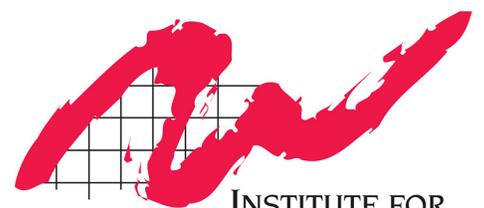




# GET TO THE BRICKS

The Experiences of Black Women from  
New Orleans Public Housing after Hurricane Katrina

Jane Henrici, Ph.D.  
with Chandra Childers, Ph.D., and Elyse Shaw, M.A.



INSTITUTE FOR  
WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH  
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## About This Report

*Get to the Bricks: The Experiences of Black Women from New Orleans Public Housing After Hurricane Katrina* presents the results of qualitative research conducted with 184 low-income black women who lived in public housing prior to Hurricane Katrina and the flooding of New Orleans, and who were displaced by the hurricane and the closure and demolition of their housing. This report attempts to answer a series of interconnected questions regarding the challenges that women in public housing faced when trying to evacuate, while displaced, and when trying to return or settle in new communities. The study explores the reasoning behind their choices to either return to New Orleans or remain displaced and the resources that were or were not available to these women as they attempted to make the best decisions for themselves and their families after such an enormous disaster. This report recommends a more holistic approach to disaster relief efforts in the United States, including coordinated services and policies that consider the needs of the most vulnerable portions of the population.

The report is part of the Institute for Women's Policy Research's work, begun in 2005, focusing on women from different communities, backgrounds, and experiences along the U.S. Gulf Coast following the Katrina-related disasters. The research is also one of a set of investigations conducted as a part of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Katrina Task Force.

## About the Institute for Women's Policy Research

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies. The Institute's research strives to give voice to the needs of women from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds across the income spectrum and to ensure that their perspectives enter the public debate on ending discrimination and inequality, improving opportunity, and increasing economic security for women and families. The Institute works with policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups to design, execute, and disseminate research and to build a diverse network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR's work is supported by foundation grants, government grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations and corporations. IWPR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that also works in affiliation with the women's studies and public policy and public administration programs at The George Washington University.

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Heidi Hartmann, Ph.D., President and CEO, and Barbara Gault, Ph.D., Vice President and Executive Director of IWPR provided guidance on the project and reviewed multiple versions of the report. IWPR Study Director Cynthia Hess reviewed earlier drafts of this report, as well as the final report. Former Research Assistant Angela Carlberg and former Research Analyst Allison Suppan Helmuth contributed to the data collection, including on-site interviews, and qualitative and quantitative analyses over the course of the project. Research Consultants Ariana Curtis and D'Ann Penner conducted interviews and collected ethnographic observations. IWPR Research Interns Shirley Adelstein, Caitlin Alcorn, Hero Ashman, Jackie Braun, Jessica Chow, Laura Dean-Shapiro, Zoe Dobkin, Rhea Fernandes, Helen Hurrey, Jovana Ilic, Monica Martinez, Hailey Nguyen, Sarah Michelsen, Paulina Montanez, Esther Orudiakumo, Nina Pasha, Breone Sanders, Kennedy Turner, Shannon Williams, and Natalie Young provided additional project and report assistance.

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**Get to the Bricks: The Experiences of Black Women from  
New Orleans Public Housing after Hurricane Katrina**

**Jane Henrici, Ph.D.**

**with Chandra Childers, Ph.D., and Elyse Shaw, M.A.**



## Foreword

This report is the culmination of a five-year research project exploring the experiences of women who lived in public housing when Hurricane Katrina made landfall in 2005 and the levees protecting the city of New Orleans failed. It presents a comprehensive analysis of the interview responses of 184 low-income black women who were living in “The Big Four”—four large housing projects within the city of New Orleans, known as “the Bricks”—and who were displaced by the twin disasters of the hurricane and the flooding. The analysis is based on in-depth ethnographic interviews with the women conducted over a two-year period from 2008 to 2010, when many of them remained displaced in other cities while some had returned to find a different city than the one they had known.

The housing these women had been living in, and which had remained structurally sound during and after the storm, was demolished as part of an effort by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) to replace large public housing projects with mixed-income developments. City services were no longer conveniently concentrated near public housing, and public transit was much curtailed compared with before the storm. For those in other cities, obtaining information about what services and benefits were available to them and living in areas with only sparse public transportation were often confusing and disheartening and presented barriers to their ability to settle their children in schools and find employment. Some displaced women and their children found good opportunities in their new cities, but others longed to return to New Orleans. All of them experienced the breakup of their long standing family and community networks that had provided them with virtually uncountable forms of support—from child and elder care to sharing food and transportation and job leads.

The failure to coordinate services, to plan for the needs of a vulnerable population, to keep families and neighborhood networks together as much as possible, both during the evacuation and throughout their resettlement (which often required more than one move), and to find ways to enable all those who desired to return to New Orleans to do so constitute a third disaster, one like the failure of the levees of human origin.

Finally, during the period these families were struggling with the immediate aftermath of survival, displacement, and relocation, the United States was also experiencing the worst of the Great Recession with its long and slow recovery, the longest recession since the Great Depression in the 1930s, constituting yet a fourth disaster confronting these women and their families.

Yet through it all, these women showed courage, determination, and resiliency as they sought to keep their children and themselves safe and move on with their lives. Theirs is a remarkable story and I invite you to hear their voices in *Get to the Bricks: The Experiences of Black Women from New Orleans Public Housing after Hurricane Katrina*.

IWPR researchers, under the able leadership of Dr. Jane Henrici, former study director and now senior research fellow at IWPR, interviewed these women in their homes or other locations in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Houston. The Katrina diaspora spread well beyond these relatively nearby cities to

virtually every state in the nation. The Katrina migration will likely remain one of the largest and longest lasting in American history that stemmed originally from a natural disaster, compounded as it was by the disasters of human engineering. As such, Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, as seen through these women's eyes, have much to teach us about how we can improve public policy and disaster planning in the years to come.

In addition to Dr. Henrici and the many researchers who assisted her in this work, I would like to single out for thanks Prof. Kai Erikson of Yale University, who invited IWPR to join the Social Science Research Council's Katrina project and to participate in its deliberations, as well as Josh Jarrett, Program Officer, and Hillary Pennington, Director of Education, Postsecondary Success & Special Initiatives, at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, who generously provided the funding to conduct the interviews and analyze the results. Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever, a former IWPR study director, also deserves special thanks for her early interviews in post-disaster New Orleans, which alerted us to the depth of the struggles these women were facing. For all of us at IWPR, this report is a fitting culmination to the research we began on the Monday after the hurricane hit, producing many fact sheets, briefing papers, book chapters, and short reports detailing, through both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the conditions faced by the women of New Orleans both before and after the storm. We wish for them and their families a secure and successful future. And it is our hope that their voices will have lasting impact on public policy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi Hartmann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heidi Hartmann, Ph.D.  
President, Institute for Women's Policy Research

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## Executive Summary

On August 29, 2005, when Hurricane Katrina made landfall in southeast Louisiana, many recognized the destructive force it would have on New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. The sheer magnitude of the devastation that came when the levees in New Orleans failed was not, however, forecast and the effects of the flooding and the destruction it wrought are still felt by many New Orleanians today. The fact that the world has seen a substantial increase in climate-related disasters since the 1990s (CRED 2015) makes understanding the experiences of New Orleans residents after Hurricane Katrina essential to ensuring that the United States is more prepared to handle future storms and disasters of this magnitude.

Prior to Katrina, nearly one in four residents in Orleans Parish lived in poverty (Webster and Bishaw 2006) and there were marked economic inequalities by race and sex (Williams et al. 2006). The stark inequalities that existed before the storm explain, in part, why it had such a devastating impact and why many, especially women of color, have had a difficult time rebuilding their lives after the storm: ten years after Katrina, many families in New Orleans continue to face economic challenges and the need for a strong safety net has not diminished. Moreover, many families who would like to return to New Orleans have not yet done so (Weber and Peek 2012).

Disaster research indicates that outcomes and recoveries are influenced by differences such as gender and race, among others (Enarson 2012; Van Zandt et al. 2012). Women disproportionately experience injuries and hardships during and immediately after disaster and, where housing and supports are inadequate after a disaster, women are especially likely to experience long-term hardship as well as greater vulnerability to future traumatic events (Phillips et al. 2010).

Since women, especially women of color, are especially vulnerable during and in the immediate aftermath of disasters, and given that these women are also often disadvantaged when it comes to accessing formal and informal political spaces (Dersnah 2013), ensuring that all women have voice and agency and are part

of decision-making processes is essential to ensure that any post disaster policy and planning is done with a gendered lens (Reichlin and Shaw 2015). As can be seen with New Orleans and the response to Hurricane Katrina, the experiences of black women in public housing were not taken into consideration when developing a plan for post-Katrina recovery. Consequently, their voices and their ability to influence policy-making and planning remain marginalized.

Understanding that there are race- and gender-specific impacts of natural disasters, the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) researchers conducted an in-depth ethnographic study of the experiences of 184 low-income black women who, at the time Hurricane Katrina hit, lived in "The Big Four" public housing projects – B.W. Cooper, Lafitte, Central City/C.J. Peete, and St. Bernard – within New Orleans. The interviews took place between 2008 and 2010, during the time when these women were displaced from their prior homes due to the hurricane and the closure and demolition of the public housing units. The information shared with us by respondents is contextualized with government documents and scholarly reports on the conditions in the city and the state and the experiences of other survivors along with an examination of relevant policies. This context helps us identify some of the key lessons learned from Katrina about the U.S. safety net and supports needed for low-income women and their families.

Given the economic status of women living in public housing at the time of the hurricane, and statements from public officials claiming that these women did not want to return after the storm, this study sought to answer a set of inter-related research questions regarding the challenges that these women faced when trying to evacuate, while displaced, and when trying to return to New Orleans or settle in new communities. The report explores the reasons women made their specific choices, either to return to New Orleans or remain displaced, and the resources that were or were not available to them as they attempted to make the best decisions for themselves and their families after such an enormous disaster.

Analysis of the stories women shared with IWPR researchers supports other relevant research while revealing important distinctions in this study. One major finding is that, contrary to the statements made by the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), most of the former tenants of New Orleans public housing preferred to return home to New Orleans. While some did choose to settle in other communities because they felt there were better opportunities outside of New Orleans, most returned to New Orleans as soon as possible. One woman stated "I didn't think about not ever going back home, because it was just like, I'll be back..." However, these women faced many obstacles when attempting to return, the foremost of which was the demolition of thousands of still-standing apartments, including the public housing buildings where these women used to live, despite the need for available and affordable rental units.

The announcement that the public housing units would be torn down came as a shock to many: "Everybody was under the impression that they were going back home, you know, that they were going to have somewhere to go." The 4,534 "Big Four" public housing apartments (including those uninhabited before the storm) that were torn down post-Katrina, have been redeveloped by HANO into mixed-income housing which include only 706 public housing (HANO 2015). Not only was the "Big Four" public housing needed, many saw them as safe havens because of their sturdy construction. Whether you lived in public housing or not, the saying among lower-income families across New Orleans was that, if a

storm hit, you should “get to the Bricks.” The sturdy construction provided families with protection from storms for generations and, if flooded, could be repaired with much less effort than other structures. One respondent even pointed out that “You know, everything needs to be made of bricks. Just in case the water does come up, all we got to do [is] un-mildew the inside.”

A second finding is that the sturdy buildings created a reliable infrastructure for the women interviewed, both in terms of safety and social networks. IWPR researchers were told that the brick construction of the public housing made the women feel safe from street violence. A woman said she felt safer because “the Bricks are actually bullet-proof. There was a shootout, someone was shooting, the only thing you had to worry about was [getting] away from the window. But here, it goes right through...” Another reason women felt relatively safe in New Orleans prior to Katrina was due the fact that almost everyone knew each other. The women frequently indicated that before they were displaced they had parents, siblings, cousins, and those who would treat them as if they were relatives living in the developments or nearby. As one woman said, “Public housing might not have been the best, but everybody was somebody’s momma back up in there.” This also meant that this network of family and friends could be turned to for financial and emotional assistance prior to the storm. Katrina changed all of that, as displacement disrupted these social networks. Regardless of the city where they lived, women who were able to reconnect with family and friends reported helping each other deal with the newer expenses and obligations that came with the elimination of public housing.

A third major finding is that using voucher systems for meeting their housing needs was more expensive than their former public housing. Thus, the abrupt switch to a voucher system added to the hardship of no longer being able to return to the homes they had inhabited prior to the storm, since the voucher system now required the women to demonstrate established credit histories as well as to pay higher rents and utilities. And yet, the levels of unemployment faced by the women from “The Big Four” were much higher after the Katrina disasters than before. However, nearly all of those who were not working or in school expressed a desire to return to work or school so they could take care of themselves and their families.

The ability to attend school, get a job, or simply to perform daily tasks, was especially hampered by the lack of transportation both while displaced and in New Orleans post-Katrina. The lack of transportation is a fourth major finding to emerge from this research as its effects were felt acutely on a daily basis. Prior to the storm, New Orleans was especially convenient for pedestrians and bus riders due to its layout and the availability of public transportation. While displaced, the women reported that they were isolated without individual cars, especially given the newcomers’ unfamiliarity with their new cities. Additionally, women who had returned to New Orleans discussed the impact the changes in bus schedules had on their lives since what used to be a 15-minute wait between buses had turned into an hour-long wait. One woman said “[The bus transportation] was kind of making me late for work, I’d get up like two hours in advance and still be late for work. They were kind of laying me off because of that.”

The fifth major finding is that the women, of varying ages and family circumstances, who resided in New Orleans public housing described problems with an incomplete emergency safety net that they felt they should have been able to rely on during times of extreme hardship. Despite the notable generosity of the

communities that received the displaced women, these women still faced many problems including information gaps, inconsistencies among services available, and inadequacies in supports such as child care. The women interviewed also highlighted the inadequacies with the implementation of general anti-poverty policies that only further marginalized low-income women and their families. IWPR research shows some of the gaps in the safety net as women and their families, both those who stayed in New Orleans and those relocated elsewhere, encountered already over-burdened social service systems, differences in rules and regulations for accessing services, and a lack of coordination among agencies and between public and private sector providers. And yet, despite all of these challenges, the women interviewed showed determination and resilience in seeking to meet their needs and the needs of their families while still striving for the right to have a say in the rebuilding of their city.

The findings from this report form the basis for a set of recommendations concerning U.S. anti-poverty, housing, and disaster recovery policies:

- Improve communication among different service providers;
- De-prioritize the construction of mixed income housing which seeks to integrate neighborhoods but generally results in an increase in market-rate housing at the expense of affordable housing;
- Expand tenant vouchers and utilize them as a means of addressing not only housing, but also education, health care, job training, and transportation;
- Diversify policies to focus on the needs of women and their families in a variety of circumstances;
- Guarantee the right to return for all residents; and
- Include the voices of low-income women and their families in policy planning and development.

As we look back on Katrina at the ten year anniversary, fully understanding the lived experiences of the women displaced from public housing – the challenges they faced as well as the resilience they showed – and the ways their experience informed the decisions they made can help policymakers do better. As the stories told by the black women from “The Big Four” show, U.S. policies were implemented in a manner that took away opportunities, supports, and infrastructures from low-income women and their families most in need of a reliable safety net as they sought to recover from a catastrophic set of disasters and endure the Great Recession. Including the various experiences and voices of these women in the policy discussion going forward will ensure that future disasters do not perpetuate the marginalization of the most disadvantaged members of our communities.



New Orleans, April 2010. Photo credit: Jane Henrici, Ph.D.

## Introduction



*What I feel, the buildings were good, strong buildings. Now, if they say they couldn't be renovated, well, that's a different story, but they had some buildings in worse shape and they're doing them over. I mean, they're doing them over! And they didn't want ours done over.*

*And I'm very disappointed, I'm very disappointed with our elected officials. They turned their backs on us...they didn't feel that they wanted public housing. I was hurt when they declared, after the storm, "If you want to come back to public housing, be ready to roll your sleeves up," like everybody didn't do that, didn't work.*



When the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) first spoke with the 70-year-old retired grandmother quoted above, in 2008, she had managed to return to New Orleans and had secured affordable shelter in a publicly subsidized apartment. That apartment was not the same place that she, family, and friends were forced to leave after Hurricane Katrina swept through New Orleans in August 2005. Nor is that apartment her home any longer. In August 2013, much of that complex was demolished, just as had happened in 2008 to the apartments where she'd lived prior to the storm.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall in southeast Louisiana and tore through New Orleans on August 29, 2005. The next day, the levees protecting New Orleans from its surrounding lake, river, and canal waters failed. As the flooding worsened and preparations proved inadequate, the multiple emergencies that ensued lasted for several more days, and the resulting hardships for many of those affected continue even now. In addition to the 1,833 who were killed in 2005 along the U.S. Gulf Coast (NOAA 2012) and several hundred who remained missing for years (Olsen 2010), more than 700,000 people in New Orleans lived in communities that were flooded and that experienced extensive structural damage (Gabe et al. 2005). In all, more than a million people were forced to relocate after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast and the levees broke in New Orleans (Katz et al. 2005; Lawry and Burkle 2008). From New Orleans alone, more than 400,000 inhabitants were relocated (Geaghan 2011) and many families who would like to return to New Orleans have not yet done so (Weber and Peek 2012).

Thousands of others also were affected, if less directly, as they participated in the disaster response and recovery and as communities around the country received survivors who were scattered across all fifty U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (Crowley 2006; Ericson, Tse, and Wilgoren 2005). The majority of those who were relocated after the Katrina-related disasters in 2005 were concentrated in the U.S. South, particularly in Texas, and remained there (Bell 2008; Kulkarni et al. 2008).<sup>1</sup> As late as 2007, of the survivors receiving federal disaster rental assistance, half were living in Texas (Carlisle 2007).

