Annotated Bibliography of Housing Mobility Research 2004-2006
Supplement to Appendix D of Keeping the Promise:
Preserving and Enhancing Mobility in the Section 8
Housing Choice Voucher Program (Dec.2005)

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Part A: Recent Articles


[Abstract provided by author] The study described in this article uses a random sample of households in the Multi-family Tenant Characteristics System database and the Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System database to address the following questions: Does a significant difference exist in the mobility patterns of households in each of the three primary assisted housing programs? What household characteristics affect the probability of leaving assisted housing? The analysis shows that individual characteristics play an important role in determining assisted housing tenure, and significant differences in individual characteristics exist across the three primary assisted housing programs. The analysis also shows that location and neighborhood factors do affect household tenure in assisted housing programs. The results from this study clearly confirm that basic economic conditions play a significant role in determining whether a household stays or leaves an assisted housing program.


(71 pages, no abstract provided, summary of findings on p. 2-4; Of note, Apgar found that affordability problems are especially severe for lowest income renters, much affordable rental stock is at risk of loss, and local regulations limit the range of options available to renters.)


[Abstract provided by authors] Mobility is one mechanism used to address the federal goals of deconcentrating poverty and minorities. The Housing Choice Voucher Program relies on participants to make residential location decisions consistent with these goals. Our research investigates the level and impact of mobility on the neighborhood quality of voucher holders, their neighborhood conditions by race and ethnicity, and perceived obstacles to mobility within the jurisdiction of a Southern California housing authority.

About one-third of the sample moved during the study, and moving resulted in improved neighborhoods for only one subset of movers. Minorities live in more impoverished, overcrowded neighborhoods than nonminorities, even when controlling for mobility status, contact rent, and other factors. Further, most voucher holders see the lack of rental units as a major obstacle to mobility. These findings suggest that current policy is not
uniformly achieving deconcentration and that real and perceived barriers to mobility exist, especially for minorities.


Berube cites the “neighborhood effects” theory, which is the notion that where a person lives (particularly, when she is in a deprived neighborhood) may influence her life chances by leading to the following: (1) lower levels of employment due to separation from work, limited job networks or through modification of social norms so that adults and children come to place a lower value on work; (2) poorer quality of education due to schools that contain a disproportionate number of low-income children and through negative peer pressure that lowers educational performance; (3) higher levels of economic need and therefore greater levels of crime; and, (4) poor health outcomes due to the combination of substandard housing conditions, crime-related stress, reduced access to nutritious food and lower stigma attached to risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol use.

Further, with regard to housing voucher programs, the most significant effect has been the change in recipients’ mental health. Researchers have found that the larger the increase in neighborhood quality achieved, the greater the improvement in mental health. Some physical health benefits have been perceived as well such as lower rates of obesity. Girls achieved significant gains in mental and physical health, while the change adversely affected the mental health of boys. Evidence reveals that life for girls in inner city neighborhoods is very stark. Such girls in the MTO experiment control group (those whose families did not receive the opportunity to move with a voucher) were more likely to face pressure from older men in the neighborhood for early, risky sex, to report being sexually harassed when they walked down the street, and to have experienced sexual violence or coerced sex. In contrast, girls who relocated seemed less likely to face this predation and the long-term psychological effects. They also were less likely to face the short-term effects like premarital childbirth.


The authors of this article focus on five key lessons that Gautreaux, MTO and HOPE VI offer for the next generation of policy development, program implementation, and evaluation research:
1. **Targeting people:** Many families want to move, but certain challenges to moving are particularly daunting for families facing health or mental health problems. The authors outline why policy and research should pay more attention to these realities.

2. **Targeting places:** Both common sense and a growing body of research evidence teach us that living in a racially isolated, high poverty community undermines a family’s well-being and life chances. The authors suggest that destination neighborhoods should be targeted on the basis of concrete opportunities, such as safety, quality schools, or access to skill-appropriate jobs.

3. **Staying there, not just getting there:** The emerging research evidence suggests that many families need help staying in better neighborhoods once they manage to get to them if they are to garner significant, long-term benefits.

4. **Leveraging the value of new neighborhoods:** Some families need additional assistance in order to take full advantage of new opportunities. Furthermore, boys appear to respond differently (negatively) to moving than girls, at least in the case of those who move as children or adolescents (not infants), and at least in the near to medium term.

5. **Low risk to receiving areas, untapped potential:** There is little or no risk of damage to receiving communities if the programs are well managed. Housing assistance programs such as Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8) have a largely untapped potential to target a wider geography of housing locations.


[Abstract provided by authors] Housing mobility programs offer families living in high-poverty neighborhoods the opportunity to relocate to lower-poverty neighborhoods using tenant-based housing subsidies. These programs, along with site-based redevelopment initiatives funded by the HOPE VI program, represent the primary means by which housing assistance is used explicitly to improve neighborhood opportunities for low-income families. Recent evaluation research gives cause for cautious optimism that these programs are an effective way to help the families they serve, but there are also questions about whether placing large numbers of families in specific low-poverty neighborhoods might change the character of these neighborhoods.

