Residential Mobility and Neighborhood Change: Real Neighborhoods Under the Microscope

Claudia Coulton
Case Western Reserve University

Brett Theodos
Margery A. Turner
Urban Institute

Abstract

Residential mobility is a process that changes lives and neighborhoods. Efforts to build strong communities are unavoidably caught up with this dynamic but have insufficient understanding of its complexities. To shed light on the underlying forces of residential mobility, this study uses a unique panel survey from the Casey Foundation's Making Connections initiative targeting poor neighborhoods in 10 cities.

The study classified households in the 10 cities as movers, newcomers, or stayers, and it evaluated the push and pull factors related to their mobility decisions. Cluster analysis revealed discernible types based on life cycle, household economic factors, and neighborhood attachment. The study also investigated the effect of residential mobility on neighborhood composition, finding that neighborhood change was primarily due to differences between movers and newcomers rather than changes for stayers. Combining information on the mix of household types with the components of neighborhood change, the study suggests these neighborhoods functioned in quite different ways that are relevant to family well-being and community development.

Introduction

Americans change residences frequently and mobility rates are higher among low-income households, renters, and younger families. Households sometimes move to improve their housing situations or their neighborhood surroundings. Low-income households, however, may make frequent moves because of economic or social distress. Residential mobility not only affects individual households, but it may also affect neighborhoods as a whole. Place-based initiatives that attempt to improve outcomes for individuals and strengthen neighborhoods face challenges in such dynamic and fluid environments. Despite the importance of neighborhood change and mobility, however, limited research has disaggregated how neighborhoods change for those households that remain in the neighborhood and from the mix of those households that leave and join.

To shed new light on these processes, this article draws on a unique panel survey conducted as part of the Making Connections initiative, a decade-long effort of the Annie E. Casey Foundation that focused on target neighborhoods in 10 cities: Denver, Des Moines, Hartford, Indianapolis, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, Providence, San Antonio, and White Center (outside Seattle). The target neighborhoods offer a unique and valuable window on the dynamics of low-income, mostly minority neighborhoods nationwide.

This article consists of three components. The first component explores the characteristics and changing circumstances of movers, newcomers, and stayers, identifying distinctly different groups of households that reflect different reasons for moving or staying in place. The second component focuses on how residential mobility contributed to changes over time in the socioeconomic composition of the Making Connections neighborhoods, essentially dividing neighborhood change into changes contributed by households that stayed in the neighborhood versus changes caused by differences between those who joined and those who left. The final component draws on these patterns to suggest five stylized models of neighborhood performance, each of which has implications for the well-being of low-income families and for community-change efforts.

Background

The recognition that place matters (Ellen and Turner, 1997) has led to several generations of community-change initiatives that attempt to address conditions thought to negatively affect families and children in poor neighborhoods. Often led by philanthropy and engaging both public and private partners, these initiatives embody a range of strategies intended to benefit residents directly through improved services and indirectly through strengthening social connectedness or access to resources (Kubisch et al., 2010). Both the service-reform and community-building aspects of community-change initiatives assume some degree of residential stability in their target areas. For residents to benefit from improved services and conditions in their neighborhoods, they presumably must have access to these programs for some minimum period of time. Likewise, for capacity building to result in a community that can mobilize to achieve the common good, it needs some stability in emerging leaders and networks. Thus, excessive residential mobility can be a challenge to the theories of change and assumptions underlying community-change initiatives (Kubisch et al., 2010; Silver, Weitzman, Mijanovick, and Holleman, 2012).

It is important that residential mobility be appreciated in the context of community-change initiatives, however, for both its positive and negative aspects. Residential mobility can reflect improvements in a family's circumstances, such as buying a home for the first time, moving to be close to a new job, or trading up to a better quality housing unit or neighborhood. It can also be a symptom of instability and insecurity, with many low-income households making short-distance moves because of problems with landlords, creditors, or housing conditions. Similarly, staying in place sometimes reflects a family's security, satisfaction, and stability with its home and neighborhood surroundings, but in other cases it may reflect that a family lacks the resources to move to better housing or to a preferred neighborhood (Gramlich, Laren, and Sealand, 1992; South, Crowder, and Chavez 2005). Moreover, residential turnover can be a source of neighborhood vitality and progress. Any such one-dimensional views of residential mobility within communities may mask important and valuable variants regarding the functions of neighborhoods (Robson, Lymperopoulou, and Rae, 2008), potentially useful information to guide community-change initiatives.

Factors Related to Household Moves

Many push and pull factors affect a household's decision to relocate and influence the move's timing and location. Changing household circumstances, such as employment or family composition, may make the current housing unit or location less tenable or satisfactory. In addition, deterioration in the current housing unit or the surrounding area may further the desire to move. The household may also be attracted to other housing units or neighborhoods for various reasons that contribute to the decision to relocate. At the same time, however, the household may experience forces that make them resistant to a move, including attachment to their current house or neighborhood and relationships that would be disrupted by a move; they may also face physical, economic, or social barriers to achieving a desirable living situation elsewhere. Such complexities have generated several complimentary conceptual frameworks to explain both the intention to move and the actual moving.

A commonly used theoretical framework for understanding residential mobility is a disequilibrium model. In this model, a decision to move occurs when the current living arrangements become suboptimal. Absent such disequilibrium, the household will stay put, because it incurs adjustment costs and other losses when moving. What is optimal relates to the housing unit's characteristics, its location, and the neighborhood surroundings relative to the household's needs and preferences (subject to cost and income constraints). Housing that may have been optimal can become suboptimal due to changes in household composition or circumstances, housing or neighborhood quality, and household income or the cost of housing. Theory has also drawn a distinction among the household's experience of housing dissatisfaction, the intent to move, and the household's actual relocation (Speare, 1974). The decision about whether to move can be seen as weighing satisfaction with current housing relative to the anticipated satisfaction with alternatives. From this point of view, a combination of push and pull factors determines if, when, and where the household moves, subject to various constraints or barriers to mobility.

A complimentary framework, the life-course perspective, views residential mobility as one of many related aspects of human development. From this point of view, moving or staying is related to other life events such as marriage or divorce; birth of children; children leaving home or attending college; change of employer, income, or assets; and retirement. Several studies have found that

these life events are potential triggers of mobility (Clark, 2005; Clark and Withers, 1999). These events can result in dissatisfaction with the current house, such as when a growing family needs more space, or may change the household's aspirations, such as when a better job leads to increased status expectations. Moreover, homeownership or residential stability may become more or less salient at particular stages of life, such as marriage, birth of a child, or retirement. These life events tend to be correlated with demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and so forth, and these characteristics are also associated with the probability of residential mobility.

Neighborhood attachment and social ties may deter residential mobility or affect the distance that a household moves. Positive feelings toward the neighborhood and strong social connections have been found to keep households in place longer, and these effects have a stronger limiting effect on residential mobility among low-income compared with high-income families. (Dawkins, 2006). Attachment to the neighborhood may also affect where households move and how they adjust to their new surroundings. A study of Seattle movers found that households moving a shorter distance (that is, staying in the same census tract) showed higher post-move neighborhood attachment. Also, households that moved for family reasons showed lower attachment to their new neighborhood than did households that moved to improve their housing or neighborhood surroundings (Bolan, 1997).

Although most of the literature has focused on explaining the likelihood that households will move, some of the literature addresses the concern that some households face barriers to effective residential mobility. In particular, racial segregation and racial inequities may undermine the probability that people of color can move to satisfactory housing and neighborhoods. A study of structural barriers to residential mobility found that after life-cycle factors and neighborhood and housing satisfaction were held constant, African-American households in the United States had a lower probability of moving than White households. Although neighborhood dissatisfaction predicted residential movement among Whites, it was the opposite among African Americans, with African-American homeowners who judged their neighborhoods to be only fair as compared with excellent less likely to move than Whites who expressed similar dissatisfaction (South and Deane, 1993). This pattern suggests that many African-American households may remain in unsatisfactory housing or neighborhoods due to social and economic barriers to movement. Moreover, studies demonstrate African Americans are less likely than any other ethnic group to move to better neighborhoods, despite gains in education and income that permit other groups to move up and out (Logan et al., 1996; Sharkey, 2008).

Although residential mobility can be a path to greater opportunity and satisfaction, concern exists that many low-income families move not to better their circumstances but due to unstable housing arrangements, and that such moves may have negative consequences. Some studies suggest that frequent moving during childhood undermines educational attainment (Wood et al., 1993), but other studies have found little or no effect after other risk factors are taken into account (Murphey, Bandy, and Moore, 2012). Nevertheless, relocating may disrupt social ties and undermine a family's social capital (Briggs, 1997), and it has a particularly disruptive effect on children when parents provide only modest emotional support and involvement (Hagan, MacMillan, and Wheaton, 1996). The quality of the new neighborhoods may buffer the effect of a move as well. For example,

teenagers who moved into distressed neighborhoods had higher dropout rates than those who had lived there a longer time (Crowder and South, 2003), but teenagers who moved from poverty areas to middle-class neighborhoods established positive ties in their new locations (Pettit, 2004).

Effect of Mobility on Neighborhoods

Residential mobility affects not only individual families, but it may also change the neighborhood as a whole. In particular, very high residential turnover can contribute to the erosion of social control and social capital. Studies have shown a negative effect of residential turnover on a neighborhood's collective efficacy, and this loss has been linked to problems such as crime and delinquency (Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush, 2001; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1997). Moreover, high residential turnover may itself promote further mobility, as suggested by the link found between residents' desire to move and the perceptions that neighborhood residents move frequently or are not "close knit" (Clark and Ledwith, 2006; Lee, Oroposa, and Kanan, 1994).

If the characteristics and well-being of newcomers differ from those of movers, mobility can change a neighborhood's demographic or socioeconomic mix, which in turn can reposition the neighborhood with institutions, resources, and the marketplace (Bruch and Mare, 2006). For example, differential mobility into and out of a neighborhood might result in an increasing share of minority residents or new immigrants, rising homeownership rates or incomes, or a growing share of childless residents. The evolving profile of a neighborhood's population can further affect investments by both individuals and institutions through social and political processes that are reinforcing and evolve over time (Temkin and Rohe, 1996). But selective mobility can also maintain a neighborhood's status quo, despite changes in individual residents' well-being. For example, if the more successful residents leave a distressed neighborhood and are replaced by others who are less well off, the neighborhood will remain distressed, even though individual households from the neighborhood improved their economic status (Andersson and Bråmå, 2004).

