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**If Low Income Blacks Are Given a Chance to Live in White Neighborhoods,  
Will They Stay? Examining Mobility Patterns with Quasi-Experimental Data**

Stefanie DeLuca and James E. Rosenbaum

Institute for Policy Research  
Northwestern University  
2040 Sheridan Rd.  
Evanston IL 60208  
847-491-3395

*Contact:* [j-rosenbaum@northwestern.edu](mailto:j-rosenbaum@northwestern.edu)

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**Examining Mobility Patterns with Quasi-Experimental Data** 7/8/02

Abstract. This study examines the long-term outcomes of the Gautreaux residential mobility program. Using administrative records provides baseline characteristics on all participants, and the study located recent addresses for nearly all participants an average of 17 years after they were originally placed. The results indicate that most families were placed in middle to high SES suburbs, and they currently still live in similar areas. We also find that most low-income black families who are placed in primarily white suburban neighborhoods did not return to the city, as previous research might have predicted. Although 84 percent of families made subsequent moves, even among movers, the racial composition of current address is strongly related to program placement, even after controls for family attributes. The results suggest that residential mobility may alter preferences or structural barriers, permitting families to follow new courses of action. The results suggest that residential mobility programs can have long-term consequences.

Given the many social problems associated with racial and economic segregation, residential mobility has attracted considerable interest among policymakers (Wilson, 1987; Massey and Denton, 1993; Bobo, 1989), and research has suggested some processes by which neighborhoods might affect individual outcomes (Galster and Killen, 1995, Briggs, 1997; Kleit, 2001) While traditional project-based housing assistance programs tend to cluster large numbers of poor families in the same location (Newman and Schnare, 1997), residential mobility programs move families from areas of concentrated poverty to ones where there is less poverty, and where resources, role models, and opportunities may be better. Residential mobility has been seen as a valuable strategy for strengthening welfare policy and supporting working families (Sard and Waller, 2002).

Research on the early outcomes of residential mobility programs has been very promising. However, the durability of residential mobility has been questioned. Critics contend that poor people would be uncomfortable in such locations and will not remain there. Seeking to be with their own kind--other low-income blacks--they will move away from integrated areas, especially ones where they are a small minority (Clark, 1991). Critics are not the only ones with such concerns. High level administrators in the federal government and top executives at public housing agencies have worried that such outcomes would occur.

This study examines long-term outcomes of a residential mobility program that began in 1976. In Chicago's Gautreaux Program, low-income black families were assigned to various neighborhoods in the city or suburbs by a quasi-random procedure between 1976-1990. This study examines the long-term effects of these moves on families' residential location an average of 17 years after they were originally placed.

This study is also distinctive in using administrative records. Previous research on the Gautreaux program used mailed surveys and in-person interviews. While these surveys had response rates that are generally considered acceptable (67%), anything short of perfect response rates raises potential ambiguities. By tracking down recent addresses of families through a variety of sources, and merging the Gautreaux program records with this information, this study can examine current location outcomes with a better "response rate" than most surveys, with fewer risks of mistaken reports than surveys.

## PRIOR RESEARCH

The majority of research on residential mobility to date focuses on two topics: 1) the neighborhood factors that affect where people *choose* to live, and 2) statistical analyses of the relationship between neighborhood attributes and many life outcomes (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Aber, 1997; Crane, 1997). However, even after extensive statistical controls, one cannot be certain about the direction of causality or whether unmeasured factors might influence observed relationships. The best way to separate these effects is through social programs in which families are randomly assigned to neighborhoods, such as the long-term Gautreaux program and the recent multi-city Moving to Opportunity program. While housing mobility programs have been done in New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, California and many other places (Peterson and Williams, 1995), few locations have offered the possibility for appropriate comparison groups that approximate a social experiment.

As a result of a 1976 Supreme Court decision, the Gautreaux program allowed Chicago public housing residents (and those on the waiting list) to receive Section 8 housing certificates (or vouchers) and move to private-sector apartments either in mostly-white suburbs or within the city of Chicago. Between 1976 and 1998, over 7000 families participated, and over half moved to suburbs. Because of its design, the Gautreaux program presents an unusual opportunity to examine the outcomes associated with helping low-income families move to better neighborhoods with better labor markets and better schools. Socio-economic and racial integration of neighborhoods is rare in the U.S., so we generally do not know about the experiences of low-income blacks in middle-income white neighborhoods. Even when such integration exists, we suspect that low-income families who move into middle-income neighborhoods are exceptional people, so their subsequent attainments reflect more about themselves than about the effects of neighborhoods.

