

RESIDENT INITIATIVES IN PUBLIC HOUSING

Leda McIntyre Hall and Richard C. Hula

Abstract

This paper reports initial results of a survey exploring current practice in Public Housing Authorities in Michigan and Indiana. Particular emphasis is given to current efforts to support citizen empowerment, particularly resident management and private ownership. Major findings include:

- *The institutional context in which housing authorities operate vary both within and across states.*
- *Efforts of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to impose broad policy are limited by local and state factors.*
- *Individual housing authorities show significant variation in their commitment to resident initiatives.*
- *Variation in local commitment to resident initiatives is not simply a function of the authority's size or complexity.*
- *Systematic interstate variations in commitment to resident initiatives (as well as overall programmatic priorities) exist.*

Suggestions for further research recommended examining the impact of resident initiatives at both the authority level and the individual development or neighborhood level.

Statement of Problem

For almost twenty years policy makers have sought to devise a rational policy that could stem the decline of the public housing resource. Initially, many saw the problems of public housing as a direct result of insufficient funding, and argued that increased appropriations would lead to dramatic improvements in the system. Congress has approved significant funds to public housing through a system of operating subsidies and modernization programs. The impact of these efforts has convinced most observers that simply increasing expenditures is unlikely to generate long term, self-sustaining

Leda McIntyre Hall is an Associate Professor in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University, South Bend.

Richard C. Hula is a Professor of Political Sciences and Urban Affairs, Michigan State University, East Lansing.

improvement. While there is little question that any serious effort to upgrade public housing will require increased investment, housing experts are virtually unanimous in the view that, if long-term improvement is to occur, significant changes in the organization and management of the system are also required (Webdale, 1993; Burgess, 1993; Nenno, 1991; Suchman, Middleton, & Giles, 1990). After a brief review of the situation in public housing, we will examine resident initiative programs and their potential positive impact on public housing. A two-state comparative study provides baseline data about the extent to which resident-initiative programs are supported and implemented. Obviously, a more extensive survey could follow from this model and would be useful to illuminate the status and benefit of resident-initiative programs.

Since its inception, the U.S. public housing system has been mired in controversy. Early criticism was rooted both in ideological objections to government-provided housing, and in a more pragmatic concern as to whether government had the expertise to do it (Hays, 1995; Schill & Wachter, 1995; Schill, 1994; Russ & Rouse, 1993). Each strand of this critique survives today, reinforced by a very widely held view that public housing is little short of a monstrous failure. Such charges come not only from those long hostile to the program, but also from many past supporters. Indeed, some of the program's most vociferous critics are its major beneficiaries, the public housing residents. Specific complaints such as substandard construction, physical deterioration, and social disorganization are well known. Drug use, violent crime, and vandalism are seen as epidemic. In spite of significant federal subsidies, a number of large local housing authorities are essentially bankrupt. Multibillion-dollar modernization programs have failed to arrest physical deterioration of the stock. Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of failure is provided by empty, uninhabitable buildings in cities notoriously short of low-income housing. For example, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) reports that in spite of a waiting list of over 40,000 people, one-sixth of all CHA apartments (6,000 units) are vacant due to deteriorated conditions.

For some, the best solution to the crisis in public housing is the example of Pruitt Igoe in St. Louis (Rainwater, 1967). Here the St. Louis Public Housing Authority deemed a large complex beyond redemption and simply blew it up. There are, however, compelling reasons to reject this view. First, the popular perception that the entire public housing system is in a state of crisis greatly overstates the genuine problems the system faces. Many local housing authorities do provide decent housing to low-income individuals and families. Popular perceptions of the problems in public housing are typically based on the problems associated with high-rise, multifamily units in large cities. Low-rise development, housing targeted to the elderly and disabled, and authorities operating in less-urban environments, report a much higher degree of success in implementing housing programs. Second, and even more compelling, is the fact that the public housing stock is a genuine social resource. The 1.3 million units of public housing represent a \$75 billion public investment, and make up a significant proportion of the total low-income housing stock (National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials [NAHRO], 1988). Finally, it should be stressed that even with public housing's very negative image, demand for such housing typically exceeds available

units. It is estimated that more than 800,000 qualified families were on waiting lists for public housing; the average waiting period was 13 months in 1994 (Williams, 1995); in 1997, the average waiting period for public housing nationally was eight months. In a number of larger cities this waiting period is measured in years. To seek simply to dismantle the public housing system is to ignore both past investment and future potential.