The realities of residential mobility and neighborhood change make evaluating community-change initiatives difficult. Interventions may improve services for neighborhood residents or create employment and other opportunities, but needy families might not remain in the same neighborhood long enough to benefit. Alternatively, families may take advantage of the neighborhood's enhanced services and opportunities, and then move *because* they have benefited. In addition, larger structural forces in the surrounding housing market or economy may cause more affluent families to move into a neighborhood, improving its profile without producing any gains in the well-being of low-income residents. The process of selective mobility is complicated, however, because it is not simply a collection of individual decisions but is also a process that is influenced by macro forces, including public policy, housing markets, economic shifts, and racial segregation.

Study Design and Methods

The Making Connections neighborhoods, like neighborhoods in general, experience considerable residential mobility. At the same time, however, they are neighborhoods in which many residents stay in place. Using two waves of household surveys, this study segments the population of movers, stayers, and newcomers into clusters that indicate whether their mobility behavior reflects positive

or negative transitions. In addition, it partitions changes in the socioeconomic composition of the neighborhood into the changing poverty status of stayers versus differences in poverty status between movers and the newcomers that replace them. These two perspectives on neighborhood dynamics are drawn on to suggest qualitative differences in how neighborhoods are functioning in this community-change initiative.

Data Sources

The data for this study come from the Making Connections survey that provides information about representative samples of households in the initiative's 10 target neighborhoods.[1] Data come from two waves of surveys, with wave 1 conducted between 2002 and 2004 (depending on the neighborhood) and wave 2 conducted between 2005 and 2007. At wave 1, interviews were conducted at a random sample of residential addresses in each neighborhood. Then, at wave 2, researchers returned to the same addresses, interviewing the current occupants, regardless of whether they were the same residents as at wave 1. If the household living at a sampled address had moved by the time of the second survey *and* if the original household had children, it was contacted and interviewed at its new address.[2] At both waves, survey questions covered a wide range of topics, including employment, income, hardship, community engagement, satisfaction with neighborhood services, and perceptions of neighborhood quality, safety, and social cohesion. This approach makes it possible to measure changes in the composition of the neighborhoods as well as changes in the location and well-being of families with children who lived in these neighborhoods at baseline.

Study Sites

The Making Connections neighborhoods are not a nationally representative sample and all are relatively disadvantaged. Shown in exhibit 1, however, neighborhoods vary considerably in their demographic and economic composition. At the time of wave 1, 39 percent of households in these neighborhoods fell below the federal poverty level, but the 10 neighborhoods were not equally poor. Four neighborhoods had poverty rates above 40 percent at the beginning of the study, with the Louisville neighborhood at the extreme with 57 percent. White Center had the lowest poverty rate at 19 percent.

The survey neighborhoods also vary widely in racial and ethnic composition. In the Des Moines, Indianapolis, and White Center neighborhoods, most households were non-Hispanic White.[3]

[1] These neighborhoods were selected (and their boundaries defined) in partnership with local policymakers and practitioners, and, as a consequence, they vary in size and composition. These areas are larger than traditionally defined neighborhoods. The median size is 4.9 square miles, with a median population of 30,598. The Making Connections neighborhoods do not always correspond to what might be considered natural neighborhood boundaries, and three target areas are composed of multiple, noncontiguous neighborhoods. Although these areas may differ from what are traditionally perceived to be neighborhoods, we use the term *neighborhood* to describe them for readability and consistency with the wider literature.

[2] Because the Making Connections initiative focuses on the well-being of families with children, childless households that moved between survey waves were not reinterviewed at their new addresses.

[3] Households have been classified as non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic African American, Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnicity. For the remainder of this report, the term *White* refers to non-Hispanic Whites and the term *African American* refers to non-Hispanic African Americans.

The residents of Louisville and Milwaukee neighborhoods were predominantly African American, but the residents of the San Antonio neighborhood were predominantly Hispanic. Hartford, Providence, and Denver had substantial populations of both African Americans and Hispanics. The White Center and Oakland neighborhoods reflect the greatest racial and ethnic diversity, including Whites, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnic groups.

Poverty and race are correlated with other indicators of well-being: quality work, health benefits, educational opportunities, and economic success. The survey neighborhoods, in general, have low homeownership rates (34 percent), low college completion (12 percent), a low share of households with working adults (63 percent), and low incomes (only 28 percent of households earn above $30,000).

The Making Connections neighborhoods also have high rates of residential mobility, as shown in exhibit 1. In the 3 years between survey waves, more than one-half (57 percent) of the households from the survey neighborhoods moved out of their original housing units.[4] The 3-year mobility rates ranged from a low of 43 percent (in San Antonio) to a high of 65 percent (in Milwaukee). In all but two neighborhoods, more than one-half of the households moved.

Exhibit 1

Demographic and Economic Characteristics of Residents by Neighborhood

Site	Poverty Rate	Percent White[a]	Percent Black[a]	Percent Hispanic	Percent Asian[a] and Other[a]	Percent Homeowner	Percent College Graduate or Higher	Percent Employed Adult in Household	Percent Turnover Between W1 and W2
Denver	38.2	40.1	14.3	36.4	9.3	35.4	27.3	64.3	56.4
Des Moines	32.6	51.7	27.6	9.7	11.0	50.9	12.3	69.1	50.9
Hartford	46.3	5.4	53.4	36.0	5.3	12.5	8.5	56.4	63.4
Indianapolis	33.6	60.2	27.2	8.5	4.0	41.0	6.9	66.6	59.3
Louisville	57.2	16.0	78.8	2.2	3.1	22.2	8.1	47.3	63.6
Milwaukee	49.3	10.7	76.1	4.7	8.5	29.9	9.8	57.4	65.4
Oakland	35.0	10.5	25.1	28.2	36.2	17.6	14.8	67.6	59.8
Providence	39.0	14.1	24.8	47.2	13.9	25.9	14.6	63.6	56.4
San Antonio	42.4	5.9	1.8	84.9	7.4	54.0	3.8	64.6	42.7
White Center	19.2	54.4	8.6	14.9	22.1	51.3	18.2	74.5	47.3
Average	**39.3**	**26.9**	**33.8**	**27.3**	**12.1**	**34.1**	**12.4**	**63.1**	**56.5**

W1 = wave 1. W2 = wave 2.

[a] Non-Hispanic.

Note: Racial, education, and employment characteristics are for survey respondents. Poverty, homeownership, and earnings characteristics are for survey households.

Source: Making Connections neighborhood-change data, wave 1

[4] In wave 2 of the Making Connections survey, interviewers returned to the same sample of residential addresses that they interviewed at wave 1. If the focus child from the wave 1 interview was no longer living at that address (and was not yet more than 18 years of age), the wave 1 household was classified as a mover and was interviewed at its new address. The household currently living at the original sample address was classified as a newcomer, even though it is possible that some members of the wave 1 household still remained.

Based on these indicators, some illustrative contrasts among the neighborhoods can be identified. The Making Connections neighborhood in Louisville epitomizes a severely distressed urban neighborhood, with 57 percent of households below the poverty level and only 14 percent earning more than $30,000. This neighborhood is mostly composed of renters, including a large share of subsidized housing; only 22 percent of households own their homes. Only 8 percent of the survey respondents have a college degree, and less than one-half are in working households (47 percent). Hartford and Milwaukee are only slightly less disadvantaged than Louisville along most of these same dimensions. San Antonio's Making Connections neighborhood is also deeply poor (42 percent of households below the poverty level), with only 19 percent of households earning more than $30,000. But it is a more stable neighborhood, with a large share of homeowners (54 percent) and moderate employment (65 percent), although little formal education (46 percent of residents have no high school degree).

In Denver, Oakland, and Providence, poverty rates are still high (35 percent or more), but the neighborhoods appear considerably less distressed. About two-thirds of the households in these neighborhoods have an employed adult. Denver's neighborhood also includes a considerable number of relatively well-off households. Specifically, 36 percent earn more than $30,000 and 27 percent have college degrees. Poverty rates in the Making Connections neighborhoods of Des Moines and Indianapolis are somewhat lower, although still above 30 percent. Both have high homeownership rates and high rates of employment, but they have few college graduates and few households earning more than $30,000.

Finally, the White Center neighborhood differs from all the other neighborhoods; it is much less poor. Only 19 percent of households have incomes below the poverty level, and more than one-half (57 percent) earned more than $30,000. Relatively large shares of residents are homeowners (51 percent), college graduates (18 percent), and employed (75 percent).

Cluster Analysis of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers

We anticipated that some households may be making positive moves to better housing or neighborhoods, some may be moving because changes in family size or composition require a different housing unit, and some may be moving involuntarily, due to a crisis or economic insecurity. Also, some households that stayed may be satisfied with their house and neighborhood, but others may be dissatisfied but unable to move due to barriers. Similarly, some newcomers may be drawn to a place to improve their circumstances, but others may face limited housing options or be relocating under duress. Because the literature suggests many factors that influence moving, the identification of types requires a method that can uncover differences among households along many dimensions simultaneously. We use *cluster analysis* to explore whether identifiable groups of movers, newcomers, and stayers exist based on factors influencing their mobility and how much they are bettering or worsening their residential situations. A mover is defined as a household that moved out of its housing unit between wave 1 and wave 2, a stayer is a household that was in the same housing unit at both waves,[5] and a newcomer is a household that was in its housing unit at wave 2 but not at wave 1.

[5] Because the Making Connections survey did not reinterview childless households that moved between survey waves, our analysis of movers is limited to families with children.

The variables used in the cluster analysis were chosen based on the literature cited in the text. We identified variables in the Making Connections survey that represented factors that could affect the chances that a household would move or stay in its housing unit between the two waves of the survey. Exhibit 2 lists these variables and their definitions. Newcomers were interviewed only in wave 2, so the cluster analysis for newcomers involves a more limited set of variables.

