HOW DOES PUBLIC HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT AFFECT NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH ENVIRONMENTS?

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Background:
Neighborhood Disadvantage & Health

- Neighborhood poverty rates are associated with a range of poor health outcomes
  - Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression, mortality
- Can public policy improve these conditions?
- These associations exist because disadvantaged neighborhoods have, on average, worse quality housing and built environments, more physical and social disorder, and fewer health-promoting neighborhood structures, such as parks or grocery stores
US Department of Housing and Urban Development HOPE VI: Goals

Housing Policy to Deconcentrate Poverty

- **Physical**
  - Higher quality housing
  - Improved design

- **Economic**
  - Mixed-income
  - Increase residential & commercial investment

- **Social**
  - Reduce crime & disorder
  - Promote self-sufficiency
  - Reduce social isolation
Philadelphia Housing Sites
Project Overview

- **Goal:** to compare health behavior of residents in three Philadelphia neighborhoods
  - Norman Blumberg at 23rd and Oxford, North Philadelphia—not redeveloped
  - Lucien Blackwell at 44th and Fairmount, West Philadelphia—mixed-income, fully redeveloped
  - Martin Luther King and Hawthorne at 13th and Christian, South Philadelphia—mixed income, fully redeveloped
Norman Blumberg
Lucien Blackwell

Former Mill Creek High Rises

Lucien Blackwell Homes
Methods

- 30 Interviews were conducted at each site
- Interviews were about 45 minutes-1 hour and participants were asked about
  - Their opinions on the past vs. current neighborhood
  - Social networks within and outside the neighborhood
  - Food access and shopping
  - Their health, behaviors and lifestyle
- Participants were compensated with $40
Recruitment

- Stalked addresses of residents and mailed letters
  - Fail
- Went in person to hand out flyers and talk to residents
  - Win
- Word of mouth within the neighborhoods
Variations in Health Behavior

- Food access
- Chronic medical conditions
- Medical care
- Exercise
- Exposure to violence
- Housing quality
Case Study in Lucien Blackwell

Who?

- 42 year old Black man; been on welfare his entire life; dropped out of school at 15 to support family

What did we find?

- Respondent was heavily involved in drugs; witnessed first-hand disturbing acts; surrounded by crime & violence

Why is it significant?

- The newly renovated homes made the respondent kick his drug habit. In his words, “The neighborhood changed so I had to change with it.”
Case Study in Norman Blumberg

- **Who?**
  - 48-year-old African American woman, moved into a high rise a few years ago from another PHA site.

- **What did we find?**
  - She took her 8-year-old son out of public school because he felt unsafe, she suffered from mental illness, high blood pressure, stomach ulcers and was very stressed.

- **Why is it significant?**
  - Since moving here, she saw multiple residents die, and says that this is the cause of her mental illness, her trouble sleeping, her high blood pressure, and her stomach ulcers.
Plans for the Future

- We both plan on continuing to work with Laura during the school year
  - PHA asked for our findings of the Norman Blumberg homes
  - Begin analyzing transcripts
  - Jess may use data for a senior project to study mental health in the Norman Blumberg neighborhood
  - Leah may create a health report of Lucien Blackwell
Thank you!

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- Joanne Levy, Lissy Madden, and LDI staff
- Fellow scholars
- Our families