This paper contains an application of policy simulation techniques to stylized representation of a housing mobility program within a metropolitan area. The goal is to explore potential long-term impacts of housing mobility policies. The model includes states representing the numbers of families living in various types of neighborhoods that are distinguished by income. Movements between states reflect interventions, reactions to policy interventions and natural uncontrolled transitions over space and class.

We derive analytical expressions for long-term steady state population levels and simulate transient dynamics. Preliminary results indicate that our system reaches steady-state fairly quickly, that middle-class flight per mobility family appears to be independent of housing mobility program intensity, and that pursuing housing mobility at a reasonably
high rate increases migration of middle-class families to distant communities more than the poverty rate in origin neighborhoods is decreased.


[Abstract provided by author] Severely distressed public housing developments are being torn down and redeveloped through the HOPE (Housing Opportunity for People Everywhere) VI initiative in cities across the United States. This article examines how families from one HOPE VI site decided where to move and how they fared in building social ties with their new neighbors. Semistructured interviews from a random sample of 41 families with children were analyzed.

Families that chose to move into public housing expressed concern about the unreliability of the Section 8 program and their own ability to pay the extra utility costs involved. Those who used Section 8 vouchers to relocate had more education on average and made this choice to improve their neighborhood for their families. Over the past two years, regardless of what kind of neighborhood they moved into, families have not rebuilt the close ties most of them had in their former neighborhood.


[Abstract provided by authors] This brief focuses on the neighborhoods available to voucher recipients in Chicago. It examines the location of units with rents below Fair Market Rents, neighborhood quality where voucher holders are located, and the quality of neighborhoods with the most affordable housing. Our findings indicate that mobility efforts that do not include larger policies to curb discrimination, including stricter enforcement of fair housing policies and enforcement of local ordinances that make refusing to rent to vouchers holders illegal, are doomed to fail.

Cunningham, Mary K and Noah Sawyer, “Moving to Better Neighborhoods with Mobility Counseling,” Urban Institute, Brief #8 from the series "Metropolitan Housing and Communities: A Roof Over Their Heads" (2005).

[Abstract provided by authors] This brief examines the efficacy of providing housing mobility assistance to families with vouchers by examining the Housing Opportunity Program in Chicago. To help families move to opportunity neighborhoods, HOP provides housing search counseling and unit referrals, free credit reports and budget counseling, transportation to view units, expedited housing inspections, workshops on landlord-tenant law, and post-move support. The authors find that voucher holders who enroll in HOP and receive mobility services are significantly more likely to move to opportunity
neighborhoods. Vulnerable households, large families, black households and public housing relocatees are less likely to move to opportunity neighborhoods.


[Abstract provided by authors] This study uses the unique design of the Gautreaux residential mobility program to estimate the long-run impacts of placement neighborhood conditions on the AFDC receipt (N=793) and employment levels (N=1258) of low-income Black women. We find that women initially placed in neighborhoods with few Black residents and moderate to high neighborhood resources experienced significantly more time employed when compared with women placed in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of Blacks and a low level of resources. Women placed in neighborhoods with high levels of resources and low Black populations also spent significantly less time on welfare than women placed in highly Black segregated areas with low levels of resources.


[Abstract provided by authors] This study reports results from a quasi-experimental residential mobility study in Yonkers, NY, in which low-income minority families residing in public and private housing in high-poverty neighborhoods were randomly assigned via lottery to relocate to publicly funded attached rowhouses in seven middle-class neighborhoods. One hundred seventy-three Black and Latino families who moved and 142 demographically similar families who remained in the original high-poverty neighborhoods were interviewed approximately 2 years after movers relocated; no baseline data were available. Multiple regression analyses controlling for individual- and family-level background characteristics revealed that adults who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods were less likely to be exposed to violence and disorder, experience health problems, abuse alcohol, receive cash assistance, and were more likely to report satisfaction with neighborhood resources, experience higher housing quality, and be employed, when compared with adults who remained in high-poverty neighborhoods. Adults who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods were less likely than those who stayed in high-poverty neighborhoods to socialize informally with neighbors. No program effects were found on adults’ symptoms of depression and anxiety. These early program effects inform housing policy initiatives for low-income families.

[Abstract provided by authors] This article presents the results from a study examining the geographic mobility of families with children that entered the Housing Choice Voucher Program between 1995 and 2002. Using a specially constructed longitudinal data set developed from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development administrative records, it analyzes the residential moves made by these families to see whether moves within the voucher program—particularly moves after the initial lease up—are associated with improvements in the neighborhoods where the families live and/or with increases in their economic self-sufficiency. We find that subsequent to program entry (that is, after the moves to lease up), a small but consistent tendency exists for families making later moves to choose slightly better neighborhoods. The data show reductions across a number of indicators of concentrated poverty and improvements across a number of neighborhood opportunity indicators for households that moved.


