

“It was really hard. ... It was alright. ... It was easy.” Public Housing Relocation Experiences and Destination Satisfaction in Atlanta

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Abstract

This article uses data from an Atlanta-based longitudinal study following public housing residents from pending relocation through relocating between 2009 and 2010. Its purpose is to examine residents' satisfaction with the relocation experience and with their postmove home and neighborhood. In addition, we examine whether levels of relocation satisfaction or dissatisfaction were associated with any significant differences in destination neighborhood characteristics. We build on previous research concerning prerelocation attachment to community and the hard-to-house. Findings suggest some consistency with previous research on levels of attachment to public housing communities and residents who fall into the category of the hard-to-house. Specifically, being older, having a disability, having longer tenure in public housing, and experiencing postrelocation financial strain are significantly associated with lower levels of satisfaction with the relocation process. Our findings, however, are far more mixed concerning the relationship between levels of satisfaction with the relocation process and destination neighborhood characteristics and pose some questions about poverty deconcentration and mixed-income assumptions. Policy implications are discussed.

Introduction

In 1936, Atlanta became one of the first cities in the nation to provide low-income, project-based public housing to needy families; in the early 1990s, the city became one of the first to take advantage of Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI), which, coupled with the massive redevelopment for the city's hosting of the 1996 Summer Olympics, resulted in national recognition for rethinking public housing. By 2011, Atlanta had become the first city in the country to eliminate all its traditional project-based public housing; it also eliminated five Section 202 highrises for seniors.¹ The final elimination of project-based public housing in Atlanta began in early 2007, when the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) announced plans to demolish the remaining 10 family public housing communities and two highrises for seniors. This last round of demolitions was not done under HOPE VI; rather, it was completed under Section 18 of the 1937 Housing Act, which, unlike HOPE VI, requires no immediate replacement of any units. About 10,000 former public housing residents have been relocated since 2007, bringing the grand total since 1994 to 50,000 residents (Oakley, Ruel, and Reid, 2013). For the last round of demolitions, the only relocation option residents were given was to move to private rental-market housing with a voucher through the Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly Section 8). Despite this massive public housing transformation effort, now known as the *Atlanta Model*, only 7 of the more than 30 traditional public housing communities eliminated were awarded HOPE VI funds for redevelopment (Farmer, 2012). Thus, relocation to voucher-subsidized, private-market housing with neither the option to return to the redevelopments nor to move to other public housing is one hallmark of the Atlanta Model, and many other cities are following suit (Ruel et al., 2012).

Although a substantial body of research concerns public housing residents' postrelocation outcomes in terms of a variety of quality of life measures and the condition of the home and destination neighborhood, relatively little research has focused on how satisfied (or unsatisfied) the residents were with the relocation process. Research also has not examined whether the relocation process affected residents' postrelocation satisfaction and destination outcomes.

These issues are important for several reasons. First, as Goetz (2010) found, premove orientation toward the prospect of relocation played a role in subsequent postrelocation experiences and perceptions. In other words, residents who were more attached to their public housing communities were less likely to be satisfied with their relocated homes. Second, a body of research related to public housing transformation policy concerns what Popkin et al. (2008) termed "hard-to-house" households. These households include a variety of former public housing residents such as custodial grandparents, singles with disabilities or households with a disabled member, residents with chronic health issues (including elderly residents), residents with a criminal background, and very large families (see Cunningham, Popkin, and Burt, 2005). As Cunningham, Popkin, and Burt (2005) pointed out, such residents may (1) have greater difficulties negotiating the relocation process, (2) be less likely to find quality private-market housing with their voucher subsidy, and (3) not receive the support services they need after relocation. Finally, mass relocation of households

¹ Section 202 came out of the 1959 amendment to the 1937 Housing Act. Its purpose was to provide affordable housing to very low-income households with residents 62 years of age or older (HUD, 2011).

typically occurs within a relatively short time and within the highly bureaucratic organizational systems of public housing authorities (PHAs) (Venkatesh 2002, 2000), which implies that, because of the bureaucracy, not all residents' relocation needs are met (Oakley, Ruel, and Wilson, 2008).

Using data from an Atlanta-based longitudinal study following public housing residents from pending relocation until after relocation, this article builds on the previous research by focusing on residents' level of satisfaction with the relocation experience and how that translated into postmove satisfaction with home and neighborhood. This article also examines whether levels of relocation satisfaction led to any significant differences in destination neighborhood characteristics. Because our sample included residents from both family public housing and highrise housing for seniors, we also examine whether variations in relocation, destination satisfaction, and neighborhood characteristics differ by origin housing type.

We begin with an overview of the existing HOPE VI relocation literature concerning resident destination outcomes and issues. Subsequently, we focus on the relocation process during Atlanta's last demolitions. Then we conduct descriptive, multivariate regression and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) analyses using our survey data concerning the effect of satisfaction with the relocation process on postrelocation satisfaction with home and neighborhood, how this effect translated into variation in census tract-level destination neighborhood characteristics, and whether variation across home and neighborhood differed by origin housing type.

Public Housing Relocation

The two existing multisite studies of HOPE VI relocations are the HOPE VI Panel Study and the HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study, both commissioned by Congress and conducted by the Urban Institute (Burton et al., 2002; Keene and Geronimus, 2011; Popkin, 2010; Popkin and Cunningham, 2002). Whereas the HOPE VI Panel Study tracked relocated residents longitudinally, the HOPE VI Resident Tracking Study provided a one-point-in-time snapshot of postrelocation living conditions. Popkin et al. (2009) summarized the major findings from these studies, concluding that for the most part results show significant improvements in the quality of life of relocated residents; they are living in neighborhoods that are safer and have lower poverty levels than public housing. Popkin et al. (2009) also pointed out, however, that many relocated residents struggle with the new challenges they face in private-market rental housing, and that those who moved to other public housing developments experienced an only minimal improvement from the communities they were forced to leave.

