

Guest Editor's Introduction

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Residential mobility—residents' movement from one housing unit to another—could be either a positive or a negative phenomenon for families and neighborhoods. At the family level, residential mobility can reflect positive changes in individual or household circumstances. Moving up and out in search of better homes, better schools, and more advantageous neighborhoods has long been a rite of passage for the American middle class. However, residential mobility can also indicate household instability and insecurity, particularly in cases in which low-income families churn through a series of short-term, short-distance relocations (Crowley, 2003). For those families who lack sufficient financial resources and are disconnected from the informal support networks that can play a crucial role in weathering emergencies, frequent moves magnify the difficulty of dealing with day-to-day challenges such as childcare and transportation.

Similarly, at the neighborhood level, mobility has different consequences—or no consequences—depending on the characteristics and balance of in-mover and out-mover households. In some cases, such as the classic gentrification scenario, the replacement of low-income residents with better resourced households may lead to increases in neighborhood safety, better amenities, and improvements in public services (Lerman and McKernan, 2007). Conversely, an exodus of economically advantaged households and their replacement with lower income households may precipitate the overall neighborhood decline associated with greater concentrations of poverty (Galster, 2012; Jargowsky, 1997; Turner and Kay, 2006). In some cases, neighborhood quality remains in a social and economic “steady state,” despite high rates of housing unit turnover, because residents of similar social and economic circumstances replace those who exit (Andersson and Brama, 2004).

Residential Mobility, Poverty, and Public Policy

Residential mobility becomes a critical issue for public policy when it is associated with poverty and disadvantage. Analysis by income quintile of Current Population Survey mobility data from 1998 to 2011 demonstrates a sustained, consistent relationship between low income and high mobility (see exhibit 1). Every step down the income scale corresponds to a rise in mobility rates. In 2011, mobility rates stood at 17.5 percent for the lowest income quintile compared with a national rate of 11.5 percent (Theodos, 2012). Thus, although the current economic downturn has led to an overall decline in residential mobility to the lowest levels since 1948 (Frey, 2011), mobility remains significantly greater among low-income populations. This pattern reflects an overall

Exhibit 1**Mobility Rates by Income Quintile**

Income quintile	Movers (Percent)													
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Lowest quintile	22.2	22.4	21.8	19.2	19.8	19.2	23.3	18.5	19.5	19.2	17.7	18.6	18.7	17.5
Second quintile	19.1	17.8	18.5	17.4	17.2	16.1	19.9	16.6	15.8	15.7	14.2	15.3	15.0	13.7
Middle quintile	15.7	15.7	16.0	14.8	14.9	14.4	15.6	14.2	14.2	13.3	11.8	11.9	12.6	10.4
Fourth quintile	12.0	12.5	12.8	11.4	11.7	11.5	12.3	11.1	10.8	9.9	9.1	9.6	9.4	8.6
Highest quintile	10.7	11.3	11.6	10.1	10.8	10.1	9.9	9.0	8.6	8.5	7.2	7.7	6.8	7.2
Total	15.8	15.7	15.8	14.3	14.6	14.0	13.6	13.7	13.6	13.0	11.8	12.3	12.3	11.5

Notes: Calculated in adjusted 2005 dollars. Lowest quintile cutoff: \$21,705.88. Second quintile cutoff: \$40,223.61. Middle quintile cutoff: \$62,879.34. Fourth quintile cutoff: \$97,416.01.

Source: Current Population Survey tabulations (Theodos, 2012)

decline in opportunities for voluntary relocation to better jobs and homes (Frey, 2009), partially offset by residential churning and evictions because of job losses and landlord foreclosures among households that lack savings and assets (Cohen and Wardrip, 2011; Cunningham and McDonald, 2012; Pettit and Comey, 2012).

Low-income residential mobility raises a host of challenges for policy responses to poverty and disadvantage at the family and neighborhood levels. Student mobility, much of which is related to residential churning, stymies efforts to improve educational outcomes for low-income populations. Lack of continuity in instruction, higher absence rates, and lack of accountability for student progress are all closely connected to student transience (Cohen and Wardrip, 2011).

Residential mobility also poses a challenge to place-based initiatives and community-change efforts designed to improve household and individual outcomes by saturating disadvantaged neighborhoods with services and opportunities. Increasingly, policymakers and program operators are recognizing the difficulties of serving a target population that does not stay put long enough to benefit fully from place-based interventions (Kubisch et al., 2010). Some practitioners directly address this challenge by making affordable housing a key dimension of place-based interventions, but the evidence shows that, even among recipients of significant assistance, housing turnover continues to be an issue (Lubell, Shroder, and Steffen, 2003; Thompson, 2007).