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 ushered in an intense debate over the future magnitude and strategy of almost all federal social welfare programs. Although the rhetoric of the administration was often more radical than its action, this was not true for housing and community development programs. From 1981 to 1988, according to U.S. budget summaries, the overall HUD budget authority was reduced by more than 40%, dropping from 4.59% to 1.31% of all federal spending. Assisted housing programs suffered even greater cuts, declining by more than 70%. The Reagan administration effectively brought to a halt new construction of any type of new subsidized housing. Whereas the 1981 HUD budget called for a total of 200,000 new assisted units, the 1988 budget called for only 5,000 new family units of public housing and 9,500 units for the elderly and handicapped (Nelson, 1992; Nenno, 1991; Kuntz, 1989). Reagan administration officials were particularly hostile to the concept of conventional public housing, arguing that the federal government's limited responsibility in the area of low-income housing should be met through a set of user subsidies in the private housing market. Indeed, the site-specific subsidies created by the Section 8 program were also criticized as an inefficient intrusion into the market. In its place, a voucher system in which housing consumers were free to choose their residence was proposed. Such a voucher plan was begun as a demonstration project in 1983, and made permanent in the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987. By the end of the Reagan years significant resources had been shifted from Section 8 housing to vouchers.

Federal policy toward existing conventional public housing might best be described as benign neglect (Hula, 1990). In 1980 an effort was made to impose a degree of comprehensive planning on housing authorities. Each was required to develop a five-year plan to address major modernization needs. As part of the plan, authorities were to outline not only physical redevelopment needs, but management strategies to meet them. Such planning requirements had relatively little impact, however, since modernization funding remained unpredictable and generally quite low, seldom exceeding more than a billion dollars. As a result, most modernization funds were largely consumed by emergency repairs rather than any comprehensive redevelopment activities. The declining condition of the public housing stock has predictably continued, with recent estimates of modernization needs exceeding \$20 billion (Hula, 1990).

Not only has the public housing stock been neglected, but there was some discussion in the 1980s about selling some public housing to residents. In 1979, the British government adopted a plan to privatize public housing as a way to reduce public expenditures (Flynn, 1988; Clapham & English, 1987). However, British public or council housing is middle-class, marketable housing in reasonably good repair that is subsidized on a sliding scale, reflecting household income. "Public housing" has a different

connotation — and a different reality — in Great Britain. It does not parallel the high-density, unattractive, and frequently decrepit “housing projects” in the United States.

Both the Reagan and Bush administrations cited with approval the British decision to sell discounted public housing to residents (Forrest & Murie, 1990; Flynn, 1988; Silver, McDonald, & Ortiz, 1985; Barnes, 1982) and explored ways to apply the model to the United States. In 1984, HUD established the Public Housing Home Ownership Demonstration Project, in which approximately one thousand units were to be sold (Silver, McDonald, & Ortiz, 1985; U.S. Congress, 1985). Although the great differences in the nature of the public housing stock (as well as of the residents in that stock) make it impossible to simply implement a British-style privatization policy, a number of policy makers argued that the ultimate solution to the problems of public housing were to be found in the residents of that housing. From this view the ultimate goal of public housing is to become private housing. Tenant management is seen as an important step in creating conditions that make long-term privatization possible. Congressional support for tenant management was made explicit in the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987, which for the first time identified tenant management as a federal policy goal, and provided a total of five million dollars for a series of 50 technical assistance grants to tenant council and resident management corporations. The legislation also provided for the purchase of public housing projects by residents.

Although there is little doubt that conservatives are most supportive of tenant management, the concept has also found some favor with liberal politicians. For example, the then District of Columbia’s Congressional delegate Walter Fauntroy co-sponsored legislation with then Representative Jack Kemp to encourage tenant management. In fact, the liberal Fauntroy joined the conservative Kemp in promoting legislation to permit the outright sale of public housing units. For the most part liberals are significantly less enthusiastic about eventual privatization, and stress instead the community empowerment aspects of tenant management.

Resident Initiatives

The debate over tenant management and/or privatization was significantly expanded by Jack Kemp during his tenure as Secretary of HUD under George Bush (Hays, 1995; Kolodny, 1986; Bratt, 1986; Hartman & Stone, 1986). Kemp attempted to implement a broad range of reforms in public housing under the rubric of “resident initiatives” (Arnaudo, 1991), including the creation of the Office of Resident Initiatives, which had three program units: Resident Management, Ownership, and Economic Development and Supportive Services. Kemp’s goal seemed straightforward: engage residents in the process of improving the conditions in which they lived. While Kemp’s plans included encouraging tenant management and ownership, attempts were made to support residents in a wide variety of activities in community development, including some not directly associated with maintaining physical shelter. Examples ranged from the establishment of day care centers and health clinics to police/community programs to control drug usage. Some support was also given to various local initiatives to provide direct resident representation on housing authorities. HUD justified these reforms us-

ing a language of community empowerment of the sort unheard since the Office of Economic Opportunity in the 1960s.