Among all whose lives were changed by Katrina and its aftermath, New Orleans' public housing residents were hit especially hard. First, many could not or chose not to leave when the city was initially evacuated, and experienced the hurricane and subsequent flood directly. Then, most of their homes in public housing apartments flooded with filthy water after the city's levees were breached; any tenants of those complexes who remained after the evacuation were forced to leave when the levees broke. The third hit came during September 2005 when the city's former inhabitants were not allowed to immediately return (Geaghan 2011). Then, in early 2006, while most of the former public housing residents were not yet back in New Orleans, a fourth hit affected them when the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced plans to demolish the majority of New Orleans public housing apartments (Reid 2012).

Compounding this last hit was the fact that HUD had evaluated the public housing buildings and deemed that they were structurally sound and would be habitable after cleaning (HUD 2006b). And yet, the demolitions and the funding for them were announced even as affordable and structurally-sound homes in New Orleans remained in high demand.<sup>2</sup> That timing implies that the decision to destroy the buildings may have been less about repairing disaster damage, or responding to the needs of those who had suffered losses and experienced traumas, and more about opportunistic urban redevelopment (Browne-Dianis and Sinha 2008). The now permanently-displaced thousands of individuals, all low-income and the majority black women, were again hit in the years that followed by the Great Recession, and by U.S. safety net policy constraints that made it difficult to find and afford the cost of alternative housing.

In its legal response to the 2007 lawsuit to prevent the post-Katrina demolitions of the four New Orleans developments planned for destruction, HANO-HUD asserted that the former tenants had been surveyed with the majority responding they did not want to return to New Orleans. The findings of this survey, according to HANO-HUD, justified the timing of the demolitions and the redevelopment of the central city neighborhoods (HANO 2008; HUD 2008).

The Social Science Research Council's (SSRC) team of disaster and poverty scholars, with IWPR as one of its partners, conducted a large-scale research study seeking to better understand the human effects of the disaster and aftermath caused by Hurricane Katrina. IWPR's role was to conduct an in-depth and long-term study into the conditions and wishes of the former public housing tenants, the majority of whom

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<sup>1</sup> Katrina-related disasters include the damage caused by the failure of the levees, the source of most of the destruction associated with Hurricane Katrina.

<sup>2</sup> The number of apartments, including those uninhabited before Hurricane Katrina, that HANO announced for demolition in 2006 totaled 4,534 across "The Big Four" complexes. According to HANO, the number of public housing units in 2015 totaled 706 across "The Big Four" redevelopments (HANO 2015)

were low-income black women directly affected by the policy and planning decisions being made by HANO-HUD.

This report builds on previous IWPR research that observed the critical importance of gender as inseparable from racial, income, and other disparities within the Katrina-related disasters (Gault et al. 2005; Helmuth and Henrici 2010; Henrici, Helmuth, and Carlberg 2012; Henrici, Helmuth, and Braun 2010; Henrici, Helmuth, and Fernandes 2010; Jones-DeWeever 2008; Jones-DeWeever and Hartmann 2006; Williams et. al. 2006). Similarly, this study was designed to fill a gap in post-Katrina scholarship by considering gender as a core element of intersectional analysis including race and class.<sup>3</sup>

For this project, IWPR conducted research on the experiences, perspectives, and motivations of women who had returned to New Orleans, as well as those who did not return and their reasons for staying away. IWPR also conducted a set of follow up interviews to assess whether attitudes and conditions had changed over the course of the study. The study findings shed light on how housing, safety net, and economic development policies can be strengthened to help sustain the economic and social livelihoods of low-income women of color, even in the face of future disasters and other kinds of shocks.

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<sup>3</sup> Researchers such as Rachel Luft (2008, 2012) and Shana Griffin (2008), Megan Reid (2010), and Jean Belhkir and Christiane Charlemaine (2007) have critiqued the initial post-Katrina activism and advocacy concerning housing and access to it because it concentrated at first on issues related to race, class, or culture without taking gender into account.





Lafitte public housing development, April 2008. Photo credit: Jane Henrici, Ph.D.

## I. Challenges to Self-Determination

### Poverty and Social Inequality: Before and After the Storm

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A 2006 report from the Institute for Women's Policy Research provides a clear picture of the economic situation of workers in New Orleans in 2004 before Hurricane Katrina (Williams et al. 2006). This research shows that in New Orleans there were marked economic inequalities by race and sex and workers were worse off than in the nation as a whole. Both poverty rates and unemployment were higher and earnings were lower. Further, the data indicate that poverty status was closely linked with sex and race and that those associations were stronger in the city itself, as compared with the surrounding regions. The stark inequality that existed before the storm explains, in part, why it had such a devastating impact, and why we would expect many New Orleanians, especially women of color, to have a difficult time rebuilding their lives whether they were relocated away from New Orleans or not.

Before Hurricane Katrina hit and the levees failed, nearly one in four residents in Orleans Parish, Louisiana, lived in poverty (Webster and Bishaw 2006)—25.9 percent of women and 20.0 percent of men (Gault et al., 2005)—one in five households lacked a car, eight percent did not have telephone service, and just over 40 percent of renters were paying more than one-third of their income for rent (Fass and Cauthen 2005). Child poverty was an especially pressing problem with a child poverty rate of 38 percent (compared with the U.S. rate of 17 percent; Fass and Cauthen 2005).

While African Americans were 67 percent of the city's total population, they were 84 percent of those living in poverty and were concentrated in high poverty neighborhoods, with poverty rates that topped 40 percent (Katz 2006). Despite the high rates of poverty among residents of New Orleans, their labor force participation rates were only slightly lower than national rates. Many of the available jobs, however, paid very low wages. Median annual earnings in New Orleans were substantially lower than they were nationally and there were dramatic differences in the earnings of men and women and of black and white workers (Williams et al. 2006). In New Orleans the median annual earnings for women were \$24,494, compared with \$30,014 for men; and while white women's earnings were only 80.2 percent of white men's

earnings, black women's earnings were even lower at 43.9 percent of white men's earnings (Williams et al. 2006).<sup>4</sup>

Unemployment rates in New Orleans were also about 50 percent higher than nationally. Black women and men nationally had unemployment rates more than twice that of their white counterparts, 12.6 percent and 14.2 percent respectively. In New Orleans, black women's unemployment was also roughly twice that of white women's (13.6 percent, compared with 6.3 percent) but black men were unemployed at four times the rate of white men (17.8 percent, compared with 4.0 percent; Williams et al. 2006). These social and economic conditions left many New Orleanians without the economic resources to effectively adapt to a crisis such as the city's flooding.

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall and when the levees failed, New Orleans was already undergoing a quiet crisis of economic inequality that compromised its resilience in the face of disaster. The city was marked by large social divisions by economic status, by race, and by gender. Given such a large population that was barely holding on even in good times, the aftermath of the storm and the ensuing flood might have been predictable.

Ten years after Katrina, many families continue to face economic challenges. In 2013, median household income in New Orleans was \$36,631, still substantially lower than the national median at \$52,250 (Shrinath, Mack and Plyer 2014). In addition, forty-eight percent of children in New Orleans live in single-mother homes, compared with just 24 percent nationally (Mack 2015).

The need for a strong safety net also has not diminished. During 2009-2013, New Orleans had a poverty rate of 27.3 percent, higher than it was before Hurricane Katrina (Fronczek 2005; U.S. Census Bureau 2015a). The poverty rate for children under age 18 was more than 40 percent, and more than 16 percent for those 65 and older (U.S. Census Bureau 2015a). While there has been a substantial increase in the provision of housing vouchers to defray the costs of housing and to deconcentrate poverty, more than half of all renters spent more than 35 percent of their household income on rent (U.S. Census Bureau 2015b). Many landlords avoid accepting the HOPE VI housing vouchers meant to deconcentrate low-income families and facilitate moves into low-poverty neighborhoods, and low-income households continue to be segregated in high poverty neighborhoods, although to a lesser extent than before the storm (Seicshnaydre and Albright 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> Nationally, white women's earnings were 71.7 percent and black women's were 62.7 percent of white men's earnings. The earnings differentials reflect, in part, differences in the jobs people held. In the city of New Orleans the three occupations employing the largest numbers of white men—and the median earnings in these occupations—were 'lawyers' (\$80,000), 'physicians and surgeons' (\$90,000), and 'managers of retail sales workers' (\$25,000), while for white women they were 'secretaries and administrative assistants' (\$29,000), 'waiters and waitresses' (\$17,050), and 'elementary and middle school teachers' (\$32,400). Compare this with the three largest occupations in New Orleans for black women – 'cashiers' (\$11,000), 'maids and housekeeping cleaners' (\$12,000), and 'nursing, psychiatric and home health aides' (\$14,500; Williams et al. 2006).

## Disasters and Gender

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Disaster research indicates that outcomes and recoveries are influenced by what disaster experts regard as “preexisting conditions”; these include biases and expectations regarding gender and other features of identity (Committee on Disaster Research in the Social Sciences, National Research Council 2006; Phillips et al. 2010). Preexisting conditions link to inequalities and disparities that can correlate with differences in sex, race, ethnic group, education, health, and access to resources as well as prejudices faced from others (Enarson 2012; Van Zandt et al. 2012). Both short- and long-term disaster vulnerabilities are especially pronounced for the elderly, those with disabilities, and those providing care (Davis and Rouba 2012; Peek 2010), most of whom are female (Henrici 2013; Hess 2013).

Within most types of disasters, women are more likely to die or die soon after due to their greater likelihood of being trapped physically in relatively less well-constructed interior domestic spaces and of being responsible for the care of others who are unable to move or to move quickly enough to escape (Neumayer and Plümper 2007).<sup>5</sup> Women can also have specific physiological requirements for safety and health that might not be met during or after disaster events (Enarson 2012), including those related to pregnancy (Zotti et al. 2012). Although not directly the result of the hazard or disaster but reportedly occurring with greater frequency in the aftermath, gender-based domestic violence also tends to affect women more than men (Jenkins and Phillips 2008a, 2008b; Wilson, Phillips, and Neal 1998). Documents that pertain to ownership over land, houses, and other assets and allow for better economic recovery post-disaster are also disproportionately controlled by men (Enarson 2012). As a result, women disproportionately experience injuries and hardships during and immediately after a disaster, as well as long-term suffering in the aftermath.

In addition to preexisting conditions, biases regarding gender, race, and socioeconomic status can influence post-disaster perspectives (Peek 2012; Phillips 2012; Scanlon 1998). For example, the fact that anyone remained in New Orleans when the flooding came was often portrayed variously as evidence of a deficiency of intelligence and character, a dependency on government support, or a victimization from a lack of government support (Brezina 2008). However, the fact that some of the residents of public housing based their decision not to evacuate on the information about the anticipated hurricane and not the

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<sup>5</sup> While in general women are more likely than men to die in natural disasters, Hurricane Katrina resulted in more male than female fatalities (Brunkard, Namulanda, and Ratard 2008; Markwell and Ratard n.d.). It should also be noted that while most references to Katrina are focused on New Orleans specifically, Hurricane Katrina caused deaths in others states including Alabama and Florida (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 2006) and some evacuees died of Katrina-related injuries after being evacuated to other states including Texas (Brunkard, Namulanda, and Ratard 2008).

unanticipated flooding is generally omitted in this portrayal (Elliot and Pais 2006).<sup>6</sup> Prejudicial viewpoints based on gender, race, class, and other identities influence individual and group disaster outcomes (Eisenman et al. 2007; Peacock and Girard 1997).

Unfortunately, disaster research also shows that low-income women and others who are more vulnerable in a disaster are less likely to be able to evacuate without the help of others (Bay 2010). Those who are more vulnerable also tend to be more likely to be *displaced*—forcibly relocated—once evacuation occurs (Barnshaw and Trainor 2010; Fothergill and Peek 2004; Jenkins, Renne, and Kiefer 2010; Laska et al. 2008; Tierney 2006). Additionally, in the long-term aftermath of a disaster, those who are more vulnerable—especially female-headed households, the elderly, racial minorities, those with low incomes, and the less educated—and hit harder tend to be less likely to return than others who have readier resources at their disposal (Enarson 1998, 2012; Fordham 1999; Morrow-Jones and Morrow-Jones 1991).

Resources within the communities going through recovery after a disaster have also been found to affect the aftermath of relocation. If able to return, low-income families will need housing, hospitals, schools, and other public buildings reconstructed (Fothergill and Peek 2004; Laska, et al. 2008; Pardee 2012; Peacock and Girard 1997; Van Zandt et al. 2012). Consequently, where housing and supports are inadequate after a disaster, women are especially likely to experience long-term hardship as well as greater vulnerability to future traumatic events (Phillips et al. 2010).

Long-term disaster recovery plans, however, often do not take issues particular to women into account (Bradshaw 2013). Pre-Katrina disaster policy and preparations for New Orleans did not include arrangements for low-income women and their families who had largely relied on the benefits of a once strong safety net and well-constructed public housing in neighborhoods where it was relatively easy to walk or take the public bus to work, school, church, clinic, or store. These women lived with their relatives and neighbors in buildings that previously suffered little from the hazards of hurricanes. In 2005, that omission in policy and practice failed thousands of individuals who were among those who disaster research could predict would be especially vulnerable.

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<sup>6</sup> In June 2006, the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released a service assessment report regarding the actions taken by the National Weather Service (NWS) prior to, during, and after Hurricane Katrina. The report not only states that there were “larger than average intensity errors” when predicting the size of Katrina (due to the rapid intensification of the storm on August 28, 2005), it also shows that no prior warning regarding possible flooding was issued until 4:00 pm on August 28, 2005 (NOAA 2006). At that time, the National Hurricane Center issued an advisory that stated “some levees in the greater New Orleans area could be overtopped” due to storm surges. While the NWS did issue an emergency bulletin for New Orleans on the morning of August 28<sup>th</sup>, which warned that most of New Orleans would be uninhabitable for weeks following the storm, it only details potential damage and death as a result of high winds. No warnings regarding the possibility of levees breaking was ever issued prior to the storm. The only flood warning as a result of a levee breach came early on August 29<sup>th</sup>, reporting the breach of the Industrial Canal. Since, according to the NOAA report, it can take 48 to 72 hours to evacuate vulnerable residents, these warnings seem to have come too late to ensure evacuation for all New Orelanians prior to Katrina (NOAA 2006).

## Voice and Agency

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Women who experience multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination are especially disadvantaged when it comes to accessing formal and informal political spaces (Dersnah 2013). Given the race- and gender-specific impacts of many natural disasters, and the fact that the world has seen a substantial increase in natural disasters, especially climate-related disasters, since the 1990s (CRED 2015), policymakers need to be sure they are considering the nuances of difference in the racial and gendered experiences of those affected by disasters. By doing so, policymakers will build their capacity to mitigate and respond to natural disasters. Ensuring that all women—especially the most marginalized—have voice and agency and are part of decision making processes, through voting, local organizing, or advocacy, is an essential part of ensuring that any post-disaster policy and planning is done with a gendered lens (Reichlin and Shaw 2015). Political empowerment can generally be described as, “people’s capacity to influence policy, make demands, and call to account the state institutions that impact on their lives” (Eyben 2010).

Women’s collective action to make demands on institutions and government can result in broader sociocultural changes that benefit more women and citizens in general (Reichlin and Shaw 2015). As can be seen with New Orleans and the response to Hurricane Katrina, the experiences of black women in public housing were not taken into consideration when developing a plan for post-Katrina recovery, which continues to marginalize their voices and their ability to influence policymaking.

### Disenfranchisement

There were many factors that led to the disenfranchisement of these women. The racial segregation of pre-Katrina New Orleans, and the disproportionate Katrina-related damage to black residential areas in 2005 (Gabe et al. 2005), impeded black residents of all income levels from returning as quickly to the city as did white residents. Low-income families with dependent children also had more trouble returning and finding housing during the city’s recovery than did others (Geaghan 2011). Black women living in public housing were dispersed to various locations often far from the support systems and networks of family and friends that they relied on in their daily lives for otherwise unmet needs, such as affordable child care (Litt 2012; Litt, Skinner, and Robinson 2012). The disruption of these social networks stripped many women of much needed emotional and economic supports that had helped families living in public housing through hurricanes for generations (Laditka, Murray, and Laditka 2010). The disruption of the established networks is important not only because of the added hardship it placed on low-income women, but also because it severely limited the little voice and agency these women had within their own communities, further marginalizing them in the process. The initial disruption of social networks through the displacement and relocation immediately following the storm became institutionalized when HANO, under receivership by HUD, announced a plan in 2006 to tear down the closed and fenced, yet still-standing, government-owned apartments (HUD 2006a).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> After 15 years of negative evaluations of HANO operations, and two years of a failed HANO-HUD partnership, HUD took control over HANO’s assets in 1996 (U.S. General Accounting Office 1996). In 2002, HUD took administrative receivership of HANO (HUD 2003), “...managing the day-to-day operations of the housing authority, including HANO’s redevelopment plans” (Browne-Dianis and Sinha 2008, 488). Despite changes in both HUD and HANO leadership in 2008 and 2009, the receivership reportedly continues (Reckdahl 2013).

Next, those who sought to move to New Orleans post-Katrina needed places to live. Unfortunately, the majority of the vast amount of housing destroyed by the Katrina-related disasters was classified as “affordable” (Crowley 2006). Further, landlords for still-standing homes demanded inflated “Katrina rents”—rent increased 35 percent in the first year following Katrina—which meant that renters, especially low-income black women and their families, were the most affected by the housing shortages when attempting to return or relocate within the city (Fussell, Sastry, and VanLandingham 2010; Pardee 2012; Willinger and Gerson 2008). However, public housing for the most part remained locked and shuttered to its former residents. All of this made returning to New Orleans especially difficult for low-income former residents. Since the power of collective action to influence policy is essential, the continued displacement of low-income African American women—both outside of New Orleans and into new racial and political landscapes within New Orleans—has led to the continued marginalization of this population.

## Political Participation

Although the African American population has now nearly reached its pre-Katrina share (of about 60 percent of New Orleans’ population), the percentage of African Americans both registered to vote and participating in elections has not kept pace with the rate of return. As a result, African Americans no longer control a majority vote in New Orleans and, even when registered, vote in fewer numbers than prior to the storm: in 2011, only 59 percent of registered voters were African American, of which only 22 percent voted (Jefferson-Bullock 2013). Barriers to voting include holding elections on weekdays during work hours, moving polling locations, and reinstating the annual canvas of the voting rolls in July 2007. While the annual canvas had been suspended immediately following the storm, its reinstatement effectively purged tens of thousands of voters from the rolls, many of whom were displaced African Americans who had changed their address after evacuation. Thus, while many displaced citizens have returned to New Orleans, many have remained disconnected from formal political processes because they must actively prove they are not registered to vote in another jurisdiction (Jefferson-Bullock 2013).

