

Eviction and Educational Instability in Richmond, Virginia

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INTRODUCTION

Richmond faces an eviction rate of approximately 11%, which has remained steady over the past 16 years. However, evictions are unevenly dispersed across the city with neighborhoods in the east and south sides of the city facing significantly higher rates. The impact of high eviction rates in these neighborhoods are exacerbated by relatively high percentage of rental housing, particularly in the Southside and Northside. Conversely, west end neighborhoods where eviction rates are low also have limited rental housing, meaning that there is limited neighborhood turnover because of eviction. While evictions touch individual households, schools are increasingly the front line of eviction. In this brief, I explore the impact of eviction on Richmond Public Schools (RPS)

Education and Eviction

Eviction is more than just the act of removing a tenant from a rental unit. Eviction affects several scales, including the household, community and jurisdiction. The impact on a family can lead to downstream costs for the community and, ultimately, the jurisdiction. Education is one arena with long term effects at all levels.

Families with children are more likely to be evicted than other types of renters (Bernet, Warren, and Adams 2015; Desmond and Gershenson 2017). A previous eviction can make finding quality affordable housing challenging (Desmond and Gershenson, 2017), and it is compounded by the difficulty that already exists for families with children of finding affordable housing (Reina and Winter 2017). The growth in the number of criminal activity nuisance ordinances, which make the owner responsible for police activity – including calls about domestic violence – have resulted in evictions. In fact, a record of police calls, regardless of the reason, can be a reason to deny a rental application (Desmond and Valdez 2013; Swan, 2015; Mead et al. 2018). As a result, families facing eviction make decisions in distress and often flood into poorer quality neighborhoods (Desmond and Shollenberger 2015; DeLuca, Wood & Rosenblatt, forthcoming) or become homeless (Brown 2014). Moreover, families are likely to move before being evicted, suggesting that the scope of evictions is artificially low (DeLuca, Wood & Rosenblatt, forthcoming.).

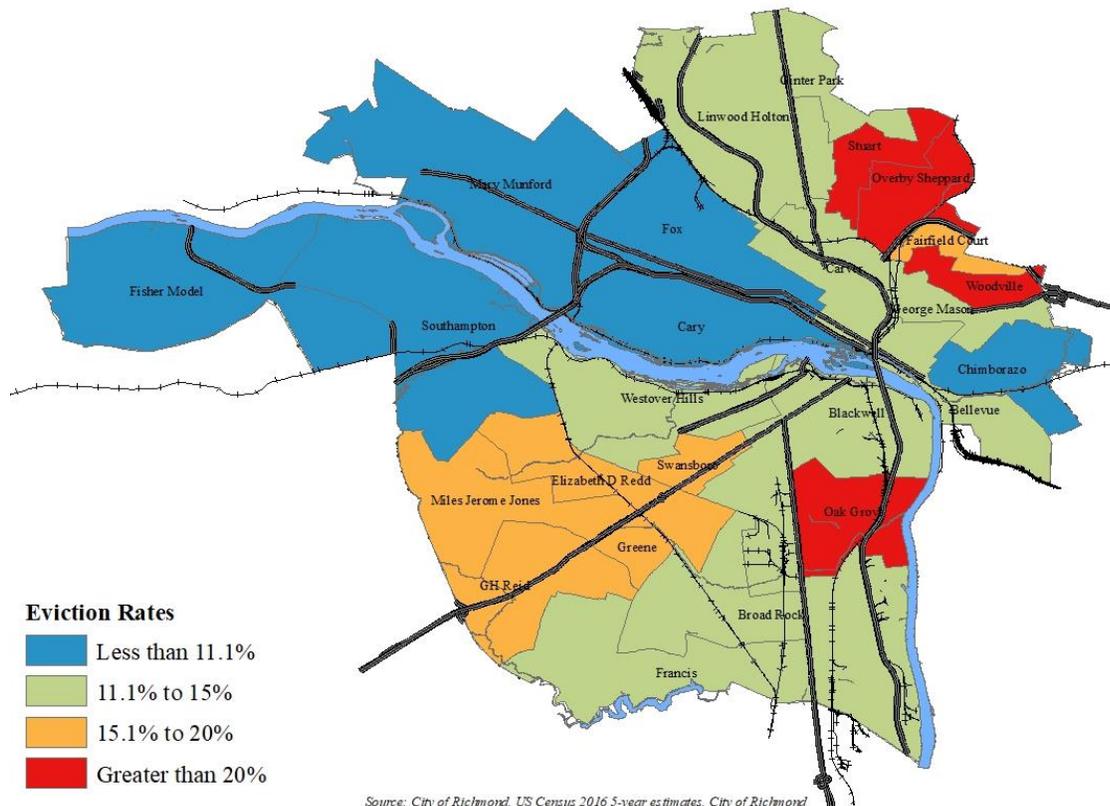
The challenges of finding and staying in affordable housing means that children of evicted households may change schools or, at a minimum, face household chaos and miss days of school as they move. This instability hurts academic outcomes and increases disciplinary problems (Scanlon and Devine 2001; Pribesh and Downey 1999; Kull, Coley, and Lynch 2016; Ersing, Sutphen, and Loeffler 2009). These impacts fall disproportionately on low SES students who move more frequently and do not move to higher SES schools (Grigg 2012). As resources, in the form of time and funding are diverted to address students with remedial needs or behavioral problems, schools see spillover effects on other children (Whitesell, Stiefel, and Schwartz 2016; GAO 2010). These effects are felt disproportionately in communities with high mobility of residents and schools with concentrated disadvantage (GAO, 2010).

