

Dissertation Abstract: Essays on Housing Policy, Schools and Neighborhood Change

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This dissertation focuses on how housing policies and schools shape neighborhoods and opportunities for low income households. I analyze two of the largest housing programs in the country, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program and the Housing Choice Voucher program, assessing their impact on racial composition and school access. Then I study elementary schools, and describe how these schools affect the New York City housing stock. Housing and school policies have traditionally operated within their own silos, yet they are inter-related. This dissertation works to build a bridge between these two separate policy worlds.

The first paper in my dissertation (co-authored with Katherine O'Regan) addresses a critical but almost unexamined aspect of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program – whether its use is associated with increased racial segregation in the metropolitan area. We examine three potential channels through which the LIHTC could affect segregation: where LIHTC units are built relative to where other low income households live, who lives in these tax credit developments, and changes in racial composition in neighborhoods that receive tax credit projects.

The second paper in my dissertation (co-authored with Amy Schwartz and Ingrid Ellen) explores whether the housing voucher program enables low-income households to live near high quality schools in all metropolitan areas throughout the United States. In this project we explore whether low income households use vouchers in neighborhoods with higher performing schools. We examine whether voucher holders live near better schools than do households in place-based housing programs as well as other low income households.

The third paper in my dissertation explores whether schools can play a role in housing investment decisions. I explore whether consistent measures of school quality are associated with higher levels of building level investment activity. To identify whether this relationship is

causal I incorporate a boundary discontinuity design. I test whether this relationship holds when comparing housing units that are very close to one another, but on opposite sides of an elementary school attendance zone boundary.