## Collective Action and Grassroots Organizing

This does not mean that low-income women’s voices have been completely silenced. African American women, including former residents of public housing, were often among the first to assist in the immediate aftermath of the storm. In general, women of any race and income level tend to be among the first to help in an emergency—whether as family members, volunteer workers, or professional responders—until those with more designated authority (the majority of whom still tend to be men) take over (Berggren 2012; Phillips 2012; Scanlon 1998). Many women also organized groups and clinics focused on the long-term care of people and the environment within rebuilding (David 2012; Jenkins 2012; Litt, Skinner, and Robinson 2012; Nguyen 2012). These activities, however, are often dismissed or overridden by those with more official authority (Scanlon 1998). Additionally, organizing groups and clinics have the possibility to overwhelm the women working to both provide assistance to others as well as meet their own daily needs, making them unable to sustain any grassroots organizing or plan for long-term change (Litt 2008; Luft 2012).

HANO's announcement in 2006 that the government-owned apartments would be torn down came as a shock to many in New Orleans, especially given that HUD's assessments of public housing units in post-Katrina New Orleans found that many units would be livable with some repairs (Browne-Dianis and Sinha 2008). A subset of the apartment complexes were even deemed worthy of historic architectural preservation (Manville 2011). Analysts, activists, and some former tenants of New Orleans public housing—including among them individuals, who prior to the storm, had said they wanted new buildings—expressed anger and outrage. Community members and organizers held protests and launched a lawsuit that temporarily stopped the housing developments from being torn down (Crowley 2006). Some former tenants even put their Section 8 vouchers at risk by joining the protests (Green, Hamelin, and Zitelman 2011).

Such responses, however, did not succeed in preventing the plans from moving forward and, in 2008, the demolitions began. Once they returned, women in New Orleans also became active in broader collective action, in the form of grassroots organizing and social justice movements, which can be instrumental for making women's concerns known to policymakers and can result in broader sociocultural changes (Evans and Nambiar 2013). For example, following Hurricane Katrina, grassroots activists and researchers who testified before Congress were critical of the nation's disaster policy (known as the Stafford Act) and its implementation. These criticisms eventually led to changes in the federal policy in terms of its funding both in response to Katrina and more broadly (FEMA 2007).

Community organizations formed with the aim of amplifying the voices of those most marginalized. For example, the Association for Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) Katrina Survivors' Association was formed, which was the first nationwide organization of displaced residents and survivors, including more than 5,500 members in more than 10 cities (Green, Hamelin, and Zitelman 2011). The Association's main focus was the right of return, rebuilding the right way, and honesty and accountability. While mainly focused on the residents of the Lower 9<sup>th</sup> Ward, their Association elevated the voices of the displaced and brought their concerns to policymakers in Washington, D.C. The Tenant's Rights Working Group (TRW), a group made up of public housing tenants, renters, and community organizers, was also formed; its aim was to win back housing rights for black and working class people in New Orleans (Green, Hamelin and Zitelman 2011). Another group, the People's Organizing Committee (POC) committed to a "bottom-up organizing strategy" with the aim of bringing black residents back into public housing, jobs, and political standing (Green, Hamelin and Zitelman 2011). These examples speak to some ways low-income black residents worked to make their voices heard.

“ If there is to be an assessment of black political economy in post-Katrina New Orleans, not only must it consider the community's economic and socio-political standing in regards to the stability and progress of individuals and the vibrancy of institutions, it must also take into consideration the manner in which the community has been substantively involved in its own recovery; its autonomy to meaningfully shape direction (Vander 2011, 277). ”

Since 2005, thanks to these lessons learned from Katrina, civic and governmental responses during hurricanes have become more attentive to unequal vulnerabilities and multiple types of need. Nevertheless, conditions during and after subsequent U.S. disasters—such as “Superstorm” Sandy in 2012—at every level of administration have shown that much more improvement is needed (Gaillard and Luna 2013). As we look back on Katrina at the ten year anniversary, fully understanding the lived experiences of the displaced women from public housing—the challenges they faced as well as the resilience they showed—and the ways their experience informed the decisions they made will only help policymakers understand the ways current policies did not and have not met the various needs of this population. Including the various experiences and voices of these women in the policy discussion going forward will ensure that future disasters do not perpetuate the marginalization of the most disadvantaged members of communities.



St. Bernard public housing development, April 2008. Photo credit: Jane Henrici, Ph.D.

## II. Research Questions, Methodology, and Respondent Demographics

### Key Research Questions

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Given the economic status of women living in public housing at the time of the hurricane in 2005, this study sought to answer a set of interrelated research questions:

1. What were the challenges that women in public housing faced when evacuating the city of New Orleans?
2. What resources were or were not available to these women during the process of evacuation?
3. Once evacuated, what resources were or were not available to these women while they were displaced from New Orleans?
4. Did these women want to return to New Orleans? If so, why? Alternately, if not, why not?
5. As recovery progressed, what challenges did these women face?
6. For those who wanted to return, what resources were or were not available to them to aid in their return to New Orleans?
7. For those who did not want to return, what resources were or were not available to them in their new communities?

### Methods

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To address these questions, IWPR interviewed 184 women from 2008 to 2010. Interviewees were all 2005 tenants of the four complexes that HANO and HUD demolished in 2006. IWPR collected data during two time periods. The primary ethnographic research was conducted from 2008-2009, and involved in-depth qualitative interviews, which were conducted primarily in the study respondents' homes (including apartments, houses, and FEMA trailers), and occasionally at workplaces. In 2010, IWPR conducted 23 structured telephone and three video-recorded semi-structured follow-up interviews with a subset of the original 184 interviewees.<sup>8</sup> This three year period of time overlapped with the Great Recession in the United States and the early phases of economic recovery.

Respondents were recruited through multiple methods: cold calling door-to-door within those buildings in the complexes that were left standing and that re-housed a minority of former tenants; introductions

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<sup>8</sup> Protocols for the primary interviews can be found in Appendix A. Follow-up interview protocols can be found in Appendix B.

from activists in New Orleans; referrals from nonprofit organizations subcontracted to do case management as part of the HOPE VI housing redevelopment;<sup>9</sup> connections IWPR researchers made at community and organizing meetings; and “snowballing” that occurred within households as multiple women living in the same apartment or complex agreed to be interviewed.

In-person interviews were conducted in the Baton Rouge, Houston, and New Orleans metropolitan statistical areas. Baton Rouge and Houston were chosen for their relatively large concentrations of former tenants, as well as their relative proximity to New Orleans. As a gesture of appreciation for the in-person interviews, respondents were given a \$30 gift card that could be used for purchases at their choice of several grocery stores.

The interview process could be emotional. Respondents often began the interviews by describing the upsetting, and often horrific things they witnessed and experienced during the flooding and while leaving New Orleans. They sometimes began crying as they were interviewed. Some women initiated follow-up interviews through phone calls to let IWPR project members know about new babies, new entrepreneurial efforts, or new outrages perpetrated by perhaps well-intentioned case workers (see Bell 2008).

The open-ended, semi-structured interviews were transcribed and coded with approximately 200 distinct codes using NVivo qualitative analysis software by a team of researchers whose work was checked for its coding consistency and inter-coder reliability among sections of interviews and between interviews. Researchers conducted multiple NVivo queries and text analyses. As themes within the interview and other materials began to appear through iteration, researchers consulted with scholars and community-based activists to improve interpretation of the data.

In addition to qualitative and semi-structured interview data, quantitative data were also studied for this project. U.S. Census data compiled by the Greater New Orleans Data Center (GNODC), data supplied through HUD inquiries, and Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) American Community Survey data were analyzed to understand the demographic features of the neighborhoods where respondents were relocated and the resources available to them.

## Characteristics of the Sample

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### Respondent Demographics

The respondents for this study were all black women who had lived in one of the four public housing developments that were slated for demolition in 2006. At the time of the Katrina disasters 64 of the women lived in the St. Bernard Housing Development, 59 lived in Lafitte, 34 in B.W. Cooper, and 23 in C.J. Peete.<sup>10</sup> Four additional respondents had lived in one of those developments prior to the Katrina disasters but had moved into another public housing complex.

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<sup>9</sup> These nonprofit agencies would describe our project to former housing residents and provide them with our contact information. They would ask them to pass the information on to their friends and family. If they or their friends and family were interested in participating, they contacted us to be interviewed for the study.

<sup>10</sup> For descriptive data on all residents living in each of the developments compared with data for Orleans Parish, the state of Louisiana, and national data before Hurricane Katrina, see Appendix C.

## Age

In August 2005, at the time of the disaster, 35 of our respondents were between the ages of 15 and 24, 71 were between 25 and 44 years old, 59 were between 45 and 64 years old, and 19 of the women were 65 years old or older. At the time of the interviews in 2008–2010, all of the women interviewed were 18 years of age or older.

## Parental and Other Caregiving Status

Not all respondents went into detail regarding those who lived with them before or after the disasters. Of the 117 women who described both time periods, 70 said that prior to displacement they lived with one to three dependents.

Twenty-four women listed between five and seven people in their apartment, although it was unclear whether these were dependents or not. Twenty-three women said they lived alone. The majority of women continued to list between two and four persons in their homes after the disasters.

Among all the women we interviewed, 87 of the 184 had dependent children in school or who were pre-school age, nine had other dependents, and one had both dependent children and other dependents. In addition, 64 women had children who were no longer dependent and 23 had no dependents or independent children. Out of all 184 women, 37 lived alone.

## Living and Transportation Arrangements

Only 12 of the 184 women interviewed owned a car at the time of the Katrina disasters. Most described getting around to jobs, schools, and other destinations either by walking, using the city bus, or getting rides from family and friends.

## Employment Status

In 2005 when Katrina hit, the majority of women interviewed were employed at least part-time (107), retired (10), or still in high school (14; four of these women were also working). The remaining 53 women were unemployed.

At the time of their interviews with IWPR in 2008–2010, these trends were reversed: 105 of the women were unemployed and not in school, one was participating in postsecondary education, and 66 had at least part-time jobs. Twelve were retired and not working.





Lafitte public housing development, April 2008. Photo credit: Jane Henrici, Ph.D.

### III. Research Findings: Post-Disaster Conditions— Displacement and Disconnections

Black women displaced from New Orleans public housing experienced challenges for years after Katrina. Certainly, pre-disaster conditions were not without difficulties and affected women’s post-disaster circumstances: women described aspects of their finances, health, neighborhoods, families, and the schools they and their children experienced prior to the storm in terms of limited options and opportunities. But the extreme traumas that women and their families and friends suffered during the flooding made everything worse, and the unreliable support that women and their families received post-disaster exacerbated existing problems, hitting these women especially hard.

Overall, what were the attitudes among all of the women who were former tenants of public housing about the situations in which they found themselves over the years following their displacement? In contrast to HANO-HUD’s 2007 assertion that former tenants did not want to return to the New Orleans, which they used to justify demolishing the four developments post-Katrina in the midst of a housing shortage, IWPR researchers found a more complex situation.

Of the women interviewed, most said that they wanted to return to New Orleans and many had done so already or were able to do so during the course of the research. Moreover, among those who said “no” to moving back, a portion said their response was affected by their sense of being rejected by the city and even the nation.

Women who were able to find shelter, income, and safety in their new location stated that they were content to remain where they were at the time of the interview, whether back in New Orleans or elsewhere. Yet, even women staying put in Baton Rouge and Houston arranged for regular visits to New Orleans once informal bus systems responded to the diaspora demands by setting up transit among the Katrina cities. In other words, even for women who said that they did not want to move back, regular access to New Orleans contributed to their willingness to stay elsewhere. Women’s primary worries were: whether jobs or other sources of income, shelter, health care, schools for their children (if younger), and family and friends all were within reach. However, as one woman pointed out, low-income families in particular “really need fair housing” and other support in order to access what they need—regardless of where they live.

Not all of the women interviewed described being affected by their forced relocation from public housing in the same way, and most of those interviewed had returned to New Orleans; yet all recounted hardships getting by in the years following Katrina. For women able to secure retirement or disability-related benefits, the added expenses required by the altered housing conditions and policies being enforced in all of the cities made things rough. Among the women who eventually reported finding better opportunities than prior to the storm, such improvements for most families came only after years of suffering and working hard to adapt.

Low-income retired and working black women and their families were hurt by the losses of neighborhood anchors such as affordable hospitals, public schools, and affordable methods of transportation. Even for women who found new apartments or housing back in New Orleans, some of whom said things were generally fine, life did not come close to normal even years after the disasters. The larger economic circumstances of the recession affected all of these households; at the same time, what made everything worse was the fact that women from public housing were forcibly taken from the New Orleans they had known by the horrors of the Katrina crisis and shunted into situations of long-term instability, sometimes growing hostility, without accompanying long-term supports.

## Experiences of Displacement, Migration, and Return

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Prior to Katrina, black women living in traditional public housing in New Orleans experienced a combination of stability with hardship. The racial and socioeconomic segregation in the city created obstacles that kept some of their families in constrained circumstances.

IWPR interviewed one 44-year-old woman who had been employed in catering and restaurant work in New Orleans prior to Katrina and, at the time of her interview in 2009, was living unemployed with assistance for her disability in Houston. Despite these changes to her circumstances, she felt that having been moved out of the housing development in which she had lived and even from the city where she had grown up had not been entirely bad for her or all of the others involved. She asserted with respect to her former neighbors, “Say you gonna hear the story, and they still gonna fault the government, they still gonna fault Katrina, and Katrina ma’am, in reality—forgive my French—didn’t have a damn thing to do with it; it was all wrong before Katrina.”

At the same time, most of the women and their families in public housing shared a form of continuity in which hurricanes, neighbors who were also relations helping one another, a lack of a dependence on cars, and payday or Social Security payments were more or less routine. Whether they had moved back to New Orleans or continued to live in other cities, most of the black women interviewed recalled their lives before the disasters largely with fondness.

Although women complained of street violence affecting their families prior to the disasters, the women could count on relative stability before Katrina in terms of their social networks, income, transportation, and other resources. Unfortunately, this stability contributed to the women’s precariousness since it led to the sense that the women would be able to get by even during bad times. However, the disasters of 2005 went far beyond almost anyone’s expectations.

Hurricanes had come and gone throughout the city's history and women reported that they thought Katrina just would blow over or, if it really was a big enough storm that they had to leave, they would be away from their apartments for only a few days at most. When most women left New Orleans, whether ahead of the hurricane or after, carried for themselves and their children little more than clothes and needed medicines and supports such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, inhalers, and canes.

Because payday came at the end of the month on the Friday before the flooding, several women reported that they at least had a little cash with them that they otherwise would have lacked. However, even those women who left in cars before the hurricane made landfall did not imagine that cities up and down the highways in all directions from New Orleans would run out of hotel rooms, gasoline, and ready supplies even for those evacuees with some cash: as a number of the women recalled, none had large enough quantities of water and food or of diapers and menstrual pads. One woman put it,

“ I didn't think about not ever going back home, because it was just like, I'll be back, never thinking that I was going to be homeless. ”

Moreover, only a few of the women kept important documents concerning themselves and the other household members ready to carry. Even for those who did carry with them identification of some sort, many pertinent records (including prescriptions) were lost irretrievably through the flooding of their homes, schools, and other institutions. Only one woman reported having received training and supplies for emergencies from her church prior to Katrina; as a result, she had all of her documents and those of her daughter, who is disabled, stored in waterproof plastic and ready to go.

In general, the tenants of New Orleans public housing described having experienced fears, insecurities, and sorrows during and in the aftermath of the storm—and many of them stated that they, their children, or their elderly relatives continued to be fearful of the sound of heavy volumes of water running, sudden loud noises, or being caught inside a closed room. The majority of those interviewed had stayed in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina hit (133 women out of 184 respondents).

As one woman put it,

I didn't have no choice [to leave], because I didn't have no car. So I had to wait till help came.

Another woman said,

We stayed. We couldn't do anything then. Every night, morning watched to see if it was like, we had this tree, to see when it [the water] went over that.

Still another respondent remarked,

And the mayor lies, he tells lies now, he had buses to come. That was a lie. They never came...no one came to see about the residents in the public housing, no one.

On their own, not all of the women who stayed throughout the storm were able to make it to the Louisiana Superdome and Convention Center, much less inside of it; many of the women tried to wade out from their apartments only to find they could not make it to higher ground or the highway bridge and so stayed in the flooded buildings on their second (the highest) stories. A woman explained, "I probably would have moved before the storm, right before, but I was pregnant with my baby. I have diabetes and I have asthma. A couple of things, so that took a toll with me plus, I just didn't have the transportation."

In addition, women stayed to help others:

Then they told me I could go, come to the boats. They said, "come on, you've got to go." I didn't want to leave because I was directing them where the old people were still in the house (...) One of my neighbors was worried. She had just come out of the hospital and...she had a hospital bed in her house. And all the ones I knew were sick and stuff and older, you know, old people are set in their own ways. They won't go. And me either, so I can't say nothing. So I made sure they went and got everybody. I said, "Go to this house right here." They didn't have no windows. Some of them, one of them was in a wheelchair, but she was upstairs so I was hollering for her, "Just stay at the window. Make sure you're at the window" (...) my nephew was swimming to go and let them know that they must come to the window because the people will come back and get them.

Along with help that was coming in from outside of the city, women's relatives and neighbors came to the rescue:

The 'no-good boys' from the neighborhood, that's who saved us. And those children saved a lot of other people, because they went to risk their lives, and they was just getting everybody they could get, they were bringing them out.

