Civic Engagement, Tenant Activism, and Collective Agency in Public Housing

Historical accounts describing the early days of public housing (in the 1940s–1960s) depict strong communities where residents were highly engaged in collective life and had a strong sense of collective identity (Fuerst, 2003; Williams, 2004). More contemporary ethnographic accounts (Gotham & Brumley, 2002; Greenbaum et al., 2008; Vale, 1997; Venkatesh, 2000) indicate that aspects of this collective engagement persisted in many public housing developments, despite rising crime and poverty.

Both the contemporary and the historical literature on public housing contain examples of civic engagement in the form of broad participation in collective life. For example, Greenbaum's (2008) contemporary ethnographic description of Tampa, Florida public housing describes tenant organizations, Saturday reading clubs, crime watch groups, mentoring projects, and numerous networks of reciprocal exchange which were highly valued by the projects' residents. Likewise, in Chicago, Illinois' infamous Cabrini Green community, Bennett and Reed (1999) describe numerous resident led initiatives and programs including Cabrini Green (a farmer's market initiative), Cabrini Peace (conflict resolution training in local schools), child care, and volunteer tenant patrolling. In his ethnographic account of another Chicago development, Robert Taylor Homes, Venkatesh (2000) describes an ongoing history of civically engaged tenants who frequently came together in their collective quest for a safer community.

Strong resident leadership in public housing developments often took the form of tenant activism when residents were able to challenge existing power structures on behalf of the well-being of their community and the rights of its members. For example, in St Louis, Missouri, in 1968, tenant leadership successfully directed a rent strike that resulted in a reconstituted St. Louis Housing Authority and greater tenant participation in public housing management (Purdy, 2004). In Chicago's Wentworth Gardens, a resident-run not-for-profit

organization was able to achieve a number of tangible victories in its struggle to protect the living conditions of its residents, for example, convincing the Chicago Housing Authority to provide resources for the community's field house (Feldman & Stall, 1990). In other examples, tenant activism among public housing residents extended beyond residents' local concerns to broader social movements. For example, Williams (2004) documents how the social structure and organization of Baltimore public housing developments in the 1950s and 1960s helped to galvanize tenants' collective struggles, not just for day-to-day concerns such as decent housing, but also for broader political issues related to civil rights and inequality.

In recent years, much tenant activism in public housing communities has focused on resistance to demolition, or on efforts to ensure that tenants' rights are protected during processes of revitalization. In the case of HOPE VI, resident participation was mandated as part of the formal planning process. However, as several scholars have noted, this mandated formal participation was often no more than symbolic, and residents in several cities fought for greater inclusion in planning decisions and also resisted demolition altogether (Chaskin, Khare, & Joseph, 2012; Howard, 2014; Pattillo, 2007; Wright, 2006). For example, in Chicago, tenants across the city formed the Chicago Coalition to Protect Public Housing in response to the city's plans for widespread public housing demolition (Wright, 2006). At Chicago's Henry Horner Homes, residents filed a lawsuit against the Chicago Housing Authority to obtain direct representation of public housing residents in decisions about the redevelopment process (Chaskin et al., 2012). Likewise, in Cabrini Green, residents filed a federal fair housing and civil rights lawsuit in the face of HOPE VI demolition which resulted in a consent decree that granted residents greater participation in the planning process and protected the right to return among those who were displaced (Wright, Wheelcock, & Steele, 2006). In New York, New York, tenant resistance was successful in limiting the amount of demolition that occurred and ensured one-for-one replacement of demolished units (Hackworth, 2005). Likewise, in San Francisco, California, a group of housing residents, working with the nonprofit Eviction Defense Network, waged a 3-year door-to-door organizing campaign that resulted in an "Exit Contract" from the San Francisco Housing Authority guaranteeing one-for-one replacement (Howard, 2014).

In an oral history of three San Francisco public housing developments, Howard (2014) describes how HOPE VI redevelopment severed relationships, coalitions, and "bonds of affective activism" among public housing residents. These losses occurred despite the fact that the extent of displacement in San Francisco was more modest than in cities such as Atlanta and Chicago. Beyond Howard's study, the scholarly and political debate about the consequences of public housing demolition has been largely framed in individualized terms, focusing on outcomes related to economic well-being or individual health (Manjarrez, Popkin, & Guernsey, 2007; Popkin et al., 2004a, 2004b). Understanding how experiences of collective agency among public housing residents may have changed as a result of demolition is a gap in the literature that this article seeks to address.

It is possible that opportunities for both civic engagement and tenant activism will be recreated in the private market communities to which public housing residents relocate. However, some evidence suggests that public housing developments may be particularly conducive to these collective processes. For example, U.S. Department of Housing and

Urban Development (HUD) regulations require tenants' associations in all public housing developments. Although there is variation in how active these associations are, they provide a unique structure that may facilitate the development of local resident activism (Williams, 2004).

Beyond formal tenant governance, some research suggests that public housing may support broader forms of collective participation and civic engagement particularly well. For example, using data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), Keene and Geronimus (2011) found that, in comparison to other Black rent-assisted households, Black public housing residents were significantly more likely to report that people in their neighborhood counted on each other, an indication of collective trust that has been associated with civic engagement (Putnam, 2000). The relative stability of public housing in comparison to other forms of subsidized and nonsubsidized low-income housing may be one factor contributing to the development of such communal ties among public housing residents. Frequent mobility, instability, and eviction are well documented among low-income renters (Desmond, 2012). Looking specifically at subsidized renters, HUD data from 2000–2010 indicate that length of residence for public housing residents is substantially and consistently longer than for voucher holders (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2014). Research also indicates high levels of postdemolition mobility among relocated public housing residents. For example, the HOPE VI Panel Study (which tracks nearly 1,000 residents across five HOPE VI sites) found that 40% of voucher users had moved again within 2 years of relocating from public housing (Buron et al., 2007).

Residential instability following relocation from public housing may constrain the ability of former public housing residents to develop the informal social ties that lead to civic engagement and tenant activism. Additionally, research suggests that for some relocated public housing residents, stigma may serve as a barrier to participation in local organizations and collective life (Keene & Padilla, 2010; Manzo et al., 2008; McCormick et al., 2012).

Public Housing Demolition in Atlanta

The last few decades have witnessed a national shift away from publically owned and operated public housing in favor of public-private partnerships and tenant-based assistance in the form of vouchers. The city of Atlanta has been at the forefront of these changes (Oakley et al., 2013). In the 1990s, Atlanta was one of the first cities to take advantage of the federal HOPE VI program, which funded the demolition of public housing developments and the construction of mixed-income developments that served both subsidized and unsubsidized tenants (Ruel, Oakley, Ward, Alston, & Reid, 2013). Nationwide, the mixed-income communities that were constructed with HOPE VI funds often had significantly fewer subsidized units than the developments that they were replacing (Goetz & Chapple, 2010; National Housing Law Project, 2002). This left many (often the majority of) former public housing residents to find other housing, most often in the private market with Housing Choice Vouchers. This was the case in Atlanta. Between 1996 and 2004, the city of Atlanta demolished 13 of its public housing developments and constructed 10 mixed-income housing communities using HOPE VI funds (Ruel et al., 2013). The 6,418 demolished

public housing units were replaced by 5,837 units, although only 2,356 of these were reserved for public housing-eligible households (Boston, 2005).