Case studies have captured some less positive nuances of relocation and placed greater emphasis on the fact that destination neighborhoods are as racially segregated as the public housing neighborhoods (see, for example, Burton, Levy, and Gallagher, 2007; Chaskin et al., 2012; Comey, 2007; Crump, 2002; Devine et al., 2003; Fischer, 2002, 2001; Fraser et al., 2004; Goetz, 2010, 2003, 2002; Greenbaum, 2008, 2002; Johnson-Hart, 2007; Keene and Geronimus, 2011; Keller, 2011; Kingsley, Johnson, and Pettit, 2003; Kleit and Manzo, 2006; Oakley and Burchfield, 2009; Venkatesh, 2002; Wang, Varady, and Wang, 2008). Other less positive outcomes include loss of important social support networks, increases in residential instability, and little benefit in terms of better employment and education opportunities. In fact, Chaskin et al. (2012) found evidence

of decreased earnings after relocation. Goetz (2010) also emphasized that, although destination neighborhoods may be less poor than public housing neighborhoods, poverty rates are typically greater than citywide rates.

How community attachment, loss of social support, and proximity to existing networks affect moving decisions and outcomes has been the subject of several studies. As Briggs (1998) pointed out, *social support* is a type of social capital essential to low-income residents that typically involves having locally based, homogeneous social ties (Boyd, 2008). Clampet-Lundquist (2010) found that families relocated from public housing in Philadelphia under HOPE VI lost their neighborhood-based social capital, which they drew on in public housing for safety. Therefore, residents felt more vulnerable in their new neighborhoods. Manzo, Kleit, and Couch (2008) found that community attachment was important to relocated residents. In their Atlanta public housing relocation study, Oakley, Ruel, and Reid (2013) likewise found that postrelocation home and neighborhood satisfaction was based largely on perceived community cohesion, not improved neighborhood characteristics. Also, as mentioned previously, Goetz (2010) found that prerelocation orientation toward the prospect of relocation played a role in subsequent postrelocation experiences or perceptions. Related to all these findings, Kleit and Galvez (2011) found that relocation decisions were driven largely by the desire to remain close to existing and needed social supports. In a previous study, Goetz (2003) found similar results.

In terms of the hard-to-house literature, the most extensive study to date came from the Urban Institute, documenting the Chicago Family Case Management Demonstration (Popkin et al., 2008). The origins of this demonstration came in part from the findings of the Urban Institute's HOPE VI Panel Study and Resident Tracking Study. Popkin, Levy, and Buron (2009), among other Urban Institute publications, found that, whereas those residents who were able to move back into the HOPE VI redevelopments had significant improvements in their quality of life, the outcomes for many others who relocated either with a voucher subsidy or to another traditional project-based public housing unit did not indicate any improvements. For example, according to Popkin (2006), in the first stages of the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA's) Plan for Transformation, qualified households were simply given voucher subsidies and left to find housing by themselves. As Popkin (2006: 154) stated, "Families receiving vouchers ended up in neighborhoods that were racially and economically segregated; some residents were 'lost' before they could receive services to which they were entitled, and even more simply failed to move at all, ending up in 'temporary' housing in other CHA buildings, some of which were also slated for demolition."

Among those residents who ended up in these situations, specific characteristics became apparent; for example, large families, custodial grandparent households, disability and chronic health issues, and felony convictions (Theodos et al., 2010). The term *hard to house* was developed to describe these vulnerable subgroups. In response, the Chicago Family Case Management Demonstration was established to help hard-to-house households in public housing better negotiate the relocation process through intensive counseling (Popkin et al., 2008). According to Popkin et al. (2008), despite this help, many residents were not ready to make a move with a voucher during the first year of the demonstration.

Although this research has provided much-needed information on how to help these vulnerable public housing households make the transition to subsidized private-market rental housing, its

focus was not on residents' perceived satisfaction with the relocation process and how such attitudes may affect postrelocation satisfaction and destination characteristics. From the Atlanta public housing study, we found that this process was complex and very stressful.

The Relocation Process Before the Last Demolitions in Atlanta

Note that most residents (88 percent) in our sample qualified for a voucher and were successful at leasing up. Those residents in our sample who did not receive a voucher typically ended up staying with relatives or in illegal boarding housings, extended stay hotels, and (in one case) a homeless shelter.

The relocation process began with a series of meetings with the residents at their public housing communities, led by AHA officials. These meetings were mandatory for anyone wishing to apply for a voucher, and officials provided the residents with an overview of the process, including information concerning eligibility, requirements, and procedures for obtaining a voucher subsidy. In addition, residents completed the necessary voucher paperwork at these meetings. HUD regulates voucher subsidies and requirements and bases ineligibility on federal guidelines concerning income levels and drug-related and sexual offender criminal history. According to HUD (2001), unless compelling special circumstances are presented, households are eligible for a voucher if they are making between 30 and 50 percent of the locality's median household income. No member of the household (that is, any member on the lease) is allowed to have had a felony conviction for a drug-related or sexual assault crime (HUD, 2001).

This entire process occurred between 6 months and 1 year before relocation actually began. Within only a few months, residents received notification of whether they had been approved for a voucher. To actually get the voucher, residents were then required to participate in the Good Neighbor Program. AHA (2008: 7) described this program as "a training series that prepares AHA-assisted families to transition successfully from environments of concentrated poverty into healthy mixed-income communities." The program provided information to voucher-qualified residents about compliance with private rental landlord and neighborhood expectations, including (1) caring for a unit and premises, (2) respecting the rights of neighbors, and (3) compliance with other essential conditions of tenancy. In addition, residents were assigned relocation counselors to assist them in finding a new place (AHA, 2008).