Tragically, women witnessed that the neighbors and other rescuers could not reach everyone. Women share stories of experiencing the horrors of deaths, violence, abuse, and being separated at different points from their family members within New Orleans and across the different state lines. One woman stated that, while she was being rescued by boat, she saw members of the U.S. National Guard in

other boats helping people, including one Guard who rescued a little boy that fell out into the water until, she said, they all reached the highway bridge and things changed:

They was treating us bad and the National Guard and stuff, they had guns on us like we were criminals. And it was sad when they put the people's children from them and put them on a bus and people were crying. Yeah, they separated the children, they were separating the daddies and stuff, and the men on one side (...) Oh, they treated people bad (...). We were on that bridge for three days (...) [and the people with guns] were just mean and hateful. People were dying on the bridge.

Many women who lived in public housing had had multiple generations of family members surrounding them in the same apartment buildings or in houses in the neighborhood and these forced separations added to the trauma. One woman waited out the storm in her public housing apartment along with her mother, her son and his wife, and her grandson and granddaughter. After her family was able to get to the highway bridge, her granddaughter then made her way to the other side of the Mississippi River where her father lived. The rest of the family remained:

So we stayed on the bridge, what, three days, until my grandson said, "Grandma, we can't stay here, because nobody's coming to get nobody. We want to get over to the Superdome, you know." So I said, "I'm not going through that water." I said, "Look at that man sitting right there. He's been sitting there for the last couple of days." He said, "That man is dead." I said, "Oh, I know I'm not going in that water now." So he happened to see a friend of his that picked up my mother and put her on his back, and he put me on his back. And my friend Joseph that was with us, you know, he had the little bag thing, what we had, the few little belonging that we had. He had those. And we went through the water, and that's how we got to the Superdome.

Once she had endured the now infamous conditions at the Superdome, she was grateful her granddaughter had been able to leave and go elsewhere:

You could hear people screaming and hollering for people to help them, "Please don't do this to me, please somebody help me." (...) They said things didn't happen at the Superdome. They happened. They happened. People were getting raped. You could hear people, women screaming. Because there's no lights, so it's dark, you know (...) I guess they was just grabbing people, doing whatever they wanted to do.

Another woman tells about her own experiences leaving the bridge:

But I say I was one of the blessed ones because some of the people that I saw on that bridge had been gone out of their houses that Monday and hadn't got nowhere (...) And I was out there only an hour (...) and I didn't know where I was going when I left off that bridge, had no idea I was coming here [to Houston]. The bus driver that picked us up, he didn't know where we were going either, but it was seven busloads of us left at the same time. But nobody knew where they was going. And it was like they had to call the bus drivers and tell them, when we were en route, where they was going, because nobody knew where they was going. There was people scattered everywhere. Some of the people have not gotten their children all together yet, and it's been three years. This is going on the fourth year. And some of the people, well for three months I didn't know where my kids was.

After being compelled by disaster to flee New Orleans for other towns and cities, black women from public housing received a mixture of responses toward themselves and their children. These responses included notable expressions of kindness and generosity:

Just a lot of different people was coming in, offering their services, bringing food, clothes, whatever they had, they were bringing it. And people was just piling in, bringing whatever. And the Houston people, if you went, say we would go out of the Astrodome and walk around, you know, people were just out there with trucks, cars, whatever they had out there. They was giving us clothes, food, they was cooking out just like it was a big [store] opening. They were just setting up tents, whatever they had, and they were giving whatever they had. Whatever they had, they thought you needed, they gave it to you. And it was all around the Astrodome and not only inside, outside (...) whatever they had, they shared it with us. It was a good feeling. It was, because I never would have realized, you know, that people could be that open-hearted.

Another woman, along with her 14 family members who were with her, found enormous kindness in Houston:

[In the Reliant Center,] I fell down the stairs and they had some kind of medical people there. And they were looking at my leg because it was swelling. And this lady came up to me and she was like, checking on my leg. She said, "Do you have somewhere to stay? (...) My boss sent me down here because he wants to sponsor two families." And, I was like, OK.

(...) So we didn't, because she came that day, we didn't even stay, we stood in the Reliant Center for a couple of hours because she came to me because of my feet. And then she said her boss wanted to sponsor two families and put them in a house and everything. And she called her boss, they came and picked us up and he put us in a big old nice house (...) He got us a rental car and everything. They had put food in the house. He told his secretary to take us to Wal-Mart and get us whatever we needed. And they bought, and we needed everything. We didn't have nothing.

Sadly, some encounters between women and their families from New Orleans and residents in their new communities during the trauma of their disaster were less gratifying. The displaced women repeatedly came across reactions to their distinctive New Orleanian urban dialect, a linguistic mixture similar to that of Brooklyn that reflects a layering of different European immigrations, combined with French and African elements (Carmichael 2014). The dialect apparently even encouraged some residents of host cities to consider those who had been displaced by the disaster as if they were non-citizens.

Women also talked about the lack of understanding from the residents of other cities about living stable lives in New Orleans public housing without cars. As a woman who had been bused to Houston put it:

You know you have poor folk who cannot afford a hotel room down at the lowest rate, you have poor folks who have a little run-around car, a car that gets you from the house to Walmart and back, around the corner to Mass and the church and back...but no car that's going to take one of those long, you know, hauls. And then you get this, "Oh, why didn't you just leave?" Like you were stupid, you know, that was the part that hurt your feelings the most. "Why did you stay?" "Why didn't you just get out when they told you to get out?"

Some of the women being displaced by the disasters also experienced cruelty, prejudice, and even violence against themselves and their families, particularly against their adolescent children. More than one displaced former New Orleanian who arrived at the Reliant Center in Houston describes a negative reaction from the Houstonians gathered outside. One woman sobbed as she remembers:

Well, people told us they don't want us out here...the mayor from out here. A lot of Houston people was at the Reliance Stadium, or whatever that was...they were telling us that they, they don't want us to even get off the bus. They were stopping us before we even got off the bus. They were saying bad things...negative things...they was calling us "coon nasties," whatever that mean. And talking about we bad people...we violent and all that. It was like they don't want us in their city...and then they was acting like we got a disease and stuff like that. They didn't

want...people didn't want to help us. Then people, we, we was pushing, everybody was pushing their way through, but not me. I was just sitting there, helping my gran, because I didn't want to leave [her] and like I said I was scared because my grandmother was still breathing funny and stuff like that. So, I mean, everybody was being ignorant, being loud, trying to get off the bus and talk back and forth with the people, they was fussing with, you know and I wasn't...they were bickering with each other...they was like, "you all don't know what we've been through" and stuff like that, which is—they was telling them the truth, you know. Everybody had just lost their family members, they had lost their houses and stuff, the things they'd worked for and slaved for.

Despite the horrors that women experienced because of the disaster and, for some of them, in its immediate aftermath, most women report being enormously grateful once they had made it out of the flooded city for the overall kindness shown by volunteers and those who had shared homes, cars, and smaller items, as well as for the professionalism displayed by emergency workers, case managers, and nonprofit and religious service providers in the disaster response and recovery—especially once outside of New Orleans. With a newborn in her arms and her family in tow, one woman who eventually lived in Baton Rouge managed to make it out of New Orleans after days of violence and hunger, during which she watched her baby's health suffer, to arrive in Austin, Texas, where "They treated us like royalty, they really did."

At the same time, among the women who were able to return to New Orleans at some point—even with the changes to the city and the demolition of their former homes—there were some who viewed their circumstances in the years that followed as better than for those who remained in either Baton Rouge or Houston.

For their part, some of the women who remained in those cities agree with this assessment, particularly as time has passed and both resources and offers of assistance have dwindled even as new jobs and forms of support have not always appeared. After years of trying to get by after surviving a disaster, during a recession, and typically without a new job, women describe ongoing obstacles regardless of the city where they now live, although these new hardships seem tied as much to their altered conditions of housing and supports as to their original and often horrific circumstances of disaster and displacement.

## Housing and Holes in the Safety Net

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Long before Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, many of the remaining apartment interiors and building surfaces of the city's public housing had been reported as deteriorated and in need of repairs, and a portion of the apartments were left unoccupied by the city management (Crowley 2006). Nevertheless, IWPR found, in agreement with research by others (Arena 2012), that low-income people in New Orleans in 2005 continued to trust the structures of the well-constructed brick buildings to provide their families with security during a hurricane. Whether you lived in public housing or not, the saying among lower-

income families across New Orleans was that, if a storm hit, you should “get to the Bricks.” And, just as past hurricanes left the buildings largely without harm, so would Katrina. For these and multiple other reasons, women who lived in those apartments until forced out by flooding and kept out by policy told IWPR they had mixed feelings about their former homes. One woman, helped by HANO to return from Atlanta to a New Orleans subsidized apartment in a different building from her former home, said her ambivalence about the housing system was primarily due to the demolitions that she felt were entirely unjustified:

Bad as the waters were, it did not go in our houses. That was one of the projects [C.J. Peete] that I think they [HANO] just wanted to tear down, you know (...). They could have left that project there and... They had people coming from other places to come stay in the projects but they never came down because they are brick (...). You know, everything needs to be made of bricks. Just in case the water does come up, all we got to do [is] un-mildew the inside. You know, if water gets in the house or whatever, you won't have to rebuild nothing. You would just have to do finishing touches, you know.

Although former residents were not entirely in agreement about whether their former apartments had been ideal places to live, for almost all the respondents their housing assistance had been a critical aspect of their lives. For many of those already seriously hurt and suffering, things were made worse by the wrenching away of these supports and the inconsistent information and resources provided in the context of the trauma.

Roughly half of the women interviewed for this study in the three cities said that they were less concerned about getting back to traditional public housing, particularly as that option disappeared, and were more preoccupied with getting a job or another source of income to pay their expenses, including the added costs such as health and child care, transportation, higher rents, and utilities. Meeting these requirements remained very difficult.

These women gave IWPR mixed responses about the issues they faced in obtaining information and assistance during displacement. With respect to accessing the social safety net in Baton Rouge, Houston, and New Orleans, many women described enormous frustrations and anxieties. These feelings were compounded as the women struggled to make ends meet and made multiple efforts to get correct information from authorities and service providers during the years after New Orleans flooded and while the Great Recession was underway. “With HANO, sometimes it’s good, sometimes it’s bad,” said one woman, who herself had been able to return to a subsidized apartment in New Orleans that included housing support for herself and her two young sons.

For most of the women displaced from New Orleans public housing by Katrina, whose apartment complexes were torn down as part of post-Katrina reconstruction, the overarching theme among their responses is of an almost violent separation from their former supports. IWPR’s research found that even

where elements, such as case management and resident participation were included in the rebuilding efforts, the different corporations that were subcontracted to redevelop the city neighborhoods displayed inconsistent and intermittent approaches to service—one of them serving temporarily as the key source for food or utility support for a set of very grateful recipients, but others being dismissive and denying both information and assistance.

Once it became clear in 2005 that many of those who were displaced from New Orleans were unable to return immediately, and temporary shelters in sports arenas, churches, and other institutions began to close in Houston and Baton Rouge, then individuals and families without other options were provided with longer-term facilities, which included government-issued trailer homes. Other individuals who had lived in public housing and proved eligible were given vouchers and one-time financial assistance that helped to pay for rental homes. Women from New Orleans public housing who were successful in getting vouchers then had to find landlords willing to take the tenant subsidies for otherwise uninhabited dwellings. This often meant renting houses and apartments on the city outskirts, in cul-de-sacs, and within complexes in need of repairs. At the same time, new apartments that were quickly put together became available; when asked how she found a place that rented apartments in Houston until she was able to return to New Orleans, one respondent said, “They had just opened up a new one, it looked like it could have been a motel...It was all right.”

A number of respondents said they were confused about the housing programs to which they had access and the document requirements to join these programs. At the time of her interview, one woman, who was moved to Houston, did not understand that Section 8 vouchers were likely the only form of housing assistance she would be receiving from that point forward if she were to continue to obtain support, unless she were to be found eligible to return to one of the public housing apartments left standing in New Orleans or elsewhere. Under the misapprehension that the voucher program was unique to Houston, she says: “[I]t’s confusing. Right now, I’m on Housing Choice Voucher program which is Section 8 which is affiliated with Houston which is affiliated with Harris County Housing Authority. I didn’t understand it, but see, I was not going to like stress myself out. I was just going to wait until March and see whatever was.”

In addition, survivors after the storm who were already overwhelmed with emotional, financial, and physical concerns had to adapt to new and often confusing housing systems that were equally overwhelmed with the influx of the thousands of people displaced by Katrina. One woman said, “By me going through so much, I was forgetful, but [Housing Authority representatives] were telling how the rules were, dah, dah, dah, just like they have one, two, three, I was skipping three, I got to two but I skipped three, and she was yelling.” Situations similar to this happened often; in many cases the rules and requirements seemed to the evacuees to change as policies were implemented.

Another respondent said that once the demolitions were authorized and while New Orleans was being rebuilt:

They’re confusing me because HANO in New Orleans sent me an application and I had to mail them all of my information, birth certificate, Social Security

card transferred. Now they telling me that they giving us some kind of options from housing authority because I lived in St. Bernard. It's still not, it's a TTY voucher, or something they're calling it, tenant something, they're calling it, I can't tell you the exact initials. But it's some kind of voucher.

Indeed, many of the problems women describe have to do with HANO, both before and after Katrina, and are separate from how women say they view moving back to public housing or New Orleans altogether. Respondents express frustration with the haughtiness and/or carelessness, which they find characterize many of their interactions with HANO representatives. In addition, respondents indicate that HANO employees were not always helpful or even informed. One woman remarked, “[Housing Authority representatives] think because you come from the off the project, you lived on the project, you're stupid, you're ignorant, or you...I don't know what they think.” Another said,

I went [to HANO] to inquire about the home ownership program because I had been calling them for three weeks and nobody was returning my phone calls. When I got there, this lady told me that I had to make an appointment, so I made an appointment to go back there another day. When I got there...I waited there for 15 minutes for this lady who was in a training, and I was like, why did she schedule an appointment with me if she was training at this time? Rushed me in and out, gave me the same application that I already had from the Neighborhood Housing Services, couldn't answer any of my questions, she was trying to call somebody else to answer my questions, and at one point, I was just like, forget about it.

Negative impressions about HANO representatives are exacerbated by the view that HANO failed to communicate, as required within federal policy, in a prompt and effective manner with residents. Some women express anger at the lack of information they received about the demolition plans. Still other women focused their dissatisfaction on the fact that they were left out initially from the hiring that took place for the housing rebuilding, despite federal requirements with respect to HOPE VI implementation regarding former tenants. Although the situation improved over the years, the changes were too late to remedy what took place during the harshest times of unemployment right after displacement. Conversely, some of the women interviewed were not interested either in planning decisions or building-related jobs, yet considered it their right to know where they might live and to have information about other services and opportunities available. For example, several residents commented that HANO did not do a good job of keeping residents up to date about personal development, educational, and business development opportunities offered through HANO and housing projects' community centers. As one woman said,

I wish that there were more opportunities for residents actually to achieve self-sufficiency. And not that they didn't exist, it's just that a lot of residents wasn't informed, you know, about services that were available, through the housing authority. I think more effort could have been made to put out the marketing,

what was available, because a lot of residents today say, “Well, I didn’t know this program exists. I didn’t know that was going on.” And how they had an entrepreneurship program, a resident loan program that existed, and a lot of residents didn’t even know about it.

Many residents, apparently not included in the HANO survey, said they were unhappy about the inability or unwillingness of HANO to solicit their input and inform them about plans to tear down the housing projects. One former resident said that she only learned about the demolition of the apartments where she had lived, “Through hearsay. You always get things through hearsay. You never get a letter in the mail telling you that you’re about to lose it until after the process has started.” It was her experience in Houston that “[HANO representatives] kept saying that...they wasn’t tearing the projects down. Everybody was under the impression that they were going back home, you know, that they were going to have somewhere to go.”

Information about returning to New Orleans was unavailable or inconsistently provided. Information about housing regulations and options in general—that is, whether in New Orleans or elsewhere—was confusing to those who, prior to the storm, had lived only under the regulations affecting government-owned apartments. Prior to Katrina and HOPE VI, tenants of public housing apartments paid only minimal rents, calculated on the basis of incomes, and received the basic utilities of water and electricity without extra cost along with the apartment. In the post-HOPE VI era and post-Katrina, displaced women spread across unfamiliar cities suddenly found themselves, without explanation or warning, expected to learn how to make use of Section 8 vouchers as well as to know when and where those vouchers might be accepted by a landlord or apartment manager. On top of that, women for whom credit ratings previously had been neither relevant nor attainable suddenly, and under the most stressful of circumstances, had to find a way to provide evidence through a credit score of being able to pay both the rents and all utilities.

According to the women IWPR researchers interviewed, having the basic utility bills covered in the public housing developments had helped many households to achieve financial stability. Some women indicated how difficult it was to meet the new expenses when living outside of public housing (“the project”), particularly at the opportunistically escalated rates being charged post-disaster:

[W]hen I was working I paid like \$275 [a month], so when I wasn’t working I was paying nothing. The project isn’t nothing but somewhere for you to stay. We wouldn’t be there if we didn’t have to, but when you ain’t got no big time income you ain’t got nowhere else to go. I lived in an apartment, I had to hurry up and get out, that apartment was eating me up.

IWPR’s research found that, during post-disaster circumstances and the Great Recession, the added requirements of an established credit history and the ability to pay higher rent and utility costs that

needed to be met to receive a voucher, rather than public housing, could be particularly problematic for low-income women and their families. The women interviewed for this study had been displaced when they had to flee their flooded homes, usually leaving without documents or resources. How could they show their credit history, even if they had established one, and with what income could they keep it stable while absorbing multiple new costs?

During an interview conducted as she sat up in her hospital bed in a Baton Rouge women's hospital while holding her hours-old newborn, a 37 year-old woman expressed agitation regarding creditors, "It was a natural disaster. I didn't do this! You will have more money than I ever will and you're calling me because I owe you!"

In Katrina's aftermath, she and her family had been issued a Section 8 voucher for a rental and somehow had to find the money to pay approximately \$400 a month for electricity and nearly double that amount in other utility bills along with a "post-Katrina" rate for rent. At the time of the interview in December 2008, she was dealing with distress rather than nursing her baby because the electric company had called to let her know her service was to be turned off in response to her delinquent payments. Cutting off the service would mean her two other children—fathered by an abusive older man in the New Orleans housing development where she had grown up—would be left at home in the dark while she recovered in the hospital, and her husband, who was the father of her infant, travelled to find work.