Continuing the momentum that began with the HOPE VI program, in 2007, the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) announced a plan to demolish its 10 remaining traditional (family) public housing developments, in addition to two low-income housing developments that served the elderly and the disabled. This plan was completed by late 2010. In contrast to the HOPE VI revitalization that occurred in the 1990s, this more recent demolition was carried out under Section 18 of the 1937 Housing Act which, unlike HOPE VI, does not require the construction of replacement units (Ruel et al., 2013). Thus, while in the case of HOPE VI, a portion of relocated residents were able to return to reconstructed developments, those recently displaced in Atlanta did not have this option. Instead, the vast majority of residents were relocated to private market housing with the assistance of Housing Choice Vouchers or, in the case of some older or disabled adults, to subsidized senior developments (both AHA and non-AHA) (Ruel et al., 2013). In moving to a model of housing assistance that is almost entirely voucher-based, Atlanta completed a shift that is currently in progress nationwide. It thus constitutes a unique and important place to examine how relocated residents are faring in the wake of demolition.

Public Housing Demolition and the Serial Displacement of African American Communities

The demolition of public housing in Atlanta and elsewhere is part of a long history of displacing low-income urban communities, and in particular African American communities. Scholars have argued that this process of “serial displacement” (Fullilove & Wallace, 2011), which includes urban renewal, planned shrinkage, and contagious loss of housing due to disinvestment, have had long-term consequences for the well-being, collective agency, and political power of African American communities (Fullilove, Green, & Fullilove, 1999; Fullilove & Wallace, 2011; Gans, 1965; Wallace, 1988). Most notably, urban renewal initiatives of the 1950s and 1960s demolished neighborhoods in cities across the country that had been designated as slums, clearing the way for urban redevelopment and economic growth. An estimated one million households were displaced by urban renewal between 1950 and 1980, the majority of them African American (Keating, 2000). Many of these displaced residents were housed in public housing projects, which were demolished decades later, creating what Vale (2013) refers to as the “twice-cleared” neighborhood.

In Atlanta, specifically, during the 1950 and 1960s, urban renewal efforts, focusing on central business district development, resulted in large-scale displacement, affordable housing shortages, and protests on behalf of the city’s poor and working class residents (Holliman, 2009; Keating, 2000; Vale, 2013). The city built only 4,762 new units of public housing during a two-decade renewal period, housing only a small portion of the approximately 20,000 households who were displaced by renewal (Keating, 2000). These units were later demolished along with the rest of Atlanta’s traditional public housing stock.

Accounts of urban renewal contain expressions of deep psychological loss among uprooted residents who grieved for lost homes and communities (Fried, 1963; Gans, 1962; Hartman, 1971). Additionally, scholars have documented the costs of urban renewal for collective life. For example, Fullilove (2001), drawing on oral histories, posits that the displacement of

African American communities as a result of urban renewal led to a historical rupture in collective life that persisted 40 years later, stating:

Prior to urban renewal, African American communities were improving steadily in the number and effectiveness of their social and political institutions. After the displacement, the style of engagement was angrier and more individualistic The ethos of neighborliness faded. People remained helpful to friends, fellow churchgoers and family, but withdrew from extending support to people whose only connection was that of geographic proximity (2001, page 78).

Scholars have argued that the demolition of public housing bears much in common with these earlier forms of displacement, and therefore, may have similar consequences in terms of individual and community well-being (Bennett & Reed, 1999; Keating, 2000; Slater, 2013). In particular, both urban renewal and public housing demolition led to a net loss of affordable housing units (Bennett, 2006; Keating, 2000). Likewise, both urban renewal and public housing demolition have to some extent recreated patterns of segregation (Buron, Popkin, Levy, Harris, & Khadduri, 2002; Comey, 2007; Fullilove, 2001; Goetz & Chapple, 2010; Hartman, 1964; Oakley & Burchfield, 2009). Finally, scholars (Bennett, 2006; Gans, 1962; Hyra, 2012; Slater, 2013) have argued that both urban renewal and public housing demolition privileged the economic value of place, clearing valuable land for redevelopment with little concern for the geographically rooted communities of the poor.

Despite the similarities between earlier renewal efforts of the 1950s–1970s, and more recent demolition of public housing, there are also differences that have potential implications for civic engagement and tenant activism. Hyra (2012) notes that public housing demolition was integrally linked to gentrification and expansion of central city areas, whereas urban renewal emphasized central city preservation. Research suggests that the loss of urban public housing in the context of gentrification and urban expansion has worked to push the urban poor out of central cities altogether into suburban areas where isolation is likely to be greater and opportunities for civic engagement fewer (Bennett, 2006; Hyra, 2012).

The Atlanta case is further differentiated from both HOPE VI and urban renewal efforts of past decades by the lack of replacement housing that will be built. Although both urban renewal and HOPE VI resulted in a large net loss of affordable housing units (Keating, 2000), a portion of displaced residents were housed in newly constructed housing or, in the case of HOPE VI, in other remaining public housing projects. It is possible that this replacement housing allowed some aspects of collective life to remain intact in ways that will not be possible in Atlanta where, with the complete elimination of traditional public housing, relocated residents are scattered throughout the city.

Methods

From March 2010 to July 2010, two student research assistants and I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with 40 former residents from six recently demolished Atlanta public housing developments. These interviews took place 8–13 months after participants had moved out of public housing and sought to understand how residents experienced the demolition and relocation process. The sample for this qualitative study was recruited from a

larger longitudinal study of public housing relocation conducted by a research team at Georgia State University (GSU). The GSU team is following 382 residents of seven public housing communities: four family and two senior developments that were recently demolished and one “control” senior development (Ruel et al., 2013).

Our research team recruited participants from this larger survey sample using purposive sampling procedures intended to diversify the sample according to relevant axes of diversity (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). In particular, we sought to obtain diversity across age and length of residence in public housing. We thus created four categories based on age (± 60 years) and length of residence in public housing (± 8 years), and sought to recruit an equal number of participants from each of these categories. We then randomly selected 12 participants in each of these categories from the larger list of survey respondents. We contacted participants in the order that their name appeared on the list. No participant declined to participate, which is perhaps related to the fact that these individuals had already consented to the larger survey study (see Ruel et al., 2013, for larger study response rates). We were unable to contact five participants on our list due to nonworking phone numbers. This may indicate that our sample excludes the more disadvantaged relocated families who may not have working phones.

Among the 40 interviewees in our ultimate interview sample, the average length of residence was 11 years and the average age was 56. Thirty-five of the participants were women, which is a reflection of the predominantly female public housing population. Thirty-eight participants were African American, and two had moved to Atlanta from the Caribbean.