On completion of the Good Neighbor Program, residents begin the waiting-to-move process. Residents can look at single-family rental houses and apartments and express interest with the respective landlords and property managers. Landlords and property managers, however, typically do not allow a lease signing until the residents have evidence that their voucher has been issued. HUD distributes voucher subsidies to state PHAs first, and then allocates them to local PHAs in the state (HUD, 2001). Thus, at least in the case of our study, residents approved for a voucher received the official paperwork at different times, meaning that some residents were able to move before other residents. On receipt of the official voucher paperwork, the residents had 90 days to find a new place to live.²

² The AHA did allow extensions of this deadline.

Data and Methods

About 6 months after the AHA's 2007 announcement, members of the jurisdictionwide Public Housing Resident Advisory Board met with Georgia State University (GSU) sociology department faculty to discuss conducting a survey of residents' views about relocation and how relocation ultimately affected their lives and overall well-being. GSU formed the Urban Health Initiative to conduct this study.

Of the public housing communities slated for demolition, five were nearly vacant and one was inaccessible because the resident board president had already been relocated when we began developing the survey in early 2008. Thus, we targeted communities that would not begin relocation until September 2008 (which included four family developments and two highrises for seniors and people with disabilities).

We conducted a baseline (prerelocation) survey during the summer of 2008. We intended to compile a disproportionate random sample of 426 participants with equal numbers from each housing community ($N = 71$). We initially achieved only 49 percent of our goal ($N = 208$) because of constraints beyond our control, primarily regular interference from the AHA, but not related to characteristics of the public housing residents; thus, no systematic bias was introduced. We then opened the study up to volunteers to increase the sample size. An additional 103 residents volunteered. Our final sample size is 311, or 73 percent of our desired sample size, a major limitation of our study. We tested the random and nonrandom portions of the sample on all variables included in the study and found no significant differences on any variables, however.

All respondents were age 18 or older, more than 90 percent were the leaseholder, and only one member per household participated. Given that we knew which units were occupied in each housing community before sampling, we created postsurvey sampling weights to make the sample representative of the six public housing communities. Nonetheless, apply caution when making generalized inferences from this sample.

We reinterviewed our respondents 6 to 8 months after relocation, from November 2009 to September 2010. The survey was essentially the same as the baseline survey to assess prerelocation-to-postrelocation change. For the 6-month followup, we obtained a retention rate of 87 percent across the six relocating sites. At the writing of this article, we had recently completed data collection for the 24-month followup, data that are currently being cleaned.³

For this article, we limited the analyses to relocated respondents who completed both the pre-relocation and 6-month postrelocation surveys ($N = 248$), dropping 13 cases with missing values on the relocation process variable. Two participants who did not participate at 6 months after relocation but did participate in the 24-month postrelocation interview were included in the analyses. Both participants experienced a hard relocation process. We then geocoded the addresses of the original public housing sample and the addresses residents lived in 6 months after relocation using 2010 census boundaries. Using the geocodes, we attached census tract identifiers for each

³ Our retention rate between waves two and three is 91 percent.

participant and merged the survey data with 2005–2009 American Community Survey (ACS) data. In this process, we limited the sample to those who moved within the Atlanta metropolitan area (dropping five out-of-state cases), giving us a final full sample size of 232.

Before presenting our multivariate analysis, we provide a thematic map of where residents moved, average census tract characteristics from the 2005–2009 ACS, and crime statistics from the Atlanta Police Department 2009 *Crime Incident Reports*.

Perceived Relocation Satisfaction Constructs

Our dependent variable comes from an open-ended question asked at the 6-month postrelocation interview and at 24 months for those few respondents lost to followup at 6 months. Specifically, we asked, "Looking back, how would you describe the relocation process?" Answers ranged from statements like, "It wasn't a problem because I found a place and everything just went smoothly"; to, "Kind of stressful" or, "It was a fair process, it was ok"; and then finally to statements like, "The process was stressful because you did not know where you were going and you were just looking around. ... It was very stressful" and, "It was horrible. I had to move from a place where all my friends were like family and now I am in the middle of nowhere."

Two authors independently coded responses to this question, met, and came to consensus on the categories to use to describe the process. A consistent theme became apparent. They then recoded the question using the agreed-on categories. After we achieved more than 65 percent agreement on the codes, the two authors met and coded the remaining responses together and refined the category definitions. We created six codes: process was (1) hard, terrible, or traumatic with stress; (2) stressful; (3) somewhat stressful; (4) OK/alright/fair; (5) good/fine; (6) easy/smooth. Given the difficulty in distinguishing "good/fine" from "easy/smooth" and distinguishing "hard, terrible, or traumatic with stress" from "stressful", we then collapsed the six categories into three: (1) hard, (2) neutral, and (3) easy relocation experience. For this analysis, we are interested in the characteristics of public housing residents who thought the relocations were easy, so we dichotomized the variable with easy relocation experience coded as 1 and neutral and hard coded as 0.

We controlled for variables that might predict an easy relocation experience. First is a dummy variable for moving from family housing versus from a highrise for seniors. We include this variable for three reasons. First, family housing and senior housing were very different. The family housing was barrack-style, in worse condition, and farther from the city center. Second, the neighborhoods differed: the family housing was located in poorer, more racially segregated, and higher crime areas. Third, a major finding from our premove baseline survey was that, although the majority of the family housing residents wanted to move (73 percent), the majority in senior housing did not want to move (61 percent). Because there were seniors in family housing, we also included age as a control.