Notified of her predicament, the nonprofit agency in Baton Rouge that had been subcontracted by the developers demolishing her former home in New Orleans obtained enough of a partial payment through donations that the family retained electricity during those winter months. Yet, this confusing mixture of new rules, new expectations, new agencies, and all around new circumstances involved in implementing a policy directed simultaneously at "deconcentrating the poor" and urban redevelopment initially added to the challenges this woman and her family faced post-disaster and during the recession.

A 29-year-old disabled mother of six, now in Houston, was another one of the women frustrated by the expenses associated with living in a Section 8 apartment in a city that was more expensive than pre-Katrina New Orleans had been. As she pointed out, the extra money needed to cover higher rent ("Who is to say you can afford a \$600 house?") and utilities means it is harder to cover other expenses even for someone able, as she is, to obtain governmental supports in addition to housing. She compares her household budgets before and after relocation in this way:

Let's just say...I'm working at Walmart. Prime example. The max [rent for public housing] they charge you \$299, okay? You don't have to pay lights, water or gas, okay? You still have enough to feed those kids. You still have enough to buy clothes. Now the big tactical [change] came when you came out here [to Houston], big difference. You have [to pay] lights. Some houses may have gas. You have to pay gas. Now, you know you need household supplies, you know you got to buy those kids clothes, because kids grow every day, okay? I still have a tough time up in here, although I get an income for my son, and I receive food stamps, but if you look at it, you've got to penny pinch.

She pointed out that getting to the doctor and to the Medicaid office was an ordeal compared with pre-Katrina New Orleans: the doctor's office in New Orleans had been located with the bank, grocery, and discount stores within walking distance from the Lafitte Housing Development where she had lived. Even obtaining public health coverage for her children is especially difficult now given that, as required for re-certification, each of the six children must visit the Medicaid Office every three months.

On top of these financial, transportation, and medical struggles, she also faced the difficulty of finding out about and gaining access to programs, organizations, and services in Houston, a city with which she is relatively unfamiliar:

Well, they say they have a lot of food banks. I don't know where it's at. They have a lot of people to help you as far as counseling. I don't know where that's at. They say they have a lot of people that will help you with gas, uh, uh, try to get your car fixed. I don't know where that's at...I don't know where half of that stuff at, and then not only that, when you do find out about it, it'll be over with.

Compounding these challenges during the recovery period was the confusion that arose outside of New Orleans where former public housing residents were unaware when they might be erroneously assigned the temporary emergency vouchers designed for other renters. As those vouchers expired, women and their families could find themselves without any shelter at all since, unlike the public housing vouchers intended for low-income individuals and families, emergency vouchers are intended to be non-renewable.

Many women do not want to remain on housing support or any government assistance for an extended period of time, whether through a voucher or public housing. As one woman said,

I don't think projects are a good idea. I really don't, because everybody needs to learn to be independent. Everybody needs to learn to do on their own, to stand on their own, to know that if you make a wrong decision, you're going to suffer for it, to know that there's nobody next door to feed you when you take your money and don't buy food with it...it's just a sense of responsibility that the projects won't—it's not going to give you that...you need to learn to be independent.

Another woman, 23 years old at the time of Katrina, had returned to New Orleans and found a job at a hospice facility while she went to college. She was one of the women who stated that she had wanted to break the cycle of her family living in the apartments: "Public housing, people get comfortable, they don't look at it as a steppingstone. They get comfortable and they just, you know, I guess they figure the government's paying their rent, they can do whatever with the money that is coming in."

Nevertheless, all of those interviewed shared that they did need to know where they would find shelter. Even women able to pay for apartments with or without vouchers expressed concern on behalf of their young children and for their older mothers and grandmothers. Indeed, those caring for young children and older women were often those who appeared to struggle the most.

In addition, some of those interviewed who reported victimization and harsh treatment in their efforts to access the safety net for back up support included those who were disabled and retired. One woman with both of those characteristics living in Houston was told to check into a homeless shelter after an apartment manager stole her Section 8 housing voucher and the city housing authority would not replace it. The 59-year-old asked what she was to do during the day time, when the shelter would not allow her to remain inside. Perhaps overlooking the number of hurricanes that Houston also experiences and its own lack of preparation and infrastructure, the person taking the inquiry at the Houston Housing Authority replied, “We have some beautiful parks.” This former New Orleanian was both tearful and resigned. She said wryly, “I feel like a bag of snacks at a Super Bowl party, I just get passed ‘round and ‘round.”

## Communities, Networks, and Relationships

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Respondents frequently indicated that before they were displaced they had parents, siblings, cousins, adult children, and those who would treat them as if they were relatives living in the housing development or nearby in their former neighborhoods. As one woman said, “Public housing might not have been the best, but everybody was somebody’s momma back up in there.”

Relatives, as well as an extended network of friends and acquaintances, could be turned to for financial and emotional assistance during times of need. These contacts were also a reliable source of child care and general assistance with raising children. A respondent explained,

No, you know why I say it wasn’t hard to make ends meet, because my parents helped, and my uh, my cousin helped and the family as a whole. They helped with me and the children, and my in-laws, they were great. They were great, they helped a whole lot with the children. They helped a whole lot.

A woman in her 50s who remembers receiving guidance and mentoring from the adults in public housing is worried about girls and younger women growing up with mothers who are struggling to find employment: “I used to fuss because my momma made me come in when it was dark...And young ladies are saying [now], ‘my mom don’t have time for me’.” For their part, younger women from New Orleans public housing who either live without children, or for whom memories of such child rearing help are less significant, tended not to highlight those connections within interviews.

According to women displaced from public housing, where they were taken when they were rescued from New Orleans after the city flooded and whether and how they were separated from one another mattered and affected whether they found new housing, income, and others to help out with child care, cooking, and information—even if and when scattered across cities or state lines. If women were dropped off in

centers with effective communication among those staffing them, or with available resources such as phones and fax machines, then mothers could locate children and elderly kin, spouses could find each other, and people could work through various networks to at least offer kind words and suggestions and sometimes shelter, transportation, or supplies. The media also helped: one woman said she found out the location of one of her sisters when she saw a newscast with footage of that sister writing out the names of her missing family members on a white board.

Afterward, relocating to New Orleans seemed to have been initially possible only for those who had family or contacts already back in the city who could help out, or for those who qualified as eligible under the new housing voucher requirements that stipulated recipients must have enough income to cover the private-home rent along with utilities. A few women, through contacts with family and with social services, were even able to return to living in their former apartment complexes since, in certain instances, the HANO-HUD redevelopments retained a portion of the older units.

Regardless of the city where they live, women who were able to reconnect with family and friends reported helping each other deal with the newer expenses and obligations that come with the elimination of public housing and, for many women, public supports altogether. One woman who described having been able to reestablish both family and work connections argued that, with public housing all but gone everywhere, “What’s the difference of me struggling in Houston or me struggling in New Orleans?”

Conversely, a few of the women said that they had not gotten along with their families and neighbors in the housing developments, or found them unhelpful, even prior to displacement; these women were getting by through forging new relationships. One woman, who had returned to a new neighborhood in New Orleans, was finding it hard to trust her new neighbors as she felt she had been able to trust her neighbors where she had lived previously. In addition, she was worried that her little boys would be affected both by the experience of the disasters and the subsequent displacement, as well as by the potential violence of neighboring children whose parents might not be what she considered responsible and attentive:

They young, they don’t really know, because my oldest little boy is seven, he’ll be eight in August, so you know, they don’t really know, but if there was going to be [thunder] now they will be like “What’s that?” You know, we’re sleeping here, we’re sleeping there this week and last week we over here, you know, then that’s something they will remember. I am not trying to get them to remember the nightmare. I want them to have a memory where they in their own house, they wake up and eat breakfast, they going to wake up, they going to take a bath, they can watch TV when they want, you know, clean their rooms. I want them to be able to do that. I don’t want them to be like, “Come on y’all, pack your clothes it’s time for us to go,” you know.

[When they are grown,] I hope that they’ll be respectful young men, you know. They men, they’ve got to know that they are black men out here and you know,

it's very hard for black men than white men, you know, but at the same time I just want them to be able to educate themselves. You know, they don't even have to go to college if they don't want to. They gotta graduate though. My mamma didn't push the college thing on us on us, you know. She let us know we have a chance, you know, you go to college, you can get a better job than what you would get, you know, if you just graduate. But even if you don't want to go, just know you have to graduate from high school, whether you want to or not.

Former public housing residents from New Orleans now living in Baton Rouge, Houston, and even back in New Orleans report both struggles and successes where they have made or remade connections. Individuals, families, and institutions in the three cities have worked to create new communities and networks, and to discover and capitalize on new opportunities.

Not all of the adaptations were successful, however. The relative isolation from social networks and employment opportunities of the available, privately-owned rental housing, with or without subsidization, is too big an obstacle for a portion of the women, even where income supports and transit options are available.

Unavailable or unreliable transit adds to the sense of isolation many of the women experience. One woman says that she did not like living in Houston because "It was too big.... And I had no car or nothing." She was there over a year before she could return to New Orleans; when asked what had delayed her return she retorted, "I couldn't get home, we had no money. How I going to get home? You going to give me some money? We had to survive up there."

Adding to some of the women's social isolation are issues of discrimination and violence, described by many as even more significant than before the disasters now that networks and other supports are no longer reliable for providing protection, guidance, or other types of help. An elderly black woman with diabetes and crippling arthritis, helped by her grandson to get by, tells of her experiences:

I moved into C. J. Peete when my husband took sick...And he wasn't able to work. And we had been there, like, about 28 or 29 years. (...) And it was nice; it was real nice. And we didn't have as much trouble as the people make like we had. We didn't have all this, you know. I can't never tell you I seen somebody got killed. I might've heard bullets but I never seen nobody got killed. And here and everywhere else you hear bullets.

So, and we caught the last bus and the last bus was for Baton Rouge. I think I would've been rather up in Texas than in Baton Rouge. Excuse my expression, when you walk on the, when you're on the outer line, on the high land, they call it the high land here, you're going face a really big cross. Yeah, it's one of those

crosses. They say those are the Ku Klux Klan. The farther you get into Baton Rouge, you're going to find some more.

We went, went around to different places asking them all to give us, telling us where to go for shelter. And most of them was filled up when we got there. So, we went to Baton Rouge and they all put us in, um, in the, in the, ah, center where they play basketball. And so, we stayed there, like, about three weeks and then afterwards that's when they gave us the trailer, in three weeks' time, because we was laying on the floor, and stuff (...).

In, in Baker [the location of the emergency trailer park where Katrina survivors were provided shelter], [the crosses] was all over. Ah, Baker was the main headquarters of the Ku Klux Klan (...) This white man walked up and he said, ah, "If you all would've came here in the '60s, he said, I'm so glad you all didn't come", he said, "Oh, you all would've been dead." He said, "They would've killed you all." They put us in a pasture where the cows and the horses was living in. That's where the trailer was.

And, believe it or not, they, they tried to put all the murders on New Orleans people. But when they found out it wasn't New Orleans people it was their own people and they did a lot of killing, themselves, in Baton Rouge. They was trying to put it on us but it wasn't us. And, but it's not everybody's opinion, but this is my opinion, Baton Rouge is not a place for people to live: none of us.

An important concern about violence is not only whether it affects women or the neighborhood but how it might affect children growing up, especially young black men who turn into "statistics" from street murder or police violence. An older woman, after first raising her own son and now helping out another woman by raising her son for her, says:

I think I did a good job [with my son], and I'm going to try and do a good job with this kid I've got now. I'm going to try, with God's help, I will do my best. And that's just my life there. If I could do it, and God keep me strong to do my best in raising him, and my son wasn't a statistic, and I'm going to raise this child not to be a statistic, but only through the help of God, that I can do this. Because most young black boys are men, first of all I'm not raising a boy, I'm raising a man, and that's what I did with my son, I raised a man, I'm not raising a boy. So with God's willing I'm going to try and do this again. He gave me my health and my strength, I'll do this again.

You know the Bricks that make me, the Bricks that make my son, and the Bricks... Those were Bricks we were living in, but it was beautiful brick, we kept a clean house, we kept... Right now, we never had that much money, but we ate. [And fed others.] That's the way we lived. It's not where you live, it who you are? You don't let people, you know, like this class, or the lower class, people, you don't let nobody take away your dignity, you know? Some people... I just speak for myself, but some people did their thing, that's their thing, you know? I did mine, this is mine, and nobody can take that away from me.

## Employment and Income Support

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Although most women were relatively secure before the storm, many were unable to return to what they considered a basic level of stability by 2010 in all three cities. New Orleans's infrastructures, supports, school districts, and communities initially were wiped out or transformed by reconstruction, while in Baton Rouge and Houston affordable apartments were often out on the cities' outskirts without regular public transit. Meanwhile, the types of jobs—such as bus driver, cafeteria worker, or security guard—that the women from New Orleans had once held were, for many years, either nonexistent, hiring others, or only temporary.

As has been found by a number of other researchers, unemployment rates relative to pre-Katrina conditions were particularly high for those who had not yet returned to New Orleans. While competition for jobs might have been lower in New Orleans than in Houston and Baton Rouge during the recovery period, the differences among households in the diaspora seem worth noting (Vigdor 2008; Zottarelli 2008). As one woman trying to get by in Houston put it, “I've been a working mother. So, not working was just horrible, no money, no nothing.”

A woman interviewed by IWPR researchers in 2008, after she was able to return to New Orleans, observed that landlords and stores were now charging higher prices during the post-disaster recovery period even as her retired status increasingly restricted what she could afford. She commented that, “And they want to make you feel bad [for coming back]...the price of food has risen twice as much as it was before Katrina. Everything has gone up triple, except for our benefits.”

Most of those interviewed were in school, employed, or retired before they were forced out of the city. Of those who were working, several had had more than one job:

[I was working until Katrina hit at] this place called Steak Escape, and, I, I still didn't get my check. [Laughs]. For the record, yeah [laughing]. I was staying...oh, I had two jobs. Ah, I was working at, um, McDonald's overnight, so, ah, nine to six, and then I, like, when I get off of there -- actually I was rotating. And I was working; I was a security guard too. My best friend got me on with that job. I loved that job [laughing]. (...)

because I was making more. A security guard? Sure, everybody's youngsters just growing up and stuff, walking around, you know, making that much money, and then, you know, I was not only...I had just started working, and they, they gave me a raise because they said I was doing so good. [I had that job] for, like, I'd say, seven months? Seven or eight months. And right after that there go that doggone hurricane.

Women in all three cities in the years after the disaster blamed their inability to get jobs where they were on the lack of transportation combined with their relative isolation. In addition, women in Houston and Baton Rouge reported prejudice against those from New Orleans as part of the experience of seeking a job, while those back in New Orleans described encountering prejudice against former residents of public housing.

What appears to be discrimination in Houston and Baton Rouge against those from New Orleans could be, at least in part, the reluctance of potential employers to hire applicants who are unlikely to stay. Unfortunately for all concerned, the problem is circular: remaining in Houston or Baton Rouge depended on having shelter and evidence of sufficient income to cover costs; yet for a woman to secure a job, she often had to be able to state definitively that she would remain in Baton Rouge or Houston rather than try to move. Women in both cities reported pondering whether and how to answer honestly, since as one woman said, "That was one of the first questions that they would ask you: 'Do you intend to live here?'"

Although the question might have a practical purpose for employers, it appears to applicants to be a sign of prejudice against them. Former residents of New Orleans public housing describe being treated as though they are black immigrants who come from another nation, even to the point of being called "refugees." As the displaced women point out, their moving from New Orleans was a response to the disaster and the destruction of their former homes rather than a reflection of their desire to work in a new place, and all of them are native-born and U.S. citizens. At the same time, particularly throughout Houston and within New Orleans as it changes demographically during its rebuilding, former residents of public housing describe competing for jobs with others who, in fact, seem to be immigrants and who nevertheless are often hired.

Within this apparently contradictory set of circumstances, women from New Orleans public housing consider questions on job applications regarding their origins and plans to stay an indication that they are unwelcome. One woman living in Houston reports, "When I open my mouth [and they hear my dialect] or if I give them my resume, see where I worked, [they say] 'filled the position'." To women trying to get work in Houston with surnames inherited from 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century English and French colonists, "They say our last name even make it seem like we're from somewhere else." Repeatedly, and in all three cities, women describe having been made to feel as though coming from New Orleans in general or from public housing in particular marks them—despite their work experience and other qualifications—as bad job candidates, or worse.

In addition to the general predicament of displacement, and in spite of a housing policy that required former public housing residents be included as employees in rebuilding efforts, many women were never

sure that employers were treating them fairly when making hiring and firing decisions. For example, one respondent stated:

[She] got a job because they had to hire a resident out of each development.... [She] was working, I think, four months they fired her. And brought people in from Texas and Mississippi. Every day that they have people from New Orleans working somebody got fired out of New Orleans. They don't want residents of public houses doing the work.

At the time IWPR researchers interviewed them, less than a third of the women reported being employed or in school. Many women said they suffered anxieties, frustrations, and fears connected to these circumstances. In general, respondents described continuing poverty, although some women were more cheerful about their future opportunities than others.

One woman reported that, to get by in Houston, she shared bill payments with her sister's household in the apartment next door, took Medicaid for her younger son, and combined incomes from her children as they graduated from high school and were able to find work. At the same time, her own persistence at a job, finally acknowledged by the management, enabled her to get a raise and a small promotion.

Because I'm now in a fulltime position, we get vacation, um, with a \$1.21 raise, I'm a coordinator now. I'm over in the men's department, boys', infant girls' and boys' and girls' and toys. So I get \$8.21 now, I make 30 to 40 hours a week, you see, I see something and it's better, thank you Jesus.

Until her salary improved, however:

Yeah. It's better now but it's still hard. I'm living paycheck to paycheck. At first I was getting a paycheck but I had to borrow from [her sister] or I had to borrow from my mamma and my daughter. I was going a week... we get paid every week. If the check was \$45 or whatever it was okay. I had to borrow to pay the phone, borrow to pay the lights, not repaying rent.