Exhibit 2

Variables for Cluster Analysis (1 of 3)

Variable	Definition	Movers With Children	New-comers	Stayers
Demographic				
Age	Respondent's age at time of survey—continuous	W1	W2	W1
Age of youngest child	Age of youngest child	W2	W2	W2
Joined spouse	Respondent's spouse or partner was not present in household at wave 1 but is present at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Left or lost spouse	Respondent's spouse or partner was present in household at wave 1 but is not present at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Spouse or partner present	Respondent's spouse or partner was present in household at time of survey—Yes/No			
Change in number of children	Children left or entered the household; this is the difference in the number of children in the household between wave 2 and wave 1—continuous	W1 to W2 change		
Number of children	The number of children present in the household—continuous		W2	W1
Employment, income, and distress				
Got job	Respondent and/or spouse not employed at wave 1 and respondent and/or spouse employed at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Lost job	Respondent and/or spouse employed at wave 1 and respondent and/or spouse not employed at wave 1 at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Employed	Childless movers and newcomers: respondent and/or spouse employed at time of survey. Stayers: respondent and/or spouse employed at wave 1 and at wave 2—Yes/No		W2	W1 and W2
Not employed	Childless movers and newcomers: respondent and/or spouse not employed at time of survey. Stayers: respondent and/or spouse not employed at wave 1 and wave 2—Yes/No		W2	W1 and W2
Income	Total household income—continuous	W2	W2	W2
Difficulty paying housing costs	Household had difficulty paying its housing costs and/or utilities for the household were disrupted by nonpayment of bills—Yes (if either or both are true)/No to both	W1	W2	W1

Exhibit 2

Variables for Cluster Analysis (2 of 3)

Variable	Definition	Movers With Children	Newcomers	Stayers
Homeownership and housing subsidy (public housing or voucher)				
Became a homeowner	Respondent rented housing unit at wave 1 and was a homeowner or was in the process of homebuying at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Became a renter	Respondent was a homeowner or was in the process of homebuying at wave 1 and was a renter at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Homeowner	Respondent was a homeowner or was in the process of homebuying—Yes/No		W2	W1
Kept subsidized housing	Household received subsidy for housing cost in wave 1 and wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Lost subsidized housing	Household received housing subsidy in wave 1 but did not at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Gained subsidized housing	Household did not receive subsidy at wave 1 but received subsidy at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Never had subsidized housing	Household did not receive subsidy at either wave 1 or 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Subsidized housing	Household had subsidized housing at the time of the survey—Yes/No		W2	W1
Neighborhood services and future				
Perceived safe neighborhood	Difference in combined scale based on how safe respondent feels in neighborhood between wave 2 and wave 1: neighborhood is safe for children, safe in home at night, safe in neighborhood during the day, would help someone asking for directions, children go trick or treating, most criminal activity is committed by people who live outside the neighborhood—ordinal	W1 to W2 change	W2	W1
School satisfaction	Difference in satisfaction with child's school for respondents with children between wave 2 and wave 1 (focus child responses used in wave 2)—ordinal	W1 to W2 change	W2	W1
Neighborhood attachment				
Neighborhood involvement	Combined scale variable at time of survey based on neighborhood-attachment variables: respondent attends neighborhood events, respondent volunteers in neighborhood, respondent gets together with neighbors to resolve community problems—ordinal	W1	W2	W1
Know child's friends	Does respondent know none, some, or most of their child's friends, for respondents with children at time of survey (focus child responses used in wave 2)—ordinal	W1	W2	W1
Years in neighborhood	Combined years and months lived in the neighborhood at wave 1—continuous	W1		W1

Exhibit 2

Variables for Cluster Analysis (3 of 3)

Variable	Definition	Movers With Children	Newcomers	Stayers
Neighborhood conditions (external measures)				
Poverty rate of census tract	Change between the 1999 poverty rate of wave 2 tract and the 1999 poverty rate of the wave 1 tract—continuous	W1 to W2 change		
Percent minority of census tract	Change between the 1999 percent minority of wave 2 tract and the 1999 percent minority of the wave 1 tract. Percent minority is determined by subtracting by the percent of white population in 1999 from the total population—continuous	W1 to W2 change		
Median home loan amount of census tract	Change in the median home loan amount between the 2005 wave 2 tract to the 2002 wave 1 tract. Median home loan amount is defined as the median mortgage amount for home purchase loans—continuous	W1 to W2 change		
Move distance				
Distance of move	Log of distance of move	W1 to W2 change		

W1 = wave 1. W2 = wave 2.

Sources: Making Connections cross-site data, waves 1 and 2; 2000 census; Home Mortgage Disclosure Act

Demographic variables consist of proxies for life-cycle events that may trigger a move or that capture stages in the life cycle that are associated with the chances of moving. For example, although households with children are generally more stable, gaining or losing children may trigger the need for more or less space. Similarly, the addition or departure of a spouse or partner may influence the desire or ability to relocate.

Employment, income, and distress variables relate to employment and income. Change in employment status may trigger a move, either due to location of the job or its effect on income. Financial hardships may bring on a housing crisis, but financial improvements may make a move to a better situation possible.

Homeownership and housing subsidy (public housing or voucher) variables used in the analysis show that homeowners and households with subsidies are expected to move less often, but changing tenure is a possible reason for a move.

Neighborhood services and future variables measure perceived neighborhood quality. Dissatisfaction with neighborhood quality could serve as a push factor for movers, but a positive view of the neighborhood might be a pull factor for newcomers and stayers.

Neighborhood attachment measures anticipate that attachment might be strongest among stayers and that movers who went only short distances or who were forced to move for other reasons might also show high attachment.

Neighborhood conditions—measures from the American Community Survey and Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data—distinguish movers who improved their neighborhood circumstances from those who did not.

Move distance as a variable distinguishes movers who remained nearby from those who moved farther away. Theoretical considerations and availability of data influenced how each cluster model differed in some respects in the waves of data available and the variable specification. This measure captures the distance households moved between wave 1 and wave 2. The variable is specified as the log distance of the move, in miles.

The statistical procedure adopted to analyze this set of variables is *cluster analysis*. Cluster analysis is an exploratory data analysis procedure that classifies cases into a smaller number of mutually exclusive groups based on their similarity on a set of measures. Several algorithms are available for clustering, but all rely on mathematical measures of distances among the cases on the variables. The method used in this analysis is a nonhierarchical cluster technique known as k-means and relies on Euclidean distances. The technique was chosen for this study because it is suitable for variables that are continuous or categorical. After standardizing the input variables using the Jaccard coefficient, we conducted this analysis using the FASTCLUS procedure in SAS. In cluster analysis, cases with shorter distances on the set of variables are grouped together. The cluster analysis was conducted separately for moves, newcomers, and stayers. We determined the number of clusters by looking for the maximum value of the pseudo-F statistic and the minimum of the R^2 (Finch, 2005). We also evaluated how the clusters differed on each variable used in the analysis to describe distinctive characteristics of the cluster.

Components of Neighborhood Change Analysis Methods

Using data from waves 1 and 2 of the Making Connections survey, we developed a new method used to determine the components of neighborhood change. This analysis is not focused on changes for people per se but on changes in a place as influenced by changes for (and of) people. We divide neighborhood change in the neighborhood poverty rate into its three components. Stayers—the households that remained at the same home—contribute to changes in neighborhood poverty by switching from being poor to nonpoor, or the reverse, between the two survey waves. Mobility contributes to changes in neighborhood poverty when those exiting and entering the neighborhood are differentially poor. Finally, a shift in the relative share of the residents who are stayers or movers changes each groups' contribution to neighborhood poverty.

To do so, we restricted the Making Connections sample to cases in which an interview was completed in a housing unit at both waves, or in which a housing unit was not occupied or did not exist at one of the waves and an interview was completed at the other wave. By these criteria, we excluded 311 cases, leaving a sample of 5,980 at wave 1 across all 10 neighborhoods. In running sensitivity tests on the restricted sample and comparing it with the full sample, we found minimal statistical differences between them. In the end, we included only 9 of the 10 Making Connections neighborhoods in this analysis; in Hartford, the neighborhood boundaries were changed between the two survey waves, so that the sample is too small to reliably measure changes for those who moved or stayed within the redefined boundaries.

The restricted sample enabled us to classify wave 1 and wave 2 respondents into two categories: those who stayed and those who moved. We further subdivided movers into those who left the neighborhood (movers) and those who joined it (newcomers). At wave 1, our sample includes stayers and movers, and at wave 2, the panel includes stayers and newcomers, where the newcomers live in units either vacated by wave 1 movers or vacant or not existent at wave 1. For the Making Connections neighborhoods, we separate the change in neighborhood poverty into its three components. Changes in poverty for stayers, as a result of mobility, and due to changes in the relative size of these groups, are additive; they may move in the same direction or they may offset each other. In calculating the change in poverty among stayers, we determine the share of stayers who improved (fell below the federal poverty level at wave 1 but were above it at wave 2), the share who worsened (were above the federal poverty level at wave 1 but were below it at wave 2), and the share whose poverty status did not change.

In measuring the change in poverty due to mobility, we calculate differences in the characteristics of movers (at wave 1) and newcomers (at wave 2) for each housing unit present at both waves. Where a housing unit was present at either survey wave but vacant or nonexistent at the other, we also include the household's poverty status in our calculations. By definition, each neighborhood has the same number of stayers at both waves. But in each of the 10 cases, the number of newcomers and movers were not the same, meaning the neighborhood's population was different at wave 2 than at wave 1. This difference in population had to be accounted for when we calculated the components of change. For example, in a neighborhood with fewer newcomers than movers, population declines. As a result at wave 2, stayers represent a larger proportion of the neighborhood than they did at wave 1. Therefore, stayers contribute to neighborhood change by changing their personal circumstances, and also by increasing their share of the neighborhood's population.

Using this information, we defined the following terms accordingly:

P_1 = Neighborhood poverty rate at wave 1.

P_2 = Neighborhood poverty rate at wave 2.

s_1 = Poverty rate of stayers at wave 1.

s_2 = Poverty rate of stayers at wave 2.

m_1 = Poverty rate of movers at wave 1.

m_2 = Poverty rate of newcomers at wave 2.

t_{s1} = Stayers in the neighborhood at wave 1.

t_{s2} = Stayers in the neighborhood at wave 2.

t_{m1} = Movers in the neighborhood at wave 1.

t_{m2} = Newcomers in the neighborhood at wave 2.