Gautreaux participants circumvented the typical barriers to living in suburbs, not by their jobs, personal finances, or values, but by acceptance into the program and quasi-random assignment to the suburbs. Assigning families to neighborhoods in a quasi-random basis, the program gave them rent subsidies that allowed them to live in suburban apartments for the same cost as public housing, but did not provide employment or transportation assistance to participating families. Moreover, unlike the usual case of black suburbanization -- working-class blacks living in working-class suburbs -- Gautreaux permitted low-income blacks to live in middle-income white suburbs. Participants moved to more than 115 suburbs throughout the six counties surrounding Chicago. Suburbs with a population that was more than 30% black were excluded by the consent decree, and a few very high-rent suburbs were excluded by funding limitations of Section 8 certificates.

Prior research on the Gautreaux program has shown significant relationships between placement neighborhoods and subsequent employment and educational attainment, by comparing

outcomes for families moving to mostly white suburbs and outcomes for those moving to mostly black city neighborhoods. A study of children found that, by the time they were young adults, those children who moved to the suburbs were much more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, attend four-year colleges (vs. two-year colleges), and (if they were not in college) to be employed and to have jobs with better pay and with benefits (Rosenbaum, 1995). Another larger study of Gautreaux mothers found that suburban movers had higher employment rates than city movers, and the difference was especially large for adults who were unemployed prior to the program (Rosenbaum, 1997).

According to a former high-level administrator at the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), "the encouraging evidence from Gautreaux led to national legislation calling on HUD to test housing mobility strategies further" (Turner, 1998, 376). This led to the Moving To Opportunity program (MTO), which randomly assigned low-income families to low-poverty areas, to an open-choice section 8 group, or to a control group which remained in high poverty areas. MTO was explicitly designed as an experiment, with random assignment, and pre- and post-move data collection. While Gautreaux is a program for racial and income integration, where moves to low-poverty areas went to predominantly white suburbs (generally 90%+), MTO is a program for income integration: 32% of MTO movers to low-poverty areas went to middle-income black areas (50%+ black), and 60% of the MTO group moved to areas where blacks were more than a token presence (10%+).

The early results of the MTO program suggest that moves to low-poverty neighborhoods have led to some important gains in some outcomes, including mother's and children's feelings of safety, mental and physical health and children's behavior and education (e.g. Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit, 1997; Katz, Kling, and Liebman 1997; Ladd and Ludwig 1997; Goering et al. 1999). MTO only began in the 1990s, so only short-term outcomes are available.

The long-term durability of such residential moves is unknown. The present paper examines whether people placed in predominantly white suburbs stay there or move back to more racially homogenous areas similar to the ones they lived in before the program. Even though residents are initially placed into neighborhoods that are safer and provide more employment and education opportunities, they may not stay in these neighborhoods if they experience transitional difficulties. After initially being placed in mostly white suburbs, do families return to city neighborhoods similar to those from which they began?

In addition, we can ask whether the racial composition of the placement neighborhoods has an effect on the later moves of these families. Prior studies have assumed that people have a set of endogenous preferences that make one neighborhood more desirable than another (Farley et al, 1978). For instance, Clark (1986, 1988, 1989,1991) found that both African Americans and whites wished to live in neighborhoods where they were the predominant race, and concluded that

residential segregation would remain high even if fair housing laws or other integrative housing policies were in effect.

Farley et al (1994) explore residential segregation as a function of the preferences of both blacks and whites in the “hypersegregated” city of Detroit in 1976 and 1992. They find that in 1976, while most whites were uncomfortable in areas with more than a few black families, most African Americans said they would *prefer* to live in racially mixed areas, specifically those in which there were at least 50% black residents. In fact, racially mixed neighborhoods appeared to be more popular with blacks than all black areas. However, despite the fact that white racial residential preferences became more liberal in the period from 1976-1992, black racial preferences shifted away from integration. Farley’s early findings implied that people can be characterized as having certain fixed preferences. His later findings indicate that preferences gradually change over a very long period of time, but, in the later period, people can still be characterized as having certain durable preferences.

Besides changing with historical and political changes, can these preferences change as a result of specific experiences? If families are randomly assigned to radically different neighborhoods, will their preferences differ and will their subsequent moves retain these differences or diminish them?