The neighborhoods to which participants moved varied widely. Twenty-one participants were living in privately owned apartment complexes. Often these were located on the outskirts of town in poorer census tracts, but two participants lived in a higher end downtown apartment building. Eleven participants were living in single-family homes in residential neighborhoods, often far from the center of town. One participant was living in one of the remaining senior public housing developments. Five participants were living in a privately owned subsidized senior housing building called the Towers (pseudonym). Finally, two participants had moved in with family members outside the city limits.

Relocated residents from the larger survey moved to 84 census tracts within the Atlanta region. The average poverty rate in census tracts that received relocated public housing residents was lower than the tracts where public housing was located (29% vs. 41%), but higher than the poverty rate in tracts that did not receive relocated residents (21%) (Oakley et al., 2013). For a map of relocation destinations for survey participants see Oakley et al. (2013).

Data were collected in the form of semistructured interviews. Because a central objective of this study was to allow participants to tell their own stories of relocation, interview questions were framed in an open-ended manner and covered broad themes related to participants' experiences in public housing, the relocation process, and the process of settling into their new homes. The interviews took place in participants' homes and respondents were

compensated \$40 for their time. Interviews lasted an average of 70 min and were all audio-recorded and transcribed.

Analysis followed an inductive approach that is characteristic of grounded theory. I began with broad questions about the experience of relocation and read transcripts closely for emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). According to this approach, analysis was an ongoing process that co-occurred with data collection. Our research team wrote thematic summaries after each interview occurred and I wrote frequent memos about developing concepts. Civic engagement and tenant activism were two themes that emerged early in the data collection process.

I used memos and early coding notes to develop a focused code structure. A research assistant and I then coded all of the transcripts according to this structure using ATLAS-Ti software (Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin, Germany). I analyzed the coded data by extracting and carefully reviewing excerpts related to civic participation, social participation, and social isolation. In addition to reviewing these excerpts, I reread full transcripts to contextualize examples within participants' broader narratives. As a narrative about civic engagement and tenant activism began to emerge from this first stage of analysis, I then began to extract and review excerpts for other themes that were relevant to this narrative (for example, residential instability, social support, sense of community, role identification). Throughout this analysis, I paid careful attention to examples that did not fit with the main narrative to understand what factors might account for these disconfirming examples. This process helped to refine the narrative presented below. To protect participants' anonymity, I have changed their names and the names of their public housing developments when presenting these data.

Findings

Pre-Relocation

Close-Knit Communities and Civic Engagement—Ruby Johnson, who was 67 years old, had lived in Linden Court for 31 years before moving to her current home in a sprawling and somewhat run down privately owned apartment complex on the outskirts of Atlanta. She liked her new place, but would have preferred to stay in Linden Court, which she described as a close-knit and stable community. She reported, “It was like one big family. Because everybody knew everybody over there because they had been over there so long.” These expressions of kinship and community were common among participants, and particularly so among older adults who had aged in place, often raising children and grandchildren in the same community and alongside familiar neighbors. As 62-year-old Roberta Shepard reported in reference to her 28 years in Meadowbrook Village, “Everybody treated everybody good. Like a big family.” Some younger participants and those who had only lived in public housing for a short time also shared these expressions of kinship and seemed to appreciate the presence of their older and longer-term neighbors. For example, 28-year-old Vanessa Sells noted that she never had any problems with her neighbors during her 13 years at Locust Homes because, as she recalled, “Lady next door to us, she stayed in Locust Homes 30 years, the same apartment, 30 years, next door to us. She was just like mama. Well I call her Grandma.” Likewise, 40-year-old Jacqueline Reed, who had only

lived in Oakwood Homes for 5 years recalled, “Everybody got along. One person barbecued, everybody brought out something, everybody just joined in. It was just like one big family in our parking lot.”

These accounts of public housing developments as close-knit communities were not shared by all participants, because some, particularly younger and shorter-term residents described keeping to themselves as a way to avoid various forms of anti social behavior that were presumed to exist in their developments. However, the vast majority of interview participants described close-knit and supportive communities that were valued despite their problems. Likewise, in the larger survey sample from which the interviews were drawn, 52% of respondents reported that public housing was meaningful and important to them (Tester, Ruel, Anderson, Reitzes, & Oakley, 2011).

These relatively close-knit and stable communities seemed to give rise, not only to social support and reciprocal exchange among individuals, which has been well documented in studies of public housing (Clampet-Lundquist, 2007, 2010; Greenbaum et al., 2008; Kleit & Manzo, 2006), but also to broader forms of civic engagement that arose when residents created and participated in social organizations and local collective life. Several participants were engaged in various forms of organizing and service in their communities. For example, 67-year-old Selena Carter organized with other residents to start a farmer’s market. Ruby Johnson told us about her efforts to organize a book club at the Linden Courts development. She recalled, “I tried to get a book club out there, get people to read books and change books. Tried to get a library out there. We never did get the library.” Sandra Hector, age 59, described an informal reading program that she started to address literacy issues among adults in Meadowbrook Village. Sarah Harris, age 55, discussed long-term involvement with an organization that sought to reduce drug use among youth in Locust homes. Others reported organizing activities for young children such as field trips, tutoring sessions, and field days. Jacqueline Reed described residents’ general engagement in efforts to improve their community stating, “We had little meetings on certain days about our area, what we were going to do about ours ... to control what was going on around the corner [referring to crime in the area].”

Tenants’ Associations, Activism, and Advocacy—In addition to the civic engagement discussed above, participants provided many examples of tenant activism in their former public housing developments; where residents advocated on behalf of their collective rights and community well-being, often challenging existing power structures. In particular, several participants were members of Residents’ Advisory Councils (RACs) or the Atlanta Jurisdiction wide Residents Advisory Board (RAB), which provided formal mechanisms for activism and advocacy. Sixty-five-year-old Jocelyn Smith spent much of our 2-hr interview discussing her involvement in the RAC and her position as secretary of Oakwood Homes where she lived for 28 years before it was torn down. She described herself as an advocate for Oakwood residents and when asked what she liked most about living there, she explained, “That I was able to help a lot of peoples, and I got involved in a lot of people’s lives and I got where folks just want to come to me and sit down and talk to me about problems.”

Jocelyn recounted how, as a RAC member, she was able to successfully advocate on behalf of her fellow residents. For example, when one of the main bus routes that served Oakwood Homes was cut off, she helped organize a successful protest to get the bus route reinstated. She explained, “So, we got our bus back, but they brought it back as [a different number]. But we didn’t care, as long as it was, you know, taking everybody to ... where they wanted to go.”

Participants provided several other examples of changes that the RACs were able to implement in their communities. For example, 75-year-old Constance Germain, who served on the RAC in Regent Terrace, a development that was torn down in the 1990s, described how the council organized to institute a written work-order policy, which ensured that maintenance requests were handled equitably. When Constance moved from Regent Terrace to Linden Court, she continued as a vocal participant at the council meetings. She recalled, “I would just tell ‘em, I would speak what I know and testify what I see.”