Disability status was coded 1 for individuals who said they did not work because of a disability or who said carrying groceries, walking up a flight of stairs, or walking around the neighborhood without assistance was a significant problem, and coded 0 for individuals who did not indicate any of these problems. A dummy variable for having a chronic condition was coded 1 for respondents who had been diagnosed with at least one of the following conditions: high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma, arthritis, stroke, or cancer. We measured tenure in public housing in years.

Experiencing financial strain is a dummy indicator, with 1 coded as not having enough money to make ends meet most months in the past year and 0 coded as having more than enough money, some money left over, or barely enough money to make ends meet at the end of most months. Having no friends in public housing is a dummy variable, with 1 coded as having no friends living in public housing and 0 coded as having at least a few friends living in same public housing community. We asked respondents if they thought the condition of their postrelocation home was excellent, good, fair, or poor. We also asked respondents if they were (1) very satisfied, (2) somewhat satisfied, (3) in the middle, (4) somewhat dissatisfied, or (5) very dissatisfied with their postrelocation neighborhood. We did not include race, gender, marital status, education, or income as controls because of lack of variation.

For the second set of analyses, we used several measures from the ACS 2005–2009 census tract-level data. We used percentage of residents living in poverty, percentage of households that are female headed, percentage of household heads who are unemployed, percentage of homes that are vacant, percentage of homes that are occupied by renters, percentage of homes that are more than 30 years old, and percentage of residents who are non-Hispanic African American. Turnover in the neighborhood is measured by the percentage of households living in the same place for less than 10 years. Finally, we include a measure we call high former public housing receiving neighborhood. Our receivership categorization is similar to that of Popkin et al. (2012). High-receiving neighborhoods had more than 12 former public housing households move in, medium-receiving neighborhoods had 5 to 12 former public housing households move in; low-receiving neighborhoods had fewer than 5 former public housing households move in. In some analyses we present, we dichotomize our receivership variable so that high receiving is coded 1 and all other is coded 0. In preliminary analyses, we also included educational attainment and household size as predictors of an easy relocation process, but they were not at all significant and, because our sample size is very small, we decided to drop them.

Multivariate Analysis

We ran generalized estimating equations, or GEE, for these analyses using the GENMOD (Generalized Linear Model) procedure in SAS[®] version 9.2 to deal with the autocorrelation inherent in clustered data (six communities) (Liang and Zeger, 1986). In this case, we use the public housing community as our cluster, because 6 months is not a sufficient time to diminish the autocorrelation of living in a specific public housing community. In addition, we run logistic regression models in which the outcome is the probability of experiencing an easy relocation process versus not experiencing an easy relocation process. We present raw logit estimates and standard errors. Finally, to examine whether destination home and neighborhood conditions differ significantly between those who experienced an easy relocation and those who did not, we use ANOVA procedures to test mean differences in reported home and neighborhood conditions.

Results

Exhibit 1 shows the demographic information for our initial sample and the sample in our present analysis. Although we were unsuccessful in locating about 13 percent of those who participated

Exhibit 1

Weighted Sample Demographics

Variable	Baseline Sample		Analysis Dataset	
	N	%	N	%
Number of cases weighted	311 ^a	NA	232 ^b	75
Female	263	85	188	81
African American	298	96	222	96
Age				
18–44	142	46	92	40
45–64	122	39	97	42
65+	47	15	43	19
Years in public housing				
Fewer than 2 years	106	33	70	30
2–4 years	58	19	53	23
4–8 years	66	21	52	22
More than 8 years	81	26	57	25
Have high school degree or GED	170	55	118	51
Married	15	5	16	7
Monthly income	\$832.41		\$831.71	

GED = general equivalency diploma. NA = not applicable.

^a Does not include the nonrelocating control group.

^b Of the 232 original respondents, 24 died before the 6-month interview, we were unable to locate 31 for the 6-month interview, 5 moved out of state before the 6-month interview, and 11 had missing information on one or more of the outcome variables.

in the baseline survey, and another 6 percent died, the population characteristics among the three survey periods are very similar. Comparing those who participated in the baseline survey with only those who participated in the 6-month followup, however, age is different, meaning younger people were less likely to participate in the 6-month followup.

Most of our sample, by far, were African American (96 percent) and female (85 percent); 46 percent were between the ages of 18 and 44 years, another 39 percent were between the ages of 45 and 64 years, and 15 percent were 65 years or older. Nearly three-fourths reported living in public housing for between 2 and 8 years. Only 5 percent reported being married, and the average number of children younger than age 18 in the household was two. Only 55 percent reported having a high school degree or general equivalency diploma (GED), and the average monthly income was \$832.41, putting these households, regardless of size, well below the federally established poverty line.

Exhibit 2 presents basic descriptive statistics of the variables used in our analyses. The topmost rows of exhibit 2 provide the distribution for the original coded variable and the final dichotomous variable. Findings indicate that 31 percent considered the relocation process either hard, terrible, or traumatic with stress (15 percent) or stressful (16 percent). Another 15 percent considered it somewhat stressful, 18 percent reported it being ok/alright/fair, and 37 percent considered it either good/fine (18 percent) or easy/smooth (19 percent). On a scale of 1 (excellent) to 4 (poor), the average level of satisfaction with the new home is 1.79. On a scale of 1 (very satisfied) to 5 (very dissatisfied), the average level of satisfaction with the new neighborhood is 2.04. The average tenure in public housing is 6.2 years, and the average age is nearly 46. The means for the computed dichotomous variables (living in a family project, being disabled, having a chronic health condition,