Another consideration is whether these neighborhoods are actually comparable to inner-city neighborhoods, rather than the “idyllic escapes from the stresses of urban life” we usually imagine them to be (Harris, 1999). Harris (1999) contends that much of the academic rhetoric about the success of minorities moving to suburbs should be taken with a grain of salt. His work shows that suburbs vary greatly with regard to socioeconomic status, and that when minorities (specifically Latinos and blacks) do live in the suburbs, more than 40% end up in suburbs of “low” socioeconomic status<sup>1</sup>. These areas are not only considerably less advantaged than the middle or high suburbs, but on many indicators they are less advantaged than their central cities.

Although there is much attention to the changing preferences of whites and blacks, there is little explicit consideration of the preferences of *low-income* black families or the possibility that these preferences can change as a function of residential mobility programs. We make assumptions that people choose where they live based on some combination of, or interaction between, personal characteristics and structural constraints. Debates about the causes of residential segregation have focused primarily on either the racial preferences of blacks and whites or racial discrimination against black homeseekers in the housing market (Clark, 1986; Galster, 1986, 1992; Galster and Kenney, 1988; DeMarco and Galster, 1993). For instance, Massey and Denton (1993) argue that blacks often experience discrimination in the housing market, and they

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<sup>1</sup> He uses several indicators of socioeconomic status to characterize suburbs, with “low suburbs” as areas where 25% of families are headed by a single female; 18.3% are poor; 65% are high school graduates; 9.7% are college graduates; and there is a mean family income of \$40,272 (\$1996).

assume they will be unwelcome in white neighborhoods, so they “prefer” predominantly black locations. Cronin and Rasmussen’s (1981) study of the national voucher program shows that, when given a housing voucher which allowed them to move to a wide variety of locations, low income black families were more likely to move to places that closely resembled their previous disadvantaged, segregated neighborhood.

Therefore, the unique design of the Gautreaux program gives us the opportunity to examine whether people’s subsequent residential moves (and implicitly their preferences) differ as a function of randomly assigned placements. In this program, people are randomly assigned to radically different neighborhoods. By examining whether the racial composition of neighborhood placement is related to subsequent mobility, we can explore whether groups of low income black families make later moves that indicate that they are reverting back to their original types of neighborhoods. If people become comfortable with the kinds of neighborhoods they grow up in, they develop segregated preferences like those suggested by Clark, and if these preferences are fixed attributes, then we would expect considerable “regression to the mean.” Even after being randomly placed in new neighborhoods, families coming from mostly black urban neighborhoods will subsequently return to mostly black urban areas, and structural constraints will also contribute to such outcomes. On the other hand, it is possible that once families are exposed to areas they would have previously avoided on the basis of fear or prejudice, they might change their preferences and thus change their residential choices.

Based on the above considerations, we ask the following questions:

- 1) *Where do participants of the Gautreaux program currently reside, and how is current neighborhood a function of city vs. suburb placement? Do suburb movers remain in suburban neighborhoods, or do they return to the city, as might be predicted by prior research?*
- 2) *Do certain kinds of suburbs have lower retention rates than others?*
- 3) *In terms of racial composition and other census characteristics, how do the areas in which participants currently live compare with pre-move and placement neighborhoods? Are these suburban areas really different from the inner city neighborhoods they left?*
- 4) *To what extent do these families choose to revert to areas with predominantly black residents?*
- 5) *To what extent do the racial characteristics of program placement neighborhood affect post-move residential locations?*

Since this residential mobility program aimed to move families to suburbs and to predominantly white areas, we shall focus on whether these initial placements accomplished these goals in the long run or whether families’ subsequent moves tended to reduce these efforts.

### The Gautreaux Program as a Social Experiment

Unlike MTO, The Gautreaux Program was not designed as a social experiment, and it only approximates the required conditions for an experiment. It has been criticized on three grounds.

First, families were not randomly assigned. Families' neighborhood assignments were quasi-random. Apartment availability was determined by housing agents who did not deal with clients. Counselors offered clients units, as they became available, according to clients' position on a waiting list--regardless of client's location preference. Although clients could refuse an offer, only 5% did, since they were unlikely to get another soon and had only six months of program eligibility. As a result, placements can be considered quasi-random. All studies have shown that families placed in suburbs and city were very similar in initial attributes (Rosenbaum, 1995).