Programs designed intentionally to channel and promote mobility as a means of improving family well-being—recently bolstered by long-term findings on positive health effects (Ludwig et al., 2011)—continue to produce disappointing employment and education effects for all but the small share of families who manage to spend significant time in high-opportunity neighborhoods (Turner et al., 2012). Moreover, these programs might have negative consequences for neighborhoods on the receiving end if relocatees concentrate in vulnerable and declining neighborhoods.

Finally, residential mobility poses particular challenges to the evaluation of place-based initiatives. Programs that seek to improve community economic conditions by increasing the economic success of residents may have difficulty demonstrating positive outcomes at the neighborhood level, because successful households move up and out. As MDRC's Jobs Plus experiment demonstrated, "resident move-out rates greatly influence how earnings effects for individuals can translate into development-level effects" (Blum et al., 2005: 12).

The Symposium

The goal of this symposium is to present policy-relevant research and research-based discussions of residential mobility and its implications for families and neighborhoods. In the effort to advance the science around this topic, the symposium features innovative analytical methods, rich but underused data resources, and discussions of technical challenges and advances in the study of residential mobility.

The articles in this symposium represent creative and insightful uses of a range of data sources and analytical methods. One article, based on administrative data (public housing authority records and crime reports), presents the results of highly complex statistical modeling techniques. Another article makes innovative use of the most recent decennial census in combination with the Urban

Institute's Neighborhood Change Database, a longitudinal file of decennial census data for 1970 through 2000 remapped to census 2000 tract boundaries. Two articles make use of exceptionally rich and sophisticated longitudinal research surveys conducted in two major American cities: The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods¹ and the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey.² Three articles use a program survey, the Making Connections cross-site survey,³ that produced multiple waves of cross-sectional data on 10 urban neighborhoods and longitudinal data on a sample of their original residents.

Patrick Sharkey examines the role of residents' "cognitive maps" in channeling residential mobility into patterns that reproduce urban inequality, and he analyzes the population dynamics underlying the entrenched patterns of segregation so prevalent in northeastern and midwestern cities. His research draws on a wide range of data sources, including the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the demand side of housing policy. Sharkey's analysis raises important considerations for policymakers and practitioners in crafting housing mobility programs that can help address segregation and inequality in American cities.

Ingrid Gould Ellen, Keren Horn, and Katherine O'Regan bring a deep and broad perspective to the issue of residential mobility, analyzing two decades of census data with a focus on shifts in neighborhood-level racial integration. Their analysis shows that, although most metropolitan neighborhoods continue to be racially segregated, the past 20 years have exhibited a long-term and accelerating trend toward racial integration at the national level. Ellen et al. examine the pathways of integration, finding, for example, that, for the vast majority of neighborhoods, integration results from the in-movement of minority households into predominantly white tracts. Using a variety of tract-level demographic and economic data, they analyze the characteristics of neighborhoods that become integrated and the characteristics of neighborhoods that remain integrated. In so doing, the authors shed new light on the role of residential mobility in defining the racial map of our increasingly diverse society.

Claudia Coulton, Brett Theodos, and Margery A. Turner explore residential mobility from the perspective of both neighborhoods and families. Using survey data from the 10-site Making Connections community initiative, they analyze the "push and pull" factors underlying the mobility decisions of the neighborhoods' mover, stayer, and newcomer households. The authors also examine the net effects of residential mobility on neighborhood-level socioeconomic change over time. Their analysis of Making Connections survey data demonstrates the need for policymakers, funders, and practitioners to take residential mobility and neighborhood dynamics into account when designing and evaluating place-based interventions.

Kate Bachtell, Ned English, and Catherine Haggerty focus on the methodological dimensions of mobility research, based on the National Opinion Research Center's work in designing,

¹ Data access information is available at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/PHDCN/daa.jsp>.

² Data access information is available at <http://lasurvey.rand.org/data/>.

³ Data access information is available at <http://mcstudy.norc.org/data-access/>.

conducting, and analyzing the longitudinal and cross-sectional Making Connections survey. The authors explain their retrospective approach for linking individual household members across successive survey waves and describe a two-dimensional approach to the analysis of mobility, an approach that considers both residential movement and change in household composition. Their work advances the field both substantively and methodologically by providing a more nuanced and complex analysis of residential mobility, one that encompasses both the relocation of intact households and internal household dynamics.