EVICTION AND SCHOOLS IN RICHMOND

Like neighborhoods more broadly, the impact on schools is uneven. Figure 1 illustrates Richmond's elementary schools and the eviction rates of their surrounding neighborhoods. The schools with the highest eviction rate neighborhoods are located in the north and south sides, with Oak Grove, Stuart, Overby-Sheppard and Woodville in neighborhoods with eviction rates between 20% and 25%. Meanwhile, schools in the west end, fall well below the citywide average, with neighborhood eviction rates as low as 4.4%. Six schools, or 20.5% of all RPS students, were located in neighborhoods with eviction rates below the citywide average, eight (39%) were in neighborhoods with rates between 11% and 15%, five (25.1%) between 15% and 20% and four (15.4%) greater than 20%.

Eviction in these neighborhoods presents differently, based on the characteristics of the built environment. In high opportunity neighborhoods where affordable rental housing is limited, as in the west end of the city, those who are able to move to opportunity are unlikely to find housing in the same school district. This is due to the impact of eviction on their application for quality rental housing, the limited supply of rental housing and because the housing authority has the right to terminate housing choice vouchers in the event of an eviction. As a result, moves to opportunity can result in instability for the families who could benefit most from high quality schools.

FIGURE 1: EVICTION RATES BY RICHMOND PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 2016



Majority minority schools and those with high percentages of chronic absences are also located in high eviction neighborhoods. Figure 2 shows the characteristics of schools and the eviction rates for their surrounding communities. The city’s only two majority white elementary schools also have the lowest eviction rates and rates of chronic absences. Meanwhile, three out of four schools in neighborhoods with eviction rates higher than 20% are also unaccredited. Conversely, five of the six schools in neighborhoods with eviction rates below the citywide average are fully accredited.

The concurrent rates of chronic absenteeism suggest that these schools already face significant instability for enrolled students. The schools in neighborhoods with rates higher than 20% also have significantly above average rates of chronic absenteeism, while schools with the lowest rates of absenteeism also are located in neighborhoods with low eviction rates. The rate of eviction, particularly in districts where families are unable to access affordable rental housing will exacerbate this instability as student cycle in and out of the classroom. In short, high eviction rates occur elementary schools least able to weather the impacts due to the compound impacts of neighborhood disadvantage.

FIGURE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RICHMOND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

School Name	Eviction Rate	Chronic Absences ¹	% White	% African American	% Hispanic	Accreditation
Fox	4.4%	3.8%	64.1%	17.1%	8.4%	Full
Mary Munford	4.8%	3.6%	75.4%	11.0%	5.0%	Full
Fisher Model	6.1%	11.0%	13.9%	58.8%	19.5%	Full
Cary	7.8%	12.3%	8.2%	83.2%	3.7%	Full
Southampton	10.2%	13.9%	7.0%	80.7%	7.0%	Full
Chimborazo	10.6%	14.6%	4.1%	93.1%	0.4%	Denied
Carver	11.1%	18.2%	1.5%	92.2%	0.8%	Full
Bellevue	12.5%	12.9%	4.2%	89.4%	4.2%	Partial
Westover Hills	12.7%	12.6%	7.1%	83.3%	5.0%	Denied
Blackwell	12.9%	9.7%	1.5%	82.0%	11.1%	Denied
Linwood Holton	13.4%	8.1%	29.9%	60.7%	3.1%	Full
George Mason	13.9%	28.9%	0.9%	92.9%	0.9%	Denied
Ginter Park	14.4%	10.7%	0.7%	94.0%	0.4%	Denied
Broad Rock	14.6%	15.4%	4.2%	60.0%	32.1%	Full
Francis	14.7%	11.1%	2.4%	62.2%	32.3%	Denied
Elizabeth D Redd	15.1%	6.5%	2.1%	68.9%	26.7%	Full
Miles Jerome Jones	16.8%	12.9%	3.8%	69.9%	23.9%	Full
Swansboro	17.5%	12.5%	2.7%	93.0%	2.7%	Denied
Fairfield Court	18.2%	19.5%	0.4%	96.6%	0.8%	Full
GH Reid	18.5%	11.0%	1.9%	57.8%	38.7%	Denied
Greene	19.1%	6.1%	1.7%	16.0%	81.1%	Full
Woodville	20.6%	25.9%	0.9%	93.3%	1.5%	Denied
Oak Grove	20.8%	19.3%	1.9%	79.5%	14.4%	Denied
Overby Sheppard	22.0%	20.6%	2.4%	95.6%	0.5%	Denied
Obama (formerly Stuart)	24.3%	16.4%	1.8%	90.4%	2.5%	Full