Second, the program has been criticized as being selective. In two respects, the program was explicitly selective. It only considered families who applied, and application often required persistence in dialing the telephone to get through. While persistent dialing may mean that applicants were more self-controlled, it might also mean that they were more desperate. The strongest motivation for many participants was feelings of powerlessness and desperation from housing-project violence.

The program was also explicitly selective in admitting families. It tried to avoid overcrowding, late rent payments, and building damage by not admitting families with more than four children, large debts, or unacceptable housekeeping. We have estimated that these three criteria eliminated about one-third of housing project residents (Rosenbaum, 1995).

Some critics have inferred the opposite, that the program lost 80 percent of applicants through attrition. Peterson and Williams (1995) find that about 20 percent of the eligible families who enrolled in each year ended up moving through the program, so, if self-selection caused this attrition, that would imply that participants were an unusual group. However, self-selection appears to have been a small part of the attrition, as Peterson and Williams (1995, p.29) themselves state, "A household could reject two units without losing its certificate, but ninety-five percent of participating households accepted the first unit offered to them." The major constraint contributing to this 20% was the limited number of housing units available. While two staff people found housing units, the program had difficulty in finding enough units for all eligible families (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum, 1999). Between 1976 and 1990, the program promised that housing units would be provided, but a large number of eligible families were not offered housing units. Rather than self-selecting themselves not to participate in the program, many families were not offered a housing unit and not given the chance to participate. There is no evidence to indicate that the program was selective in making offers among eligible families, and, if they did, it would have violated program rules. This 20% figure indicates a program failure to provide promised housing units, but probably does not indicate selectivity.

Third, the program has been criticized as studying small numbers of cases and lacking indicators of pre-move attributes (Turner, 1998). That is true for the early studies prior to Turner's

review. The earliest study followed 163 families and a later study examined 330 families, and neither had pre-move information (Rosenbaum, 1995). Since then, one recent study merged Gautreaux program records with Illinois public aid administrative data, so that study had pre-move information and could analyze 1500 families (out of a random sample of 1506 records). That study found that families assigned to different neighborhoods were not significantly different at the outset, supporting the inference of random assignment to neighborhoods. That study also found that families who moved to higher-SES neighborhoods were significantly less likely to be on public aid many years after moving. Families moving to the lowest quintile neighborhoods were about 50% more likely subsequently to be on public aid than those placed in the highest quintile neighborhoods. This relationship remained significant, even after controlling for mothers' age, years in the program, and prior receipt of public aid (Rosenbaum and DeLuca, 2000).

The present study responds to this third criticism and adopts the same strategy of using administrative data. This permits analysis of pre-move information, post-move information, high response rates on large numbers of cases, with little risk of nonresponse or response error.

## **Data and Methods**

This study uses the program's intake records. We double-checked and cleaned the records of a 50% random sample of all female-headed families who moved with the program between 1976-1990 (N=1506). To characterize placement address, we matched census tract of placement neighborhood to the 1980 Census. Using a variety of sources, we located recent addresses, an average of 17 years since move, on 1503 families (99.8%, =1503/1506), of which we could geocode 98% (1472/1503). We coded this information for census tract and merged information from the 1990 U.S. Census for 79.2% of these<sup>2</sup>. Thus for most analyses, we were able to analyze the current locations of 98% of the originally placed people. It should be noted that 72% of those addresses are 1996-99, and 94% are 1993 or later (ten years after the average year of move for the sample (1983). This gives a broad span of time in which families could evidence residential change.

## **RESULTS**

### **Descriptive Analyses**<sup>3</sup>

#### **Where Are They Now?**

First, we examine where families currently reside and whether they returned to the city. Contrary to what most critics would have predicted, we find that of the families placed in the suburbs, less than 30%

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<sup>2</sup> It might have been preferable to interpolate census characteristics between the two Censuses according to year of move. However, after doing this, we lost many cases due to the fact that some census areas exist in one census and not in another.

<sup>3</sup> Basic descriptives for the sample are included in Appendix 2.



moved back to the city, while over 57% remained in the suburbs (Table 1). Of the families placed in the city, over 78% stayed in the city, and 12% moved into suburbs on their own. Excluding the small portion of families who moved out of state (10%) or outside the six county area of the study (1.5%, who could not be categorized as city or suburb),<sup>4</sup> 66% of suburb movers remained the suburbs (N=438/663).