We defined each group's share of population as

$$w_{s1} = t_{s1} / (t_{s1} + t_{m1}) = \text{Share of wave 1 population that are stayers.} \quad (1)$$

$w_{s2} = t_{s2} / (t_{s2} + t_{m2})$ = Share of wave 2 population that are stayers.

$w_{m1} = t_{m1} / (t_{s1} + t_{m1})$ = Share of wave 1 population that are movers.

$w_{m2} = t_{m2} / (t_{s2} + t_{m2})$ = Share of wave 2 population that are newcomers.

Neighborhood poverty is

$$P_1 = w_{s1}s_1 + w_{m1}m_1. \quad (2)$$
$$P_2 = w_{s2}s_2 + w_{m2}m_2.$$

The change in neighborhood poverty is

$$P_2 - P_1 = w_{s2}s_2 + w_{m2}m_2 - w_{s1}s_1 - w_{m1}m_1. \quad (3)$$

The change in poverty for stayers is

$$\Delta s_{12} = s_2 - s_1. \quad (4)$$

The difference in poverty between movers and newcomers is

$$\Delta m_{12} = m_2 - m_1. \quad (5)$$

The change in each group's share of the population is

$$\Delta w_{s1s2} = w_{s2} - w_{s1}. \quad (6)$$
$$\Delta w_{m1m2} = w_{m2} - w_{m1}.$$

Substituting equations 4, 5, and 6 into equation 3 yields

$$P_2 - P_1 = (w_{s1}+\Delta w_{s1s2})s_2 + (w_{m1}+\Delta w_{m1m2})m_2 - w_{s1}(s_2-\Delta s_{12}) - w_{m1}(m_2-\Delta m_{12}). \quad (7)$$

Rearranging and canceling terms produces the equation

$$P_2 - P_1 = w_{s1}\Delta s_{12} + w_{m1}\Delta m_{12} + \Delta w_{s1s2}\, s_2 + \Delta w_{m1m2}m_2. \quad (8)$$

These final terms measure the three components of neighborhood change. The first term ($w_{s1}\Delta s_{12}$) is the contribution of change in poverty among stayers (holding their population share constant at wave 1). The second term ($w_{m1}\Delta m_{12}$) is the change in neighborhood poverty attributable to the difference between movers and newcomers (holding their population share constant at wave 1). Combined, the final two terms are the change in neighborhood poverty resulting from changes in population ratios ($\Delta w_{s1s2}\, s_2 + \Delta w_{m1m2}m_2$).

Findings

Types of Residential Mobility

Previewing our findings, the study showed three discernible types of movers, newcomers, and stayers in the Making Connections neighborhoods. One of the types in all instances reflected households in distress. Their residential situations were dictated more by economic exigencies or family stress than by choice. Another type could be characterized as positive in their residential choices, whether they were staying in satisfactory places or moving to better situations. Finally, in all instances we identified a type for which life stage and household composition were predominant factors in their residential location. These patterns are consistent with the expectation that households move or stay put for various reasons, and that simple mobility rates belie differences.

Movers With Children

For movers with children, three clusters were identified (see exhibit 3). The largest cluster, labeled *Churning movers*, accounted for 46 percent of the mover sample. The families in this cluster tend to be young and are adding children to their households. They have very low incomes (median $14,000), are mostly renters who had not lived in their old house very long (median 2 years), and were the least involved of any cluster in their neighborhood. These families moved short distances (median 1.7 miles) and did not gain much in terms of neighborhood amenities and satisfaction. They started out in poor neighborhoods that they viewed as somewhat unsafe and not very positive

Exhibit 3

Selected Characteristics of Households in the Movers With Children Cluster

	Churning Movers	Nearby-Attached Movers	Up-and-Out Movers	Weighted Average
Cases in cluster (%)	46	24	30	100
Life-cycle factors				
Respondent age (mean)	28.0	40.9	32.4	32.5
Age of youngest child (mean)	3.57	10.38	5.79	5.88
Change number of children (mean)	0.53	– 0.27	0.21	0.24
Added adult to household (%)	9	5	18	11
Lost adult from household (%)	16	16	6	13
Employment and income				
Employed, W1 (%)	70	69	78	72
Household income, W2 (median $)	14,000	15,000	28,000	16,000
Gained a job (%)	14	12	13	13
Lost a job (%)	14	17	5	12
Difficulty paying housing costs, W1 (%)	42	43	35	40
Homeownership and housing subsidy				
Homeowner, W1 (%)	8	29	23	18
New homebuyer (%)	10	9	26	15
Shifting to rental (%)	2	19	7	8
Gained subsidy (%)	12	16	7	12
Lost subsidy (%)	13	12	16	14
Neighborhood quality				
Safety rating, W1 (mean)	4.33	4.74	3.72	4.24
Change in safety (mean)	0.16	– 0.27	1.93	0.59
Neighborhood good for children, W1 (%)	62	66	34	55
New neighborhood better for children (%)	14	17	63	30
Neighborhood attachment				
Neighborhood involvement, W1 (mean)	0.57	1.30	0.72	0.79
Years in neighborhood, W1 (median)	2.0	7.5	3.0	3.0
Neighborhood conditions (census tract)				
Change in poverty rate (mean)	– 4.78	– 6.46	– 22.33	– 10.53
Change in percent minority (mean)	– 6.8	– 6.49	– 38.42	– 16.36
Increase in housing prices (median $)	23,500	26,000	45,000	31,000
Distance of move				
Distance in miles (median)	1.66	1.14	5.77	2.17

Source: Making Connections cross-site data, waves 1 and 2

for their children, and they gained little by moving. This pattern suggests that these households may be frequent movers whose moves are a response to financial stress or problems in their rental housing arrangements.

The second mover cluster is labeled as *Nearby-attached movers*, constituting 24 percent of the sample. The families in this cluster are middle aged and have declined in household size. They have very low incomes (median $15,000). Unlike churning households, however, more of them were homeowners at wave 1, had lived in their homes for a very long time (median 7.5 years), and were highly involved in their original neighborhoods. These families moved the shortest distances (median 1.1 miles), with some (19 percent) shifting from homeowner to rental tenure. Their relocation did not appreciably affect their neighborhood distress or satisfaction, but they reported somewhat less neighborhood participation following their move. Thus, nearby attached movers had been stable involved residents whose moves may have been dictated more by life-cycle factors than by a desire to leave their house or neighborhood. In fact, they have not moved far nor have they changed very much in their feelings about the place.

The last cluster, *Up-and-out movers,* comprised 30 percent of the sample. These movers are young families but are more likely to be gaining an adult in the household than are churning movers. They have moderate incomes (median $28,000), had not lived in their old house very long (median 3 years), and were the most dissatisfied with the old neighborhood. These families moved much farther (median 5.8 miles), with more families becoming homeowners than in other clusters. They are more satisfied and optimistic about their new neighborhoods, which are substantially less poor and less predominantly minority, and which have higher (and rising) house values. In summary, up-and-out movers seem to have moved a long distance to improve their housing and neighborhood satisfaction. They had the financial wherewithal to make such moves possible.

Newcomer Households

Next, we focus on households moving into homes and apartments in the Making Connections neighborhoods. For these households, the Making Connections survey provides only wave 2 information; we do not know where these households lived before or how their circumstances changed.[6] We can explore factors that may have pushed or pulled them into their current location, however, including age and number of children, employment and income, housing tenure and subsidy (voucher or public housing) status, affordability problems, and perceptions of the neighborhood and attachment to it. Cluster analysis yields three categories of newcomers distinguished on the factors shown in exhibit 4.

The first cluster is labeled *dissatisfied renter newcomers* and accounts for 36 percent of the newcomer sample. In this cluster, nearly all households are renters (96 percent). They are young families with young children (mean age of adults is 30.8 and children is 3.7). They have low incomes (median $12,000) and have difficulty affording their housing. About one-fifth (22 percent) receive housing subsidies and about two-thirds have an employed member in the household. These families are

[6] As discussed previously, we do not have wave 1 addresses for these newcomers; some may have lived nearby and considered themselves in the same neighborhood.

Exhibit 4

Selected Characteristics of Households in the Newcomers Cluster

	Dissatisfied Renter Newcomers	Low-Income Retired Newcomers	Positive Newcomers	Weighted Average
Cases in cluster (%)	36	24	40	100
Life-cycle factors				
Respondent age (mean)	30.8	53.1	36.6	38.4
Age of youngest child (mean)	3.65	10.51	7.01	5.52
Number of children (mean)	1.91	0.30	0.78	1.08
Adults in household (mean)	1.64	1.80	1.52	1.63
Employment and income				
Employed (%)	67	9	97	66
Household income (median $)	12,000	7,500	30,000	15,000
Difficulty paying housing costs (%)	51	33	21	35
Homeownership and housing subsidy				
Homeowner (%)	4	19	37	21
Housing subsidy (%)	22	35	2	17
Neighborhood quality				
Safety rating (mean)	3.62	4.85	5.04	4.48
Neighborhood good for kids (%)	26	72	81	59
Neighborhood attachment				
Neighborhood involvement (mean)	0.47	0.72	0.87	0.69
Years in neighborhood (median)	1	2	2	2
Neighborhood conditions (census tract)				
Poverty rate (mean)	36.44	34.27	29.95	33.30
Percent minority (mean)	78.02	74.31	69.77	73.80

Source: Making Connections cross-site data, waves 1 and 2

very dissatisfied with the neighborhood and have not become very involved in it since their move. This pattern is consistent with being pushed to move by circumstances rather than attracted to their new residence by a positive feeling about the neighborhood or the achievement of a stable housing situation. Their profile suggests that they may move again quickly due to further disruption or dissatisfaction.

The second cluster, *low-income retired newcomers,* comprises 24 percent of the newcomer sample. This cluster is composed of predominately older households with very low employment rates (9 percent) and very low incomes (median $7,500). A large proportion of newcomers in this cluster have housing subsidies (35 percent) and most of the households in this cluster are renters (81 percent). Many report that they have trouble paying for their housing costs (33 percent). Despite their financial difficulties, they are positive about the neighborhood and are moderately involved. This cluster seems to represent households that already felt positively toward the neighborhood and changed residences due to reaching retirement and requiring lower housing costs or more housing assistance. Households in this newcomer group are likely to remain settled unless their personal situations change or they can find more affordable or subsidized housing elsewhere.