Exhibit 2

Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in the Analysis

Relocation Process	Mean/Proportion	Range
Hard, terrible, or traumatic with stress	0.15	
Stressful	0.16	
Somewhat stressful	0.15	
Okay/alright/fair	0.18	
Good/fine	0.18	
Easy/smooth	0.19	
Easy relocation	0.37 (0.48)	0–1
Live in family project	0.76 (0.42)	0–1
Age	45.70 (16.78)	19–93
Have disability	0.57 (0.50)	0–1
Have chronic health condition	0.58 (0.49)	0–1
Tenure in public housing in years	6.22 (6.92)	0.25–38.00
Financial strain	0.16 (0.37)	0–1
No public housing friends	0.35 (0.48)	0–1
Condition of postrelocation home (1 = excellent, 2 = good, 3 = fair, 4 = poor)	1.79 (0.83)	1–4
Satisfaction with postrelocation neighborhood (1 = very satisfied, 2 = somewhat satisfied, 3 = in the middle, 4 = somewhat dissatisfied, 5 = very dissatisfied)	2.04 (1.26)	1–5
High former public housing-receiving neighborhood	0.08 (0.27)	0–1
Neighborhood percent of homes more than 30 years old	64.81 (21.84)	14.81–96.76
Neighborhood percent of homes vacant	21.27 (8.37)	6.93–45.13
Neighborhood percent renters	51.92 (14.86)	12.49–80.69
Neighborhood percent living in same place less than 10 years	70.72 (15.22)	38.91–100.00
Neighborhood percent in poverty	31.73 (11.49)	3.85–64.26
Neighborhood percent female-headed households	19.28 (8.60)	1.72–40.04
Neighborhood percent unemployed	17.12 (6.57)	1.71–34.90
Neighborhood percent non-Hispanic African American	84.53 (22.78)	6.54–98.25

Notes: Neighborhood characteristics represent the census tracts where the public housing residents moved and are from the 2005–2009 American Community Survey. N = 232. Standard deviations in parentheses.

having financial strain after relocation, and having no public housing friends in destination neighborhoods) show a mixed story. Specifically, the level of being disabled or having a chronic condition is nearly 0.60, but experiencing financial strain is only 0.16. Likewise, having no public housing friends is 0.35, indicating that most did have friends in public housing. Interestingly, the dichotomous variable concerning whether a resident moved to a high-receiving neighborhood is 0.08, indicating that most residents in the sample did not move to this type of area.

The average neighborhood characteristics for the sample used in our analysis, shown in exhibit 2, are consistent with previous research. Specifically, on average, these former public housing residents are moving to neighborhoods with less poverty (but not low poverty) that are racially segregated; the average poverty level is nearly 32 percent, and the average percentage non-Hispanic African American is more than 84 percent. On average, they are also moving to neighborhoods where the percentage of homes built more than 30 years ago is high (nearly 65 percent). These neighborhoods are also characterized by a high mobility level, with an average of nearly 71 percent living in the

same place for less than 10 years. Average unemployment is about 17 percent and the average of households that are female headed is nearly 20 percent. Average vacancy is slightly more than 21 percent, and the average of households who are renters is nearly 52 percent.

Neighborhood Characteristics by Level of Receivership

To put our subsequent multivariate analysis in perspective, we also provide some descriptive information at the census tract level for the entire sample (including those residents we drop from the subsequent multivariate analysis of relocation satisfaction) by levels of receivership. Exhibit 3 shows the receivership categories by census tract. Based on the distribution of former public housing households across the destination census tracts, we came up with the following categorization: (1) nonreceiving; (2) low receiving, meaning 1 to 5 households; (3) medium receiving, meaning 6 to 12 households; and (4) high receiving, meaning more than 12 households.

Exhibits 4 and 5 show the average tract-level population and socioeconomic characteristics by level of receivership. Exhibit 4 provides this information for the city of Atlanta and includes crime information. Exhibit 5 shows the population and socioeconomic information for the suburbs (note that the crime data are not available for the suburbs). On average, all the receiving tracts differ substantially from the nonreceiving tracts. Based on 2000 census tract boundaries, of the 660 census