Table 2a gives a broader perspective on the program in general, and compares the pre-move, placement, and current addresses on a number of socioeconomic census characteristics. Comparing columns 1 and 2, we see that program participants were placed in areas of much lower poverty, black percent, and male unemployment and higher education rates and mean family income than their original addresses. Looking at columns 2 and column 3, it is clear that families are still living in areas very similar to their placement neighborhoods, an average of 17 years later. Current addresses are strikingly comparable to placement neighborhoods in terms of percent in poverty (17 vs. 19%), education level as measured by percent of neighborhood with college degree (21 vs. 20%), male joblessness (32 vs. 36%), and mean family income (which is actually higher—\$56,057 at placement and \$68,550 at current, both in 1999 dollars).

The only characteristic that differs substantially between placement and current address is the mean percent black of each neighborhood. Given the program's consent decree, families that were placed in suburban neighborhoods had to be placed in areas with no more than 30% black residents (mean black percent was actually 10% in suburban placements). City movers went to places of a much higher black percent (mean city black percent 56%). In the current period, although the mean percent black of neighborhoods increases from placement, it is still only about *half* what it was at original address. So while there is some evidence that post-placement families moved to areas of slightly higher black composition, these areas are still far more integrated than their origin areas.

### *A Suburb is a Suburb is...*

In addition, we test the hypothesis that most of the families that remained in or moved to the suburbs would end up in areas classified as "low" according to Harris' (1999) typology of all suburbs in the nation. We used selected census characteristics to compare with those used in the Harris paper<sup>5</sup>. As mentioned above, he cautions against the city/suburb distinction, since many suburbs have come to resemble central cities with regard to socioeconomic disadvantage over the last few decades. Therefore, we examined the suburban neighborhoods into which families were placed, as well as the addresses for those currently living in the suburbs, according to an adaptation of Harris' typology. This analysis tests Harris' claim that many minorities, who end up in suburban neighborhoods, reside in the least advantaged ones.

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<sup>4</sup> From this point forward, we remove those families who have moved out of state or county range, since it would be difficult to generalize interpretations about racial composition effects across states. The number of families for whom we have recent addresses is larger in the first few tables than the numbers in these analyses as a result.

<sup>5</sup> We chose four out of the seven variables in the Harris (1999) paper because those were variables for which we were confident we had comparable census measures. The Harris paper does not include an appendix documenting which census variables he chose by number, so we used those that were the most unambiguous and the clearest indicators of socioeconomic status.

Table 2b shows census characteristics for both initial suburban placement neighborhood and current suburban neighborhood<sup>6</sup>. Alongside each of these are the corresponding neighborhood characteristic means from the Harris paper. We compare our estimates for placement neighborhood to his estimates for the 1980 census period, and our estimates for current neighborhood to his estimates from the 1990 census period. At placement, suburban families were overwhelmingly assigned to suburban neighborhoods that would be classified as high to middle according to Harris, with most characteristics actually closer to high suburb values than middle. For example, Harris classifies high suburbs as those with a poverty rate of 3.6% (low suburbs with 15.4%), and on average our sample was placed into suburban neighborhoods with 5.3% residents in poverty. With regard to the percent of female-headed families, Harris' high suburbs only have 9.2%, and our sample was placed into suburban neighborhoods with 11.5% female-headed families.

At their current address, after 84% of families had moved, families are still in areas that fall above middle suburbs on some attributes and much closer to the middle category than low on other attributes. Current suburban addresses have a mean of 7.11% for percent poor, as compared with Harris' middle suburb value of 7.20% for middle suburbs (low is 18.26%). Mean family income at current address (\$62,367), and percent college degrees (22.19%) also fall just above Harris' value of \$60,330 and 19.09%, respectively, for a mean middle suburb. Current address mean percent on female headed families (17.34%) in current neighborhood falls just above but close to Harris' cut-off for middle suburbs (15.25%). Overall, it appears that families were placed in suburbs that closely resemble "high" to "middle" suburbs according to Harris, although there has been more movement into the middle suburbs over time.

Next, we examine whether families placed in suburban neighborhoods and in predominantly white neighborhoods will remain in such neighborhoods or will return back to city neighborhoods (Table 3). It should be noted that large proportions of families (about 84%) do make at least one residential move to a different census tract after placement, so it is not the case that once placed, families remain in the same location. It is also true that the pattern of moves is somewhat related to initial placements. Just as Clark suggested, we find that families who move to areas with very low percent blacks are somewhat more likely to return to the city. Families moving to the areas with the lowest percentage blacks (0-1% black) have slightly higher rates of return to the city than the average family moving to suburbs. However, this difference is very small--32.2% vs. 29.5%. The groups that are the least likely to return to city are families who move to suburban areas in the middle quintile, areas which still have quite low black composition (4-10% black). Less than 25% of these families return to city. There are smaller differences among city areas in city retention rate, and some of this variation occurs in groups with smaller cell sizes.