[Abstract provided by author] The research presented in this article uses event history methods to describe and explain the dynamics of housing assistance exits. The results show that a plurality of housing assistance spells ends within 5 years and a majority ends within 10 years. Being White, younger, and not disabled, not having children, and a higher vacancy rate in the local housing market were associated with shorter spells of housing assistance receipt. The results also suggest that life-cycle factors that predict residential mobility, in general, play an important role in determining exits from housing assistance. In addition, the availability of housing alternatives for low-income minorities would appear to be an important determinant of housing assistance exits. The results imply that, to the extent policymakers wish to shorten the durations of housing assistance spells, consideration will have to be given to the lack of suitable housing alternatives in addition to the traditional human capital approaches.


[Abstract provided by authors] Grigsby and Bourassa note that since the introduction of the Section 8 program in 1974, the quality of the nation's housing stock has continued to improve, to the point where only a very small percentage of the stock is severely inadequate (e.g., lacks hot water, indoor toilets, etc). Thus, the program has achieved its original purpose, which was to improve housing conditions.

Rather than materially improving the housing stock, the program is now little more than an ill-disguised income supplement, designed primarily to make decent housing more
affordable to lower-income households. Yet these households continue to face problems of affordability, neighborhood decline, limited access to economic opportunity, and involuntary mobility. Though the Section 8 program has partially addressed some of these problems, it would be more effective in doing so if it were integrated directly into the federal social safety net.

The authors propose that the voucher program be made into an entitlement for households that qualify for other federal assistance such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Earned Income Tax Credits, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, and food stamps.


[Abstract provided by authors] We examine the conditions under which the Gautreaux residential mobility program produced long-run improvements in the neighborhood environments of program participants. We relate participants’ “current” neighborhood characteristics, measured an average of 15 years after entry into the program, to the characteristics of the neighborhoods in which program families initially moved. Most families initially moving to suburban neighborhoods continue to reside in the suburbs. Families initially moving to higher-income, mixed-race, and suburban neighborhoods are currently living in the most affluent neighborhoods. Mobility is more integrated, lower-crime and suburban neighborhoods all contributed to the chances that a participant ended up in a lower-crime neighborhood.


[Abstract provided by authors] Families, primarily female-headed minority households with children, living in high-poverty public housing projects in five U.S. cities were offered housing vouchers by lottery in the Moving to Opportunity program. Four to seven years after random assignment, families offered vouchers lived in safer neighborhoods that had lower poverty rates than those of the control group not offered vouchers. We find no significant overall effects of this intervention on adult economic self-sufficiency or physical health. Mental health benefits of the voucher offers for adults and for female youth were substantial. Beneficial effects for female youth on education, risky behavior, and physical health were offset by adverse effects for male youth. For outcomes exhibiting significant treatment effects, we find, using variation in treatment intensity across voucher types and cities, that the relationship between neighborhood poverty rate and outcomes is approximately linear.

We study adult economic and health outcomes in the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration, a randomized housing mobility experiment in which families living in high-poverty U.S. public housing projects in five cities were given vouchers to help them move to private housing units in lower-poverty neighborhoods. An “experimental” group was offered vouchers valid only in a low-poverty neighborhood; a “Section 8” group was offered traditional housing vouchers without geographic restriction; a control group was not offered vouchers. Our sample consists largely of black and Hispanic female household heads with children.

Five years after random assignment, the families offered housing vouchers through MTO lived in safer neighborhoods that had significantly lower poverty rates than those of the control group not offered vouchers. We find no significant overall effects on adult employment, earnings, public assistance receipt. In contrast, we do find significant mental health benefits of the MTO intervention for the experimental group. We also demonstrate a more general pattern for the mental health results using both voucher groups of systematically larger effect sizes for groups experiencing larger changes in neighborhood poverty rates. In our analysis of physical health outcomes, we find a significant reduction in obesity for the experimental group, but no significant effects on four other aspects of physical health (general health, asthma, physical limitations, and hypertension) or on our summary measure of physical health.


of high-poverty areas in tight urban rental markets. However, intensive housing placement services greatly improve the success and mobility of voucher holders.

Drawing on ethnographic research in the housing placement department of a private, nonprofit community-based organization, I first describe how fundamental problems in implementing the public subsidy program in a tight private rental market generate apprehension among landlords and voucher recipients that can prevent the successful use of vouchers. Second, I demonstrate how housing placement specialists can dispel and overcome this apprehension through a variety of tactics that require extensive soft skills and a deep commitment to the mission of housing poor families.

These findings provide support for the increased use of housing placement services to improve success and mobility rates for Section 8 vouchers.


[Abstract provided by author] The Housing Choice Voucher Program is designed to help low-income households consume housing at an acceptable burden on their income. The incidence of high housing cost in the program has been reduced over the past few years. About 38 percent of all households in the program spend more than 31 percent of their income on housing, down from 47 percent only 2 years earlier. A high housing cost burden appears to stem from very low income rather than from market conditions or decisions by program administrators. Despite program rules, a small percentage of households in the program pay a very high level of income toward housing. It appears that this problem results from some households having very little or no income at the time their housing consumption was recorded.


[Portion of executive summary provided by author] This paper disaggregates the range of problems besetting the low-end rental market and identifies specific initiatives (both public and private) that could reduce the problems. Among these are the federal Section 8 voucher program and the project-based voucher program. These were designed to address the problems of housing affordability and physically inadequate housing, either separately or in combination. They are essential programs to the city of Baltimore. Every effort should be made to ensure that the city receives its fair share of these resources from HUD, and that it manages these programs expertly so landlords begin to trust the programs enough to participate and the maximum number of needy tenants are assisted. If the city continues to face difficulties in managing the Section 8 voucher program, it should consider contracting out the program, as other cities have done.