William A.V. Clark analyzes the relationship between households' socioeconomic status (SES) and their neighborhood choices. Drawing on the rich data resources of the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey together with census data, Clark compares the characteristics of destination neighborhoods with those of neighborhoods of origin for different socioeconomic groups, then analyzes the characteristics of households that move "up," "down," or remain in the same or socioeconomically similar neighborhoods. Clark also explores the subjective dimensions of residential mobility by examining neighborhood satisfaction among movers to higher SES neighborhoods compared with that of movers to destination neighborhoods of the same or lower SES. Clark makes a significant contribution by expanding the analysis of residential mobility to include the full socioeconomic spectrum of neighborhoods and households to address fundamental questions about the relationship between residential mobility and social mobility.

Susan J. Popkin, Michael J. Rich, Leah Hendey, Chris Hayes, Joe Parilla, and George Galster draw on housing voucher records and crime data to analyze the relationship between local crime rates and the large-scale relocation of public housing residents resulting from the sweeping transformation of public housing that took place in Chicago and Atlanta starting in the 1990s. Basing their findings on sophisticated statistical modeling, the researchers demonstrate that destination neighborhoods with a low density of relocated households experienced no change in crime rate attributable to relocation. For destination neighborhoods with a medium-to-high density of relocatees, however, their model shows that the overall decline in neighborhood crime rates was shallower than would otherwise have been the case. This study constitutes a major methodological advance in its use of complex modeling to quantify the effects of housing policy. Its substantive contribution is twofold. The article presents credible, objective research findings on the nature and magnitude of the neighborhood effects of public housing resident relocation—findings that establish an effect at greater concentrations of relocatees but nevertheless counteract popular misconceptions that link relocatees to perceived neighborhood crime waves. In addition, these findings have important implications for housing policy, highlighting the need to prioritize the deconcentration of poverty as an objective of housing voucher programs.

G. Thomas Kingsley, Audrey Jordan, and William Traynor address the policy and programmatic implications of residential mobility for community-based initiatives. After reviewing Making Connections survey data on the prevalence and patterns of residential instability in 10 low-income neighborhoods, Kingsley et al. identify and describe a set of household- and community-focused strategies for preventing involuntary residential churning and for continuing to serve mobile families within the context of place-based interventions. They examine household-focused strategies based on lessons from a range of homelessness prevention and service programs. Their review of community-based strategies centers on the experience and principles of *network organizing*, an

innovative approach that can deliver formal and informal supports to families at risk of involuntary mobility and provide a mechanism to link residentially unstable households back to community-based resources and opportunities.

Ade Kearns of the University of Glasgow provides the international commentary for this symposium. While exploring the common ground in U.S. and European policy research related to residential mobility, he focuses on three key areas: (1) the question of what constitutes mobility; (2) the increasing research interest in the processes of mobility, particularly in the decisionmaking process; and (3) the broadening of the residential mobility research agenda to include a range of different populations and units of geography.

Conclusion

Each article in this symposium makes its own contribution to the research literature around residential mobility and its implications for families and neighborhoods. Looking across the articles, some common themes, which may be particularly important for policy and program development, also clearly emerge. Some articles point out a disturbing connection between negative mobility (churning among low-income families and downward residential mobility) and the disruption of the family unit itself. Recognizing the connection between residential stability and family stability, this symposium underscores the need to coordinate housing policy and supportive services targeted to vulnerable families. Programs such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Choice Neighborhoods and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Housing and Child Welfare Demonstration indicate promising movement in this direction at the federal level. Considering the community-level implications of residential mobility, place-based work clearly must be reconceptualized in a way that recognizes that the target population is a moving target. Programs that promote the development of social networks as enduring links to place-based resources constitute an innovative response to resident mobility. We can expect further progress as federal initiatives such as HUD's Choice Neighborhoods and the U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods pursue the commitment to longitudinal tracking of target-population outcomes. Longitudinal tracking data can provide policymakers and practitioners with the information necessary to address the challenge of serving mobile families—whose success or failure will not show up in the kind of cross-sectional neighborhood data available from traditional sources such as the census—through place-based interventions. Finally, the findings in this symposium challenge policymakers to develop strategies to channel residential mobility into moves that work to the benefit of families and neighborhoods through interventions such as mobility counseling, fair housing enforcement, inclusionary zoning, voucher portability, and other interventions designed to maximize access to opportunity neighborhoods and minimize the reconcentration of poverty.

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Guest Editor

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