To eliminate families who remained in the same location, we examine recent addresses for only those families who moved from their placement addresses, since,<sup>7</sup> since non-moving may only reflect inertia.

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<sup>6</sup> To obtain the means for placement neighborhood census characteristics, we interpolated data across the 1980 and 1990 Censuses, according to year of move. See Appendix 3 for more details.

<sup>7</sup> We will only be including "movers"-- those families with current addresses that differ either by zip code or census tract from their placement addresses. Eighty-four percent of the families moved at some point after placement. It is also

This provides a conservative test, since including non-movers would strength the relationship between placement and recent neighborhood. Among movers, black composition of placement address is strongly related to black composition of recent address (Table 4;  $\chi^2=132.768$ ;  $p<.001$ ). While the diagonal is the main element of this table (moves to other tracts with similar composition to placement tract), deviations are primarily in one direction, from low to high percent black. Although most families move to areas similar to those in which they were placed, families are more likely to move from low to high percent black tracts than the opposite. Among these families randomly assigned to different tracts, those assigned to high-black tracts very rarely move to high white tracts, while those assigned to high white tracts often choose another such tract when they move.

Table 5 examines *black composition* of recent address as a function of black composition of placement address *and* city/suburb placement, still excluding non-movers. Not surprisingly, families initially placed in suburbs end up in recent addresses with a lower black percentage than those placed in the city—35.6% vs 62.9%. Families who move to suburbs with higher black percentage (over 41%) end up in current addresses with a higher black percentage (46.9% vs. an average of 35.6% for all suburban tracts) and those placed in middle quintile areas (with 4-10% black composition) end up in recent addresses with the lowest black composition (30.4%). On an ANOVA test, suburb movers placed in middle black quintile neighborhoods have current neighborhoods with significantly lower black composition than those placed in the highest black quintile neighborhoods ( $F=9.783$ ,  $p<.01$ ) or than those placed in the two highest black percent quintiles combined ( $F=4.597$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Suburban families placed in the very low percent black areas (less than 1.3%) end up in areas with a lower black composition than families placed in the highest black tracts. However, the relationship is U-shaped. They do end up in somewhat higher black tracts (36.3%) than the middle quintile black placements (30.4%), although this difference is not significant (ANOVA  $F=.608$ ,  $p=.436$ ).

In Table 6, we find that on average, families placed in suburbs who later move back to the city end up in areas with higher black composition (75.9%) than families who originally were placed in the city (62.9%). Among those who return to the city, placement neighborhood black composition seems to have little effect on later black composition. However, among suburban movers who remain in suburbs, original black composition has strong effects on later black composition. For example, those families who were placed in the lowest black percent areas in the suburbs (0-1%) and remain in the suburbs are currently in areas with 15.6% black residents. In contrast, those who moved to moderately high black percent suburban areas (10-40%) and remain in suburbs, now reside in neighborhoods with 23.2% black residents.

These descriptive analyses indicate vastly more suburban persistence than critics would have predicted. They also show that after given the experience of living in mostly white areas, black families often continue to live in mostly white areas. Critics, like Clark, are correct that people in areas with mostly white residents are somewhat less likely to persist, but this is a small difference. However, what is most

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important to note that we do lose some cases when doing analyses with current address because some of the addresses

noteworthy is the low proportion of families who return to the city, and the small difference between the types of suburbs in rates of return to city. The dominant conclusion is that most moves persist, and they have long-term effects on whether families are in integrated neighborhoods many years after their initial moves. Apparently, residential locations can be changed as a function of mobility programs, and these changes persist over long periods of time.

### Multivariate Analyses

This section tests the descriptive relationships above using multivariate analyses that control for some individual attributes. Again, these analyses look only at those families who moved from their placement addresses. Program intake records provide some baseline characteristics that we use as controls. Given the program's quasi-random design, we can be relatively confident that families assigned to different areas are similar. However, these multivariate analyses allow us to control for several important attributes<sup>8</sup>.