Women like this who had found jobs, or whose adult children were employed, often expressed excitement and even gratitude for their opportunities and prospects. At the same time, the generally insufficient wages and lack of benefits accompanying most of their jobs meant that even those who had gained employment would need additional income or a new job altogether. Low wages and limited access to benefits affected all of the women who were interviewed, regardless of whether they planned to stay where they were or to move.

## Education

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Women's own education and the education of their children were strong factors in deciding whether to return or remain. One young woman who was working and had obtained a Pell Grant to cover the costs of nursing school and living expenses says she found Houston to be better than New Orleans for completing high school and pursuing her own career in health care. She was able to get child care help from her mother but reported experiencing significant strain from the demands she faced after she makes her way home:

I mean, it's like, kind of hard, to try to do so much...but I just look at it that I'm trying to make my life better...as far as me and my son, so you know, if we can live better and we can live comfortable, so, it's kind of—it's an experience, because I go to night school. You know, as soon as I come from night school, most of the time my son is probably up waiting on me. Sometimes he'll be sleeping, sometimes he'll be up like I come and he ready to play and you know, my body is so tired, it's ready to shut down on me. It's like, oh my goodness, I got to suck it up and be that mom because he's just a baby, he doesn't understand what's going on.

Other young women who were in high school when Katrina hit and lived in Houston or Baton Rouge immediately after describe their happiness at finding that there were other young people they knew enrolled in their new schools. Unfortunately, for some of these women in both cities, their hanging out together with others who had been displaced was labeled as gang behavior and elicited verbal threats of punishment by administrators and teachers, as well as verbal threats and physical attacks by other students. Young women finishing high school and mothers of young women and men in school describe harassment, abuse, and threats. For some, all of this diminished over time to the point where schools, neighborhoods, and the families themselves became more comfortable with one another and the problems subsided.

Child care for children not yet in school or when school is out was a new need for many women. For women seeking to pursue new employment opportunities or to advance their own education, locating affordable and accessible child care was difficult. Many families who have been displaced from traditional public housing no longer live near the family members who used to watch their children and provide transportation.

Schools in New Orleans, before the city flooded, were often also neighborhood centers. A common first question when meeting someone used to be, "Where did you go to [high] school?"—a question that elicited information that could be used to assess family, occupational, and ethnic backgrounds. Katrina hit on what was the second day of the public school year, and many of the children attending classes that day were unable to readily recover their educational levels or credits, much less their own support networks of teachers and classmates. Children's familiar social networks were lost after the floods and they found themselves displaced to schools where they did not know anyone.

Their children's education was a factor influencing women's desire to either remain relocated or return to New Orleans after Katrina. Women of all ages—mothers and grandmothers—who care for school-aged children say they wanted to remain in Baton Rouge or Houston rather than go back to New Orleans. Most of these women state that, at least within some of the school districts, schools in Houston and Baton Rouge seem to have better educational opportunities than those where their children were enrolled and where they themselves attended in New Orleans before Katrina. Women cite more challenging academics and greater access to extra-curricular activities as reasons for wanting to keep their children in the new school they'd relocated to.

Conversely, some of the women who have either directly experienced or have had children who experienced bullying or violence express a sense of desperation to leave Houston or Baton Rouge and return to New Orleans. Several mothers report their children having been treated with hostility and disrespect by educators because they were displaced from New Orleans. In addition, misinformation and unfamiliar rules regarding school districts made it harder for women to register their children at new schools. One mother, unfamiliar with Houston, discovered she had enrolled her children in a school outside of the district for which her new address was zoned and for which they would get a bus ride to school. She had to move her children among schools until the situation was resolved. Fortunately, she received help from one of her daughter's teachers, who also generously collected and donated to the family crates of dishes, sheets, and blankets. Despite frustrations with unaccommodating school systems, several mothers recounted acts of kindness and help from teachers and staff within their new schools.

Another mother, who was less fortunate about receiving information that she needed in time, was unable to enroll her children in school in Houston altogether, causing them to fall behind in their education compared with other students their ages:

I didn't have shots, they didn't have shots and they was going to expel them. And they, they didn't have shots and, at the time, I didn't know about, nothing about Texas. I wasn't around, nobody, like [now] these ladies and stuff they tell me when they find out things. So, I didn't know [then] about where to go to get the free shots, nothing like that, so they didn't let them go to school, so that made everybody get left behind...They just stayed home.

In some cases knowledge of better schools was reason for relocating to other areas. One woman who had originally been displaced to Atlanta, GA, states that "the first school [her children] went to, it was fine because [the school] didn't worry about it, they started the school the next day when we went there but then after a while [the school] started requesting all these papers, we don't have any of these types of stuff, so I mean, we were hearing about all that they were doing for the people in Texas...so we just all decided to move to Texas." Women resisted moving again so that their children could finish grades or graduate so as not to disrupt their education. Some mothers who had to move back to New Orleans, or elsewhere, in the search for work or for accommodations left their children in the care of relatives so as not to withdraw them from schools the children had settled in.

A compounding problem in nurturing children after the disasters was that not all members of displaced families could stay together, especially given the complexities former tenants of traditional public housing encountered trying to locate affordable shelter. Keeping children enrolled in schools for consistency countered pressures to move, sometimes from place to place, looking for family help and employment. One mother described her young son as having been bright and focused in school before displacement and now as distracted and causing fights, so that he has gone from earning all “A” grades in the first year of primary school to having “C’s, D’s, and F’s” in the second. Another mother, struggling to pay for basic needs while trying to keep her children with her and feeling safe—a number of women reported children reacting with fear to rainfall or other reminders of Katrina—was appalled when her daughter was in trouble at school for wearing a jacket of a color that a Houston teacher found to be inappropriate. With time, however, this mother said she came to like the schools that her children attended there.

As part of the city’s redevelopment during recovery, schools were largely closed or overhauled and gradually replaced with charter schools that demanded school-specific vouchers. Reactions among women to the charter schools that developed in all three cities were mixed; in general, their concern was that girls and boys be encouraged to learn without being taught to be ashamed for having been displaced from New Orleans public housing. At the same time, the schools in Baton Rouge and Houston were, at least initially, often unprepared for, and sometimes reportedly unwelcoming, to New Orleanian students. For these children, whose entire lives had been uprooted, there existed little in the way of support or counseling services. When asked if there were counsellors available to talk to students displaced by the storm one mother replied “well no, not that I know of, because you know, nobody really did talk to my kids, you know, concerning that, or anything.”

## Violence and Safety

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For some women—in school and out—physical attacks between those from New Orleans and those from Houston and Baton Rouge led to bloodshed and deaths among families already grieving. One woman, a retired bus driver, described ducking down in her Baton Rouge apartment to avoid bullets and her sadness at the recent loss of her adult daughter to gunfire. Just as the IWPR researchers prepared to leave her apartment when the interview ended, the woman received a phone call from the police to inform her that her adult son had been killed.

A woman employed at a casino in Baton Rouge prefers the relative quiet of that city to New Orleans but says she felt safer in New Orleans public housing despite the violence there:

I was just thinking about that the other day, that the Bricks are actually bullet-proof. There was a shootout, someone was shooting, the only thing you had to worry about was [getting] away from the window. But here, it goes right through, like one came through here and I couldn’t believe it. And it happened Friday. The minute I heard the shots...I was on the floor. And I don’t want to get used to it.

One reason for feelings of relative safety in New Orleans was the fact, often vaunted by respondents, that almost everyone knew each other. Another was that former tenants also knew surrounding service providers and police officers. In their new homes, “I saw the police roll around once and I haven’t seen them since...I didn’t even know what color their uniforms were. Even after I saw them here, well, I couldn’t tell you what color their uniforms are because I didn’t see them—he was sitting in his car but he never got out.”

Only one woman described the New Orleans police before the disasters as part of the violence, at least in terms of collusion to avoid charging men accused of raping underage girls. Indeed, she was the only respondent who mentioned rape as a problem, yet she was clear in her description of what she had witnessed others go through and what she herself escaped while living in Lafitte:

There was more rape [of] the young girls than anything but it was hush-hush. If you knew the police, you know, if you had a family member, put it like that. If there was a police you reported to, your report didn’t get in. Out of all the things we saw, the murder, the gambling, whatever, there was more rape from the younger girls up in ‘79, ‘80s than anything. Several girls [I knew were raped]. I was the one who got away.

Moreover, although getting by in Houston has been difficult, staying there with her sister and all of their children seemed to this woman better than returning to New Orleans. The reason for that was the rise in violence and drug-dealing she saw among young men her oldest son’s age. At the same time, she acknowledges that she would like to move back to New Orleans; after first going back only to deal with paperwork, she has become able to travel there for Mardi Gras and thinks she might be able to return to live once her youngest child is out of high school.

## Transportation

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At the same time that they are under pressure to learn new systems and new cities, women are under pressure to learn how to drive and to own a car. Without cars or licenses to drive in Houston and Baton Rouge, where most residents must use personal automobiles, or back in New Orleans where the city seems redesigned for private rather than public transit, women often spend hours and energy walking or taking multiple buses to get from one scattered agency to another, seeking clear answers, if not checks or vouchers. At job openings, one of many questions asked of applicants in Baton Rouge and Houston is whether they have a reliable automobile of their own. While most women at least have access to telephones—which can help them get answers to questions about services, receive call backs about jobs, and stay in touch with scattered family members—owning a car is yet another expense that they cannot afford. For many women, the lack of a personal automobile complicates their efforts to get a job or to get help from one another, an employer, or the safety net.

Transportation challenges add to school, safety, health, and employment stress and dilemmas during displacement. Before she was injured while working at a New Orleans post office, a woman who was 29 at the time of Katrina had worked a variety of jobs to which she walked; she emphasized during the interview the ease of getting around in pre-Katrina New Orleans in contrast with her circumstances in Houston, whether walking or using the public bus.

She explained that, prior to the disasters, not only had New Orleans been more convenient for pedestrians and bus riders due to its layout and the availability of public transportation, but also because of the perceived safety and comfort of walking through familiar areas where she had friends and family: “But basically you had some kind of transportation but if you look at it, the city wasn't too bad, because everybody knew everybody, and then once you got towards Orleans and Claiborne [streets], you were safe because you knew everyone.”

She also noted that the housing development, Lafitte, where she had lived after she had her first child was within walking distance to a variety of stores she relied on for food and other consumer goods. She told IWPR researchers that she was frustrated by the fact that it is so much harder to go shopping both in Houston and in post-Katrina New Orleans: “Why I got to go all other places... [when] all that stuff was to my advantage? If I was staying in Lafitte, I could walk to [get food].” As a result, the disabled mother relies upon a car to get around Houston, which has been costly not only to buy but also to maintain and fuel: “I didn't have to spend no gas money [in New Orleans] because I could use my feet.”

Meanwhile, many of the older women and those with disabilities that affect mobility in particular were also affected by the displacement, their relative isolation after relocation, and difficulties accessing transit. One of the oldest among the black women, notably present among those who protested the demolitions, had been retired from her long and extensive employment experience even prior to Katrina. Yet, as she put it regarding the need to be able to keep going, whether to get out of the flooded city or back into the community she preferred for herself and her family:

Nothing can stop me. But, if I stop doing what I like to do, the Lord is going to take me, you know? And my son and they keep telling me, stop talking about that, and it's oh, you stop talking about that. I say, yeah, but I'm just saying, I got to do what I got to do.

Although some women who had returned to New Orleans reported having had transit challenges even before Hurricane Katrina, most were positive about the earlier public transportation system and said that they often used it to perform daily tasks. When asked if the bus system had been convenient, one woman replied, “Oh yes. Yes. The buses ran all the time” and also stated that she could “...always catch one bus and transfer to the other one.” Another woman stated that living in Saint Bernard Housing Development was beneficial in part because of the buses that ran nearby. In addition, a few women said that the bus transit provided independence so that they did not have to ask family members or others for transportation help.

Women in New Orleans had used the bus transit to perform daily tasks, such as getting to work, going grocery shopping, meeting educational needs for themselves and their children, and providing medical assistance for family members. One woman in Baton Rouge illustrated how she and her siblings would use a bus routine while still in New Orleans to take their mother to cancer treatment appointments: "...I walked her to the bus stop, my older sister would catch the bus and take her to clinical appointment then my oldest brother picks them up."

Women note substantial differences prior to and after evacuation in their ability to access to doctors, stores, work, school, and day care. When asked about her different modes of transportation prior to the evacuation of New Orleans, one woman responded:

Walk. I walk a lot. Walk, walk, walk walk walk. Walk, or the bus. Out here [in Baton Rouge], I can't get around easily. It's so long, I can't walk. And I'm walking and I'm on the bus. I don't have no car, no transportation to get around out here. Out there I could get around out there because the bus is, like, so close there. My sister's there, you know, my momma's there, you know, my friends, you know. I had people, you know, with cars. Out here, you know, I just can't get around. No transportation at all. That's what I liked most out there; I could get around out there in New Orleans. Out here I can't.

After displacement, respondents who returned to New Orleans appear to be relatively better off in terms of transportation than those who live in Houston or Baton Rouge. Most complaints about buses in New Orleans since its redevelopment refer to newly unreliable and infrequently scheduled stops.

A number of women who returned to New Orleans after evacuation discuss the impact of the change in bus schedule on their working lives. One, contrasting what used to be a 15-minute wait between buses with the current typical hour-long wait, says,

Well, I was working; that was the reason why I couldn't finish work because of the bus transportation. It was kind of making me late for work, I'd get up like two hours in advance and still be late for work. They were kind of laying me off because of that.

Another says about trying to get work, "They have a lot of openings but I don't have a car...when I wanted a certain job and I can't get around...I want to work." Unemployment for women in New Orleans became associated not only with the Great Recession but with the lack of transit in post-Katrina conditions: "The only thing...everything was so far. And the way gas is, I wasn't able to go nowhere. Even the job was far."

Women who relocated to Baton Rouge and Houston described the transit situation with even greater concern, particularly given the cities' relative unfamiliarity to the newcomers. In Baton Rouge especially,

women and their adolescents seem to be isolated without individual cars. Respondents indicate that not having a car compounds their problems by making them dependent on others.

One respondent noted, “They put that in the ads and applications—do you have your own transportation? And when I first got here, I noticed you really do need your own transportation. [...] I don’t drive. I’ve never wanted to drive, but I would like to now.” Another remarks, “Ain’t no place like home, right? ‘Cause like in New Orleans you could get around, but here, if you ain’t got no car, you can’t get nowhere. It’s hard to get around.” A 35-year-old who had worked in New Orleans as a security guard but who was living on food stamps while looking for work and living in Baton Rouge stated,

You have to, most likely, because most jobs, they want you to have your own car here. In New Orleans, I like riding the bus, the streetcar, I love riding. But here, that’s why it’s so hard for me to find a job. And you have to have either a car or either reliable transportation. They put that in the ads and applications—do you have your own transportation? And when I first got here, I noticed that you really do need your own transportation.

Transportation makes it easier for many of these women to negotiate the demands of daily life and a lack of transportation made life harder. For instance, women in Baton Rouge found it difficult to find jobs and access Medicaid and WIC services because of transportation difficulties. One woman stated that her child was fortunate to be able to take the bus to go to school because she “wouldn’t have went to school if I had to take her.”

In Houston, car ownership is important as well, but more women in this city with whom IWPR researchers spoke had been able to find employment and bus rides to their jobs than in Baton Rouge. At the same time, as one woman put it,

Why every time we [have to go to HUD] we’ve got to go so far out? Everybody don’t have no car, you know. [...] This is too hard. I tried to catch the bus one time, out here. Well, twice. And I got lost. Houston is big. New Orleans fit right in the middle. I mean, New Orleans still can’t compare to Houston.

Another woman in Houston declared, “I didn’t even have money to catch the bus to go find a job, and then I couldn’t leave my kids inside when we don’t have no food.”

## Health

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Women face stress from these difficulties, and the stress of the disaster and displacement overall is more than some can bear without medication therapy. Other issues, such as the injuries and infections families experienced during their escape through the flood waters, continued to hamper lives. For women who were already older and retired at the time of Katrina, many of their friends and relatives of their

generation died prematurely in the years immediately after the storm. For younger women, the suffering of older relatives and neighbors had created caregiving difficulties.

A woman who is HIV positive living in Houston sends part of her disability money each month to her children, all of whom are in foster care now, to try to help support them as best she can. She waded with her family through the flood, was taken to Houston, and is struggling to get by in that city. She described the way she had come to know and rely upon the medical system in New Orleans in contrast to that of Houston:

See, when I'm out and I ain't got nobody to go for me or go with me, it be hard. Because, see, they, they know. [The New Orleans pharmacists] used, they, they know when it's time for me to be refilled, on my medicines. That's why they, they know if I'm taking it right, regular like I supposed to.

Meanwhile, in New Orleans as part of redevelopment, the extensive teaching hospital system that those living in public housing had trusted was being torn down and replaced by a new system with which women were unfamiliar. The need for a reliable and accessible hospital system is clear: many of the women interviewed in all three cities reported experiencing depression, tension, high blood pressure, and chronic pain and fatigue after displacement.





New Orleans, June 2010. Photo credit: Jane Henrici, Ph.D.

## IV: Moving Forward

When asked about how to improve conditions for women from public housing, a woman who had worked for a child care agency, now living on unemployment insurance, recommends:

“ [Money] should be spent on jobs, child care, healthcare, education. Now how we do that, I would have to be in a room with the women and they would have to show me, but to me the number one thing is housing. You have to have somewhere to live. You have to have a stable environment. Of course, education, and if you don't finish school, at least get to a level where you can read and nobody can make you sign and not know what you are doing. Jobs, I don't care if it's a Burger King, McDonald's or running a lot, somewhere that you can take care of yourself. Healthcare, of course, we get help for your children but that is what we need.

And we need to stop labeling people. You know, as we know, the only difference between the White House and The Projects is the attitude. That's public housing, that's somebody else's house, so the only difference between a White House and a Project is an attitude. And, the next thing is that people, you have to give people an opportunity. You have to let them...you always want training, but you don't train up so people get jobs. You need to train up, and we go from training to the job. On-the-job training because...if that's in your contract, to train somebody, then that's the way.

She advocates subsidized copayment for rents, rents based on income after taxes, and child care costs based on sliding scales. In addition, she argues for more counseling and social work to provide families with information about resources to benefit them, and to make their needs known to others. All of these recommendations, if enacted, would have a huge impact on the lives of low-income women, especially women of color, who were hardest hit by Katrina and the subsequent flooding.