Exhibit 3

Public Housing Relocation Receivership, by Census Tract

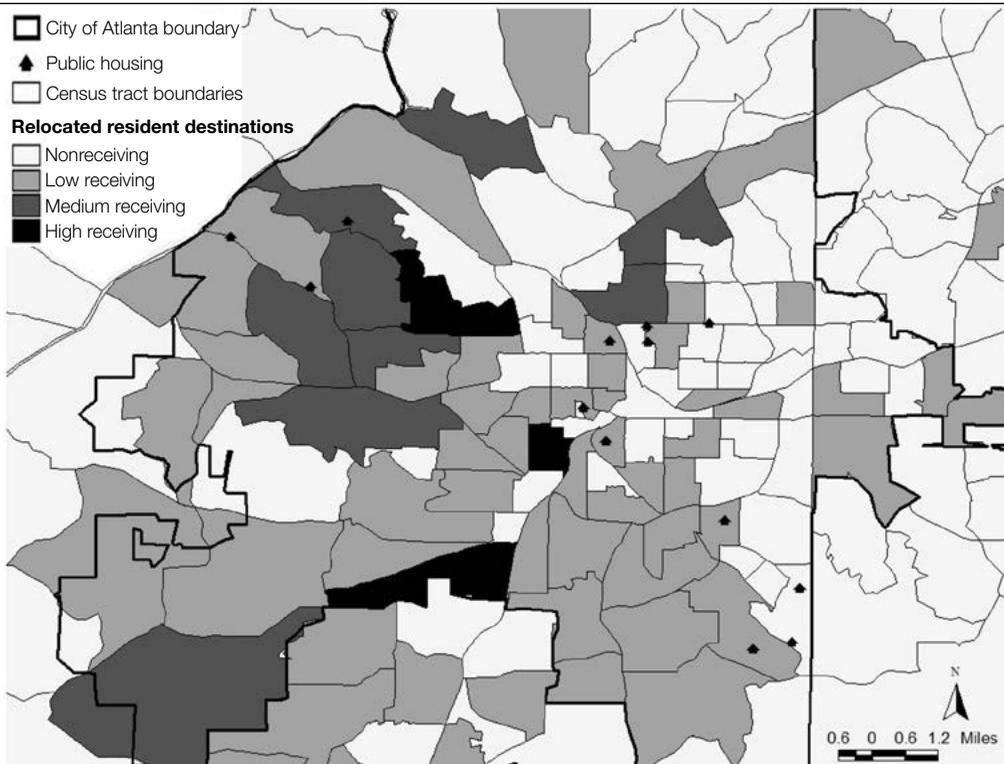


Exhibit 4

Average Characteristics of Destination Census Tracts Within the City of Atlanta

	Citywide	Non-receiving	Low Receiving	Medium Receiving	High Receiving	Average Receiving	Public Housing
Nonviolent crime rate	96.97	106.22	95.83	67.88	94.69	81.13	97.76
Violent crime rate	20.83	18.96	23.79	16.96	25.71	22.15	26.93
Total population	4,511	4,467	3,841	6,115	5,278	5,078	3,001
Percent non-Hispanic African American	60.00	46.00	71.10	75.14	95.21	80.48	73.40
Percent non-Hispanic White	31.00	44.00	21.00	17.00	3.00	13.70	16.15
Percent Hispanic	5.20	6.01	5.22	4.18	1.41	3.60	6.00
Percent vacancy	22.00	19.00	25.00	24.08	21.27	22.70	25.13
Percent rental household	41.24	40.00	43.50	39.02	61.58	48.03	54.15
Percent homeowner household	37.00	41.46	32.00	37.00	17.14	28.71	21.00
Percent poverty	22.40	21.00	33.54	26.10	29.00	29.55	41.11
Number of census tracts	121	58	48	13	3	64	12

Sources: 2005–2009 American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Atlanta Police Department crime incident reports, 2009

Exhibit 5

Average Characteristics of Destination Census Tracts in Suburban Atlanta

	Metropolitanwide	Suburb Nonreceiving	Suburb Receiving
Total population	7,702	8,455	7,408
Percent non-Hispanic African American	35.58	29.16	49.00
Percent non-Hispanic White	49.52	55.00	31.16
Percent Hispanic	9.35	10.03	14.56
Percent vacancy	13.00	10.46	16.09
Percent rental household	29.53	26.57	35.00
Percent homeowner household	58.00	63.00	49.01
Percent poverty	15.00	12.00	16.00
Number of census tracts	660	549	20

Source: 2005–2009 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

tracts in the Atlanta metropolitan region, former public housing residents moved to 84, with 64 within the city limits. Thus, less than 10 percent of our sample moved outside the city limits, and those who did so typically relocated to tracts adjacent to the city boundaries with relatively similar neighborhood characteristics to the characteristics of the tracts to which those who relocated within the city moved. The average distance moved is only 3 miles. Thus, by far, most relocated residents are not far from the former public housing locations.

We begin with the average census tract characteristics by receivership for the city, shown in exhibit 4. In terms of racial composition, low-receiving, medium-receiving, and public housing census tracts range from 71 to 75 percent African American. High-receiving tracts average 95 percent African American, and the average percentage African American across all levels of receivership is slightly more than 80. By contrast, nonreceiving tracts are 46 percent African American, and the citywide

percentage is 60. Thus, a clear pattern of racial segregation is apparent; former public housing residents are not moving to more racially integrated neighborhoods, and, in fact, the level of racial segregation is much greater in high-receiving tracts than in the public housing census tracts.

Nonreceiving neighborhoods have the lowest vacancy and medium-receiving neighborhoods have the lowest renter household percentages. Across the other receivership categories and citywide, however, little difference emerges except in the high-receiving tracts, where the proportion of rental households is about 20 percentage points more. Homeownership percentages are less in high- and low-receiving tracts and in the public housing tracts as compared with the percentages in nonreceiving tracts and citywide. Medium-receiving tracts, however, have a homeownership percentage equal to that of the city. The average across all receiving tracts is slightly less than 29 percent as compared with the citywide average of 37 percent and the nonreceiving tract average of slightly more than 41 percent.

Poverty percentages across all receiving and public housing tracts are greater than the citywide and nonreceiving tract percentages. Whereas the citywide poverty rate is 22.4 percent, and the nonreceiving tract rate about the same, the poverty rate for the low-receiving tracts is 33.5 percent, for medium-receiving tracts is 26.0 percent, and for high-receiving tracts is 29.0 percent, with an average across all receiving tracts of 29.6 percent. The poverty rate for the receiving tracts is between 7.5 and 12.0 percentage points less than for the public housing tracts. Like those of previous studies, our findings reveal that residents are moving to neighborhoods with less poverty than public housing. The widely accepted definition of low-poverty neighborhoods is 20 percent or less, however (Goetz, 2003). All levels of receivership neighborhoods in our study exceed this threshold by between 6.0 and 13.5 percent, and the citywide and nonreceiving figures also exceed this threshold.