As another example, Ruby Johnson explained how the RAC organized to create a program for senior citizens at Linden Court. In general, Ruby described the council meetings as an effective form of advocacy noting, “We would just talk about, we would talk about what was going on in the apartments, what we liked and what we didn’t like. Then, they, the office, the management, was very supportive of us.” Sarah Harris echoed Ruby’s appreciation of the regular tenant’s meetings held in Oakwood Homes. She said, “[The monthly tenants’ meetings were] Very informative. They were. And you could put, you know, your input in, you could say what you, how you felt about things.” She also explained that these meetings were widely attended stating, “I wasn’t the only one ya’ know. Every one mostly participated.”

Others described the RACs as important mediators between public housing residents and the management of their developments. For example, Selena Carter, who spent 37 years in Oakwood Homes, was president of the council’s grievance committee where, she helped protect residents from eviction:

SC Well see, her son was on her lease. And he moved out and didn’t tell her. And by him having another lease somewhere else, they was going to put her out. And I went and talked to the people, you know. Asked them not to put her out because she didn’t know her son had this problem, you know. They listened to me. They would listen to me.

DK The management listened to you?

SC Um-hm. And I was president of the grieving committee of Oakwood Homes. You know, so we helped save a lot of people from getting put out that way, you know.

Although RAC leadership experiences were primarily limited to older participants, the interviews suggest that these councils provided an important resource for younger public housing residents as well. For example, 23-year-old Tiffany Mason, in describing the president of the Linden Court’s RAC recalled, “And, you know, I really didn’t socialize with her like that but I did speak every day I saw her and you know, if I had a problem and I felt like she could help me, I would talk to her.”

Activism and Resistance in the Face of Demolition—With the impending demolition of their public housing communities, RACs also became important mediators between tenants and the AHA. For example, RAC leaders sought to ensure that residents were informed about the relocation process by encouraging attendance at the AHA sponsored pre demolition meetings and by reaching out to community members through door-to-door campaigns. As 59-year-old Donald Bell said of the Oakwood Homes president, “Come around and everything, they knock on your door and everything. Communicate.”

The RACs were not only an important source of information, but they also served to mobilize communities to protest demolition and to advocate for the rights of public housing residents during the relocation process. For example, Jocelyn Smith explained:

We had heard about they was, you know, we read about how they was moving folks in Chicago. And how the folks in Chicago were fighting about they, they, they public housing So, that’s when we, you know, we start really getting out fighting.

Fifty-year-old Sherry Briscoe described how the RAC at Linden Court organized to protect residents’ right to replacement housing. Residents had heard stories about relocatees being placed in hotels and as Sherry stated, “we weren’t gonna let them do that to us.” To ensure adequate replacement housing, the president of the RAC sought legal representation. As Sherry reported:

So, some said that everything [relocation] was gonna be (pause) easy. But then you find out they were lying. So, uh, we got a lawyer. We had one lady who was the president out there. She got a lawyer for the whole complex.

Sherry then described how the AHA proceeded to remove the president, providing one illustration of how tenants’ collective agency was limited in the face of more powerful forces. She explained, “But the thing is, they was trying to get her out of there. And they actually got her out of there. I mean, they literally went to court on her.”

Although participants described having little power to prevent the demolition of their homes, they were, in some cases, through the work of the RACs, able to effect small changes in the way relocation was carried out. For example, according to Jocelyn, when the president of Oakwood Homes got word that the AHA was planning to evict more than 100 families prior to demolition (which would make these families ineligible to receive vouchers), she organized residents to prevent these evictions. Jocelyn explained:

I think it was 10 families they had throwed out before [Oakwood Homes president] and I got to working on it. By the time we got to working on it, uh, the families, a lot of them, they volunteer and moved out because they had got these demand letters.

Ultimately, according to Jocelyn, by threatening the AHA with media exposure and holding pickets at the rental office, they were able to prevent many of the remaining families from being evicted.

Likewise, Constance Germain described working with the RAC to protect the rights of tenants during the 2005 demolition of Washington Homes (where she lived after her home in Regent Terrace was demolished and before relocating to the now demolished Linden Court). She explained that there were tight restrictions on who could move back into the new mixed-income development that was constructed in the place of Washington Homes. These restrictions excluded those who had lease violations prior to demolition. She noted, “They was tryin’ to stop people, they didn’t want ‘em in there’ ‘cause they wanted as many as they can to rent out to the private people.”” She then described how the RAC successfully protested this residence requirement. She explained:

Cause they was just weedin’ them out like that. And we stopped that. We went to City Hall and everything ... we had a meetin’ that, no they could not go back to that. What, what our, our plan was and had to have Rene Glover and them sign it and Shirley Franklin too¹. That our time, the time that our reference started, if the police had been to your house and everything, you couldn’t move back in the new Washington Homes. So we, we went and made an agreement that our records started from the time we moved out of Washington Homes until they rebuild.

Post-Relocation

Loss of Community and Civic Engagement—One result of demolition was to disperse the relatively close knit communities that existed in public housing and several participants lamented this loss. For example, Vanessa Sells explained, “You know, people watch out for each other [in Linden Courts]. But now, you ain’t going to have that, you know, since everybody gonna move away.” Likewise, Selena Carter said, “We was just one big happy family. Now, see, we just scattered.” Seventy-six-year-old Irene Thompson explained that this scattering was more pronounced in this last round of public housing demolition. She had moved to Meadowbrook Village in 2005 after Hillside Homes was demolished. She described how much of the Hillside community, including a few key community leaders, was transplanted to Meadowbrook, but now, after the demolition of Atlanta’s last traditional public housing developments, virtually all of the residents had moved to private market housing. She said, “After they cut down Meadowbrook, they scattered us then. We can’t do but call one another now because we ain’t close to one another.”

In contrast to the descriptions of close-knit pre demolition communities, many participants described a sense of isolation from neighbors in their new post-relocation homes. For example, Tiffany Mason explained that in her new community she doesn’t go out unless she is “driving off or whatever.” She said, “I don’t really walk around out here like that.” She recalled a much different experience in Linden Courts stating, “Yeah, ‘cause it was like a big community, like everyone knew each other and people would like talk, you know, tell you things and we had security over there. We don’t have that here.” Several participants noted that they weren’t close with their new neighbors using the phrase “we speak” to describe interactions that did not go beyond neighborly formality. As Sheila James, age 61, reported:

[I] don’t know nobody around here, but my son and those boys across the street there. But the neighbors around here, when I see them, you know, they’ll speak and

stuff. And you speak back. And I don't go visit nobody around here like I did, you know, in Oakwood Homes.

Selena Carter also used the phrase “speak” to describe her relationship with new neighbors. She explained, “I speak to em.” “How you doing? ... but look like everybody around here mind they own business.” When asked if this was different than in Oakwood Homes, she noted, “Yeah, because in Oakwood Homes everybody be stopping and talking, you know.” Selena’s statement that people “mind they own business,” was reiterated by other participants who described a more private ethos in their new communities. As Constance explained, “You don’t see nobody knockin’ on each other’s door over here.” Many participants described keeping to themselves in these more private new communities. For example, Vanessa Sells reported:

We just communicate, we don’t know these people out here. So we stay to ourself, like I stay in the house. You know, I go to see my friend, they’ll come see me, like that. But um, not in these apartments, we don’t know nothing.