Positive newcomers are 40 percent of the sample. This third cluster is made up of working households (97 percent are employed) in their middle child-rearing years. They have relatively high incomes (median $30,000), are the most likely of the newcomer households to be homeowners (37 percent), and are the least likely to have difficulty with housing affordability. They are very optimistic about the neighborhood and participate in it. Households in this cluster are likely to become engaged with their new community and to remain stable as long as their housing remains optimal. Those with rising incomes may move on, however, as they become ready for homeownership or as their housing needs and preferences shift.

Stayer Households

Finally, we turn to the households that stayed at their original addresses. For these households, the survey provides two waves of information about both families with children and childless households, including a wide range of factors that might have made them want to stay as well as factors that might have limited their options for leaving. Again, we find three identifiable clusters of stayers as shown in exhibit 5.

Dissatisfied stayers comprise 22 percent of the newcomer sample. This cluster is the youngest of the stayer clusters (the mean age of adult members is 38.9), although stayers as a group are older than movers. Most of these families have an adult who is working (79 percent), but their incomes

Exhibit 5

Selected Characteristics of Households in the Stayers Cluster

	Dissatisfied Stayers	Long-Term Older Stayers	Positive Stayers	Weighted Average
Cases in cluster (%)	22	31	47	100
Life-cycle factors				
Respondent age (mean)	38.9	63.8	41.3	47.7
Age of youngest child (mean)	6.73	9.21	8.08	7.83
Number of children (mean)	0.14	– 0.16	– 0.04	0.00
Adults in household, W1 (mean)	1.57	1.71	1.42	1.54
Employment and income				
Employed, W1 (%)	79	20	95	69
Household income, W2 (median $)	20,000	10,000	30,000	20,000
Difficulty paying housing costs, W1 (%)	39	14	19	22
Homeownership and housing subsidy				
Homeowner, W1 (%)	39	56	68	58
Housing subsidy, W1 and W2 (%)	17	18	3	11
Neighborhood quality				
Safety rating, W1 (mean)	3.36	4.83	5.12	4.64
Neighborhood good for children, W1 (%)	15	80	93	72
Neighborhood attachment				
Neighborhood involvement, W1 (mean)	0.76	0.81	0.89	0.83
Years in neighborhood (median)	6	24	10	11
Neighborhood conditions (census tract)				
Poverty rate, W1 (mean)	32.49	32.14	28.88	30.68
Percent minority, W1 (mean)	77.26	82.10	77.91	79.07
Increase in housing prices (median $)	15,500	10,500	10,500	11,000

Source: Making Connections cross-site data, waves 1 and 2

are only low to moderate (median $20,000). Most of these households are renters (61 percent) and likely to be having difficulty paying housing costs. They have lived in the neighborhood the shortest time (median 6 years) and, out of all stayers, are the least positive about it. If they continue to remain in their current residence, it is likely because of barriers to movement rather than a stable and satisfactory situation.

The second cluster, labeled *long-term older stayers,* accounts for 31 percent of the sample. The households in this cluster are a bit older than those in the other clusters (mean age of adults 63.7), seldom include working adults (only 20 percent employed), and have very low incomes (median $10,000). Yet, more than one-half of these households own their homes and few are having difficulty with housing costs. They have lived in the neighborhood for many years (median 24 years) and are satisfied with it. Although it seems likely that these stayers will remain in place, their fixed incomes and advancing age may make them somewhat vulnerable.

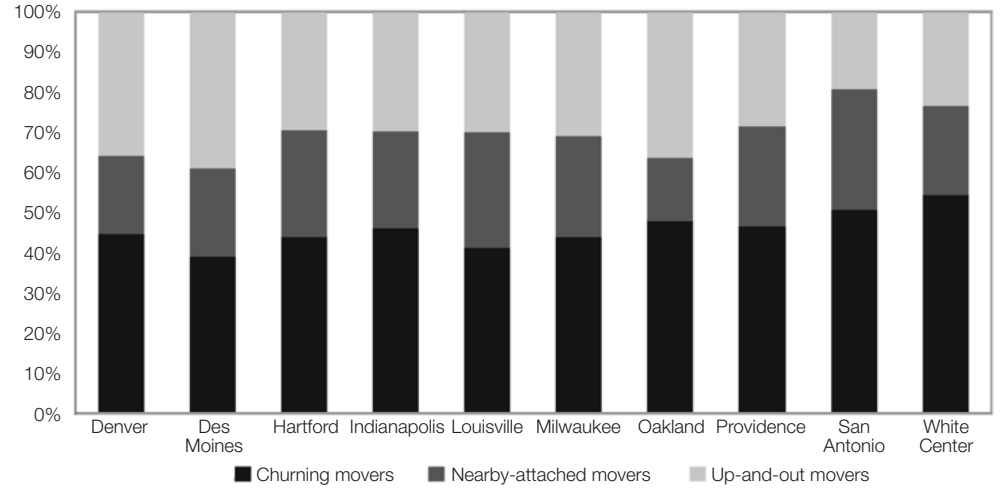
Finally, *positive stayers* comprise the largest cluster at 47 percent of all stayers. These households tend to be middle-aged (mean age of adults 41.3) families who are working (95 percent are employed) and have the highest incomes (median $30,000) of the three stayer groups. Most are homeowners (68 percent), and the median number of years living in the neighborhood is 10. These households participate most in their neighborhood and are the most optimistic about it. This cluster is likely to continue to be involved and remain in their residence as long as they remain satisfied with their housing and surrounding neighborhood.

Differences in Cluster Mix by Making Connections Sites

Now we turn to the question of how this classification of households regarding their residential mobility status characterizes the Making Connections neighborhoods. The mix of movers, newcomers, and stayers is shown by site in exhibits 6, 7, and 8. For example, the Denver

Exhibit 6

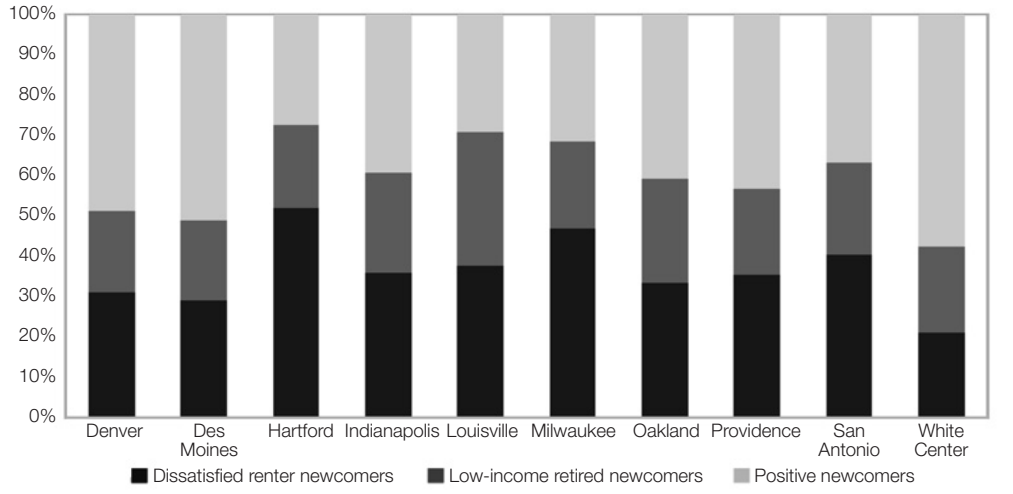
Types of Movers by Making Connections Neighborhood



Source: Making Connections cross-site data, waves 1 and 2

Exhibit 7

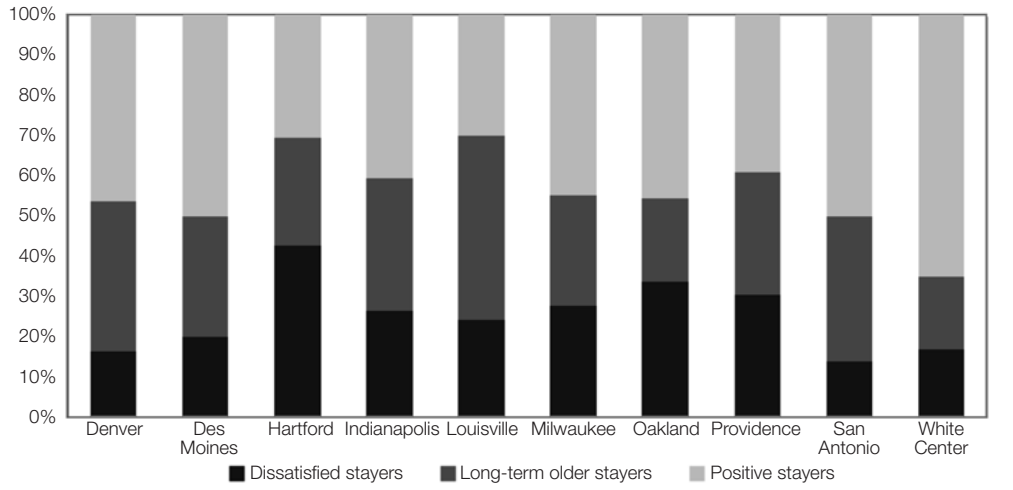
Types of Newcomers by Making Connections Neighborhood



Source: Making Connections cross-site data, waves 1 and 2

Exhibit 8

Types of Stayers by Making Connections Neighborhood



Source: Making Connections cross-site data, waves 1 and 2

neighborhood has a large component of long-term older stayers and the percentage of dissatisfied stayers is low. Denver is also low on nearby-attached movers and low-income retiree newcomers while being in the middle range on other clusters. This pattern suggests the core of a stable older population in the Denver neighborhood, with little influx of older newcomers. In general, the positive newcomers exceed the dissatisfied ones. Churning movers exceed the nearby-attached movers by about two to one, however, reflecting considerable churning among in the younger low-income population in the Denver neighborhood.

