



Atlanta's Enduring Compromise: Youth Contending with Home Foreclosures and School Closures in the “New South”

**LECONTÉ J. DILL, DRPH, MPH¹, MERCEDEZ DUNN²,
& ORRIANNE MORRISON³**

¹SUNY DOWNSTATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH,

²UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY,

³EAGLE'S LANDING MIDDLE SCHOOL

Presenter Disclosures

LeConte J. Dill

(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

“No relationships to disclose”

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Safe Routes to School...?



The Atlanta Paradox : A Tale of Two Cities

Excluded



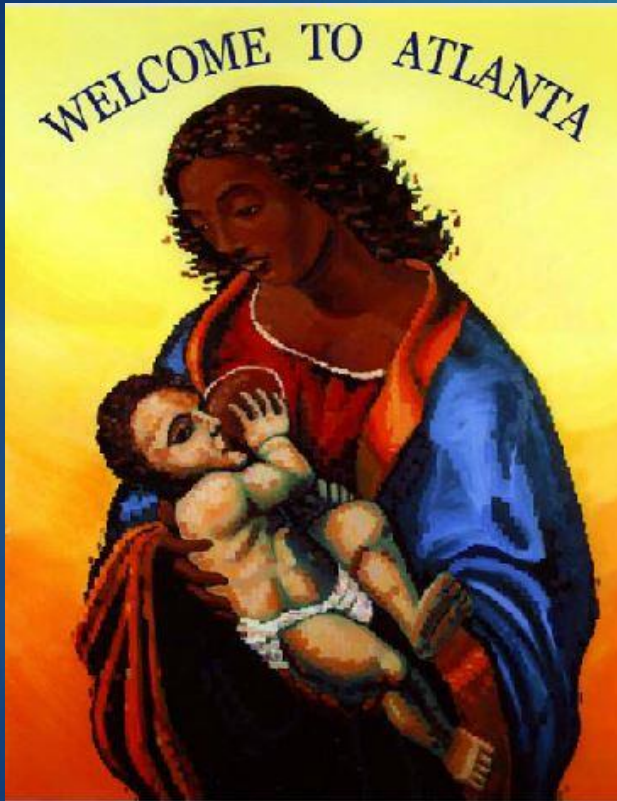
Riskscape

Exceptional



Safe Haven

The Atlanta Compromise



Welcome To Atlanta,
Charles Huntley Nelson

“Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom, we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are **to live by the productions of our hands** and fail to keep in our mind that we shall prosper as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor. **It is at the bottom of life we should begin and not the top.**”—Booker T. Washington, 1895

Migration & Segregation: The Urban South

“They of **Atlanta** turned resolutely toward the **future**; and that future held aloft vistas of purple and gold—Atlanta, **Queen of the cotton kingdom**; Atlanta, **Gateway** to the Land of the Sun...So the city crowned her hundred hills with **factories**, and stored her **shops** with cunning handiwork, and stretched long iron ways to greet the busy Mercury in his coming. And the nation talked of her **striving**.”

—W.E.B. Du Bois, 1903



Migration Series, Jacob Lawrence



The Civil Rights & Black Power Movements



Neoliberalism as Structural Violence

“The traces of the New World Order, time is getting shorter. If we don’t get prepared people its gon’ to be a **slaughter**. My mind won’t allow me to not be curious. My folk don’t understand so they don’t take it serious. But every now and then, I wonder if the **gate was put up** to keep crime out or to keep our a\$\$ in.”—Goodie Mob, “Cell Therapy,” 1995



Housing Displacement as “Root Shock”



“Like Hurricane Katrina without the water”



Health



- Persistent **health inequities** fostered by:
 - Exponential growth—**Sprawl**
 - **Rhetoric** as City Too Busy to Hate
- 62% of children do not participate in any organized physical activity (CDC, 2003)
- 23% of children do not participate in any free-time physical activity outside of the school day (HHS, 2008)
- Only 13% of children walked or biked to school in 2009, compared to 48% of children in 1969 (NCSRTS, 2011)
- Approximately 17% of children and adolescents are overweight or obese (12.5 million children and adolescents) (HHS, 2008)