Crime trends indicate some interesting patterns. Specifically, the nonviolent crime rate per 1,000 people is greatest (106) in the nonreceiving tracts and least in the medium-receiving ones (68). By contrast, the citywide, low-receiving, and high-receiving rates are nearly equivalent (95 to 97), with the average across all receiving tracts at 81. The nonviolent crime rate for public housing is greater than for all the receiving and citywide tracts, at nearly 98. Similarly, the violent crime rate is least (17) in the medium-receiving neighborhoods even compared with crime rates in the citywide (21) and the nonreceiving (19) tracts. Low-receiving neighborhoods have a rate of 24 and high-receiving neighborhoods a rate of 26, with the average across all receiving tracts at 22. The rate in the public housing tracts is the greatest, at 27.

Exhibit 5 shows the suburbanwide population and socioeconomic characteristics compared with the averages for the receiving and nonreceiving census tracts. Because most residents stayed within the city limits, the numbers of households per suburban census tract varied little, with the average being three. Therefore, we simply categorize the suburban tracts as receiving or nonreceiving.

Findings indicate that, although the receiving tracts are more disadvantaged and racially segregated on average than both the nonreceiving and metropolitanwide tracts, they are less disadvantaged than public housing. In addition, residents who moved to the suburbs are living in far less disadvantaged and racially segregated tracts than those residents who moved within the city, which in large part reflects disparities that have existed between the urban and suburban regions of metropolitan areas around the country since suburbanization began in the 1950s. The fact that so few residents in our

study (10 percent) left the city proper suggests both structural barriers (such as lack of public transportation) and individual choices (reluctance to move too far away from existing social supports).

Exhibit 6 presents the first set of logistic regressions. Model 1 presents raw logits and standard errors from logistic regression of an easy relocation process. Residents of family projects are significantly more likely than residents of projects for seniors to have experienced an easy relocation process ($b = 0.96$). For each additional year of age, the probability of an easy relocation increases significantly, by 0.04 logits. Having a disability is significantly associated with 0.60 lower logged odds of an easy relocation process than the nondisabled. Having a chronic health condition is not associated with the ease of the relocation process, however. Each additional year living in public housing (tenure) is associated with a 0.07-logged odds reduction in experiencing an easy relocation process. Those experiencing financial strain have 1.26 lower logged odds of an easy relocation process than those with no financial strain. Having no friends in the public housing community is associated with 0.52 higher logged odds of an easy relocation process than those with friends in public housing community.

Exhibit 6

Logistic Regressions of Having an Easy Relocation Process on Baseline Hard-to-House Characteristics

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	-0.85*** (0.09)	-0.78** (0.28)	-0.87*** (0.15)	-0.91*** (0.09)	-0.64*** (0.11)
Live in family project	0.96*** (0.26)	0.89+ (0.48)	0.99** (0.33)	0.92** (0.31)	0.68* (0.31)
Age	0.04** (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	0.04** (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	0.04** (0.01)
Have disability	-0.60** (0.20)	-0.69*** (0.09)	-0.61** (0.21)	-0.54* (0.22)	-0.61** (0.19)
Have chronic health condition	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.07 (0.10)	-0.07 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.19)
Tenure in public housing in years	-0.07* (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)
Financial strain	-1.26* (0.50)	-1.26* (0.50)	-1.10** (0.38)	-1.23* (0.51)	-1.27* (0.50)
No public housing friends	0.52* (0.22)	0.52* (0.22)	0.52* (0.22)	0.48* (0.22)	-0.14+ (0.08)
Live in family—disabled		0.11 (0.33)			
Live in family—financial strain			-0.21 (0.89)		
Live in family—tenure in public housing in years				-0.11** (0.03)	
Live in family—no public housing friends					0.85** (0.29)
QIC	283.51	283.86	284.74	283.85	282.22

QIC = Quasilikelihood under the Independence Model Criterion (goodness of fit).

+ $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .0001$.

Notes: The reference categories are living in housing for seniors or people with disabilities, having a functional limitation or disability, having no chronic conditions, and having no financial strain. Raw estimates and standard errors in parentheses.

Models 2 through 5 explore whether the hard-to-house characteristics vary by type of housing project. This examination is important because the effect of relocation on residents of housing for seniors has received little examination. All noninteracted variables change little if at all, and therefore we will not reinterpret them but focus solely on the interactions. In model 2, we interact disability status with housing type. Having a disability is associated with 0.69 lower logged odds of an easy relocation process, but the odds did not differ significantly for residents of family housing versus housing for seniors.

Model 3 interacts financial strain by housing type. Experiencing financial strain is associated with 0.11 lower logged odds of an easy relocation process, but the odds did not differ significantly for residents of family housing versus housing for seniors. Model 4 interacts tenure in public housing with type of housing project. A significant difference emerges in the association of tenure in public housing with the relocation process for residents of family housing versus housing for seniors. Each additional year of tenure in public housing reduces the logged odds of an easy relocation process for family housing residents compared with the corresponding odds for residents of housing for seniors. Model 5 interacts having no friends in public housing with type of housing project. A significant difference emerges in the association of having no friends in public housing with the relocation process for residents of family housing versus housing for seniors. Those in family housing with no public housing friends had a 0.85-logged odds greater likelihood of an easy relocation process than residents of housing for seniors.

In sum, being older and from housing for seniors, having a disability, experiencing financial strain, and living a longer time in public housing decreased the probability of experiencing an easy relocation process. What are the consequences in terms of the new homes and neighborhoods of not experiencing an easy relocation process? Does it lead to worse home and neighborhood conditions?