Many participants also reported that they were not involved with formal or informal organizations in their new neighborhoods. For example, when asked whether she participated in neighborhood organizations, Sarah Harris replied, “No, only your organization [referring to the Georgia State Research Study].” Kiana Landley, age 21, also said that she did not participate in neighborhood organizations drawing a distinct contrast with Oakwood Homes. She explained:

No. I don’t know things that go on. Don’t nobody come knock on my door. Like, “We doin’ this.” At Oakwood Homes, they come out there, “Well we doing this today for the kids, y’all can come participate if y’all want” They don’t do that out here. If they do do it, we don’t know nothing about it

It is unclear from Kiana’s statement whether her lack of participation resulted from a lack of neighborhood organizations, from her status as an isolated newcomer, or a combination of both factors. Linda Ellis, age 42, reiterated this ambiguity when asked about whether there was a community center in her new neighborhood, stating, “I wouldn’t know what either. I don’t get out a lot.”

There were a few exceptions in the data where participants described some participation in organizational life within their new neighborhoods. For example, Jacqueline participated in a neighborhood clean-up, but at the same time described feeling alienated by the organizers of this event. Lenore Allen, age 54, sporadically attended resident meetings at her downtown apartment complex. Constance joined with a few neighbors to plant flowers in the communal spaces that surround her new apartment, yet spoke at length about the loss of more formal organizing and activism that she described as central to her life in public housing.

The one strong example of post-relocation participation in collective life was evidenced among participants who moved to a privately owned senior high-rise called the Towers. Although privately owned, the Towers was similar to public housing in that it contained communal spaces (a library, a gym, a computer room, indoor gathering spaces) and

numerous organized activities for its residents. Participants who lived at the Towers described engaging in these activities and with their fellow residents. For example, one Towers resident, 73-year-old Dorris Martin, reported serving as a floor monitor and helping older residents with their laundry. Another participant, 82-year-old Gladys Cullen, described tenant activism at the Towers in the form of a petition circulated by other residents to obtain city bus service for the development.

Beyond the Towers and the few isolated examples noted above, the organizational participation that participants described post-relocation was largely limited to organizations that were external to the neighborhood; namely churches located near their former homes. This contrasted sharply with the prevalent descriptions of local civic engagement in public housing developments that often brought neighbors together in a collective effort to improve their own communities.

Loss of Activism and Advocacy—With the exception of the example from the Towers, cited above, descriptions of tenant activism were largely absent from participants' post-relocation narratives. Jocelyn Smith explained that as a result of demolition and relocation, tenant leaders like herself were no longer able to advocate on behalf of their communities and fellow residents. For example, she explained that many younger residents had lost their vouchers because they couldn't afford their new rental apartments and also because they no longer had a community of elders looking out for them. She noted:

Now, we have all these peoples out here with these children. A lot of them—God bless 'em—trying to move in with families.' It's already over-crowded. They done lost everything they had. They can't afford to, you know, stay out there. They had a better chance of, uh, uh, over there in Oakwood Home, when we were working with them with than what they have now They don't have nobody to stand up for them.

After relocation, Jocelyn continued to try to help former residents of Oakwood Homes. For example, she helped one former tenant find pro-bono legal assistance to prevent an impending eviction. However, she lamented the fact that she could not provide the same kind of assistance that she used to when she was part of the RAC. She explained:

It's a lot of them out there right now that need help. Serious help. I can't help 'em because I'm not in there like I was with Atlanta Housing.' So, I can't get in their business no more It worries me that I can't help these people We need to have a meeting. We need to—I can't do that no more because there's no longer an Oakwood Homes.

In her statement, "we need to have a meeting—I can't do that no more," Jocelyn laments the loss of the RAC as a formal opportunity to advocate for the rights of public housing residents. Although many Atlanta neighborhoods contain active neighborhood and homeowner associations (City of Atlanta, 2014), several participants' narratives suggest that these organizations did not exist in their new neighborhoods. Additionally, some participants noted that these groups did exist, but that they did not feel welcome to join them.

Stigma and Alienation—Several participants described feeling stigmatized and alienated in their new neighborhoods and these perceptions seemed to create barriers to civic engagement and tenant activism. For example, Kiana Lanley explained that she did not anticipate becoming involved with activities in her new neighborhood because, “It’s just the people in the community, they just think they’re better than everybody. You can tell those people who think they better than everybody.” Likewise, Jocelyn noted that her new neighborhood had a crime watch called “Take back your Neighborhood” but she had not gotten involved with them because “they already have their people.” Additionally, like several other participants she was worried that the stigma associated with her former home in public housing would make her unwelcome. As she said, “They find out I’m from Oakwood. You know, they’re probably looking down on me.” Selena reiterated this perception stating, “They gave Oakwood Homes such a bad reputation, you see what I’m saying? Oakwood Homes wasn’t that bad. You had to really live in Oakwood Homes to know how Oakwood Homes was.”

Similarly, Lenore Allen described feeling stigmatized in her higher-end downtown apartment complex that she was preparing to move out of at the time of the interview. She explained that her neighbors, unaware that she herself was a voucher holder, often complained to her about the rowdy crowds at the community pool, which they attributed to an influx of voucher holders.

Jacqueline Reed also experienced stigma toward voucher holders while attending neighborhood watch meetings in her new neighborhood. She said, of the meetings:

I went to one ... it was alright. You know, there was a lot of older people who were, you know, they were just talking about they didn’t want the violence and crime. When we first moved here, they was talking about they didn’t want a lot of people on this street with Section 8.

Perhaps in response to this stigma, participants described a general sense of alienation from their new neighbors, which seemed to contribute to self-imposed social isolation and to prohibit civic engagement. For example, 22-year-old Nikia Reeves used the example of borrowing Kool-Aid to illustrate the difference between Oakwood Homes and her new apartment complex. She recounted:

[in Oakwood Homes] “Do anybody got a extra pack of Kool-Aid?” (laughing). They like, “What kind you need?” I like, “I need some grape.” “I got some grape.” Then later in the door, “Oh I got some, you need it?” I like, “I just asked one pack and wind up with four packets of Kool-Aid.” So yeah, it was, it was nice. Out here, I don’t even think they folks drink Kool-Aid, you know what I’m saying?

In this final statement, “I don’t even think folks drink Kool-Aid,” Nikia points to a perceived divide between herself and her new neighbors and explains that this leads her to “keep to myself.”

Residential Stability and Uncertain Prospects for Community Development—

Although it is possible that connections with neighbors and opportunities for civic engagement and tenant activism would develop over time, lack of residential stability may

hinder the development of such community ties. Participants described their new communities as transient places, where people were, “always moving out.” Additionally, data indicate that relocated public housing residents themselves move frequently. For example, in the larger survey sample from which these interviews were drawn, 12% of respondents had moved a second time within 6 months of relocation. Furthermore, the interviews contained many examples of eviction, mobility, and fears of instability.