[Abstract provided by authors] This article uses administrative data on families that participated in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Section 8 Housing Voucher Program between 1995 and 2002 combined with data from other sources to estimate the differences in attrition rates among families with demographic characteristics of greatest interest for housing policy and the effects on attrition of changes in the program’s main parameters. The most important results are that large decreases in the program’s payment standard and increases in the tenant contribution to rent will have small effects on program attrition. These results suggest that the overwhelming majority of voucher recipients receive substantial benefits from program participation. The empirical analysis also indicates that whether the head of the household is elderly and whether the head is disabled are by far the most important influences on the likelihood that the family will exit the tenant-based voucher program. Families with disabled heads of the household are about 37 percent less likely to exit the program and families with elderly heads of the household are about 23 percent less likely to exit the program each year than otherwise similar families. Differences in attrition rates based on other family characteristics are much smaller.


[Abstract provided by authors] This article uses administrative data on nonelderly, nondisabled households that received U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development rental assistance between 1995 and 2002 combined with data from other sources to estimate the effect of low-income housing programs on these households’ labor earnings and employment. Using longitudinal data to explain the change in these measures of market labor supply makes it possible to account for immutable, unobservable household characteristics that are determinants of market labor supply and correlated with program participation. Employing a large random sample of households throughout the country makes it possible to produce estimates of the national average effect of each type of housing assistance. Using administrative data makes it possible to identify accurately the type of housing assistance received. The results indicate that each broad type of housing assistance has substantial negative effects on labor earnings that are somewhat smaller for tenant-based housing vouchers than for either type of project-based assistance. They also suggest that participation in the little-used Family Self-Sufficiency program, an initiative within the public housing and housing voucher programs to promote self-sufficiency, significantly increases labor earnings.

In 2002, the Gautreaux Two housing mobility program provided low-income families living in Chicago public housing with the opportunity to move to more affluent, less racially isolated communities. This article presents findings on their complex search and moving process. Only about one-third of enrolled families actually moved through the program (“leased up”). In-depth interviews with a randomly chosen sample of 71 families and an additional 20 “likely mover” families showed that movers fell into four groups distinguished by personal characteristics that made it easier for them to move or by residence on Chicago’s North Side.

Nonmovers faced a variety of obstacles, both external (a tight rental market, discrimination, and bureaucratic delays) and internal (limited experience and program comprehension, large household size, and health problems). Also, some nonmovers were too busy with work or school to engage in what proved to be an onerous process of identifying a suitable unit and moving.


This article uses qualitative data from the Gautreaux Two Housing Mobility Study to assess how the use of vouchers to move low-income families out of segregated, high-poverty neighborhoods into more affluent ones affects female movers’ labor force participation. We compare movers’ and nonmovers’ labor market experiences before they move, finding similar employment experiences and histories of holding low-wage service jobs interrupted by periods of welfare receipt. Primary obstacles to working are childcare responsibilities, illness and health issues (including pregnancy), transportation difficulties, and layoffs from temporary jobs. Respondents have positive attitudes toward employment. We find that moving had little or no impact on most study participants’ employment situations. We explore this outcome by profiling four groups that describe the employment situations of most respondents after moving and discuss why moving seems to have little effect on employment. This article pays special attention to how gender influences voucher holders’ labor market participation.


This article addresses two questions about spatial barriers to welfare-to-work transition in the United States. First, what residential and transportation adjustments do welfare recipients tend to make as they try to become economically self-sufficient? Second, do these adjustments actually increase the probability that they will become employed?
Analysis of 1999-2000 panel data on housing location and automobile ownership for Milwaukee welfare recipients reveals two tendencies: (1) to relocate to neighborhoods with less poverty and more racial integration and (2) to obtain a car. Results from binary logit models indicate that residential location and car ownership both increase the likelihood that welfare recipients will become employed. These findings suggest that policies should aim to facilitate residential mobility for low-income families and improve their neighborhoods, rather than simply move them closer to job opportunities. The findings also suggest a critical role for transportation policy in reducing unemployment.


[(Abridged) Executive Summary provided by author] This paper reviews the progress of important federal housing reforms (under the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act) since 1998. It examines the extent to which the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and its local partners have implemented changes to transform the physical, social, and economic setting of public housing, improve its overall management, and enhance the voucher program.