In Des Moines, three clusters stand out: up-and-out movers, positive stayers, and positive newcomers. Des Moines is also low on churning movers and low-income retiree newcomers. This pattern suggests that the Des Moines neighborhood is a positive attraction for many households but is also a place movers leave behind to improve their situations. Oakland and Providence have similar profiles to Des Moines, although somewhat less positive. In Oakland and Providence slightly more movers are churning, and more stayers are dissatisfied than in Des Moines.

The Hartford Making Connections neighborhood is characterized by large proportions of dissatisfied newcomers, dissatisfied stayers, and churning movers. The small proportion in the up-and-out cluster suggests that few are moving on to better housing or neighborhoods. Few of the newcomer households fall into the low-income retirees, suggesting that younger distressed families are the bulk of those relocating to the neighborhood. Milwaukee's mix of movers and newcomers is similar to Hartford's. More positive stayers and fewer negative stayers are in Milwaukee than in Hartford, however.

Louisville stands out in the high proportion of stayers and newcomers in the low-income older clusters. Also, Louisville's movers tend more than the other neighborhoods to remain nearby-attached movers. Few are up-and-out movers and few of the households that stay or move in are doing so for positive reasons. This pattern suggests that many households in the Louisville Making Connections neighborhood are there mainly because housing is affordable and that many are long-term residents with a connection to the neighborhood. The mix of movers, newcomers, and stayers in Indianapolis is similar to Louisville, with the exception that Indianapolis has a higher proportion of positive newcomers.

San Antonio is unique among the neighborhoods in that its movers mostly remain nearby and are seldom bettering their situation by moving out. Nevertheless, San Antonio also has a large group of positive stayers who are remaining in place and are satisfied with the neighborhood. The newcomer mix in San Antonio is unremarkable compared with the other neighborhoods, with a nearly equal mix of newcomers in the positive and dissatisfied clusters. This pattern suggests that the San Antonio Making Connections neighborhood is one with a core of long-term residents, but many of them frequently change housing units within the general neighborhood.

The White Center neighborhood is low on up-and-out movers and high on positive stayers and positive newcomers. It appears, therefore, that residents who are being drawn to the neighborhood are seeking its positive qualities and not moving away for better situations. The neighborhood is also high on churning movers, however, suggesting that an element of frequent moving also exists among residents with unstable living situations.

Components of Neighborhood Change

In this section, we focus on the Making Connections neighborhoods and turn to the question of how residential mobility shapes the overall composition of the neighborhoods. We illustrate this dynamic by calculating separately the components of change in neighborhood poverty rates because concentrated urban poverty has received a great deal of policy attention and poverty reduction is a common goal in community-change initiatives. Across the Making Connections neighborhoods, changes in poverty rates occurred primarily through mobility, not because of changing circumstances

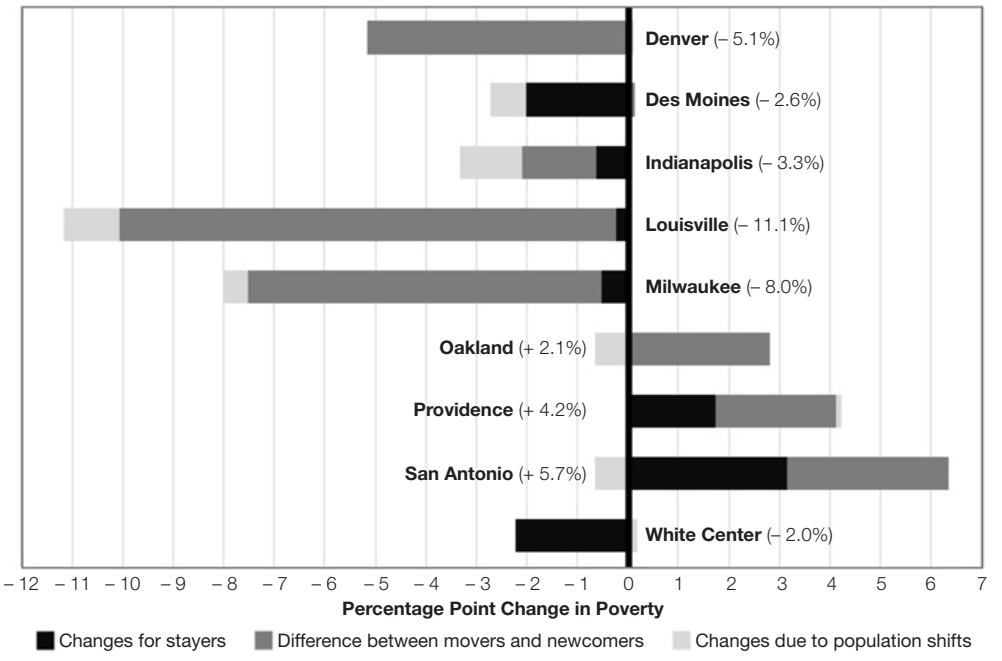
for stayers. Reductions in neighborhood poverty occurred in one of two ways: through a sizable departure of poor residents, or through an influx of better off households. For neighborhoods where stayers saw reductions in the prevalence of poverty, these improvements were not sufficient to produce neighborhood gains. The biggest increases in neighborhood poverty rates occurred where poverty increased both among stayers and as a result of mobility.

At the start of this study, the Making Connections neighborhoods ranged from moderately to severely distressed, with an average poverty rate in 2002 or 2003 of 35 percent. Of the nine neighborhoods analyzed, four saw statistically significant changes in the poverty rate. Of these nine neighborhoods, three experienced reductions in poverty, with the biggest reductions occurring in some of the poorest communities: Louisville (-10.8 percentage points), Milwaukee (-7.5 percentage points), and Denver (-5.2 percentage points). San Antonio experienced an increase in poverty of 6.3 percentage points.

To determine the role that mobility played in these poverty trends, we calculate the components of change for each site using the technique outlined in the methods section of this article. The results appear in exhibit 9. For each city, the first column is the change in neighborhood poverty attributable to changes in stayers' poverty status. The second is the change due to differences between movers' and newcomers' poverty rates. The third column is the contribution of shifts in the neighborhood's population (and the shares of residents who are stayers or who move between the two survey waves). These three components sum to the total neighborhood change in poverty, which is shown in parentheses.

Exhibit 9

The Components of Change in Neighborhood Poverty



Note: Net percentage point change shown in parentheses.
Source: Making Connections neighborhood-change data, waves 1 and 2

Summarizing our findings, the decline in Denver's neighborhood poverty rate was driven by the arrival of better off residents. In Louisville and Milwaukee, on the other hand, declining poverty rates were driven by the departure of poor residents. In Des Moines and White Center, although the poverty rate remained essentially unchanged, poverty fell slightly among households that stayed in the neighborhood. Poverty in Indianapolis did not change for any group. Somewhat higher poverty rates among newcomers than among movers were not enough to notably shift Oakland's overall poverty rate. Providence saw modest increases in poverty from both stayers becoming poorer and from poor newcomers replacing some nonpoor movers. Finally, in San Antonio, neighborhood poverty rates rose due to increasing poverty among stayers and to higher poverty among newcomers than among movers.

None of the Making Connections neighborhoods saw economic improvements among stayers that were sufficient to produce a statistically significant net reduction in poverty rates. This economic situation is because of the high rates of mobility these neighborhoods experienced and because it is difficult for households to leave poverty (Cellini, McKernan, and Ratcliffe, 2008; Rank and Hirschl, 2001; Stevens, 1999). None of the neighborhoods that experienced rising poverty rates did so solely due to mobility or changing circumstances for stayers—both trends worsened together. A shifting share of the neighborhood's population (that is, the share that was made up of stayers or movers/newcomers) generally had little effect on neighborhood poverty. We explore these findings below—grouping sites that experienced improving, unchanging, or worsening poverty conditions.

One Making Connections neighborhood—Denver—improved, because newcomers were better off than movers. As shown in exhibit 9, the poverty rate declined 5.1 points. This reduction in poverty was entirely attributable to mobility, with newcomers more than 9 percentage points less poor than movers, a sizable shift. Between 2003 and 2006, more than one-half of the Denver neighborhood's residents left (56 percent) and were replaced by newcomers, with no net change in population (exhibit 2). Residents who remained in the neighborhood from 2003 to 2006 were, on average, no more or less poor.

Declining neighborhood poverty can be produced simply through the departure of poor residents, a scenario that some may consider a Pyrrhic victory and others consider a necessary deconcentration of poverty. Both the Louisville and Milwaukee neighborhoods reflect this pattern. Looking at Louisville to illustrate this phenomenon, we see that the poverty rate fell dramatically, dropping more than 11 percentage points in 3 years (exhibit 9). Yet, this improvement was entirely attributable to the departure of some poor households. More than 63 percent of households in Louisville left the neighborhood and many of these residents were not replaced by newcomers—the neighborhood's population declined 17.3 percentage points (exhibit 2). Further driving the changes, newcomers had a substantially lower poverty rate than movers (13.3 percentage points). With a poverty rate approaching 50 percent, however, they were still severely disadvantaged. A sizeable share of Louisville residents relocated between the two survey waves as a result of the HOPE VI program. Public housing revitalization led to poverty reduction in Louisville, but the Milwaukee neighborhood also saw the departure of poor residents, not as a result of a federal program. Households that remained in the Louisville and the Milwaukee communities experienced no improvements in their poverty rates.

Unlike the previously described neighborhoods, five Making Connections neighborhoods did not demonstrate changes in poverty rates, although one group of residents may have experienced a greater or lesser likelihood of being poor. For these neighborhoods, changes among or between individual groups were not sufficient to generate a net change. Because the net poverty rates for these communities did not change, relying on these aggregate figures alone may mask divergent outcomes for the different groups.

In two neighborhoods, Des Moines and White Center, stayers were somewhat less poor at wave 2, an important outcome in assessing community change efforts. Yet this change did not improve the overall neighborhood. Oakland also showed no net change in neighborhood poverty. But in this case, it was stayers who were unchanged, and newcomers were 5.0 percentage points less poor than movers. These components resulted in a 2.1-percentage-point increase in Oakland's poverty. Poverty rates in Indianapolis were not substantially different for stayers, neither as a result of mobility nor shifts in the neighborhood's population. In Providence, poverty increased modestly for stayers and as a result of mobility. These two factors resulted in a 4.1-percent increase in neighborhood poverty, but this change is not statistically significant.