Participants described affordability as a significant challenge to residential stability after relocation. Although vouchers provided subsidized rent, utility bills (which were covered in public housing) often strained household budgets. As Kiana Landley explained, “Like certain people getting put out of their houses and apartments because they can’t afford their rent. I mean it’s crazy, a lot of homeless people. It’s gonna be a lot.” In concurrence with Kiana’s assessment, 34-year-old Michelle Mitchell described her own challenges with affordability and eviction after relocation from public housing. She had been planning to pay her late rent with her income tax return, but came home one day to find her belongings on the curb. She explained:

I lost everything. So we had to start all over from scratch, and by the grace of God, we were able to get this place, to actually move in this place. I was actually able to find a place within a month. So now it’s like a situation as far as my finances. I work right now, but it’s still kind of hard trying to pay all the bills, because it’s not enough to pay all of my bills.

In addition to the added expenses associated with utility bills, some relocated public housing residents struggled to maintain eligibility for the housing assistance vouchers they were receiving. For example, participants described the challenge of maintaining the 30 hours a week work minimum that is required of voucher holders. As Vanessa Sells, who was expecting a baby at the time of the interview, explained:

I was [afraid of losing my voucher] because I don’t have a job, you know, and I’m pregnant, so I’m like, “I hope I don’t lose my voucher.” That’s why I got to do something immediately after I have my baby. My grandma gonna help take care of my baby for me, so I need to find me a job, ‘cause right now I don’t want to lose my voucher right now.’

Other participants described the broader fragility of private market housing where availability was subject to the decision of individual owners. For example, 52 year-old Wanda Stokes was renting an apartment in a house that was on the market. Her ability to remain there depended on whether the new owners retained its Section 8 certification. She worried about having to move, noting, “Yeah, they got it up for sale. So I’m hoping I don’t have to move though. Because that’s a hard job.”

In the context of the above mentioned constraints, it is unclear whether relocated residents will be able to develop the long-term residency that many participants experienced in public housing and which seemed to be an important determinant of the civic engagement and activism that they described. For example, when asked about the prospects for developing a close-knit community in his new neighborhood, 59-year-old Donald Bell replied, “Well let

me put it like this here, it took a long time for Oakwood Homes to get like that It wasn't just a day or two, a year, it took a while."

Discussion

Research evaluating the costs and benefits of public housing demolition has typically focused on individual outcomes (Goetz & Chapple, 2010; Keene & Geronimus, 2011; Popkin, 2006). This article examines the collective dimensions of public housing communities that were also affected by demolition and relocation. In-depth interviews with relocated public housing residents in Atlanta revealed frequent accounts of collective agency prior to demolition. Participants described civic engagement in the form of organizational participation and community outreach. They created reading programs, farmers markets, and youth activities, to meet the day-to-day needs of their fellow residents. Interviews also revealed examples of tenant activism in pre demolition communities, where residents challenged existing power structures in a fight for their collective rights, often resulting in real gains such as obtaining bus service or protecting neighbors from eviction.

Some scholars (Greenbaum, 2008; Howard, 2014) have argued that one consequence of public housing demolition has been to reduce the collective power of public housing residents and the analysis presented in this article lends support for this view. Interviews indicate experiences of isolation from both informal and formal organizational life in post-relocation environments. Several participants described keeping to themselves and having few meaningful interactions with their new neighbors after relocation. With few exceptions, participants were not involved in neighborhood organizations or neighborhood governance in their post-relocation communities. The interviews suggest that this isolation may stem both from a lack of formal organizing opportunities in new neighborhoods and from the perceived inaccessibility of any existing organizations. Perceptions of stigma prevented some participants from joining existing neighborhood structures. Fears of eviction and residential instability also seemed to prevent participants from putting down roots and developing the close neighborhood ties that often provide a foundation for civic engagement.

Additionally, some participants lamented the loss of HUD-mandated RACS which provided a collective voice through which residents could negotiate with public housing management, with the AHA, and with the city of Atlanta. As low-income renters scattered throughout Atlanta neighborhoods, participants noted that they could no longer look out for each other and advocate for their collective rights.

Although these interviews occurred within 2 years of relocation, when many participants had yet to establish themselves in their new communities, the loss of HUD-mandated RACs and the presence of barriers such as residential stability and stigma suggest that the collective processes that existed in public housing may be difficult to recreate in the post-relocation landscape, even with the passing of time. Future research that examines the longer term consequences of relocation will be important.

Future research may also be able to tease out differences between various types of relocation environments with respect to civic engagement and tenant activism. These interview data

suggest that both perceived and concrete barriers to collective participation are likely to vary depending on the relocation environment. For example, residents of the Towers, a privately owned, subsidized building for seniors, did not report the same experiences of isolation as other participants. Perhaps the various communal spaces and organized activities of the Towers helped to support collective life. Future systematic observational research may also be able to tease out the relative contributions of social dynamics (stigma, alienation, residential instability) and structural context (availability of organizations and associations) to the isolation that participants describe after relocation.

The goal of this qualitative study was to understand how residents experience relocation with respect to civic engagement and tenant activism. Although the data give voice to the experiences of individual participants, they do not allow for an examination of population level trends. Future survey research that can measure both pre- and post-relocation levels of engagement and activism in representative samples of public housing residents will thus be an important addition to the literature.

In thinking about the consequences of demolition for collective agency among public housing residents, it is important to consider the historical context that has repeatedly uprooted, marginalized lower income and predominantly African American communities. The Atlanta public housing developments that were demolished in 2010 housed many residents who had been relocated as a result of HOPE VI demolitions in the 1990s. For example, Irene Thompson and Constance Germaine had experienced demolition and relocation two and three times, respectively, before moving to their current private market neighborhoods, where their claims to place as subsidized renters remained fragile. Additionally, looking back further into history, the now-demolished public housing developments in Atlanta, and elsewhere, often held families who had been displaced by the massive urban renewal initiatives of the 1950s and 1960s (Keating, 2000). As Fullilove and Wallace (2011) note, the cumulative effects of these serial displacements likely have significant consequences for social organization, collective agency, and political power in urban African American communities.

Although the recent demolition of public housing in Atlanta follows a long history of displacement, it is unique from previous HOPE VI demolition and to some extent from urban renewal in that not even a small portion of the demolished units were replaced. Additionally, with the complete removal of traditional family housing from the city, the degree of dispersal was likely much greater than in previous rounds of public housing demolition (such as HOPE VI) where residents had the option to relocate to other public housing developments and often did (Buron et al., 2002; Comey, 2007). In this regard, the consequences of this most recent form of displacement for collective life may be particularly significant.