## Summary of Findings

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Analysis of the words women shared with IWPR researchers within their homes in Houston, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans supports other relevant research while revealing important distinctions in this study. To summarize the research briefly, IWPR's analysis shows that:

- Most of the former tenants of New Orleans public housing who lived in other cities preferred to return home to New Orleans, and most did as soon as possible.
- Levels of unemployment faced by women who were forced without advance notice or planning to leave the traditional system of public housing are much higher after the Katrina disasters than before.
- Nearly all former residents who were not working or in school expressed a desire to return to work or school and to take care of themselves and their families.
- Low-income black women faced many obstacles to returning to New Orleans during its recovery. Three of these obstacles relate to U.S. housing policy as implemented post-Katrina:
  - the HUD-HANO<sup>11</sup> demolition of thousands of still-standing apartments, among them the women's former homes, despite the need for available and affordable rental units;
  - the abrupt—for these disaster survivors—switch from a system in which they rented government-owned apartments, where utilities were provided without added charge to tenants, to a system in which they were given voucher subsidies and required to demonstrate established credit histories and pay higher rents in addition to utilities, at a time when they were often having difficulty finding employment;
  - the implementation of a system in which tenant vouchers, for the women who were eligible to receive them, go to those landlords and property managers willing to take them in exchange for privately-owned housing in locations that were scattered in order to “deconcentrate” families living in poverty, yet without necessarily providing any affordable and accessible transportation that such dispersion necessitates. This is particularly the case for women, many of whom have disabilities and dependent children, who had for the most part been able to work and raise families without having to own a car or learn to drive prior to being displaced.
- Women of different age groups and with varying family circumstances who resided in New Orleans public housing prior to Katrina describe problems with an incomplete emergency safety net that they feel they should have been able to rely on, particularly in times of extreme hardship, such as during a disaster's aftermath. These problems include information gaps, inconsistencies among the types of services and resources made available, and inadequacies in housing, child care, transportation, health, and education supports for women and their families.

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<sup>11</sup> HANO refers to the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) and HUD is the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

- The combination of public with private agencies in the implementation of anti-poverty and other policies continues to be pressured by unregulated market forces, such as “post-disaster rent” increases that make it difficult to keep up with the higher cost of housing even with vouchers, which can further marginalize low-income women and their families.

## Recommendations

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Our research above shows that during the post-Katrina rebuilding, U.S. housing policies were implemented in a manner that took away opportunities, supports, and infrastructures from low-income women and their families most in need of a reliable safety net as they sought to recover from a disaster and endure the Great Recession. This is unfortunate, as the emptying of New Orleans could have been an opportunity to implement U.S. federal housing programming, with its emphasis on dispersing mixed-income housing across cities, in a manner that would have shown greater support for the most vulnerable households.

Many women and men are working to make the city more inclusive and welcoming than it was prior to Katrina or in the years since, yet the experiences of low-income women of color who were made to feel unwelcome are important to consider, as are general issues of U.S. anti-poverty policy, infrastructure needs, and safety net provision both during the everyday and during disasters (Waddell, Lee, and DeDecker 2011; Zedlewski 2006). The fact that most respondents in this study remember being able to live independently is central to their “before” and “after” stories. After displacement, most women describe themselves and their children as lacking a supportive neighborhood or community, a legal job, a way to finish school, access to information or income; some women also face the threat of imminent homelessness. Most of the women and their families who have recovered from the flood and the loss of their homes in fact had to struggle every day to adapt to a new city or to return and participate in the rebuilding of a substantially altered city.

IWPR’s analysis of the stories shared by women in Houston, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans provides a counter-narrative to HUD’s claims that tearing down the “Big Four” was justified because residents did not wish to turn to their former homes. These contrary findings form the basis for the following recommendations concerning U.S. anti-poverty, housing, and disaster recovery policies:

1. **Improve communication among different service providers.** The system that combines public with private agencies in policy implementation is likely to continue and, therefore, policy should support more effective communication among different levels of government, between government agencies and private organizations and enterprises, and among families to strengthen overall social resilience (Henrici 2006; Gotham and Greenberg 2008).
2. **De-prioritize the construction of mixed income housing which seeks to integrate neighborhoods but generally results in an increase in market-rate housing at the expense of affordable housing.** Instead, there should be a focus on the provision of affordable housing. This will not only improve the safety and security of women and girls, but is also beneficial for

businesses, who struggle to retain employees who cannot afford to keep up with increasing housing costs (Jones-DeWeever 2008).

3. **Expand tenant vouchers and use them as a means of addressing not only housing, but also education, health care, job training, and transportation.**

Namely:

- a. increase the number of tenant vouchers issued;
  - b. provide financial education and counseling along with tenant vouchers to help with the development of strong credit histories and tie this to improved case management;
  - c. Case management should address access to transportation, child care, job training, and education subsidies (Blumenberg 2003);
  - d. tenant vouchers should return to being dedicated to those with lower incomes and greater needs; and
  - e. renters' tax credits might be used as an additional way to help women and their families without a major overhaul of existing housing policy (Sard and Fischer 2012).
4. **Diversify policy to focus on women and their families.** Policy should focus on the needs of women and their families in a variety of circumstances while addressing underlying conditions and generating responsible solutions to these needs, especially with regard to discrimination in housing and redevelopment (Turner et al. 2013). In particular, education and health care provision and policy need to be approached from the perspective of women and their children, ensuring that their needs are prioritized post-disaster both within disaster areas and areas likely to receive those who have been displaced.
5. **Guarantee the Right to Return for all residents.** Federal, state, and local officials must make every commitment to ensure that residents can return to re-built, repaired, or newly constructed housing. Upon return, and even before return, residents must be guaranteed a political voice, as well as physical shelter and basic needs. Voting restrictions need to be reversed and voices of resistance and protest must be met with discussion, rather than silence (Williams et al. 2006).
6. **Include low-income women and their families in policy planning and development.** Many of the women in this report expressed the belief that their voices went unheard and their needs unmet. In order to ensure that the specific needs of women are included in recovery policy, from the beginning, a broad representation of women must be included in decision making processes (Jones-DeWeever 2008; Kromm and Sturgis 2008; Reid 2012; Schaeffer 2007).

While black women of every income level and background have been critical to the recovery of New Orleans, many of those who lived in the city prior to the Katrina disasters have not been able to return after its flooding because of city planning and federal policy. Interviews by IWPR researchers with black, low-income women in New Orleans, Houston, and Baton Rouge illustrate the multitude of different experiences that women went through during and after hurricane Katrina. For all of them, pre-existing economic inequality and overlapping race and sex discrimination worked to exacerbate the struggles they and their families experienced in the process of displacement and, in some cases, return to New Orleans.

In the United States, low-income women, particularly women of color, face inconsistent and unstable conditions that anti-poverty policy and the safety net should address. That those circumstances instead can be worsened by policies implemented in the wake of disaster suggests the need for a re-examination of all policies and their use. These women's voices and experiences should have been part of the narrative prior to Katrina, when decisions regarding public housing were put in place; they should have been considered during Katrina, when so many found themselves disconnected from friends, families and security; and they must be included now in discussion and action to advance the redevelopment of New Orleans and to improve and create post-disaster policies nationwide.

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# Appendix A. Interview Protocol

## Doubly Displaced: Women and Public Housing after Katrina

### LIFE HISTORY

Where were you born and raised?

Family history

Your people: Where they from? How many generations?

Education and career experiences

Numbers of children you look(ed) after

Where were you living before the storm?

When did you start living in \_\_\_\_ Project?

How did life improve for you after entering the project?

How did it get harder?

### BEFORE THE STORM

How many people were living with you at the time of the storm?

Who was on the lease?

Who was off the lease?

What was so great about life in the projects?

Who were your closest friends? Where did they live? What role did they play in your life?

What was not so great?

How much longer were you planning on living in the \_\_\_\_ Project if Katrina hadn't happened?

Before the storm, what would you have done to address the things you liked least?

What could the community have done?

What could officials have done?

What were your feelings about New Orleans before the storm? What did you like best? Least?

Where else had you lived or traveled? How did those places compare?

Precarious economic grounding (before and after the storm)

## KATRINA

Did you get out before the storm?

If so, how did you hear about it?

How did you get out?

With whom did you evacuate?

Where did you go?

If you were stuck,

When did you hear about it?

Where did you ride it out?

How did you eventually evacuate?

How were you treated during?

If you were pregnant, who was your doctor at the time?

How's the baby now?

What needs did you feel that you had that weren't addressed during the crisis?

What was the impact on yourself, your kids, your family?

Why do you believe the city flooded? How did you reach this conclusion?

Do you feel the city is safe again for you to live in?

Post-Katrina, before New Orleans:

Where did you end up?

How long did you live there?

Where did you stay? How did you find housing? What were your options as explained to you?

What happened to your children in terms of school and health?

What did you miss most about home (New Orleans, project)?

What did you like best about the new place?

What did you do when medical needs arose?

Did you have enough money to make ends meet?

How did you go about rebuilding your life and healing your family?

Did any individuals or churches or organizations help you out? What needs did they meet?

What did you get from the government? How did you get it?

What needs were left unmet?

How often did you come back to New Orleans from \_\_\_\_? How were you treated by city officials or social services when you came back to visit and get information?

How often were you in touch with your friends from the project? Where are they now?

How were you treated by Social Services in your respective area of relocation?

Did you get involved in any activist groups for Katrina survivors in \_\_\_\_? What was your role? What did you feel the group accomplished?

What factors did you weigh in deciding whether to stay in \_\_\_\_ or return to New Orleans?

In an ideal world, when would you have come back or what situation would you have needed to stay in \_\_\_\_?

### **NEW ORLEANS AFTER YOUR RETURN**

How were you treated within New Orleans since you've been back?

Where did you want to live? Where are you living? Would you have wanted to move back into the project as it was? Why or why not? What is your dream permanent housing (public or not) like?

How much security do you feel? What worries you day-to-day? Long-term?

What's it like being back in New Orleans now?

What has changed for the better? For the worse? Stayed the same?

What about the city or services could be improved?

What are your thoughts about the future? (for yourself, your family, your friends from the neighborhood/project, your city)

What options do they see for themselves and their families?

How close are you to having your life back?

What still stresses you out? Makes you feel vulnerable? What is your greatest worry?

What makes you optimistic?

How do your friends and family feel about the Project and whether it should have been torn down, or whether it should be replaced now?

# Appendix B. Follow-Up Interview Protocol

**Institute for Women’s Policy Research**

**Doubly Displaced: Women and Public Housing after Katrina**

Funder: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, IWPR #1008

Principal Investigator: Jane Henrici, Ph.D.

## Protocol for Follow-Up Interview

Interviewer:	Stenographer:	
Date of Interview:	Time of Interview:	Case #:
Respondent’s Name:	Respondent’s Phone:	
Respondent’s Filename	Respondent’s Email:	

**Notes of interest about previous interview with respondent (family, work, living situation):**

<b>Housing Complex:</b> <b>Current City:</b>
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### [Greeting/Introduction]

Hello. I am [Name] from Institute for Women’s Policy Research. We interviewed you [Month,Year] do you remember us? We were conducting research on a project called “Doubly Displaced: Women and Public Housing after Katrina” about women who have been displaced from Hurricane Katrina and subsequently from housing developments, some of which were demolished. It’s been five years since Katrina and we are calling to hear how things are going for you and to update our information.

### [Informed Consent]

*You may read these statements and questions out loud but this is not a script; on the other hand EVERY direct question must have an answer even if it is “Refuses to Answer (RA)” or “Not Applicable (NA).”*

Before we begin, I want to clarify that your participation in this interview is purely voluntary; you are free to stop the interview at any time. If you decide after speaking with us that you do not want to have your interview included in our study, please let us know. You can contact Jane Henrici at 202-785-0393 or [henrici@iwpr.org](mailto:henrici@iwpr.org). Your name will not

be identified in any resulting reports that we publish about the study or its findings. In addition, we will record the interview so that I can check the accuracy of my notes, but I will erase that recording once I've written up the notes.

Do you have any questions before we begin? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
---

<b>A. Current Information, Family, and Housing</b>		
[Check file to view their previous household configuration and family situation. If they have children, need ages, whether in school or working.]		
1.	a. I just want to confirm your birth date. Is it _____?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. Is this the best <b>phone number</b> to reach you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. [If no] [Record other number] Do you share a phone?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. Do you have an email address?  _____@_____.com	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	e. Do you have access to a computer in your home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	f. [If yes] Does your computer have internet access?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	g. [If no] Where do you go to use the internet?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
2.	a. Are you still living at ____?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. When did you move?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. [Whether new OR same address as on form:] Do you like where you are living [How so]?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. Were you able to get a Section 8 voucher for it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

	e. Has the rent gone up since last year [if yes] do you mind telling me how much?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	f. Do you pay utilities? [If yes] How much?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
<b>B. Health</b>		
I have some questions about health since we want to know how you all are doing.		
3.	a. How is your health?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. Are you going to a doctor?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. How are you getting there?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. Are you able to meet those expenses?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	e. How about your children's health?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
<b>C.</b>	<b>Household/Family:</b>	
4.	a. [If she has children] How are your children [insert name(s)] doing?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. How old are they now?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. Are they in school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. [if yes] Do they like the school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	e. [If no] Are they working now? [if so] Where?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
5.	a. Is/are [insert name(s)] still living with you? OR Is it just you there now?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. [If part of household] How is/are s/he/they doing?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

	c. How is the rest of your family doing?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. Where are they all now?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	<b>Gap Filler:</b> <i>If family members mentioned that we don't have a record of, or if we otherwise lack records:</i> Did s/he/they live with you before Katrina?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	Has s/he/they stayed with you after Katrina?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
6.	<b>If relevant:</b>	
	a. Have you spoken with [insert family] recently?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. Have you kept in contact with your neighbors from the development?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. Are you [still] involved with the redevelopment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. Are you planning on moving back once the apartments are built? ( <i>Refer to their interview &amp; redevelopment sheet created to see current status.</i> )	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	e. Why or Why Not?	

**B. Employment, Education, and Transportation**

*Check file to see if she was working, and where, or if she was enrolled in school, planning to go back, and her primary means of transportation.*

7.	<b>Employment:</b>	
	a. [Even if retired/on SSI] Are you working now?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. [If yes] Where are you working?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. [If yes] Do you like it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. [If this is a new job] How did you find that job?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	e. Is it supporting you? (full time or part time)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	f. Is it full or part time?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	g. Are you receiving any medical or retirement or other kind of benefits?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	h. [If so] Which ones?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	i. [If not working or period of unemployment] How did you make it financially when you weren't working?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	j. [If use of credit cards mentioned] Mind if I ask if those are paid off?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	<b>Gap Filler:</b> Were you working at this job before/after Katrina?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	How are you getting by each month? [With groceries, utilities, rent?] <i>Note any assistance they receive.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
8.	<b>Transportation:</b>	

	a. What is your main form of transportation?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. Is it convenient for you?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	<b>Gap Filler:</b> is that how you got around before Katrina and since then?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
9.	<b>Education:</b>	
	a. Are you taking any classes or job training now?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. [If no] Do you plan on beginning a program?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. [If yes] Where are you taking classes or training?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. Is that going well for you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	e. Did you get student loans or grants [which]?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

<b>C. New Orleans</b>		
I have some questions about living in New Orleans now.		
10.	<b>If she is not in New Orleans:</b>	
	a. Do you want to move back to New Orleans?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. Why? Or Why not?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. Are your family members and neighbors back in New Orleans?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. Do you ever visit [How/how often/what's that like]?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

11.	<b>If recently moved back to New Orleans:</b>	
	b. Did moving back change things for you and your family?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	f. What would you recommend for other people trying to get back to New Orleans?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
12.	<b>If back in New Orleans at time of first interview:</b>	
	a. Do you still feel the same as when you first came back to New Orleans?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. Did moving back change things for you and your family?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. So, are things better than before you moved back?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. Is anything worse than before you moved back?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	e. What would you recommend for other people trying to get back to New Orleans?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

	f. What recommendations do you have for making New Orleans better for the future?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

<b>E. Services and networks</b>		
I have some questions about organizations and agencies that are helpful.		
13.	a. I see Catholic Charities [insert applicable organization] has helped you previously, are they still doing that?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. Is any other organization helping you out [Name]?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. How did you hear about them?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. Are you regularly involved with them?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
14.	a. Do you [still] attend [name] church?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. Are you regularly involved with them?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. Would you ever, or do you ever, ask for help from the church?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
15.	a. Do the government agencies help you out now?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. How or how not?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
16.	a. What about family and friends: are you helping them out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. How or how not?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

	c. Are they helping you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	d. How or how not?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

<b>E. Policy</b>		
We are approaching the 5 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Katrina this summer and we are curious as to what you would recommend to improve things for your family and others.		
17.	Do you have any needs right now that are going unmet?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
18.	a. What has worked best for you in terms of getting your feet back on the ground?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	b. What hasn't worked?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
	c. What would you recommend for others in the future?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
19.	What do you think was done well handling the flooding and evacuation after Katrina?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
20.	What do you think wasn't done well?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

21.	What would you recommend for the future?	<input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

<b>F. Conclusion</b>		
22.	We will be coming out with a report later this year, would you like a copy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
23.	Would you like to be involved in this project in the future?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA
24.	Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions for me, or anything you'd like to add?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> RA <input type="checkbox"/> NA

<b>Notes:</b>

## Appendix C.

# Pre-Katrina “Big 4” New Orleans Housing Development Neighborhood Data

Table 1. Pre-Katrina Housing and Housing Costs Data for Select Neighborhoods within Orleans Parish,<sup>12</sup> Orleans Parish, the state of Louisiana, and the United States, 2000.<sup>13</sup>

Occupancy status (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total housing units (full count)	1,647	10,344	2,249	4,254	215,091	1,847,181	115,904,641
Occupied housing units	86.30%	78.80%	89.80%	80.60%	87.50%	89.70%	91.00%
Vacant housing units	13.70%	21.20%	10.20%	19.40%	12.50%	10.30%	9.00%
Renters and owners (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total occupied units	1,421	8,147	2,020	3,429	188,251	1,656,053	105,480,101
Owner occupied	3.90%	16.30%	17.00%	21.80%	46.50%	67.90%	66.20%
Renter occupied	96.10%	83.70%	83.00%	78.20%	53.50%	32.10%	33.80%
Housing age (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total housing units (sample count)	1,747	10,242	2,249	4,245	215,091	1,847,181	115,904,641
Built 1990 to 2000	0.00%	3.20%	0.70%	0.80%	3.00%	14.60%	17.00%
Built 1980 to 1989	1.70%	4.40%	2.40%	2.70%	8.20%	18.40%	15.80%
Built 1970 to 1979	2.20%	7.10%	2.30%	3.10%	13.60%	22.40%	18.50%
Built 1960 to 1969	19.60%	16.50%	12.10%	10.10%	15.10%	16.30%	13.70%
Built 1950 to 1959	28.20%	17.00%	18.30%	14.30%	16.90%	12.80%	12.70%
Built 1949 or earlier	48.30%	51.80%	64.20%	69.00%	43.20%	15.50%	22.30%
Length of residency (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total occupied units	1,463	8,101	2,020	3,425	188,251	1,656,053	105,480,101
Moved in 1999 to 2000	14.50%	24.00%	9.60%	17.70%	20.60%	18.70%	19.90%
Moved in 1995 to 1998	26.90%	26.40%	28.20%	26.90%	28.50%	26.90%	28.90%
Moved in 1990 to 1994	19.80%	18.90%	24.10%	20.20%	15.90%	15.60%	16.10%
Moved in 1989 or earlier	38.80%	30.70%	38.10%	35.20%	35.00%	38.80%	35.10%
Average rental costs (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total renter-occupied housing units paying cash rent	1,366	6,482	1,667	2,523	96,257	474,873	33,386,326
Average gross rent	\$191	\$430	\$214	\$345	\$518	\$490	\$657
Renter-occupied housing units paying gross rent of...							
less than \$100	26.20%	5.40%	32.00%	12.50%	3.10%	2.00%	1.00%
\$100-149	19.20%	6.40%	21.50%	11.40%	3.40%	3.00%	1.90%
\$150-199	14.20%	6.20%	12.80%	5.30%	3.30%	4.00%	2.70%
\$200-249	10.40%	6.10%	7.80%	6.20%	3.30%	4.50%	2.50%
\$250-299	14.30%	9.50%	7.20%	9.40%	4.90%	5.70%	2.90%
\$300-399	6.90%	22.50%	3.10%	17.90%	14.90%	16.80%	9.30%

<sup>12</sup> C.J. Peete housing development is included among Central City data (<http://gnocdc.org/orleans/2/61/snapshot.html>).