Although the Clinton administration is generally more sympathetic toward public housing and its residents, there has been little interest expressed in a return to a traditional public housing policy. Certainly there is less interest on the part of HUD to privatize large elements of the public housing stock. However, there seems to be no question that resident initiatives in public housing will remain an important element of HUD policy. Indeed, since 1994, HUD requires significant attempts by local housing authorities to increase resident participation in public housing (U.S. Department of HUD, 1994).

Impact of Resident Initiatives

Popular accounts of resident management provide tantalizing anecdotal evidence that resident initiatives could have a profound impact on quality of life in public housing. Nevertheless, caution is in order (Hall, 1993; Hula, 1990; Diaz, 1979; Fuerst, 1988). Although popular reports stress success, it is quite clear that tenant management is difficult to implement, and may be even more difficult to maintain. For example, an early (1976) HUD demonstration project made significant investments in seven sites to promote tenant management. Of the seven sites, only four ever became viable. Two that did have since lost their contracts. While two St. Louis groups are often cited as being great successes, three other tenant management corporations established in the same city failed (Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation [MDRC], 1981; Kolodny, 1983). Tenant management will not succeed just because it is a good idea. Rather there must be a stable well-trained leadership structure, a supportive relationship between the Public Housing Authority (PHA) and the tenant association, and sufficient resources for capital improvement.

Resident initiatives cannot act as a substitute for investment. Indeed, such initiatives as tenant management almost certainly demand an initial increase in necessary resources, although they may lead to a more efficient long-term use of social resources. Unfortunately, there is simply no reliable data that would permit a realistic estimate of either short- or long-term costs of tenant management. A related question is whether resident-initiated programs can survive the loss of original leadership. The most successful tenant management corporations all continue to be headed by "first generation" leadership. Note that the issue of continuity is a bit more subtle than simply whether new leaders will emerge as housing managers. Reading reports of tenant management, one is struck by the critical importance of indigenous leadership, and the prodigious effort required by that leadership (Hula & Hall, 1994; Peterman, 1993; Hall, 1993; Johnson, 1991; McCain, 1991; Marabella, 1991; Monti, 1989; Fuerst, 1988). While particular leaders often assert that required skills are common, the evidence on this point is far from convincing. Also at stake is whether the community-based nature of tenant management can be maintained. As tenants display the ability to manage their own property, it is possible that tenant management might evolve into a form of conventional management in which PHA employees are also residents.

Even more speculative is the possibility that successful resident initiatives may shift political priorities within the resident organization itself. Some argue, for example, that an emphasis on home ownership may have a negative effect on current residents (Ho, 1995; Kinnaird, 1994; Rohe & Stegman, 1992). Consider the case of Kenilworth-Parkside in Washington, which is seen as a premier example of resident initiatives, including a move toward purchase of property. Some critics claim that efforts to remove the poorest residents at Kenilworth-Parkside were initiated with impunity by site leadership. Although claims of such displacement policy are controversial, there can be no doubt that resident managers have articulated a number of policy positions quite independent of their "natural" liberal base. For example, the most important of these have been efforts to free public housing developments from federal regulations requiring union labor for modernization work, so as to be able to train and employ their own residents. The political effect has been, of course, to cast tenant management in an increasingly neoconservative framework.

Current Research

Efforts to assess the impact of the current HUD resident-initiative programs reveal how little is known about the operational level of the public housing system. Much of what scholars and practitioners do know about public housing is limited to the largest urban areas. While it would be foolish to deny the importance of these authorities, there are many others. For example, the state of Michigan has 130 Public Housing Commissions, only one of which is located in the city of Detroit. The size of commissions, based on the number of housing units only, ranges from 20 to 9,000. In Indiana, the smallest housing authorities have 50 units, while the city of Indianapolis has over 2700 housing units.

To obtain baseline information on resident initiatives, a mail survey was sent to the executive directors of all public housing commissions in Michigan and Indiana. Eighty-one percent of Michigan's commissions responded, and 90% of sixty-nine Public Housing Authorities in Indiana returned the surveys. Because the survey asked for reporting by executive directors, other sources of data were also used, including state-level reports from HUD, other surveys, and interviews with HUD, public housing authority (PHA-Indiana), and public housing commission (PHC-Michigan) staff members. With the exception of a single commission in Indiana, all housing commissions described in this paper report owning and managing conventional public housing.

Indiana and Michigan constitute essentially a convenience sample. However, by including data from the two state jurisdictions, this research is able to test for state-level effects in the implementation of federal policy promoting resident initiatives. There is, of course, significant literature on state politics that suggests that such differences exist. For example, Elazar (1966, 1994) persuasively argues that states have distinct political cultures that impact policy outcomes in those states. He specifically points to important differences between Michigan and Indiana. Michigan is seen as having a strongly moralist culture. Government is seen as a productive and useful tool to maximize both individual and collective ends. Elazar sees the political culture in Indiana as

individualist and, secondarily, traditional. Here the market is highly emphasized, with the role of government being seen as more utilitarian. Such cultural variables help explain observed state-level differences in local responses to resident initiatives.