In the models below, we examine whether the racial composition of current neighborhood is related to the racial composition of placement neighborhood, controlling for age at move, AFDC use at program entry, and number of people in family. Table 7, column 1 shows logistic regression analyses with the dependent variable as the two highest black quintiles combined, roughly the level that was the stated preference of African Americans (Farley et al., 1994). This model examines how baseline characteristics and placement neighborhood percent black predict the likelihood of current address being in a census tract with over 53% black residents, what might be termed, "mostly black areas." Table 7, column 2 shows the same model, but predicting current address in the highest percent black quintile only, 98-100% black.<sup>9</sup> Placement neighborhood is also shown in quintiles, to test for linearity, and the lowest percent black (0-1% is left out as the reference category<sup>10</sup>. Age at move and number in family are both continuous variables, while AFDC at entry is a dichotomous indicator variable.

Since families who begin on AFDC are more likely to continue to receive AFDC after placement, we expected that these families would be more likely to move back to high black areas, where there is more social approval for welfare receipt, or move back to the city, where the welfare infrastructure is better

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we were able to locate were unable to be geocoded (2.3%).

<sup>8</sup> Apartment availability was determined by housing agents who did not deal with clients and was unrelated to client interest. Counselors offered clients units, as they became available, according to their position on a waiting list-- regardless of client's location preference. Although clients could refuse an offer, very few did, since they were unlikely to get another soon and had only six months of program eligibility. As a result, participants' preferences for city or suburbs had little to do with where they ended up moving. In terms of selectivity, the program tried to avoid overcrowding, late rent payments, and building damage by not admitting families with more than four children, large debts, or unacceptable housekeeping.

<sup>9</sup> We use the model with both quintiles collapsed, since there are more cases in the dependent variable, and we use the model with the single highest quintile as dependent as a more conceptual test of our hypotheses.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that the quintiles for placement neighborhood are broken down according to frequencies within the sample. According to the consent decree, families had to be placed in suburban areas that had no more than 30% black residents or middle class revitalized black neighborhoods in the city. That explains why there is more variation in the lower end of the black percent distribution than in the higher end. At current address, the quintiles break down differently, given that some residents have moved back to areas with a higher percentage of black residents.

articulated and more common<sup>11</sup>. We also expected that the age of female heads (at time of move) might be important, since older mothers might adapt less well to mostly white areas because of longer prior experience in mostly black housing projects. We expected that families with several children might also make differential mobility decisions. There does not appear to be any evidence to support these hypotheses. As the results show, age at move, number in family, and AFDC at program entry have no significant effects on predicting racial composition of current neighborhood.

However, the racial composition of placement neighborhood does significantly predict the racial composition of current neighborhood, even after controlling for individual attributes. The higher the black percent of placement neighborhood, the more likely a family is to be currently in a higher percent black area, but only after a certain point (column 1). For example, families placed in areas with 10-41% black residents were about 2.7 times more likely to be currently live in mostly black areas (54-100% black) than those families placed in areas with 0-1% black residents (the reference group). Families placed in neighborhoods with 42-99.8% black residents were almost six times as likely to be currently living in mostly black areas.

Examining whether current residence is in the highest percent black areas (98-100% black), we see again that the baseline characteristics do not significantly predict current neighborhood (Table 7, Column 2). Only those families placed in the highest percent black neighborhoods (42-98%) are more likely to currently reside in areas of the highest black percentage (98-100%) than the reference group.

Lastly, in Table 7, column 3, we run the model separately for suburb movers. We see results similar to the first two models, in that baseline individual characteristics have no significant effects, while percent black of placement neighborhood does. Suburb movers placed in moderately high black percent neighborhoods (10-41%) are about twice as likely to currently live in neighborhoods with 54-100% black residents as those placed in the lowest black concentration areas. Those placed in the highest black quintiles (42-98%) are about three times as likely to be in neighborhoods with higher percentages of black residents currently. The effects for the suburb movers alone are not quite as strong as we saw in the earlier model (column 1), perhaps because there was less variation in their placement racial composition to begin with.

Overall, these multivariate logistic regressions indicate that residential persistence occurs among these families involved in the Gautreaux residential mobility program. We see that most families move after placement, and their later address is significantly related to the kind of neighborhood into which they were placed by the program, for both city and suburb movers. Families placed in neighborhoods with higher black percentages were more likely to currently reside in similar neighborhoods, and inversely, those placed in more integrated areas are more likely to currently live in more integrated areas.