Overall, the paper finds that:

- As a result of the federal reforms, the nation's worst public housing developments are largely being transformed into more attractive, better quality communities.
- The act has helped reduce concentrations of poverty; however, it is less clear if the act directly improved the self-sufficiency of public housing residents.
- HUD's aggressive efforts to improve the management of the most troubled housing authorities have been effective; but the act's success in deregulating public housing management—with increased accountability—has been more mixed.
- The public housing reform act succeeded in consolidating, and ultimately providing a sound basis for expanding, the Section 8 certificate and voucher programs; however, recent changes in voucher funding and administration jeopardize this progress.
- Ultimately, Congress and HUD must embrace additional reforms and actions to further the goals and vision of the 1998 public housing reform act. There are three major areas where Congress and the administration can act. First, HUD must collect, analyze or release critical data that will enable better monitoring of the progress and impact of these important public housing and voucher reforms. Second, HUD can do more to execute those aspects of the act that have yet to be implemented and expedite reform. This would mean completing regulations or guidance that would allow for the full range of tools for leveraging funds and facilitating mixed-income communities and would fully implement the system of management evaluation, rewards, and penalties. Also, HUD could provide adequate staff to carry out the act's initiatives and simplify requirements wherever possible. And finally, Congress must act to ensure that the original intent of the act is protected and improved upon.

[Abstract provided by author] This study uses a new data set combining survey and administrative data to investigate the longitudinal effects of subsidized housing on a broad range of outcomes relating to dependency. Given a household’s assistance status in 1996, it examines outcomes over the subsequent 3 years. The aim is to produce a credible comparison group by matching on the same variables (measured in an earlier period) as the outcomes to be examined.

Both subsidized and comparison households made strong gains from 1996 to 1999, showing sharp increases in income, employment, and earnings and reductions in poverty and transfer program participation. The earnings of people in the comparison group increased more rapidly, however, suggesting that housing subsidy programs reduce individual earnings by roughly 15 percent. In two of the three programs, similar results were found for family earnings, much of which can be explained by reductions in household size of 5 to 10 percent. Impacts of subsidy programs on program participation were small and inconsistent, suggesting little effect. Although these programs are found to affect neighborhood choice, neighborhood poverty rates explain little of the impact of individual earnings.


[Abstract provided by authors] Policymakers have started examining the long-term impacts of housing assistance on families. In particular, policymakers want to determine whether assisted housing can act as a barrier or a bridge to economic self-sufficiency. In this article we use a longitudinal data set of households receiving housing assistance and compare their trajectories on three outcomes---income, earnings, and employment---across types of housing programs and household characteristics. Using descriptive and multivariate analyses, we find notable differences in these three outcomes across different housing programs and populations. These findings imply that, while housing assistance need not be an impediment to increasing household income, earnings, and employment rates, program---and household-specific policies and interventions would likely have the most success in helping assisted households achieve economic self-sufficiency.


While rent supplements are an effective means of providing assistance to renters, additional measures are needed to ensure that such a program achieves its full potential. Mobility counseling and assistance can help rent supplement recipients understand the locational options available, identify housing opportunities, and negotiate effectively with landlords. Landlord outreach, services, and incentives, though sometimes viewed as a
component of mobility counseling, actually involve very different activities. With the addition of new rent supplements, there will be a greater need to recruit landlords into the program and break down barriers, either real or perceived, to landlord participation.


[Abstract provided by authors] During the 1990s, the Department of Housing and Urban Development launched three rigorous research demonstrations testing alternative strategies for helping low-income families escape the isolation and distress of high-poverty, central-city communities. All three demonstrations were carefully designed to include rigorous controls and systematic data collection so that their implementation and impacts could be systematically evaluated. And all three are now generating provocative results that offer new insights for ongoing program experimentation and policy development. We draw ten broad lessons--including lessons about the potential for success, about the realities families face, about implementing complex strategies, and about obstacles to success.


[Abstract provided by authors] Scholars have achieved much in their quest to understand the ways that housing markets and urban communities influence each other. Over eighty years of research has produced increasingly sophisticated models of neighborhood change, innovative efforts to understand the reasons why communities typically are segregated by race and income, and the causes and effects of concentrated poverty. This research has at various times influenced the nation's public policies, helping to shape varied programs and regulations aimed at improving economic efficiency, correcting market failures, ensuring fairness, and promoting equity. This paper reviews the ways in which housing markets shape initial neighborhood conditions and drive changes in these conditions over time. In addition, it examines the impacts of the operation of housing markets on communities and individuals. Lastly, it considers the public policy responses to results of the operations of the housing market. This summary is organized around five important impacts of housing markets on community character: 1) residential segregation by race and income; 2) neighborhood change leading especially to urban decline and distressed neighborhoods; 3) uneven quality of public services across jurisdictions; 4) uneven access to opportunities by community; and 5) socioeconomic distress associated with distressed neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.

Part B: Other Articles

Recent Moving to Opportunity Research, Available at: www.nber.org/~kling/mto/recent.html. This is an excellent website, listing research briefs, documents and data (with abstracts) on Moving to Opportunity Research:

RESEARCH BRIEFS

- Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood Effects on Youth and Youth Criminal Behavior in the MTO Experiment
- Moving to Opportunity and Tranquility

DOCUMENTS

- Neighborhood Effects on Barriers to Employment: Results From a Randomized Housing Mobility Experiment in Baltimore. Kristin Turney, Susan Clampet-Lundquist, Kathryn Edin, Jeffrey R. Kling and Greg J. Duncan. April 2006.
- Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood Effects. Also available are Web Appendix Tables. Kling, Jeffrey R., Jeffrey B. Liebman and Lawrence F. Katz.. June 2005.
- Neighborhoods and Academic Achievement: Results from the MTO Experiment. Also available are Web Appendix Tables. Sanbonmatsu, Lisa, Jeanne-Brooks-Gunn, Greg J. Duncan, and Jeffrey R. Kling. August 2004.