Research Questions

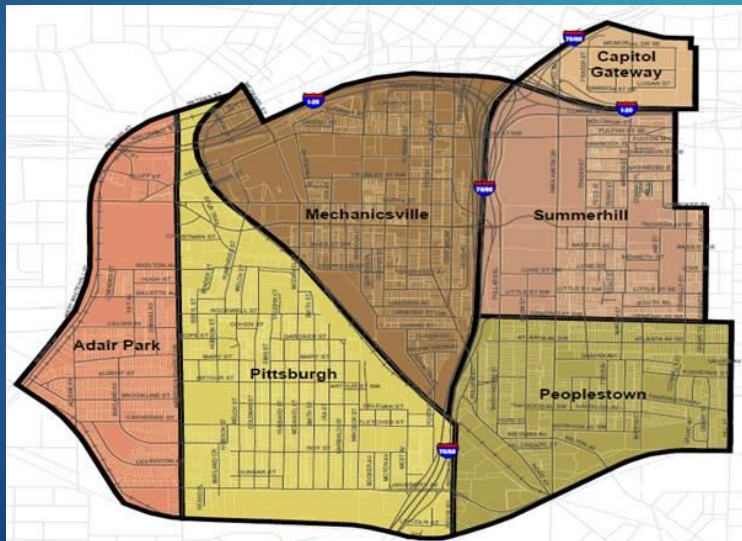


1. How does the built and social environment influence how youth **navigate** through distressed neighborhoods?
2. How do youth conceive of **safe and unsafe spaces** in their neighborhood?
3. How do youth in distressed neighborhoods conceive of the barriers to and facilitators of **active transport**?
4. How has the national and local **foreclosure crisis** impacted health risks for youth?
5. How do the **institutions in distressed neighborhoods** impact positive youth development?

Pittsburgh Neighborhood



- 1883: Established, one of Atlanta's **oldest neighborhoods**
- 1920s: **'The place to be'** for Black Atlantans
- 1950s: Population began to **drop**
- 1970s-1990s: Population **cut** in half
- 2007-Present: Epicenter of local and national **foreclosure crisis**
- 2012: **Hate crime** against Brandon White



Methods

- Partnership with the **Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association (PCIA)** and **W. L. Parks Middle School**
- **Direct and Participant Observation**
- **Literature Review**
- **3 Focus Groups** with 7th & 8th Graders
- **Photo-Mapping** of Safe & Unsafe Spaces
- **Coding & Thematic Analysis**



Findings



“Used to be Good”: Nostalgia and Pride

- “**Used to be** a good neighborhood.”
- “**Used to be** quiet when I was in elementary and now it’s loud and people always fight outside of school.”
- “**Used to be** fun to go outside but now you have to worry about things.”



Moving Out and Moving In: Foreclosures

- “Houses may be abandoned because crime increased and people changed and people either passed away or cannot cope and **moved out.**”
- “Really loud neighbors **cause family to move** and later people broke in. Then it was boarded up and abandoned. Most houses are abandoned because they are foreclosed. Investors will buy the houses and the **only way you can move in** is to rent them.”



Dirty Truth Campaign, 2009

“Now the House is Abandoned”: Foreclosures

- “Now there is **one abandoned house** and neighbors are not kind.”
- “There are **3-4 abandoned houses** on the street and you can hear people breaking windows and hear drug dealers.”
- “[Neighborhood is] challenging because people want to improve community, but there are **so many abandoned houses.**”



Dirty Truth Campaign, 2009

Drug Use & Foreclosures



- “House was foreclosed because grandmother passed away and parents **got on drugs**. Family went into depression.”
- “Losing homes means losing family and being alone and **causes more to be on drugs**.”

Not Just Housing: School Closures



- “Parks [Middle School] is a **historic site** and should be kept open.”
- “[Closure is] bad for teachers and 5th graders who have to **find another school.**”
- “School **shouldn’t close** because Mr. Randolph is like a father.”
- “Make people feel **unsafe** when going to a neighborhood where there will be bullying and rape.”

Discussion



The Crossing Guard, Charles Teenie Harris

“Foreclosed homes all look
The same, as if the house left
In the middle of breakfast
And didn’t come back.” —
Mary Weems, “House Note”

“Like with **abandoned homes**
I would make them into
better homes for everybody.
Yeah, just make the homes
better and just make better
decisions, like **don’t close**
down the schools. That
affects other people” —
8th grade male

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Contact

Leconte.Dill@downstate.edu

