HOPE VI Relocation: Moving to New Neighborhoods and Building New Ties

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Abstract

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

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

Keywords: Household location; Public housing; Urban policy

Introduction

In the fall of 1999, the four high-rise buildings of the W.E.B. DuBois Tower in Philadelphia were imploded, paving the way for new, mixed-income housing to be developed on the site. Before the implosion, the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) relocated the 281 households living at DuBois. The HOPE (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) VI program, administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is funding the redevelopment. Deconcentrating poverty through mixed-income housing and through dispersal is part of a national trend in federal low-income housing policy. When families move out of severely distressed public housing, they may have a chance to live in a better neighborhood and to create social networks that will be more conducive to economic self-sufficiency.

1 The name of the development has been changed to protect the identity of the interviewees.
Policy makers have relied on two major assumptions in predicting improved outcomes for low-income families that move out of distressed public housing. The first is that families will make relocation decisions that will put them in neighborhoods with better opportunities. At DuBois, as well as many other HOPE VI sites, tenants were given the option to move into another public housing unit or to move with a Section 8 subsidy. These choices offer very different neighborhood opportunities. The second is that the children and adults in these families will create social ties in their new neighborhoods that can help them develop economic self-sufficiency. In this article, I explore these two assumptions by looking at how a random sample of families relocated from DuBois decided where to move and how they formed social ties in their new communities.

Literature review

Relocation decisions

Families are relocated from severely distressed public housing in the hope that their lives will improve as a result of moving out of an area of concentrated poverty. Although their human and financial capital remain the same, their social capital may change, based on their new surroundings. In his literature review of social capital theory and research, Portes defines social capital as “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (1998, 6). Social capital “exists in the relations among persons” and members of the community can draw on it for social support, social control, or social mobility (Coleman 1988, S101).

Social capital does not just happen to passive individuals. People have agency in managing their opportunities so as to increase or capitalize on the resources available in their social relations. Selecting a neighborhood to live in is one strategy in managing a family. Furstenberg et al. (1999) argue that parents “play an essential role in managing the external world by monitoring, locating, and cultivating the social contacts in which their children engage outside the household” (12). A neighborhood can shape a child’s world in numerous ways, and by choosing a neighborhood, a parent chooses the schools, streets, social ties, and recreational activities children will have access to. These resources are forms of social capital. In essence, how families manage their moves tells us something about how parents manage a child’s store of social capital; this is especially true for poor children whose experiences are more tied to the neighborhood.
However, the relocated DuBois families may not have considered these issues when they made their decisions. An ecocultural perspective casts the net a little broader by taking into account how the need to create a sustainable daily routine shapes these decisions (Weisner 1998). The ecocultural perspective directs attention to the demands of the daily routines that might influence families’ relocation decisions. Families that rely on public transportation must be close to grocery stores and doctors’ offices. Another resource that might have a significant impact on a family’s daily routine is the help offered by nearby kin.

Smith (2002) conducted focus groups with HOPE VI relocatees in four cities in order to explore their decisions on housing choice. She recruited people who had used Section 8 vouchers to move and who lived in a cluster of other HOPE VI relocatees. Several focus group participants reported that they had felt constrained in their housing choice by the availability of Section 8 housing and the time limits of the search. (Prospective tenants have a limited amount of time to find an acceptable unit that accepts Section 8.) In their search, these relocatees did not use the family management approach outlined earlier and rarely targeted a specific neighborhood on the basis of improved opportunities for their families. Instead, some chose to stay near their old public housing development because of their ties to people and places, and others wanted to move to neighborhoods that seemed safe. Smith’s (2002) study offers insight into the housing choice process, but because the sampling was targeted rather than random, it is impossible to know how representative these findings might be for HOPE VI relocatees in general. In this article, I use interview data from a random sample of families to look at their relocation choices for both the type of subsidy and the neighborhood.

Creating social ties in the new neighborhoods

Once families have made their relocation decisions and moved, what kind of social ties do they create in their new neighborhoods? And why does this matter for policy makers? Housing mobility research rests heavily on assumptions about neighborhood effects, and local social ties are an important element in such research (Briggs 1997; Ellen and Turner 1997). Galster and Killen describe the neighborhood context as an “opportunity structure” in which markets, service delivery systems, institutions, and local social networks shape outcomes affecting social

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2 Only 19 percent of the housing units in the two block groups encompassing DuBois Towers reported a vehicle available to them (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991).
advancement (1995, 9). Researchers argue that neighborhoods characterized by concentrated poverty are places where individuals have poor educational and employment outcomes (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1996). For example, researchers have found that teenagers growing up in neighborhoods with a high unemployment rate or a low percentage of neighbors in professional jobs are more likely to drop out of school or have a baby (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993; Crane 1991). Eliminating or redeveloping public housing stock in high-poverty neighborhoods, therefore, may not only serve to revitalize a community, but it can also positively affect individual economic self-sufficiency, one of the key goals of HOPE VI.