The survey questions were designed to collect information about the type and intensity of resident initiatives and were based on our attempts to condense a plethora of activities into a manageable instrument. Questions were driven by the suggestions of experts who recommended specific topics. The Michigan portion of this study was partially funded by HUD, and the grant funds were used to assemble a panel of HUD staff, commission directors, state and local housing officials, and residents of public housing. This panel reviewed and pretested the survey. After several iterations, it was mailed to executive directors in both states.

The Policy Environment

One important question is simply how local authorities operate. To gain some sense of this issue, commissions were asked to describe their relationship with local governments in their jurisdictions. Table 1 presents a set of summary statistics describing the variation in local government and housing commission relations for Michigan and Indiana.

Housing authorities in both states view themselves as relatively autonomous. This attitude is particularly true in Indiana, where 61% of authorities reported complete agreement with the statement that they were completely autonomous from local government.

These data also suggest that federal authorities may find it difficult to implement policy preferences unless local authorities concur. The wide variation in commission responses can be at least partially explained by a sort of administrative mutation. The National Housing Act (NHA) of 1937 authorized state governments to pass legislation enabling local governments to make arrangements for public housing. The intent of the NHA was interpreted, eventually, through 50 state lenses, as local governments set up housing commissions or authorities according to state laws. However, relationships between the housing commissions and the local governments vary from city to city and town to town. A further complicating administrative difference emerges from the budget process. Funds that come primarily from HUD are administered by a board of directors that is appointed by the mayor or town council to oversee the commission. In Indiana, the treasurer of the board is usually the executive director of the housing authority. Obviously, then, there is little wonder that the notion of public housing defines a very complex policy arena.

Evidence of Resident Initiatives

Authorities were asked to indicate on a scale of one (very little) to five (very high) how much activity was occurring around the promotion of resident initiatives. Data presented in Figure 1 show that approximately 50% of both Michigan and Indiana PHCs report either very high or high activity associated with resident initiatives. It is interesting to note, however, that almost 30% of reporting commissions indicate little

Table 1. Administrative Characteristics of PHAs

	% Total Agreement				% Complete Disagreement					
	1		2		3		4		5	
	IN	MI	IN	MI	IN	MI	IN	MI	IN	MI
Autonomous from local government	61	53	16	15	18	17	0	11	5	5
Employees work for local government	11	28	4	7	7	13	2	6	76	47
PHA is unit of local government	5	24	4	9	9	12	9	14	73	42
PHA makes own budget decisions	7	17	4	5	9	11	3	10	77	58
PHA works with local government	43	48	18	14	23	18	5	11	11	9

or no activity around resident initiatives. This result is moderately surprising given the very strong emphasis on resident initiatives throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. One explanation for the lack of activity is that commissions reporting little attention to resident initiatives tend to be those with only Section 8 units or units designated for senior citizens (Lamberg, 1995). For example, in Indiana, 25 housing authorities have no housing units in public-owned housing; subsidized housing in these authorities is offered only through Section 8 units or vouchers. Residents in such units tend to be dispersed, difficult to organize, and unlikely to have building management or ownership as goals (Williams, 1995).

In an effort to more clearly identify authority commitment to resident initiatives Table 2 reports a set of more concrete indicators of resident initiatives in Michigan and Indiana. Once again a similar pattern emerges in both states. Resident Councils are the most common indicator of resident initiatives in both states. Actual and planned participation in HUD's HOPE programs is similar. Although reported commitment to resident initiatives is higher in Michigan, there is little interest in resident management in either state. Table 2 shows that resident councils are very common in Michigan, and they are reported to exist (or are planned) in some form in almost all Michigan's PHC's. In Indiana this percentage is under 50%; again, the number of resident councils is likely reduced by the number of PHAs that have no public-owned housing.

To judge the relative importance of resident initiatives, Table 3 presents a summary of priority areas reported by authorities in Michigan and Indiana. Overall activity in the two states appears similar. The mean percent of authorities reporting "very active" across all priority areas was 20% in Michigan and 18% in Indiana. However, there is

some substantive variation in the particular activities favored by Indiana and Michigan authorities. Unit rehabilitation, resident initiatives, recreation community development, and resident management receive relatively greater emphasis in Michigan. Indiana public housing authority administrators stress crime prevention, unemployment, drug elimination, increasing the number of units, and home ownership as important. However, their emphasis has not always translated into either policy, public expenditures, or changes in tenant behavior. While such differences are interesting, they seem to provide no intuitive pattern. Future research might determine what variables in the political or policy environment would help explain the differences.