The intention of this analysis is not to paint a nostalgic and unblemished picture of public housing developments. Indeed participants in this study describe real challenges in their communities related to poverty and unemployment, as well as violence and drug commerce that often occurs in the absence of legal sources of income. In some cases, the activism and engagement described above was a direct response to these challenges. However, the

dominant discourse surrounding public housing revitalization, which has focused primarily on these challenges, has, for the most part, failed to acknowledge the important social resources that exist in public housing developments (Goetz, 2013; Slater, 2013). Some have argued that this demonizing discourse has conveniently served broader economic interests (Bennett & Reed, 1999; Goetz, 2013; Slater, 2013). Like the urban renewal initiatives of the 1950s–1970s, and HOPE VI redevelopment in the 1990s, the recent public housing demolition in Atlanta has cleared valuable land for redevelopment and urban growth (Vale, 2013).

In summary, experiences of civic engagement and tenant activism were salient aspects of public housing life for participants in this sample and the loss of these collective resources was described as a salient consequence of relocation. The narratives presented here point to a need for strategies of urban redevelopment that recognize the existence and importance of collective life in public housing communities. Supporting the development of resident associations in post-relocation neighborhoods may be a useful strategy, but may also fall short of recreating the types of collective agency that existed in public housing due to factors such as stigma and residential instability. The collective agency of public housing residents can also be protected by limiting displacement. For example, phased renovation of deteriorated public housing can improve physical conditions while keeping communities intact. Additionally, one-for-one replacement policies that retain the full number of public housing units for former residents may help to protect collective resources. The opposite approach was taken in Atlanta, and the findings presented here suggest that this type of wholesale demolition may have some negative consequences for collective well-being.

Acknowledgments

I thank Erin Ruel, Christopher Pell, Elton Wilson, Annie Ro, and Julia Rozonova for their assistance with this project. I gratefully acknowledge support from the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan, which is supported by Award 1 U01 AE000002-03 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. This work was also supported by the National Institute of Aging through a training grant to the University of Michigan Population Studies Center (T32 AG000221). Any opinions expressed are my own and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the Federal Government.

References

- Austin Turner, M., Popkin, S., Kingsley, T., Kaye, D. Distressed public housing: What it costs to do nothing. Washington, DC: Urban Institute; 2004. Retrieved from http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411159_Costs_of_Inaction.pdf
- Bennett, L. Downtown restructuring and public housing in contemporary Chicago: Fashioning a better world class-city. In: Bennett, L.Smith, J., Wright, P., editors. Where are poor people to live? Transforming public housing communities. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe; 2006. p. 282-301.
- Bennett, L., Hudspeth, N., Wright, P. A critical analysis of the ABLA redevelopment plan. In: Bennett, L.Smith, J., Wright, P., editors. Where are poor people to live? Transforming public housing. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe; 2006. p. 185-215.
- Bennett, L., Reed, A. The new face of urban renewal: The near north redevelopment initiative and the Cabrini-Green neighborhood. In: Reed, A., editor. Without justice for all: The new liberalism and our retreat from racial equality. Boulder, CO: Westview Press; 1999. p. 176-192.
- Boston TD. The effects of revitalization on public housing residents: A case study of the Atlanta housing authority. Journal of the American Planning Association. 2005; 71:393–407. DOI: 10.1080/01944360508976710

- Buron, L., Levy, D., Gallagher, M. Housing choice vouchers: How HOPE VI families fared in the private market. Washington, DC: Metropolitan Housing and Community Center, Urban Institute; 2007.
- Buron, L., Popkin, S., Levy, D., Harris, L., Khadduri, J. The HOPE VI resident tracking study: A snapshot of the current living situation of original residents from eight sites. Washington, DC: Abt Associates and Urban Institute Press; 2002.
- Chaskin R, Khare A, Joseph M. Participation, deliberation, and decision making: The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in mixed-income developments. *Urban Affairs Review*. 2012; 48:863–906. DOI: 10.1177/1078087412450151
- City of Atlanta, Neighborhood links. 2015. Retrieved January 12, 2015, from <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=595>
- Clampet-Lundquist S. No more 'bois ball: The effect of relocation from public housing on adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. 2007; 22:298–323. DOI: 10.1177/0743558407300115
- Clampet-Lundquist S. "Everyone had your back": Social ties, perceived safety, and public housing relocation. *City & Community*. 2010; 9:87–108. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6040.2009.01304.x
- Comey, J. HOPE VI'd and on the move. Washington, DC: Metropolitan Housing and Community Policy Center, Urban Institute; 2007.
- Corbin, A., Strauss, J. Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing a grounded theory. 2nd. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; 1998.
- Crump J. The end of public housing as we know it: Public housing policy, labor regulation and the U.S. city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 2003; 27:179–187. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.00438
- Desmond M. Eviction and the reproduction of urban poverty1. *American Journal of Sociology*. 2012; 118:88–133.
- De Souza Briggs X. Brown kids in white suburbs: Housing mobility and the many faces of social capital. *Housing Policy Debate*. 1998; 9:177–221. DOI: 10.1080/10511482.1998.9521290
- Dreier P. The status of tenants in the United States. *Social Problems*. 1982; 30:179–198. DOI: 10.2307/800517
- Feldman, RM., Stall, Susan, editors. Coming of age. Madison, WI: Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA); 1990. Resident activism in public housing: A case study of women's invisible work of building community; p. 111-119.
- Fischer, PB. Section 8 and the public housing revolution: Where will the families go?. Chicago, IL: Woods Fund of Chicago; 1999.
- Fried, M. Grieving for a lost home. In: Duhl, LJ., Powell, J., editors. The urban condition: People and policy in the metropolis. New York, NY: Clarion; 1963. p. 151-171.
- Fuerst, J. When public housing was paradise: Building community in Chicago. Westport, CT: Praeger; 2003.
- Fullilove MT. Root shock: The consequences of African American dispossession. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2001; 78:72–80. DOI: 10.1093/jurban/78.1.72 [PubMed: 11368205]
- Fullilove MT, Green L, Fullilove RE. Building momentum: An ethnographic study of inner-city redevelopment. *American Journal of Public Health*. 1999; 89:840–844. DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.89.6.840 [PubMed: 10358672]
- Fullilove MT, Wallace R. Serial forced displacement in American cities, 1916–2010. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2011; 88:381–389. [PubMed: 21607786]
- Gans, H. The urban villagers: Group and class in the life of Italian Americans. New York, NY: Free Press; 1962.
- Gans H. The failure of urban renewal: A critique and some proposals. *Commentary*. 1965; 39:29–37.
- Goetz E. The politics of poverty deconcentration and housing demolition. *Journal of Urban Affairs*. 2000; 22:157–173. DOI: 10.1111/0735-2166.00048
- Goetz E. Better neighborhood, better outcomes?: Explaining relocation outcomes in HOPE VI. *Cityscape*. 2010; 12:5–15.
- Goetz E. The audacity of HOPE VI: Discourse and the dismantling of public housing. *Cities*. 2013; 35:342–348. DOI: 10.1016/j.cities.2012.07.008