This research is based on data collected in 2002, in all five MTO sites. To apply for access to these data, contact HUD.

For survey instruments and item-by-item sources for survey questions, see:


Part C: Law Review Articles


[Summary provided by LEXIS] ...One focuses on the history of segregation - of white and black separateness; and the other focuses on black identity formation - the essential question of what it means to be black. ... From this perspective, the most appropriate site for an individual's racial or ethnic identity formation is within the context of some appropriately constituted "black community. ... Radical integration views racial segregation not merely as a particular form of race discrimination, but as the manifestation of contemporary white supremacy. ... More specifically, radical integration recognizes that racial segregation is a primary impediment to achieving structural equality. ... Radical integration focuses on eradicating racial segregation, which constrains black individuals' access to economic, educational, political, social, and cultural opportunities. Radical integration is about enhancing individual choice given the systemic and continuing constraints perpetuated by racial segregation. ... An overriding concern with racial identity formation is that a black individual needs a strong and positive sense of self to survive and flourish in a white-dominated culture. ... Radical integration accepts the possibility that racial or ethnic identity may well have less salience as segregation decreases. ... Radical integration acknowledges the importance of racial and ethnic identity formation particularly as it relates to black individuals' ability to self-actualize in a white-dominated society. ...


[Summary provided by LEXIS] Residential segregation by income and race has persisted in the United States for generations. ... Hence, it is likely that the racial integration experienced in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area (to provide a specific example), as well as other metropolitan areas, has been at the cost of within-Black economic segregation, consistent with Wilson's theory of Black upper-and middle-class out-migration. ... This data on racial segregation and economic segregation offers a powerful insight into the state of neighborhood segregation in U.S. metropolitan areas, but of particular interest is the intersection between race and class segregation. ... In 1990, the average Black poor resident of the Washington metropolitan area lived in a neighborhood
with a poverty concentration of .264, and this figure grew in 2000 to .315. ... This represents an increase of poverty concentration for the Black poor of 19.3% in one decade, the same decade in which neighborhood poverty concentration and economic segregation was dropping significantly across the nation. ... However, there is no evidence to suggest that the Fair Housing Act has done anything to alleviate the strain of racial and economic segregation among the Black poor. ...


[Summary provided by LEXIS] MTO enables us to rigorously test what happens to individuals' criminal behavior when they move to neighborhoods characterized by what broken windows theory predicts should be of greatest relevance -- order and disorder. ... Analysis of arrest records and survey data suggests that moving to a less disadvantaged, less disorderly neighborhood does not on net reduce criminal behavior for MTO program participants. ... The key scientific and policy question behind the Kelling and Sousa analysis is thus whether asking police to focus on minor disorder crimes, as in broken windows policing, yields more pronounced reductions in violent crime than does having police focus on violent crimes directly. ...


[Summary provided by LEXIS] For instance, two major federal mobility efforts, the Gautreaux program and the Moving to Opportunity program (MTO), moved poor, mostly black residents from distressed inner-city neighborhoods to majority-white, middle-class suburban neighborhoods. Studies of these programs found improvements in education, health, and safety among participants, along with less-promising outcomes in terms of employment and receipt of public assistance. These programs are based, in part, on the theory that poor people who live among the middle-class will have better role models and access to information about jobs. Yet, status differences need to be overcome for there to be meaningful contacts among the affluent and their low-income neighbors. In other words, conscious efforts need to be made by housing authorities to integrate mobility participants into their new neighborhoods, through neighborhood associations or other community groups, and poor residents need support to ensure that their housing is indistinguishable from that of their neighbors. Community needs to be fostered; it does not arise on its own, and the value of community should not be forgotten even with desegregation strategies. Although communitarians tend to focus on involuntary societal connections, given the mobility within modern society, they also recognize the need to create community where it is lacking.

[Summary provided by LEXIS] Here, I will argue that the disproportionate burden of pollution upon segregated communities of color compels the conclusion that there is a dire need to resuscitate Brown and press for implementation of its integrative promise. ... The Camden story also supports the "pollution magnet" claim that once an area is saturated with pollution and houses only poor, powerless Blacks and Latinos, it becomes a "magnet" for further polluting facilities because the land is cheap and the people living there lack the political power successfully to oppose the facility. ... Institutionalized racism created the urban ghettos and accompanying housing, economic and environmental ills that afflict their inhabitants. ... Southern and "Sunbelt" inner cities ... are well on their way to duplicating the fiscal and infrastructural problems of urban centers ... i.e., unemployment, dependency, limited education, crowded housing, and poverty. ... The time is long overdue for the nation to turn its attention to the problems of housing discrimination, residential segregation, neighborhood disinvestment, redlining, and environmental racism - all of which contribute to urban decline. ... Integrationists argue by contrast that racial integration is necessary to allow poor Blacks and Latinos to obtain access to the opportunity structure, which includes education, health care, and jobs, necessary to succeed in our society. ... A relocated Norco resident commented to Monique Harden, an environmental justice lawyer who heads the New Orleans-based Advocates for Environmental Human Rights, "I now have a beautiful house fit for a king.