There is evidence of policy differences between Indiana and Michigan, and Table 4 reports these differences by activity area. The “scores” reported in Table 4 are summary scores obtained by averaging the raw number of responses in each priority category and calculating the difference between the states by this equation: *Michigan average - Indiana average = score*. A negative number on the table simply means Indiana authorities had a higher average score than Michigan authorities on that particular priority.

Table 5 reports the results of a factor analysis applied to each of the twelve priority areas for each state. For each state, the revealed factor structure is presented as a simple list of indicators that load highest on specific factors. (The actual factor scores are presented in the Appendix.) The goal of this analysis is to see whether priorities tended to cluster in specific substantive areas. For example, if authorities report high levels of

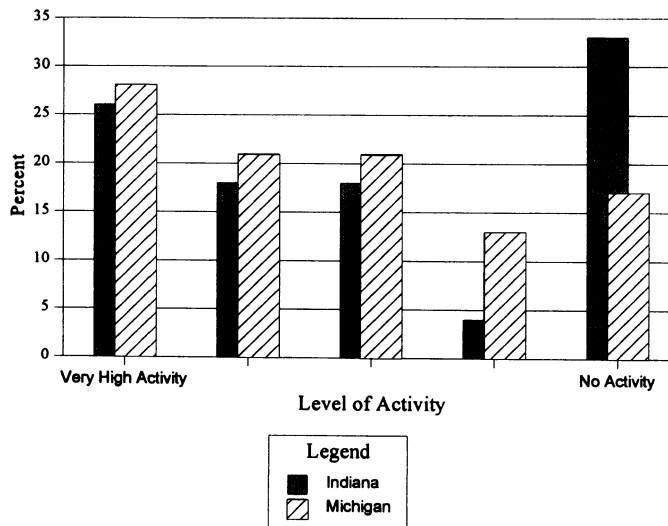


Figure 1. % of PHCs/PHAs Reporting Support for Resident Initiatives.

Table 2. Indicators of Support for Resident Initiatives (percent affirmative)

Activity	Indiana		Michigan	
	Planned	Implemented	Planned	Implemented
Resident Councils	5	42	28	63
Staff Assigned to Initiatives	52	35	*	40
Counseling about Home Ownership and Rental Opportunities	3	21	36	32
Home Ownership Programs	31	2	36	12
Resident Management	15	5	18	6
HOPE I**	15	—	15	1
HOPE II	10	—	8	—
HOPE III	6	2	14	—

*Question not asked in Michigan

**The 1990 Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act includes the HOPE program, Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere. HOPE I dealt with the sale of public housing to tenant management organizations. HOPE II allowed for a similar process in privately owned projects receiving federal assistance. HOPE III enabled non-profit organizations to build or rehabilitate units for purchase by low-income individuals.

Table 3. Priority Areas for Public Housing Commissions

Priority	Average Score ¹		% Reporting "Very Active"	
	Indiana ²	Michigan ³	Indiana	Michigan
Rehabilitation of Units	2.67	2.11	38	55
Support Resident Initiatives	3.04	2.70	27	28
Recreation	3.22	2.86	10	25
Crime Prevention	2.69	3.14	37	25
Family Services	3.33	3.42	6	13
Employment	3.04	3.57	21	13
Drug Elimination	2.84	3.60	34	18
Increasing Number of Units	2.98	3.62	28	19
Community Development	4.13	3.76	6	12
Resident Management	4.54	3.88	2	16
Economic Development	4.13	4.13	6	3
Home Ownership	3.81	4.17	6	10

¹Computed on the basis of scores that ranged from 1 (very active) to 5 (no activity).

²N = 62.

³N = 108.

Table 4. Differences in Priority Areas between Michigan and Indiana Public Housing Commissions

Priority	Average Score ¹ (MI - IN)	% Reporting "Very Active" (MI - IN)
Rehabilitation of Units	-.56	17
Support Resident Initiatives	-.34	1
Recreation	-.36	15
Crime Prevention	.45	-12
Family Services	.09	7
Employment	.53	8
Drug Elimination	.76	-16
Increasing Number of Units	.60	-9
Community Development	-.37	6
Resident Management	-.66	14
Economic Development	—	-3
Home Ownership	.36	4

¹Computed on the basis of scores that ranged from 1 (very active) to 5 (no activity).

activity in one area are they more likely to report high (or low) levels of activities in others? The listing provided in Table 5 suggests that clustering of activities does tend to occur in each state. However, the particular clusterings that exist in each state are different.