- Goetz E, Chapple K. You gotta move: Advancing the debate on the record of dispersal. *Housing Policy Debate*. 2010; 20:209–236. DOI: 10.1080/10511481003779876
- Gotham KF, Brumley K. Using space: Agency and identity in a public-housing development. *City & Community*. 2002; 1:267–289. DOI: 10.1111/1540-6040.00023
- Greenbaum S. Poverty and the willful destruction of social capital: Displacement and dispossession in African American communities. *Rethinking Marxism*. 2008; 20:42–54. DOI: 10.1080/08935690701739956
- Greenbaum S, Hathaway W, Rodriguez C, Spalding A, Ward B. Deconcentration and social capital: Contradictions of a poverty alleviation policy. *Journal of Poverty*. 2008; 12:201–228. DOI: 10.1080/10875540801973609
- Hackworth J. Progressive activism in a neoliberal context: The case of efforts to retain public housing in the U.S. *Studies in Political Economy*. 2005; 75:29–51.
- Hartman C. The housing of relocated families. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*. 1964; 30:266–286. DOI: 10.1080/01944366408978135
- Hartman C. Relocation: Illusory promises and no relief. *Virginia Law Review*. 1971; 57:745–817. DOI: 10.2307/1072173
- Holliman IV. From Crackertown to model city?: Urban renewal and community building in Atlanta, 1963–1966. *Journal of Urban History*. 2009; 35:369–386. DOI: 10.1177/0096144208330402
- Howard, AL. More than shelter: Activism and community in San Francisco public housing. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; 2014.
- Hyra DS. Conceptualizing the new urban renewal: Comparing the past to the present. *Urban Affairs Review*. 2012; 48:498–527. DOI: 10.1177/1078087411434905
- Keating L. Redeveloping public housing. *Journal of the American Planning Association*. 2000; 66:384–397. DOI: 10.1080/01944360008976122
- Keene D, Geronimus A. “Weathering” HOPE VI: The importance of evaluating the population health impact of public housing demolition and displacement. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2011; 88:417–435. DOI: 10.1007/s11524-011-9582-5 [PubMed: 21607787]
- Keene D, Padilla M. Race, class and the stigma of place: Moving to “opportunity” in Eastern Iowa. *Health & Place*. 2010; 16:1216–1223. DOI: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2010.08.006 [PubMed: 20800532]
- Keene D, Padilla M, Geronimus A. Leaving Chicago for Iowa’s “fields of opportunity”: Community dispossession, rootlessness and the quest for somewhere to “be ok”. *Human Organization*. 2010; 69:275–284. [PubMed: 21037928]
- Kissane R, Clampet-Lundquist S. Social ties social support and collective efficacy among families from public housing in Chicago and Baltimore. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*. 2012; 39:157–180.
- Kleit R, Manzo L. To move or not to move: Relationships to place and relocation in HOPE VI. *Housing Policy Debate*. 2006; 17:271–308. DOI: 10.1080/10511482.2006.9521571
- Manjarrez, C., Popkin, S., Guernsey, E. Poor health: Adding insult to injury for HOPE VI families. Washington, DC: Metropolitan Housing and Community Center, the Urban Institute Press; 2007.
- Manzo L, Kleit R, Couch D. “Moving three times is like having your house on fire once”: The experience of place and impending displacement among public housing residents. *Urban Studies*. 2008; 45:1855–1878. DOI: 10.1177/0042098008093381
- McCormick NJ, Joseph ML, Chaskin RJ. The new stigma of relocated public housing residents: Challenges to social identity in mixed-income developments. *City & Community*. 2012; 11:285–308. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6040.2012.01411.x
- National Housing Law Project. False HOPE: A critical assessment of the HOPE VI public housing redevelopment program. Oakland, CA: Author; 2002.
- Oakley D, Burchfield K. Out of the projects, still in the hood: The spatial constraints on public-housing residents’ relocation in Chicago. *Journal of Urban Affairs*. 2009; 31:589–614. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9906.2009.00454.x
- Oakley D, Ruel E, Reid L. Atlanta’s last demolitions and relocations: The relationship between neighborhood characteristics and resident satisfaction. *Housing Studies*. 2013; 28:205–234. DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2013.767887

- Pattillo, Mary. *Black on the block*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 2007.
- Purdy, Sean. By the people, for the people tenant organizing in Toronto's regent park housing project in the 1960s and 1970s. *Journal of Urban History*. 2004; 30(4):519–548.
- Popkin S. HOPE VI program: What about the residents? *Housing Policy Debate*. 2006; 15:385–414. DOI: 10.1080/10511482.2004.9521506
- Popkin, S., Cove, E. Safety is the most important thing: How HOPE VI helped families. Washington, DC: Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center, Urban Institute; 2007.
- Popkin, S., Eisemann, M., Cove, E. How are HOPE VI families faring? *Children*. Vol. 6. Washington, DC: Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center Urban Institute; 2004a.
- Popkin, S., Katz, B., Cunningham, M. A decade of HOPE VI: Research findings and policy challenges. Washington, DC: Urban Institute; 2004b.
- Putnam, R. *Bowling alone*. New York, NY: Simon and Shuster; 2000.
- Ruel E, Oakley DA, Ward C, Alston R, Reid LW. Public housing relocations in Atlanta: Documenting residents' attitudes, concerns and experiences. *Cities*. 2013; 35:349–358. DOI: 10.1016/j.cities.2012.07.010
- Slater T. Expulsions from public housing: The hidden context of concentrated affluence. *Cities*. 2013; 35:384–390. DOI: 10.1016/j.cities.2012.10.009
- Tester G, Ruel E, Anderson A, Reitzes D, Oakley D. Sense of place among Atlanta public housing residents. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2011; 88:436–453. DOI: 10.1007/s11524-011-9579-0 [PubMed: 21567265]
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A picture of subsidized households. Washington, DC: Author; 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.huduser.org/picture2000/>
- Vale L. Empathological places: Residents' ambivalence toward remaining in public housing. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. 1997; 16:159–175. DOI: 10.1177/0739456X9701600301
- Vale, L. *Purging the poorest: Public housing and the design politics of twice cleared communities*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; 2013.
- Venkatesh, S. *American project: The rise and fall of a modern Ghetto*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2000.
- Wallace R. A synergism of plagues: "planned shrinkage," contagious housing destruction, and AIDS in the Bronx. *Environmental Research*. 1988; 47(1):1–33. DOI: 10.1016/S0013-9351(88)80018-5 [PubMed: 3168963]
- Williams, R. *The politics of public housing*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2004.
- Wright, P. Community resistance to CHA transformation: The history, evolution, struggles, and accomplishments of the coalition to protect public housing. In: Bennett, L.Smith, J., Wright, P., editors. *Where are poor people to live? Transforming public housing communities*. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe; 2006. p. 125-167.
- Wright, P., Wheelcock, R., Steele, C. The case of Cabrini Greene. In: Bennett, L.Smith, J., Wright, P., editors. *Where are poor people to live: Transforming public housing communities?*. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe; 2006. p. 168-184.