Exhibit 7 presents mean differences in reported home and neighborhood conditions and objective census tract-level measures of neighborhood conditions between those who experienced an easy

Exhibit 7

Predicting Home and Neighborhood Consequences of Easy Relocation Versus Not Easy Relocation

	Mean for Not Easy Relocation	Mean for Easy Relocation	F-Test
Condition of postrelocation home (1 = excellent, 2 = good, 3 = fair, 4 = poor)	1.93 (0.85)	1.57 (0.77)	9.46*
Satisfaction with postrelocation neighborhood	2.27 (1.28)	1.66 (1.12)	14.19**
High former public housing receiving neighborhood	0.06 (0.23)	0.11 (0.31)	4.95*
Neighborhood percent of homes more than 30 years old	62.76 (21.34)	68.17 (22.39)	1.22
Neighborhood percent of homes vacant	21.48 (8.68)	20.92 (9.14)	0.37
Neighborhood percent renters	52.43 (14.40)	51.08 (15.69)	0.12
Neighborhood percent living in same place less than 10 years	73.12 (14.03)	66.80 (16.44)	5.15*
Neighborhood percent in poverty	32.09 (11.32)	31.16 (11.86)	0.27
Neighborhood percent female-headed households	18.63 (8.93)	20.35 (7.90)	4.06
Neighborhood percent unemployed	16.13 (6.94)	18.75 (5.50)	10.15*
Neighborhood percent non-Hispanic African American	79.93 (26.29)	92.02 (11.00)	17.16***

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .0001$.

Note: Raw estimates and standard errors in parentheses.

relocation and those who did not, along with the reported ANOVA test results. Resident evaluation of both home and neighborhood is significantly greater for those who experienced an easy relocation than for those who did not. Those who experienced an easy relocation also were significantly more likely to move into neighborhoods where at least 12 others from our sample moved compared with those who did not experience an easy relocation.

In terms of the census tract measures, no significant difference emerges between the neighborhoods of those who had an easy relocation and those who did not in terms of neighborhood percentage vacancy, percentage renters, and percentage older homes. Approximately 20 percent of homes were vacant in neighborhoods for each group. For each group, slightly more than 50 percent of all occupied homes were occupied by renters. Although the neighborhoods chosen by those experiencing an easy relocation had more older homes, the difference was not significant. A significant difference does emerge, however, in the level of neighborhood turnover. Those who experienced an easy relocation moved into neighborhoods with significantly less turnover (66.8 percent) than those who did not experience an easy relocation (73.0 percent).

The neighborhood poverty level for those who did and did not experience an easy relocation exhibits no significant difference. Those who experienced an easy relocation chose neighborhoods with significantly greater proportions of both female-headed households and unemployed heads of households than did those who did not experience an easy relocation. Similarly, those who experienced an easy relocation ended up in more racially segregated neighborhoods, with 92 percent non-Hispanic African-American neighbors, compared with the neighborhoods of those without an easy relocation (79 percent African American).

Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this article has been to examine whether perceived levels of satisfaction with the relocation process among former public housing residents affected postrelocation satisfaction with home and neighborhood and to examine whether there are significant differences in destination neighborhood characteristics based on levels of satisfaction with the relocation process. We conducted this analysis using data from an Atlanta-based longitudinal study following public housing residents from pending relocation through being relocated, interviewing them before relocation and then 6 months after relocation.

Overall, our destination neighborhood-level findings are consistent with the previous research: by and large, former public housing residents are moving to neighborhoods that have less poverty (but not low poverty) and that are safer than, but just as racially segregated as, their former neighborhoods. Our findings are also consistent with the previous research concerning levels of attachment to public housing communities and residents who fall into the category of hard to house. Specifically, being older, having a disability, having a longer tenure in public housing, and experiencing postrelocation financial strain are significantly associated with lower levels of relocation process satisfaction. Although those in highrise housing for seniors or people with disabilities were less likely to experience an easy relocation process, they were not the only hard-to-house residents. Within family housing, those residents with longer tenure and greater attachment to the community in terms of networks were less likely to experience an easy relocation process.

The findings are far more mixed concerning the relationship between levels of relocation-process satisfaction and destination neighborhood characteristics. First, no significant difference emerges in terms of levels of satisfaction and levels of neighborhood poverty. In other words, regardless of poor satisfaction or high satisfaction, residents are moving to neighborhoods with similar poverty levels. On the other hand, those residents with high satisfaction are moving to neighborhoods that are more stable in terms of mobility, but these neighborhoods also have a significantly higher proportion of female-headed households, unemployment, and racial segregation.

What, then, do these findings imply for the policy imperatives to use public housing demolition and relocation in an effort to deconcentrate poverty and, in the process, create mixed-income developments and places? The most obvious implication is that the policy discourse clearly does not match up with residents' perceptions in terms of being relocated and postrelocation satisfaction. The relationship appears direct between those who were less satisfied with the relocation process and those who are less satisfied with their postrelocation home and neighborhood. The relationship between relocation process levels of satisfaction and postrelocation neighborhood characteristics tells a different story, however. There is no statistical difference in neighborhood levels of poverty, and, although those who were more satisfied with the relocation process ended up in more stable neighborhoods, those neighborhoods had higher racial segregation.

The underlying assumptions of the poverty deconcentration imperative clearly are not supported by our analyses. More specifically, our analyses point to the importance of acknowledging that one size does not fit all and that resident perceptions matter. Public housing transformation efforts using relocation to the subsidized private rental market need to better accommodate the varying circumstances of the residents before relocation and their relocation preferences within the context of health conditions, disability, age, public housing tenure, and essential social supports.

Our findings also speak to the importance of proactively including residents' voices in the relocation process and not simply assuming that they will be better off because they are moving out of public housing and into neighborhoods with less poverty. Lastly, although at least in our sample the majority of residents in family housing expressed a desire to move (whereas the majority of those in senior housing did not want to move), an explicit acknowledgement that these are forced moves needs to be better incorporated into such policies.

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