At present we do not have data that might help us explain these aggregate state differences. Possibilities range from political culture explanations to preferences of state and regional HUD offices. There may be differences caused by the number of low-rent housing units in contrast to other subsidized units, such as scattered-site housing or housing vouchers. Policies unrelated to HUD may contribute to the differences. For instance, how much of the Factor 1 cluster in Michigan can be explained by Michigan's recent deep cuts in social service and job training programs? What is clear, however, is that state-level variables will need to be addressed in further work that evaluates the local impact of resident initiative efforts.

Explaining Local Variations

Beyond state-level variables, how are we to explain the variations in reported levels of commission activity? One common-sense hypothesis suggests that variation in policy is simply a function of the magnitude of problems facing particular jurisdictions. A second hypothesis argues that commissions with the greatest level of resources would likely be most active across possible priority areas. Each of these hypotheses

Table 5. Factor Analysis of Housing Authority Priorities By State**Indiana**

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Rehabilitation Current Units	Home Ownership	Increase Number of Units	
Crime Prevention	Family Services	Employment	
Drug Elimination	Economic Development		
Recreation	Community Development		
Support Resident Initiatives	Resident Management		

Michigan

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Employment	Crime Prevention	Increasing Number of Units	Rehabilitation of Current Units
Family Services	Drug Elimination	Home Ownership	Resident Management
Economic Development	Recreation		
Community Development	Support Resident Initiatives		

predicts that the largest systems will be the most active. We attempted to test this notion by measuring the associations among levels of activity across a number of priority issues, the size of the population area served, and the total number of units in each commission (Tables 6, 7, and 8 include only Michigan data).

The data in Table 6 suggest that overall commission activity is not simply a function of size or complexity. Of particular interest is the result that authorities who report high levels of activity in resident initiatives tend on average to have a smaller population area than those who are less active. Only 4 coefficients out of a total of 24 computed are significant at the .05 level. Although this result is beyond what one would predict on the basis of chance, the overall pattern is weak and in the wrong direction! Also, as size increases, commissions report lower levels of activity across priority areas. This finding is of particular interest since most observers tend to generalize about public housing based on experience with larger commissions.

Table 6. The Association between Reported Levels of Activity and Population of Service Area and Total Number of Units

Activity	Population of Service Area	Total Number of Units
Rehabilitation of Units	-.13 ¹	-.15
Support Resident Initiatives	-.25*	-.24
Recreation	-.04	-.10
Crime Prevention	-.08	-.16
Family Services	-.29*	-.22
Employment	-.28*	-.25
Drug Elimination	-.22	-.23
Increasing Number of Units	-.02	-.18
Community Development	-.27	-.08
Resident Management	.02	-.07
Economic Development	-.21	-.22
Home Ownership	-.01	-.29*

¹Pearson Correlation Coefficients; * $p < .05$ level.

Table 7. Association between Commission Characteristics and Priority Activities

Activity	Characteristics				
	Autonomous from Local Government	Employees Work for City	Commission Described as Unit of Local Gov't	Commission Makes Budget Decisions	Works Closely with Local Government
Rehabilitation of Units	-0.02	0.09	0.19	-0.01	-.18
Support Resident Initiatives	0.22	-0.04	0.18	-0.02	.25*
Recreation	-0.1	0.02	0.05	-0.04	-.05
Crime Prevention	0.11	0.02	-0.09	-0.04	.25*
Family Services	0.05	0.19	-0.05	.25	-.01
Employment	-0.12	0.15	0.04	.07	.07
Drug Elimination	0.09	-0.01	-0.12	.03	.24*
Increasing Number of Units	0.06	-0.09	-0.07	-.10	.15
Community Development	-0.2	-.37*	-.31*	.34*	.27*
Resident Management	0.02	0.17	0.18	-0.02	.20
Economic Development	-0.09	0.11	-0.06	-0.02	.09
Home Ownership	-0.17	0.08	0.04	.05	.13

Pearson Correlation Coefficients; * $p < .05$ level.

Table 7 explores whether the various structural features of commissions (described in Table 1) predict the level of activity. Table 7 does not reveal any dramatic association between these attributes and activity across priority areas. Of the seven positive coefficients that are significant at the .05 level, four are between how closely the commission cooperates with local government and specific activity areas. These include resident initiatives, crime prevention, drug elimination, and community development. Thus, there is some modest evidence that cooperation with local general-purpose government does increase the capacity of public housing commissions. In all cases, however, the predictive power of these indicators is modest.

Table 8 examines two key indicators of resident initiatives: the existence of a resident council and whether the commission has appointed staff specifically to the area of resident initiatives. All PHAs have a Resident Initiatives Coordinator (RIC), but not all RICs have organized resident councils, so some authorities may have both. This analysis is quite striking. In all cases, commissions reporting resident councils or staff assigned to resident initiatives have higher levels of activity in *all* priority areas. Ten of twenty-six t-tests are significant at the .05 level. Obviously it is impossible to infer causality from these data. It may be that active commissions make staff assignments to resident initiatives and support resident councils as part of a general process of activism. It is nevertheless intriguing to note this pattern.