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<sup>11</sup> We ran the same analyses with current address in city as the dependent outcome in a logistic regression, and found no significant results. It seems that the major outcome for which percent black at placement has an effect is not city versus suburb, but rather racial composition of current address.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Conservatives frequently criticize social programs as social engineering. However well-intentioned these programs are, conservatives believe that they ignore human nature, and the changes they implement will quickly be erased. Racially integrated moves may sound nice, but people won't like them, and they will soon move back to areas where they are more comfortable. Even if residential mobility programs managed to move families and have positive early effects on life outcomes, they ultimately will have little importance if families do not remain in these areas and move back to segregated low-income neighborhoods where they feel more comfortable.

The present findings clearly refute those expectations. First, we found that the majority of low income black families who were placed in primarily white, suburban neighborhoods did not move back to the city, as previous research might have predicted (Farley, 1978; Clark, 1991). Rather, suburban placements had long-term effects on where families ended up.

Second, even though 84% of families made subsequent moves after placement, the racial composition of current residence is clearly a function of program placement. Contrary to the assumption that people have inherent preferences about the racial composition of neighborhoods they are willing to live in, these findings clearly indicate that similar groups of families randomly placed in mostly white areas are much more likely to end up in another such neighborhood than families placed in mostly black areas. This may imply that preferences, rather than being inherent attributes of people, are affected by what kind of neighborhood people have experienced, or it may indicate that structural barriers, having been broken, permit families to follow new courses of action.

These findings have implications for integration policies. These findings suggest that the stereotypical fears low-income black families have about housing choices can be overcome with intervention, and thus mobility programs can potentially reduce segregation on a long-term basis. Although early research on neighborhood preferences showed a tendency for whites and blacks to prefer neighborhoods in which they were in majority, and research on housing vouchers showed that low-income black families tended to choose areas similar to the ones in which they began (Cronin and Rasmussen, 1981), our findings indicate that randomly assigned experiences have enduring effects in leading to quite different subsequent housing. For those who were randomly assigned to neighborhoods very different from the ones where they originally lived, their subsequent housing often looked very different. Having once circumvented the usual barriers to housing in the suburbs (landlord discrimination, search difficulties, and transportation), most families found some way to remain in suburban and racially mixed neighborhoods an average of 17 years later. In other words, one might speculate that racial preferences for residential choice may not be as durable or fixed as earlier research implied, and these preferences may be related to mobility program experiences.

Our analyses also show that families in our sample ended up in better suburbs than expected, even if they made subsequent moves. Our comparison with Harris's (1999) paper showed that most families were not only placed in middle to high socioeconomic status suburbs, but also currently still live in similar areas.

This allays the fears that these minority families would end up in areas that were suburb in name, but just as disadvantaged as the inner city neighborhoods they tried to leave through the program.

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**Table 7. Logistic Regression of Percent Black at Current Neighborhood by Percent Black of Placement Neighborhood**

	1 54-100% Black		2 98-100% Black		3 54-100% Suburb Movers Only	
		Exp(B)		Exp(B)		Exp(B)
<b>Age at Move</b>	-.013 (.009)	.987	-.010 (.010)	.991	-.013 (.012)	.987
<b>Number in Family</b>	-.045 (.077)	.956	.020 (.081)	1.021	-.017 (.100)	.984
<b>AFDC at Entry</b>	-.292 (.191)	.747	-.063 (.199)	.939	-.300 (.243)	.741
<b>Percent Black at Placement (in quintiles)++</b>						
<b>Very Low (1.2-4.0%)</b>	.196 (.254)	1.217	.161 (.317)	1.175	.109 (.265)	1.115
<b>Moderately Low (4.1-10%)</b>	.303 (.258)	1.354	.090 (.324)	1.094	-.254 (.304)	.776
<b>Moderate (10-41%)</b>	1.299 ** (.267)	3.665	.498 (.301)	1.645	.741 * (.374)	2.098
<b>Highest (42-99.8%)</b>	1.935 ** (.281)	6.926	1.163 ** (.279)	3.201	1.105 * (.530)	3.019
<b>Constant</b>	.524 (.440)		-1.163 * (.485)			
<b>N</b>	669		669			
<b>-2LL</b>	810.879		744.779			
<b>Chi Square</b>	83.086		28.300			
<b>Significance</b>	.0000		.0002			

\* p<.05; \*\*p<.01

++ Reference category is 0-1%, lowest black quintile