As opposed to improving, neighborhood poverty worsened in only one manner. The poverty rate increased in San Antonio, driven by a worsening situation among stayers and due to mobility. Poverty among stayers rose by 5.5 percentage points from 2003 to 2006—a change that resulted in neighborhood poverty increasing by 3.2 percentage points. At the same time that stayer households experienced greater poverty, the community absorbed even more poor migrants and lost households that were better off. Those who joined the neighborhood had a poverty rate 7.5 points higher than those who left.

In sum, across all Making Connections neighborhoods, this analysis shows few communities with poverty-rate reductions among stayers, a core indicator of neighborhood health and vitality. But in neighborhoods where poverty declined among stayers, that gain would be overlooked by focusing simply on neighborhood change. The magnitude of change among stayers is smaller than change as a result of mobility. The fates of stayers and movers were linked in surprisingly few neighborhoods—only in worsening neighborhoods did they change in the same direction. Given the high rates of mobility and the greater likelihood that movers and newcomers were differentially poor, mobility was a larger influence in changing neighborhoods. Mobility contributed to neighborhood improvement in several cases, even if gains were not experienced by stayers. Also, in no neighborhoods did mobility alone drive neighborhood poverty-rate increases, although, where poverty increased, poor newcomers added to an already deteriorating situation for stayers.

Discussion of Functional Differences in Low-Income Neighborhoods

In this section, we apply the preceding findings about the mix of movers, newcomers, and stayers and the components of neighborhood change to offer some insights on how different low-income neighborhoods may be functioning for the families who live in them (and move through them).

We begin by proposing five stylized models. Two of these stylized types—*incubator* and *launch pad*—function in positive ways for their low-income residents, two types—*neighborhood of choice* and *comfort zone*—are mixed, and one—*trap*—essentially fails low-income families.

If a neighborhood is an incubator, mobility rates will be low. Stayers would be attached and positive about the neighborhood and newcomers would be positive about it as well. If, on the other hand, a neighborhood is a launch pad, mobility rates will be higher. Successful families would be moving out while needier families moved in.

If a neighborhood is a launch pad, mobility rates will be high. Many movers would be transitioning up and out, but those who stayed would be attached and positive, and newcomers (although poor) would be positive about what the neighborhood had to offer.

If a neighborhood is a neighborhood of choice, mobility rates will be moderate and neighborhood outcomes would be improving. These gains, however, should reflect the well-being of neighborhood newcomers, with lesser improvements reflected in stayers' well-being. In addition, although newcomers should be very positive about the neighborhood, many movers are likely dissatisfied and disconnected.

If a neighborhood is a comfort zone, mobility rates will be low and outcomes for long-term residents or the neighborhood as a whole would have little or no improvement. In this way, comfort zones are like traps. In a comfort zone, however, many stayers would be strongly attached and many newcomers would be satisfied with their neighborhood circumstances.

Finally, if a neighborhood is a trap, mobility rates will be moderate and neighborhood outcomes would either remain unchanged or decline over time, reflecting static or worsening conditions among stayers. Short-distance churning moves may be common, although long-distance opportunity moves would be infrequent. Movers, newcomers, and stayers would all be dissatisfied about their neighborhood circumstances.

Patterns of mobility and neighborhood change in most of the Making Connections neighborhoods roughly align with these stylized models. The White Center neighborhood and possibly Indianapolis appear to be functioning as incubators. Des Moines and Oakland look like launch pads. Denver can be best described as a neighborhood of choice. San Antonio and Providence appear to be functioning as comfort zones for low-income households struggling under tough economic circumstances. Louisville, Milwaukee, Hartford, and possibly Indianapolis all have attributes that correspond with traps.

Despite this alignment with a typology of neighborhood functions, the full picture in every Making Connections neighborhood is more complex and messy. All exhibit characteristics that differ from their stylized models. And none unambiguously functions in the same way for all of its residents. For example, even in an incubator neighborhood, some residents feel trapped or dissatisfied and some movers appear to be churning. Likewise, even in a trap neighborhood, some families are able to move up and out. In the following sections, we focus in turn on five Making Connections neighborhoods that most closely match the stylized neighborhood models (see exhibit 10), highlight the complexities and contradictions within these neighborhoods, and suggest possible implications for community-change strategies.

Exhibit 10

Stylized Models of How Neighborhoods Function for Residents

Site	Mobility	Components of Neighborhood Change			Characteristics of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers		
		Overall	Among Stayers	Due to Mobility	Family Movers	Newcomers	Stayers
Incubator							
White Center	Low	No change	Improving modestly	No change	High churning; low up-and-out	High positive; low dissatisfied renters	High attached positive; low long-term older
Launch pad							
Des Moines	Low	No change	Improving modestly	No change	High up-and-out; low churning	High positive	High attached positive
Neighborhood of choice							
Denver	Interme-diate	Improving	No change	Newcomers better off than movers	High up-and-out	High positive; but also dissatisfied renters	High long-term older
Comfort zone							
San Antonio	Low	Worsening	Worsening	Newcomers worse off than movers	High churning and nearby-attached; low up-and-out	All three types of newcomers	High positive; low dissatisfied
Trap							
Louisville	High	Improving	No change	Movers much worse off than stayers or newcomers	High nearby-attached	High low-income retirees; low positive	High long-term older; low positive

An Incubator for Many, but Instability Persists Among Poor Renters

The White Center Making Connections neighborhood has many features suggestive of being an incubator. Stayers are experiencing modest declines in poverty and most are positive and attached to the neighborhood. The population is growing, but mobility is not driving the decline in poverty; the poverty rate among newcomers is essentially the same as among movers. Few movers appear to be up-and-out movers, and most newcomers are positive newcomers.

White Center differs from the stylized model of an incubator in one respect, however. Some movers—in fact, a substantial share of movers (slightly more than one-half)—are churning movers. This category of mover has lived in the neighborhood for only a short time, is not strongly attached to it, moves only a short distance, and is not any more satisfied or optimistic about the new location. Thus, although White Center may be functioning as an incubator for many of its residents, it also exhibits residential churning for some families. Further analysis suggests that these churning movers are mostly young working families, often single parents, who rent homes and apartments. They are considerably more likely than White Center's stayers to be minorities or immigrants.

Because so many of the households moving into White Center are positive newcomers, one might wonder whether the neighborhood is experiencing gentrification. Poverty rates among newcomers are essentially the same as among movers, however. Further analysis shows that even the positive newcomers have lower average incomes than most stayers. Newcomers are also more likely to be minorities or immigrants than the neighborhood's stayers. The positive newcomers are much less likely to have children than stayers, however, which may suggest an influx of singles and childless couples to the White Center neighborhood.

What strategies make sense under these circumstances? White Center already offers substantial assets that attract and retain residents who are positive about the neighborhood and attached to it. And the well-being of those who stay in the neighborhood is rising. Community initiatives should build on these assets and expand their reach so that more families can benefit. In particular, the large share of churning movers need targeted help to achieve greater stability. One strategy might be to target low-income families who rent homes and apartments in the neighborhood, reaching out to draw them into available services and activities, and expanding rental assistance, including short-term emergency assistance to help families remain in place longer. In addition, resident engagement and community-building efforts might explicitly work to engage the neighborhood's newcomers, including childless singles and couples. Many of these households appear very positive about the neighborhood and seem prepared to get involved and contribute to it. But these newcomers are by no means affluent; they too need help connecting to neighborhood-based services and supports.

A Launch Pad, Although Many Residents May Be Happy To Stay

Des Moines's Making Connections neighborhood exhibits dynamics that match the model of a launch pad neighborhood (exhibit 10). In particular, many movers are up-and-out movers and few are churning movers. In addition, many newcomers are positive, although they do not appear to be substantially poorer than the households they are replacing. In addition, the flow of movers out of the Des Moines neighborhood is smaller than one might expect for a launch pad, the stayers' well-being appears to be improving, and many stayers are attached and positive.

In fact, Des Moines' up-and-out movers appear similar to positive stayers in many respects. Most of both groups are renters, most are minorities, and most are native born. The up-and-out movers are somewhat more likely than the positive stayers to rent and somewhat more likely to be native born. So Des Moines may actually be functioning as a launch pad for some residents and an incubator for others.

Not all Des Moines residents are experiencing positive change, however. In particular, low-income immigrants appear to be less well served by the neighborhood. Churning movers have much lower incomes and are more likely to be immigrants than either the up-and-out movers or the stayers. Also, dissatisfied newcomers are more likely to be immigrants than are the positive newcomers.

These findings suggest the need to build on existing neighborhood assets, but to explicitly extend them to reach immigrants living in and coming to the neighborhood. Currently, these households appear substantially less engaged, less positive about what the neighborhood has to offer, and less stable. Because they are immigrants and are more likely to move frequently, they may be left out of community-building and resident-support networks. In addition, community-based work in such a neighborhood might help them retain connections with the up-and-out movers, effectively extending the network of engagement and support beyond the neighborhood boundaries.

A Neighborhood of Choice, but Few Gains for Low-Income Residents

Denver's Making Connections neighborhood appears to be a neighborhood of choice. As shown in exhibit 10, the neighborhood's poverty rate is declining but not due to any gains among stayers. Among stayers, the poverty rate remains unchanged, but newcomers to the neighborhood are much less likely to be poor than movers. Movers include both up-and-out movers and churning movers. Denver is home to a core of attached elderly stayers, however, as well as many positive stayers.

Denver's positive newcomers have substantially higher incomes than any group of stayers or movers. They also have small households on average, with few children. The positive newcomers are more likely to be White, less likely to be Hispanic, and less likely to be immigrants than are movers. The neighborhood as a whole is not undergoing dramatic racial/ethnic change, but the differences between newcomers and movers will gradually make the neighborhood more affluent, with more White households and fewer children.

Finally, although roughly one-half of the newcomers to the Denver neighborhood are positive newcomers, a smaller but still substantial share is dissatisfied renters. These newcomers are much poorer, less likely to be working, more likely to be African American or Hispanic, and more likely to be immigrants. Moreover, Denver has a large group of long-term older stayers. These households have children, high rates of joblessness, and very low incomes. They are more likely to be African American or Hispanic than either the more affluent, positive stayers or the positive newcomers. Thus, at the same time that Denver is a neighborhood of choice, it also continues to serve a large population of needy households and can be characterized as moving toward a more diverse income mix.