Implications

Since the data presented in this report must be seen as tentative, policy recommendations based on them should be framed with care. However, several important lessons do emerge. The most important of these is that policy makers must more clearly acknowledge the diversity within the public housing system. The analysis lends strong support to current proposals by HUD leadership to restructure the agency to better promote local initiative and innovation such as RICs in each commission and grants for experimental on-site education programs. This need for increased flexibility is shown by a number of factors. For example, evidence has been provided that systematic variation across state boundaries exists. The source of this variation is unclear and may range from the terms of state-enabling legislation to local political culture. What is clear is that successful policy will need to be designed to accommodate such variance.

The data presented here show that there is also a good deal of variety among commissions within a single state that is not simply an artifact of size or budgetary resources. Nor is the activity level directly determined by the set of structural features of commissions that were measured by the survey. Of interest is the finding linking resident councils and staff assignments to resident initiatives to higher overall levels of activity in all priority areas.

In Michigan and Indiana, resident councils are the avenue most frequently taken toward resident participation. It also seems that the direct assignment of staff to resident initiatives is a means of increasing the capacity of local housing commissions to address a number of community issues. Obviously it is essential that further research

Table 8. Differences in Reported Levels of Activity for Commissions with and without Resident Initiative Staff and Resident Councils

Activity	Staff Assigned to Resident Initiatives	Resident Council in Place
Rehabilitation of Units	.61	1.21*
Support Resident Initiatives	1.19*	1.27*
Recreation	.66*	.75*
Crime Prevention	1.09*	1.09*
Family Services	.45	.73
Employment	.89*	.58
Drug Elimination	.98*	.67*
Increasing Number of Units	.36	.60
Community Development	.30	.28
Resident Management	.18	.39
Economic Development	.41	.33
Home Ownership	.48	.22

Note: This table reports differences in response on a five point activity scale (1=high activity, 5=no activity) between commissions reporting staff assigned to resident initiatives and resident councils in place. A positive difference indicates higher levels of priority assigned by commission with staff and/orresident council. * denotes *t*-test for differences significant at .05 level.

be directed to the specific impact of resident initiatives at the commission and development level. While the data do provide evidence of an association between resident participation and a wide range of other activities typically assumed to positively impact housing quality, little systematic evidence is available as to the specific mechanism by which such benefits are gained and how they can be maximized.

References

- Arnaudo, P. (1991). Resident initiatives: A new HUD commitment. *Journal of Housing, 48* (1), 13-15.
- Barnes, K. (1982). Housing associations: European ideas, American applications. *Journal of Housing, 39* (1),10-13.
- Bratt, R.G. (1986). Public housing: The controversy and contribution. In R.G. Bratt, C. Hartman, and A. Meyerson (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on housing* (pp.335-361). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Burgess, J.S. (1993). Program management: Modernization help for LHAs. *Journal of Housing, 50* (5), 200-205.

Clapham, D., & English, J. (1987). *Public housing: Current trends and future developments*. Wolfeboro, NH: Croom Helm.

Diaz, W.A. (1979). *Tenant management: An historical and analytical overview*. Los Angeles: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

Elazar, D.J. (1966). *American federalism: A view from the states*. New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell.

Elazar, D.J. (1994). *The American mosaic: The impact of space, time and culture on American politics*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Flynn, R. (1988). Political acquiescence, privatization and residualisation in British housing policy. *Journal of Social Policy* 17 (3), 289-312.

Forrest, R., & Murie, A. (1990). A dissatisfied state? Consumer preferences and council housing in Britain. *Urban Studies*, 27 (5), 617-635.

Fuerst, J.S. (1988). Tenant management in low-rent public housing. *Social Service Review*, 62, 37-45.

Graft: Public Housing (1995). *The Economist*, 335 (7917), 10-15.

Hall, L.M. (1993). The houses messiah builds. *Shelterforce*, 16 (1), 12-14.

Hartman, C., & Stone, M.E. (1986). A socialist housing alternative for the United States. In R.G. Bratt, C. Hartman, & A. Meyerson (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on housing* (pp.484-513). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Hays, R.A. (1995). *The federal government and urban housing*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Ho, L.S. (1995). Privatization of public housing: An analysis of policy alternatives. *Economic Policy*, 13 (3), 53-64.

Hula, R. (1991). Alternative management strategies for public housing. In W. Gromley (Ed.), *Privatization and its alternatives* (pp.134-162). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Hula, R. & Hall, L.M. (1994). *Resident initiatives in public housing*. Lansing, MI: Center for Urban Affairs.