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 Sample Characteristics (SF3). From a compilation by the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. <http://www.gnocdc.org>.

\$400-599	6.40%	27.50%	8.50%	25.50%	37.40%	38.90%	29.50%
\$600 or more	2.40%	16.40%	7.10%	11.80%	29.70%	25.10%	50.20%
<b>Owner costs with mortgage (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Total owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage	39	748	119	388	58,667	643,900	47,065,828
Owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage paying selected owner costs of...							
Less than \$400	0.00%	3.30%	0.00%	10.90%	3.30%	8.00%	3.40%
\$400-599	100.00%	25.50%	31.10%	15.70%	13.40%	19.90%	10.10%
\$600 or more	0.00%	71.20%	68.90%	73.40%	83.30%	72.10%	86.50%
<b>Housing affordability by income level (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Households with 30% or more of household income spent on selected owner costs (owners) or gross rent (renters)	380	3,138	444	1,262	62,710	350,885	25,014,017
Making less than \$10,000	84.50%	63.00%	72.00%	64.00%	40.50%	40.20%	24.10%
Making \$10,000-19,999	15.50%	27.50%	23.00%	25.10%	33.00%	32.10%	27.90%
Making \$20,000-34,999	0.00%	6.80%	5.00%	9.20%	18.20%	18.40%	24.90%
Making over \$35,000	0.00%	2.70%	0.00%	1.70%	8.30%	9.30%	23.10%

Table 2. Pre-Katrina Income Data for Select Neighborhoods within Orleans Parish, Orleans Parish, the state of Louisiana, and the United States, 2000.

<b>Household income type (2000)<sup>14</sup></b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Total households	1,477	8,080	2,021	3,414	188,365	1,657,107	105,539,122
Wage or salary income	60.10%	56.90%	60.80%	60.00%	73.30%	75.40%	77.70%
Self-employment income	3.50%	5.00%	3.20%	3.60%	8.70%	9.80%	11.90%
Social Security income	23.40%	27.50%	22.30%	27.20%	24.70%	25.20%	25.70%
Supplemental Security income	17.50%	14.80%	15.00%	12.00%	7.80%	6.10%	4.40%
Public assistance income	25.00%	8.80%	16.40%	10.80%	5.40%	3.30%	3.40%
<b>Income distribution (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Total households	1,477	8,080	2,021	3,414	188,365	1,657,107	105,539,122
Less than \$10,000	54.60%	42.10%	48.70%	44.30%	21.00%	15.70%	9.50%
\$10,000-14,999	19.60%	11.40%	13.60%	10.70%	9.60%	8.60%	6.30%
\$15,000-19,999	8.80%	9.40%	9.40%	8.60%	8.30%	7.60%	6.30%
\$20,000-29,999	7.30%	13.50%	8.80%	14.90%	14.70%	14.40%	13.00%
\$30,000-49,999	7.70%	11.60%	9.20%	12.10%	16.30%	17.70%	18.00%
\$50,000 or more	2.00%	9.80%	8.60%	7.80%	26.10%	31.50%	41.90%

<sup>14</sup> Adds to more than 100% because some households have more than one income source.

Table 3. Pre-Katrina Poverty Data<sup>15</sup> for Select Neighborhoods within Orleans Parish, Orleans Parish, the state of Louisiana, and the United States, 2000.

Population in poverty (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total population for whom poverty status is determined	4,352	18,993	6,303	8,849	468,453	4,334,094	273,882,232
People living in poverty	69.20%	49.80%	66.00%	56.90%	27.90%	19.60%	12.40%
Poverty status by age (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total population 0-5	777	1,677	973	999	39,308	375,393	22,636,650
% in poverty	82.80%	75.20%	88.50%	81.10%	43.00%	29.00%	18.10%
Total population 6-11	786	2,046	1,026	1,061	44,048	403,616	24,587,815
% in poverty	75.80%	67.50%	84.70%	77.00%	42.40%	26.80%	16.90%
Total population 12-17	549	1,876	801	932	44,210	421,352	23,700,796
% in poverty	73.20%	54.70%	78.80%	69.80%	36.50%	24.40%	14.80%
Total population 18-64	2,014	11,022	3,036	4,973	286,783	2,644,159	169,610,423
% in poverty	62.50%	44.00%	54.10%	48.70%	24.00%	17.00%	11.10%
Total population 65 and older	226	2,372	467	884	54,104	489,574	33,346,548
% in poverty	49.10%	39.40%	33.60%	38.10%	19.30%	16.70%	9.90%
Families in poverty (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total families below poverty level	801	1,936	1,020	1,138	26,988	183,448	6,620,945
Female householder (no husband present) with own children under 18	81.80%	68.20%	84.20%	74.50%	65.20%	52.20%	44.40%
Male householder (no wife present) with own children under 18	3.50%	4.60%	3.00%	8.30%	6.20%	5.90%	6.80%
Married-couple family with children under 18	10.60%	5.80%	5.80%	4.10%	11.90%	19.90%	26.70%
Families with no children under 18	4.10%	21.40%	7.00%	13.10%	16.70%	22.00%	22.10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4. Pre-Katrina Basic Demographic Data for Select Neighborhoods within Orleans Parish, Orleans Parish, the state of Louisiana, and the United States, 2000.

Gender (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Female	60.40%	54.30%	57.80%	56.00%	53.10%	51.60%	50.90%
Male	39.60%	45.70%	42.20%	44.00%	46.90%	48.40%	49.10%
Racial & ethnic diversity (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Black or African American	98.40%	87.10%	97.80%	92.40%	66.60%	32.30%	12.10%
White	0.20%	9.90%	1.10%	4.90%	26.60%	62.60%	69.20%
Asian	0.00%	0.60%	0.00%	0.10%	2.30%	1.20%	3.60%
American Indian	0.00%	0.10%	0.00%	0.30%	0.20%	0.50%	0.70%
Other	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.30%	0.20%	0.10%	0.30%

<sup>15</sup> For the population for whom poverty status is determined

2 race categories	0.40%	0.70%	0.30%	0.50%	1.00%	0.90%	1.60%
Hispanic (any race)	0.90%	1.60%	0.80%	1.50%	3.10%	2.40%	12.50%
<b>Age (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
5 years old and under	17.30%	9.20%	15.20%	11.60%	8.40%	8.50%	8.20%
6-11 years old	18.50%	11.00%	16.20%	12.10%	9.20%	9.20%	8.90%
12-17 years old	12.60%	9.70%	12.90%	10.60%	9.10%	9.50%	8.60%
18-34 years old	25.40%	23.90%	23.80%	23.20%	25.90%	24.30%	23.80%
35-49 years old	14.60%	20.50%	15.20%	19.80%	21.90%	22.50%	23.20%
50-64 years old	6.50%	13.10%	9.10%	13.00%	13.80%	14.50%	14.90%
65-74 years old	2.90%	6.70%	3.40%	5.40%	6.00%	6.30%	6.50%
75-84 years old	1.70%	4.20%	3.00%	3.20%	4.20%	3.90%	4.40%
85 years old and older	0.50%	1.70%	1.20%	1.10%	1.50%	1.30%	1.50%

Table 5. Pre-Katrina Household Composition Data for Select Neighborhoods within Orleans Parish, Orleans Parish, the state of Louisiana, and the United States, 2000.

<b>Households by type (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Total households	1,421	8,147	2,020	3,429	188,251	1,656,053	105,480,101
Female householder (no husband present) with children under 18	59.10%	24.00%	49.20%	32.20%	17.70%	11.90%	8.40%
Male householder (no wife present) with children under 18	1.60%	2.50%	2.00%	2.60%	2.50%	2.60%	2.40%
Married-couple family, with children under 18	5.50%	5.50%	8.10%	6.80%	14.80%	24.30%	24.90%
Nonfamily households, with children under 18	0.30%	0.50%	0.10%	0.40%	0.30%	0.40%	0.40%
All-adult households	33.50%	67.50%	40.60%	58.00%	64.70%	60.80%	63.90%
<b>Children in households (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Population under 18 years in households	2,100	5,642	2,803	3,022	128,785	1,214,204	71,970,901
Children living as head of household	0.20%	0.30%	0.20%	0.30%	0.10%	0.10%	0.10%
Children living with mother only	74.80%	58.30%	68.70%	61.70%	39.20%	24.60%	18.50%
Children living with father only	0.80%	4.40%	2.10%	2.80%	4.70%	4.80%	4.90%
Children living with married parents	8.10%	12.20%	9.70%	12.40%	35.90%	57.00%	66.20%
Children living with grandparents	11.60%	18.40%	15.20%	15.90%	14.90%	9.70%	6.30%
Children living with other relatives	3.40%	4.30%	3.50%	5.30%	3.70%	2.20%	2.10%
Children living with non-relatives	1.10%	2.10%	0.60%	1.60%	1.50%	1.60%	1.90%
<b>Elderly (65+) in households (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Elderly in households	219	2,375	428	851	53,375	485,182	32,998,132
Living alone	42.00%	50.00%	29.70%	38.70%	34.20%	30.70%	29.50%
Living in family households	56.60%	45.30%	69.60%	56.50%	62.60%	67.20%	68.00%
Living in nonfamily households	1.40%	4.70%	0.70%	4.80%	3.20%	2.10%	2.50%
<b>Grandparents as caregivers (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Total grandparents living in households with grandchildren < 18	196	878	278	374	17,338	122,240	5,771,671
Grandparent responsible for grandchildren < 18	73.00%	57.70%	57.20%	58.00%	54.70%	54.90%	42.00%

Table 6. Pre-Katrina Education and Employment Data for Select Neighborhoods within Orleans Parish, Orleans Parish, the state of Louisiana, and the United States, 2000.

Level of schooling (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total population 18 years and over	2,240	13,396	3,572	5,857	355,507	3,250,523	209,279,149
Less than 9th grade	13.30%	12.50%	9.20%	10.40%	7.20%	8.40%	7.10%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	37.40%	31.40%	36.30%	29.60%	18.20%	17.20%	13.20%
High school diploma or GED	29.80%	26.20%	29.90%	32.20%	24.00%	32.00%	28.60%
Some college or Associate degree	18.50%	18.30%	20.70%	20.30%	27.50%	25.60%	28.80%
Bachelor's degree to higher	1.00%	11.60%	3.90%	7.50%	23.10%	16.80%	22.30%
Labor force status (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total population 16 years and over	2,430	13,984	3,829	6,115	370,138	3,394,546	217,168,077
Not in labor force	53.10%	53.20%	53.20%	52.40%	42.20%	40.60%	36.10%
In Armed Forces	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%	0.00%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%
Employed	33.90%	37.20%	37.00%	37.40%	51.80%	54.60%	59.70%
Unemployed	13.00%	9.50%	9.70%	10.20%	5.50%	4.30%	3.70%
Hours at work in 1999 (2000)	B.W. Cooper Apts	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total population 16 years and over	2,430	13,984	3,829	6,115	370,138	3,394,546	217,168,077
Worked full-time (35+ hours per week)	32.40%	37.00%	32.10%	36.20%	48.40%	51.20%	54.90%
Worked part-time (15-34 hours per week)	10.30%	9.40%	12.10%	9.70%	11.40%	10.40%	11.70%
Worked very part-time (1-14 hours per week)	5.30%	2.40%	3.00%	2.60%	2.90%	2.60%	2.90%
Did not work	52.00%	51.20%	52.80%	51.50%	37.30%	35.80%	30.50%

Table 7. Pre-Katrina Disability Data for Select Neighborhoods within Orleans Parish, Orleans Parish, the state of Louisiana, and the United States, 2000.

People reporting disabilities (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total civilian noninstitutionalized population 5 years and over	3,773	17,676	5,513	8,044	440,111	4,045,963	257,167,527
% with a disability	39.30%	31.10%	25.70%	29.50%	23.20%	21.80%	19.30%
Types of disability by age (2000)	B.W. Cooper	Central City	St. Bernard Area	Tremé/Lafitte	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total civilian noninstitutionalized population 5 to 15	1,343	3,710	1,757	1,929	81,524	757,341	45,133,667
Sensory disability	1.20%	2.20%	2.20%	1.50%	1.20%	1.30%	1.00%
Physical disability	3.80%	3.80%	0.00%	3.70%	1.80%	1.30%	1.00%
Mental disability	9.30%	6.60%	6.70%	8.50%	5.80%	5.50%	4.60%
Self-care disability	1.60%	3.40%	0.30%	3.90%	1.60%	1.10%	0.90%
Total civilian noninstitutionalized population 16 to 64	2,204	11,594	3,289	5,231	304,483	2,799,048	178,687,234
Sensory disability	6.80%	3.60%	2.60%	3.00%	2.70%	3.00%	2.30%
Physical disability	16.00%	11.10%	9.10%	9.70%	7.70%	7.80%	6.20%
Mental disability	10.60%	8.50%	7.00%	8.60%	5.10%	4.70%	3.80%
Self-care disability	5.10%	3.70%	3.80%	3.10%	2.50%	2.30%	1.80%
Go-outside-home disability	22.30%	15.80%	14.50%	14.00%	8.60%	7.00%	6.40%
Employment disability	23.90%	17.80%	16.70%	16.50%	13.60%	12.90%	11.90%
Total civilian noninstitutionalized population 65 years and over	226	2,372	467	884	54,104	489,574	33,346,626
Sensory disability	35.40%	16.90%	21.20%	12.80%	15.30%	16.40%	14.20%
Physical disability	70.40%	40.90%	53.30%	38.70%	35.00%	34.30%	28.60%

Mental disability	32.30%	19.50%	16.50%	22.10%	14.70%	12.40%	9.50%
Self-care disability	28.30%	19.10%	21.20%	21.80%	26.60%	23.70%	20.40%
Go-outside-home disability	70.80%	31.50%	40.90%	32.50%	14.90%	13.50%	10.80%

NOTE: Within each age group, the different types of disabilities do not equal 100% because some individuals have more than 1 disability while many others have no disability.

**Table 8. Pre-Katrina Transportation Data for Select Neighborhoods within Orleans Parish, Orleans Parish, the state of Louisiana, and the United States, 2000.**

<b>Vehicles available (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Total occupied housing units	1,463	8,101	2,020	3,425	188,251	1,656,053	105,480,101
No vehicle available	75.40%	56.50%	65.30%	55.60%	27.30%	11.90%	10.30%
1 vehicle available	21.50%	33.30%	24.90%	31.80%	42.30%	37.00%	34.20%
2 vehicles available	2.10%	8.60%	6.70%	10.00%	24.20%	38.00%	38.40%
3 or more vehicles available	1.00%	1.60%	3.10%	2.60%	6.20%	13.10%	17.10%
<b>Type of transportation (2000)</b>	<b>B.W. Cooper</b>	<b>Central City</b>	<b>St. Bernard Area</b>	<b>Tremé/Lafitte</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Total workers 16 years and over	736	5,097	1,370	2,171	188,703	1,831,057	128,279,228
Public bus	45.30%	25.90%	30.90%	28.10%	12.40%	2.10%	2.50%
Streetcar	0.00%	3.70%	0.00%	0.60%	0.60%	0.10%	0.10%
Other Public transportation	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.00%
Car, truck or van	38.00%	54.70%	58.20%	57.40%	76.30%	91.70%	87.80%
Bicycle	0.00%	1.00%	0.40%	1.40%	1.20%	0.40%	0.40%
Walked	15.50%	10.00%	5.80%	7.60%	5.20%	2.20%	2.90%
Other, incl motorcycle	0.00%	0.70%	1.60%	0.80%	0.90%	1.20%	0.80%