[Summary provided by LEXIS] Ethnic and class-based residential segregation is a worldwide problem that is worsening. ... Several alternative strategies have been implemented both within the United States and in other nations to reverse or prevent apartheid, including: (1) a system of privately enforceable housing discrimination laws; (2) a system of government-administered enforcement of housing discrimination laws; (3) inclusionary land use and housing policies; (4) subsidized supply through new housing production; (5) subsidized housing access through demand subsidies; (6) affirmative action integration policies; and (7) New Urbanism planning design policies. ... This paper has reviewed seven possible strategies to achieve ethnic and income-minority residential integration and reduce residential segregation, including: (1) a system of privately enforceable housing discrimination laws; (2) a system of government-administered enforcement of housing discrimination laws; (3) inclusionary land use and housing policies; (4) subsidized housing supply through new housing production; (5) subsidized housing access through demand subsidies; (6) affirmative action integration policies; and (7) New Urbanism planning design policies. ... New Urbanism, which offers higher density apartments designed for pedestrians around efficient public transport, generates more affordable housing and significant opportunities for residential racial integration. Thus, the strategy of New Urbanism emerges as the one strategy that is the most politically feasible and effective in the pursuit of residential integration.

Serious examination of the negative impacts of environmental racism must include an examination and understanding of racial segregation and its consequences. In this article, I address the role that racial segregation and concentrated poverty play in perpetuating and intensifying racial disparities in health.

Blockbusters were real estate agents who induced panic-selling among white homeowners by convincing them that the neighborhood was being invaded by blacks, then bought homes cheaply from fleeing whites and sold them to blacks at a profit. The high density of affordable housing in poor segregated neighborhoods, increased drug and other crimes in those areas, and limited access to medical care all contribute to the growing number of blacks, Latinos, and other minorities experiencing higher rates of diseases and lower life expectancies. If housing discrimination could be dramatically reduced, poor blacks and Latinos would no longer be isolated in neighborhoods vulnerable to environmental racism. There was no racial component in the court's remedy, and hence most of the housing has gone to poor white people. As long as racial segregation separates poor blacks and Latinos from the more politically powerful middle- and upper-class society, it will be difficult for them to achieve the political leverage to achieve environmental justice.


A growing national debate about the future of race, housing, and urban policy in the United States is reflected in the recent controversy over the administration of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit ("LIHTC") program, the largest federal program that supports building low-income housing. Part of the LIHTC statute, which passed without debate as a later amendment, gives preference in allotting credits to very poor areas. The New Jersey Superior Court found the FHA duty to "affirmatively further" fair housing to be applicable, but held that the state agency's plan, in part because of the statutory preference for LIHTC in low-income neighborhoods, did not violate that duty. Real estate agencies engaged in a variety of discriminatory practices, including racial steering of blacks and whites away from each other and blockbusting, which involves selling a few homes in a white neighborhood to black tenants, buying neighboring homes at lower prices from panicked white homeowners, and then selling the homes to middle-income blacks at a premium. The duty to "affirmatively further" fair housing in Title VIII came partially as a response to the resistance from HUD - which at the time was the primary federal source for affordable housing funds - and local housing authorities to build housing projects anywhere other than in poor, racially segregated neighborhoods.


[Description provided by LEXIS] This Article considers a paradox: although Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and related legal standards prohibit racial discrimination in federally assisted housing programs, pervasive racial discrimination and segregation still characterize those programs in 2005. ... To indicate how radically we have failed to eliminate racial discrimination and segregation in the federal housing programs, Part II considers conventional public housing and HOPE VI, the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) (formerly called Section 8), the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, and overall federal housing expenditures. ... The 1977 Interagency Survey of HUD Title VI enforcement activities, conducted by the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, pointed out numerous deficiencies in HUD's nationwide performance of its duties to prevent and remedy segregation in public housing. ... Typically, African American public housing residents endure housing and neighborhood conditions that are vastly inferior to the housing and neighborhood conditions that white public housing residents enjoy. ... Thus, it rivals - and probably exceeds - the public housing program and, because it benefits high income taxpayers, it is politically popular, and is likely to be continued in the second George W. Bush administration. ...

**Part D: Books**


[Description provided by Brookings Institution] Many Americans think of their country as a welcoming "nation of immigrants," yet our communities have a long history of ambivalence toward new arrivals and racial minorities. This is often expressed through segregation by race and income. In this book, some of the nation's leading analysts and advocates show why segregation persists and how it undermines education, job prospects, and even health and safety for millions of minorities and low-income families. Calling housing "the most important invisible social policy issue in America," the book outlines and agenda to expand the geography of opportunity and assesses the political promise—and limits—of the movement for regional solutions. This project was sponsored by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University in collaboration with Harvard’s Joint Center for Housing Studies at the Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Policy Program.