Johnson, I. (Personal interview conducted by Charles James, April 11, 1991).

Kinnaird, S.B. (1994). Public housing: abandon HOPE, but not privatization. *Yale Law Journal*, 103 (4), 961-995.

Kolodny, R. (1983). *What happens when tenants manage their own public housing*. NAHRO report submitted to the Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of HUD.

Kolodny, R. (1986). The emergence of self-help as a housing strategy for the urban poor. In R.G. Bratt, C. Hartman, & A. Meyerson (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Housing* (pp.447-462). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Kuntz, P. (May 6, 1989). Expiring federal subsidies raise a policy dilemma. *Congressional Quarterly*, 1041-1045.

Lamberg, K. (Telephone conversation, September 7, 1995). U.S. Department of HUD, Indianapolis Office.

Marabella, S. (1991). Resident responsibility: The participation continuum. *Journal of Housing*, 48 (1), 16-18.

- McCain, A. (Personal interview at Resident Management Corporation, Dearborn Homes, Chicago, IL, April 11, 1991).
- Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) (1981). *Tenant management: Findings from a three-year experiment in public housing*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company.
- Monti, D.J. (1989). The organizational strengths and weaknesses of resident managed public housing sites. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 11 (1), 39-52.
- National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) (January/February, 1988). Keeping the commitment: An action plan for better housing and communities for all. *Journal of Housing*, 45, 11-22.
- Nelson, K.P. (1992). Housing assistance needs and the housing stock. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 58 (1), 85-102.
- Nenno, M.K. (1988). Housing and community development: A new cycle of policies and partners. *Journal of Housing*, 45 (1), 75-82.
- Nenno, M. K. (1991). National housing policy: A national policy perspective on three strategic issues. *Public Administration Review*, 51 (1), 86-90.
- Peterman, W.A. (1993). Resident management: Putting it in perspective. *Journal of Housing*, 45 (3), 111-115.
- Rainwater, L. (1967). The lessons of Pruitt-Igoe. *The Public Interest*, 29, 116-126.
- Rohe, W.M., & Stegman, M.A. (1992). Public housing home-ownership: Will it work and for whom? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 58 (2), 144-156.
- Russ, M., & Rouse, J.W. (1993). Is public housing the most effective way to address the country's low-income housing needs? *CQ Researcher*, 3 (34), 809-829.
- Schill, M.H. (1994). The role of the nonprofit sector in low-income housing production: A comparative perspective. *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, 30 (1), 74-102.
- Schill, M.H., & Wachter, S.M. (1995). The spatial bias of federal housing law and policy. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 143, 1285-1342.
- Silver, H., McDonald, J., & Ortiz, R.J. (1 November/December, 1985). Selling public housing: The methods and the motivations. *Journal of Housing*, 42 (6), 213-228.
- Suchman, D.R., Middleton, D.S., & Giles, S.L. (1990). *Public/Private Housing Partnerships*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute.
- U. S. Congress (1985). Homeownership demonstration program. Hearings before a subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, 99th Congress, First Session.
- U. S. Department of HUD (1994). Public and indian housing amendment to the tenant participation and tenant opportunities in public and indian housing: Final rule. *Federal Register*, 59 (163), 43622-43645.
- Webdale, W.D. (1993). Streamlining HUD: Making LHAs more efficient. *Housing and Urban Development*, 50 (5), 192-197.
- Williams, M.A. (Personal correspondence, September 25, 1995). U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Indianapolis Office.

APPENDIX I
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF HOUSING AUTHORITY PRIORITIES IN MICHIGAN AND INDIANA

Priority Areas	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
INDIANA				
Increase in Number of Units	.04	.24	.82	
Rehabilitation of Current Units	.57	.45	-.47	
Crime Prevention	.92	.11	.05	
Employment	.43	.37	.63	
Drug Elimination	.89	.13	.24	
Recreation	.87	.07	.08	
Home Ownership	-.01	.72	.36	
Family Services	.45	.56	.52	
Economic Development	.25	.82	.16	
Community Development	.17	.76	.14	
Support of Resident Initiatives	.78	.43	.07	
Resident Management	.14	.68	.05	
MICHIGAN				
Increasing Number of Units	.03	.12	.81	.12
Rehabilitation of Current Units	.02	.09	.38	.68
Crime Prevention	.18	.76	.12	.14
Employment	.65	.32	.11	.41
Drug Elimination	.49	.74	.03	-.01
Recreation	.07	.62	.09	-.13
Home Ownership	.39	.17	.79	-.13
Family Services	.79	.30	-.01	.06
Economic Development	.62	.20	.29	.00
Community Development	.71	-.19	.33	.11
Support Resident & Initiatives	-.04	.64	.18	.42
Resident Management	.19	-.03	-.19	.76