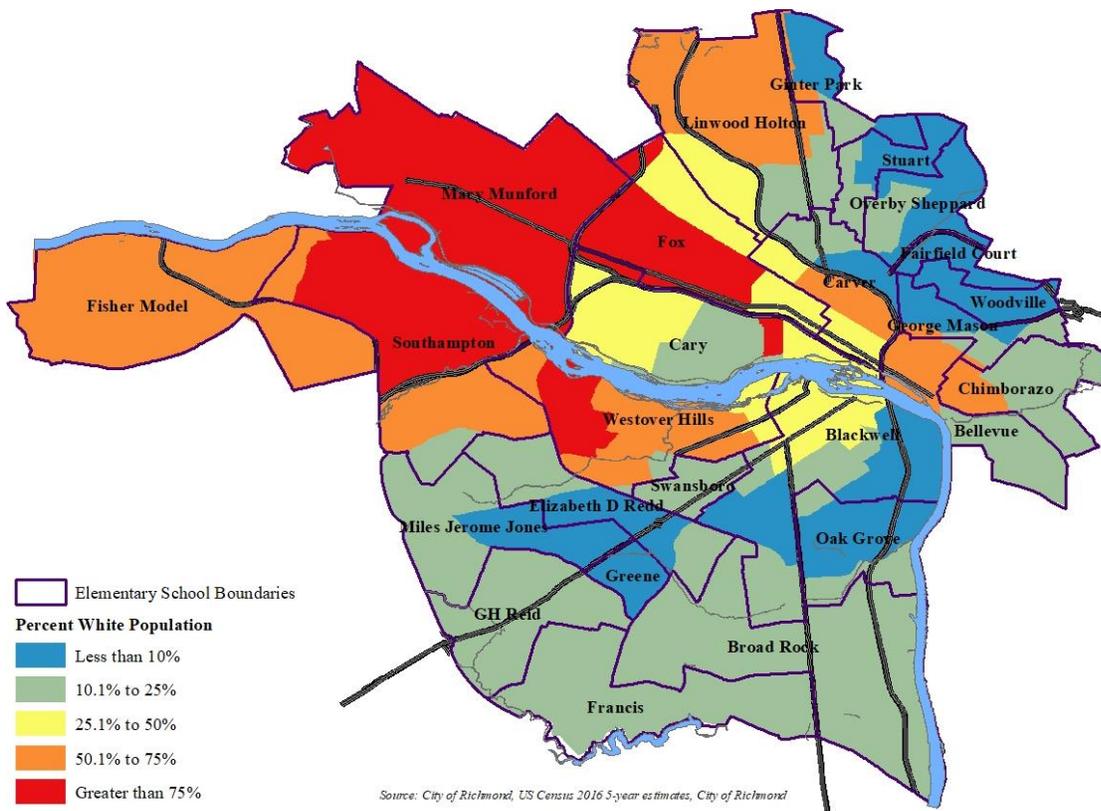
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Examining the demographic composition of elementary school neighborhoods helps to understand impact to particular schools. Figure 3 shows the breakdown by race of the census tracts located in the school districts. The demographics of schools including Holton, Fisher, Carver, Blackwell and Chimborazo do not match those of the surrounding neighborhood. This mismatch in the demographics of students versus residents largely reflects the changing demographics of gentrification occurring in these neighborhoods, which have concurrently experienced rising rents and home prices as well as falling household sizes. New residents, moving into smaller units, have fewer children or have fewer children of school age.

This suggests that after an eviction, low- and moderate-income households will have increasing difficulty finding housing that is affordable and accessible - particularly with an eviction in their history. The challenge of finding housing in the context of high demand can continue to destabilize the current and receiving schools and household as students churn in and out of elementary schools.

¹ The US Department of Education defines chronic absenteeism as the percentage of students missing 15 or more days in a school year.

FIGURE 3 SCHOOL BOUNDARIES AND WHITE POPULATION IN RICHMOND, 2016



IMPLICATIONS

Evictions in Richmond impact both the individual family as well as the larger community and jurisdiction. First, high turnover of students resulting from evictions means that students are, at minimum, facing chaos of multiple moves in their household, which has negative implications for behavior and academic achievement. Moreover, emergency decision-making resulting from evictions mean that these children are moving into more chaotic environments, facing homelessness or moving multiple times through their childhood in the search for housing. The schools themselves face a constantly changing array of students needing services and attention, ranging from remedial schoolwork to social services. Instability of households can mean that schools struggle to meet adequate yearly progress, see increasing chronic absence rates and fail to meet the demands of accreditation due to failing test scores.

This analysis suggests interventions at multiple scales and timeframes:

1. Schools, as community touch points for renters, may be a site in which to engage households in diversion programs or other eviction prevention interventions, particularly families who are not currently connected with social service programs in the city.
2. Local and state-level housing agencies need to expand affordable housing resources, including funding, zoning and regulation, and focus them in areas of concentrated privilege.
3. The City of Richmond should develop an interagency task force to understand the ongoing downstream costs, including schools, code enforcement, policing, redevelopment and public housing, that are impacted by eviction.

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