Such neighborhood dynamics challenge community-based strategies to engage the positive newcomers, so that they may become active participants in making improvements that benefit residents who are still struggling economically. Many positive newcomers express strong attachment to the neighborhood and optimism about its future. Actively reaching out to them and involving them in ongoing community-building activities and social networks may enable a neighborhood like Denver's to capitalize on its resources and influence to the benefit of the neighborhood as a whole. Yet potential gains from these positive newcomers must be balanced against the risks of future displacement and efforts may be needed to preserve affordable housing and stabilize the income mix.

A Comfort Zone, Despite Worsening Economic Outcomes

The Making Connections neighborhood in San Antonio corresponds closely to the model of a comfort zone. As exhibit 10 illustrates, economic outcomes are deteriorating in the neighborhood as a whole, both because stayers are getting poorer and because newcomers are worse off than movers. Although the rate of mobility is low, the neighborhood's total population is declining. A substantial share of movers is classified as churning movers, but the share of nearby-attached movers is also high, and most stayers are either positive and attached or long-term older stayers. In other words, many residents appear to be attached to and positive about the San Antonio neighborhood, although their economic outcomes are deteriorating.

Most of the San Antonio neighborhood's residents are Hispanic, and the Hispanic residents appear most likely to be attached to and positive about their neighborhood. More specifically, nearly all the neighborhood's stayers are Hispanic, as are the nearby-attached movers. In contrast, nearby-disconnected movers are nearly all African American.

These findings suggest that the San Antonio Making Connections neighborhood may function as a comfort zone for its Hispanic residents, although larger structural factors in the economy prevent much economic advancement. Hispanic residents appear to have established strong social networks and community activities that they enjoy and value. These neighborhood assets, however, may not be capable of compensating for low wages and insecurity in the entry-level labor market. These dynamics suggest that community-based initiatives may not always be able to tackle the larger barriers undermining residents' well-being, and that they need to work in concert with larger policy-change strategies designed to address structural challenges of employment and income.

A Trap, Despite a Big Drop in the Neighborhood Poverty Rate

The Making Connections neighborhood in Louisville suffers from a higher rate of poverty than any other neighborhood. Although the poverty rate dropped 11 points during a 3-year period, the Louisville neighborhood continues to suffer from severe distress, and its dynamics correspond in many troubling respects to the hypothesized characteristics of an isolated neighborhood (exhibit 10). The neighborhood is losing population (in part because a large public housing development was demolished and will ultimately be redeveloped), and the decline in poverty is attributable to the loss of public housing residents. The poverty rate among stayers remained unchanged. Moreover, few movers are up-and-out movers, few newcomers are positive newcomers, and few stayers are positive stayers.

Despite this generally discouraging picture, a large share of the neighborhood's movers remains nearby and appears attached to the community. These nearby-attached movers appear slightly better off than the churning movers; they are a little older, are more likely to be employed, and have fewer children. Although the share of nearby-attached movers is high compared with that of the other Making Connections neighborhoods, in Louisville the much needier churning movers outnumber this group. The Louisville neighborhood is also home to a large group of older attached stayers. These families have lived in the community for a long time and are strongly attached to it. In Louisville, these older stayers typically have children but do not work and are extremely low income.

Given its current dynamics, the Louisville neighborhood might be experiencing a continuing downward spiral of poverty, disinvestment, and distress. At the same time, it might be a good candidate for equitable redevelopment strategies. Presumably, demolition of the public housing project is a first step toward developing new, higher quality housing that serves a wider mix of incomes (including public housing residents). Because the neighborhood has lost population, it should have room to grow by attracting new residents, without risk of displacement. The challenge will be to provide higher quality housing and neighborhood amenities that attract moderate- and middle-income households, while also providing the service and support that current residents need to increase their employment and earnings prospects. In particular, the neighborhood's long-term older stayers and its churning movers are extremely needy. A mixed-income redevelopment strategy probably would not help these families unless it is accompanied by tangible supports for both adults and children.

Summary, Limitations, and Implications for Community Initiatives

The cross-neighborhood survey conducted as part of the Casey Foundation's Making Connections initiative provided a unique opportunity to explore the dynamics of residential mobility from the perspectives of both neighborhoods and families. Several important limitations of the study exist as well. The study neighborhoods are not a nationally representative sample but were deliberately selected for a community-change initiative and may differ from other low-income neighborhoods in important ways. Moreover, the neighborhood boundaries used in this analysis were defined by the stakeholders in the sites and do not necessarily agree with residents' neighborhood definitions (Coulton, Chan, and Mikelbank, 2011). In addition, the analysis of types of movers had to exclude households without children because no data exist on their move destinations. These households may have differed from movers with children in their reasons for moving or the outcomes of their relocation.

This analysis reinforces findings from past research about high rates of residential mobility, but it also offers new insights on patterns of mobility and their implications for neighborhood change in low-income communities located in 10 very different sites. Across all 10 neighborhoods, we found high rates of residential mobility. More than one-half of the households that lived in the neighborhoods at the time of the first survey wave had moved to a new address 3 years later. Although this finding is by no means new, its significance is frequently overlooked by community-based initiatives and local practitioners. Efforts to improve the well-being of families and children by strengthening conditions in poor neighborhoods cannot simply assume that families will remain in one place long enough to fully benefit. Many of the Making Connections movers remained nearby, however. These nearby movers may retain social connections from their original residential location and may still participate in activities and services there. This finding highlights an opportunity for community-based initiatives to continue serving families who move but remain nearby.

Moreover, our findings suggest that many of these nearby movers may need ongoing help. Nearly one-half of the Making Connections families who moved were classified as churning movers; they appear to be moving frequently, renting in different locations without establishing strong

neighborhood attachments. These families tend to be young and have very low incomes. This finding highlights the potential importance of housing assistance to community-based work. By reaching out to engage churning movers and helping them remain in place longer or by helping them move to opportunity neighborhoods, local initiatives could improve outcomes for these vulnerable families and their children.

A move, however, does not always signal problems. For a substantial minority of families, residential mobility represents a positive choice. Across the Making Connections neighborhoods, 3 of every 10 movers were up-and-out movers, often becoming homeowners in better neighborhoods where they were more satisfied and optimistic. In some cases, these up-and-out movers may simply be escaping from a bad environment; in other cases, their moves may reflect the success of community-based services and supports that have helped them obtain the resources they needed to advance.

High rates of residential mobility mean that measuring gross changes in neighborhood outcomes can be misleading. A decline in a neighborhood's poverty rate or an increase in its employment rate does not necessarily mean that the well-being of individual residents has improved. In fact, we find that neighborhood change is often the result of mobility—differences between the characteristics of movers and newcomers. In contrast, changes among stayers over a 3-year period, in general, are small. Efforts to strengthen neighborhoods should acknowledge both the slow pace of change among stayers and the role played by the continuous flow of households into and out of neighborhoods.

That outcomes improved only slowly, if at all, among families who stayed in the Making Connections neighborhoods does not mean that they stayed unwillingly—unable to escape to better neighborhoods. In fact, across the 10 Making Connections neighborhoods, close to one-half of all stayers were attached to their neighborhood and positive about their future. A smaller share of stayers was unambiguously dissatisfied with their neighborhoods, remaining in place primarily because they lacked viable alternatives.

Although it is instructive to classify low-income neighborhoods based on stylized models—incubator, launch pad, neighborhood of choice, comfort zone, and trap—the evidence from Making Connections teaches us that reality is far more complex. Although each Making Connections neighborhood roughly corresponds to one of these models, none of them performs in the same way for all their residents. All 10 have both up-and-out movers and churning movers, all 10 have both attached and dissatisfied stayers, and all 10 have both positive and dissatisfied newcomers. In other words, each neighborhood may be working in different ways for different residents. The goal of community-based initiatives should be to strengthen a neighborhood's performance for all its residents: supporting up-and-out movers while reducing churning, supporting the attached stayers while improving the choices available to dissatisfied stayers, and engaging with both positive and dissatisfied newcomers to draw them into neighborhood networks and supports.

In particular, residential churning appears to pose a significant challenge in all neighborhood types. This finding suggests that addressing "housing instability" should receive more attention in efforts to improve low-income neighborhoods. Vulnerable families need help along many dimensions (from job training to mental health services), but recent evidence on programs that serve chronically homeless people shows that addressing the housing instability first can make it

easier to deal with other challenges (Bratt, 2008; Lipton et al., 2000; Sussman, 2005; Tsemberis et al., 2004). Expanding the availability of high-quality affordable housing, preserving the current stock of moderately priced rentals (most of which receive no subsidy), and helping families apply for and use available housing assistance can all contribute to greater housing stability and reduce churning. In addition, programs that provide short-term emergency assistance to prevent eviction, foreclosure, or a forced move could help vulnerable families remain in place even when long-term housing assistance is scarce.

The evidence from the Making Connections neighborhoods also argues for flexible and fluid definitions of neighborhood boundaries. Instead of focusing exclusively on households living within a defined geography, neighborhood-based services and supports should provide continuity for nearby movers, so that families can remain part of the community and receive uninterrupted services even if they have to change their address. Similarly, community-building efforts should sustain connections with families who move, including those moving up and out, to broaden the social networks for those who choose to stay and for those relocating nearby.

Evidence and analysis from the Making Connections neighborhoods demonstrate convincingly that the dynamics of residential mobility and neighborhood change pose critical challenges for community-change initiatives. Policymakers and practitioners should avoid the mistake of seeing neighborhoods as static areas within which a population of residents waits for services, supports, or opportunities. Instead, community-based interventions must focus on the characteristics and needs of households moving through a neighborhood and of those of longer term residents. Also, it may be unrealistic for every neighborhood initiative to create an incubator for all residents. Neighborhoods can also serve their residents well by offering a launch pad to better environments and opportunities. Understanding how a neighborhood is functioning today may help in defining realistic goals for improving its performance over time.

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Authors

Claudia Coulton is the Lillian F. Harris Professor of Urban Research and Social Change at Case Western Reserve University.

Brett Theodos is a research associate at the Urban Institute.

Margery A. Turner is vice president for research at the Urban Institute.

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