[Abridged press release] This is an account of the landmark case, *Gautreaux v. CHA and HUD*, as told by its principal lawyer, Alexander Polikoff. It moves with ease through local and national civil rights history, legal details, political matters, and the personal costs--and rewards--of a commitment to fairness, equality, and justice. Both the memoir of a dedicated lawyer, and the narrative of a tenacious pursuit of equality, this story--
itself a critical, still-unfolding chapter in recent American history--urges us to take an essential step in ending the racial inequality that Alexis de Toqueville prophetically named America's "most formidable evil."


**Part E: Other Related Articles and Information on Housing Mobility**


[Abstract provided by authors] This report provides the findings of a HUD-sponsored research project conducted to more accurately identify the housing subsidy status of respondents for use in large-scale surveys such as the American Housing Survey (AHS). The report explores the collection of housing subsidy information and research methodologies used by the AHS and other surveys, with the objective of reducing error in determining eligibility for housing assistance.


[Abstract provided by authors] The social disorganization and anomie perspectives generally suggest that poverty's criminogenic effect is racially invariant. These perspectives imply that policies that alleviate economic deprivation will equally reduce rates of violent crime in neighborhoods that are predominately white and neighborhoods that are predominately black. In contrast, several social commentators have suggested that alleviating poverty will be a relatively ineffective crime reduction strategy in predominately black areas. Existing empirical research on this issue has been mostly at the city level, and almost entirely cross-sectional. The present study examines potential racial differences in the longitudinal relationship between neighborhood poverty and violent crime rates. We use iteratively reweighted least squares, a robust regression technique, to estimate race-specific effects for Cleveland census tracts, 1990-2000. The results are supportive of the racial invariance hypothesis. Reductions in neighborhood poverty appear to produce similar reductions in violent crime in white and black neighborhoods.

Joseph, Mark L., Robert J. Chaskin and Henry S. Webber, “The theoretical basis for addressing poverty through mixed-income development,” The University of Chicago School of Social Science Administration (April 2005) (working paper), Available at: http://cas.uchicago.edu/
[Abstract provided by authors] The goal of this paper is to examine the theoretical foundations upon which the rationale for mixed-income development as a strategy to confront urban poverty is built. We focus on four propositions that draw from theories on social networks, social control, culture and behavior, and political economy. We provide a conceptual framework that delineates the levels and pathways through which mixed-income development can be hypothesized to improve the quality of life for the urban poor. We assess available evidence about the relative importance of the four theoretical propositions and examine the extent of their application in mixed-income settings. We conclude that the most compelling propositions are those that do not rely on social interaction to promote a higher quality of life for low-income residents and instead predict benefits in terms of greater social control and higher quality goods and services. Finally, we consider the implications for future urban development planning, implementation, and research.


[Abstract provided by author] Affordable housing has often been described in terms of rent burden or owner cost burden. This article introduces the concept of housing-induced poverty to describe the situation that arises when a household, after paying for housing, cannot afford the poverty basket of nonhousing goods. This is similar to Stone's shelter poverty concept, except that it is linked to a better-known measure: the official poverty thresholds.

On the basis of the 1999 American Housing Survey, it is estimated that 3.8 million households that were above the official thresholds could not afford the poverty basket of nonhousing goods. In 1999, the housing-induced poverty rate in the United States was 2.7 percentage points higher than the official rate. Results from an analytical model reveal that regional and locational variables are significant determinants of the probability of housing-induced poverty. Housing assistance significantly decreases the probability that near-poor renters will fall into housing-induced poverty.


[Abstract provided by authors] Strategies to help the one billion people worldwide who live in informal settlements have mainly focused on slum upgrading, sites and services programs, and tenure security. In contrast, there has been less attention on what enables slum dwellers to transition into the formal housing sector, which has the dual benefits of improving service access and escaping social stigma. In this paper the authors investigate residential mobility among slum dwellers in Bhopal, India. Their analysis shows that one in five households succeeds in getting out of a slum settlement, and a major determinant is the household’s ability to save on a regular basis. Due to limited outreach of institutional housing finance, most slum dwellers rely solely on household savings for
purchasing a house. These findings underscore the urgent need to improve savings instruments for slum dwellers and to downmarket housing finance to reach the poorest residents of rapidly growing cities in developing countries.


Abstract provided by author] The black middle class received little scholarly attention from the 1960s through the 1980s, when the emphasis was on studying the black urban poor. Recently, however, there has been an increase in attention to this group and their residential environs. This review covers the topics of racial and class segregation, the comparative well-being of black middle-class neighborhoods, and residential preferences, with some attention to black suburbanization and black gentrification. Research findings clearly show that middle-class blacks in the United States have more favorable residential outcomes than poor blacks but still live in poorer neighborhoods than the majority of whites on all measures. Ethnographic studies explore this marginal position in more depth. I argue that if racial integration is the remedy to various racial disparities, then the more fruitful endeavor may be to study the ideologies, practices, and cultures of white neighborhoods, rather than black ones.

Rosenbaum, James, et al., “Gautreaux at 40 conference: The legacy and future of landmark public housing decisions,” Centerpiece 5:3, (Spring 2006), further information available at: www.law.northwestern.edu/faculty/conferences/research/gautreaux.html