Researchers have theorized a variety of transmission mechanisms whereby neighborhood-level characteristics affect individual outcomes, and most of these mechanisms depend on social relations between neighbors (Ellen and Turner 1997). Adult role models and social networks are two examples of how social ties can link neighborhood-level variables to individual outcomes. While ties outside the neighborhood or institutional or government investment in a neighborhood can certainly affect individual outcomes, I will focus here on the initial formation of local social ties by HOPE VI relocatees in their new neighborhoods.

Researchers have argued that over the last part of the 20th century, secular trends such as transportation technology and a shift to a postindustrial labor force may be associated with people turning to neighbors less and less for relationships and support (Fischer 1982; Wellman 1979). Guest and Wierzbicki (1999) used data from the General Social Survey from 1974 to 1996 to analyze whether there has been a change in neighboring over time and to explore differences in neighboring among subgroups. They found that over these two decades, there has been a slow decline in local social ties and an even smaller increase in extralocal social ties. Even so, in 1996, more than half of those surveyed reported socializing with neighbors at least once a month. People who were elderly, had low levels of education, did not work outside the home, or had children were more likely to have local rather than nonlocal ties. These findings suggest that the DuBois relocatees would also rely more on local ties than nonlocal ones, since the general population at DuBois had low levels of education and employment.3

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3 In the two census block groups that DuBois spanned, 63 percent of adults lived below the poverty line, and 70 percent had no high school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991).
The demographic composition of a neighborhood can shape possibilities in that racial, ethnic, and class differences can present barriers to building ties. The contact theory outlined by Gordon Allport states that prejudice “may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals” (1954, 281). He further pointed out that contact, in and of itself, did not necessarily reduce prejudice or create friendships between people of different groups. Contact comes in many varieties, and certain types of contact may actually serve to increase prejudice.

Following Allport’s (1954) theory, we might expect that DuBois tenants who move to a neighborhood where people are of equal status—such as another public housing development—might form new ties more easily than those who move to a neighborhood with racial and economic diversity. When black public housing tenants in the Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program moved to the predominantly white suburbs of Chicago, they faced both race and class obstacles. The equal-status hypothesis would predict that because relocated tenants were not meeting at a common level on either dimension, they would have more trouble building local ties than tenants who relocated to predominantly black Chicago neighborhoods. However, contrary to this hypothesis, suburban and city movers were equally likely to have some contact with neighbors, and suburban movers reported significantly more neighborly interaction (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). These findings indicate that if DuBois tenants who use Section 8 to relocate end up in neighborhoods that are more racially or economically diverse, they may not find it impossible to create ties with their neighbors.

Some of the HOPE VI relocatees moved to different public housing developments with a demographically homogeneous composition, yet this spatial context may offer a unique neighboring environment. Rainwater (1970) conducted a large-scale study of Pruitt-Igoe, a public housing development of 33 eleven-story buildings in St. Louis. He suggested that informal ties among the tenants were heavily influenced by the oppressive circumstances under which they lived. Soon after Pruitt-Igoe opened, it began to fall apart because of vandalism and poor maintenance. Rainwater (1970) found that tenants had few ties other than kin outside of Pruitt-Igoe but that most of them had close ties with a handful of neighbors. However, he further explained that tenants’ ties were transient and could be marked by distrust that was often linked to a fear that neighbors would turn them in for welfare fraud if, for example, an unreported man was living in the apartment. Further, some tenants chose isolation to shield themselves and their families from perceived negative influences in the development.
Like Rainwater (1970), Venkatesh (1997, 2000) found an intricate network of social support and social control among the people he interviewed in the Robert Taylor Homes, a high-rise public housing development in Chicago. These two studies suggest that HOPE VI tenants who relocate to other public housing developments may be able to re-create supportive social networks, but Rainwater’s (1970) findings caution that they might have to do so in an atmosphere of mistrust.

**HOPE VI**

In 1992, HUD officials developed the HOPE VI initiative in response to the need to revitalize distressed public housing developments, as assessed by the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing. Local housing authorities have been using HOPE VI funds to demolish such developments and to redevelop the sites so that developments will be a more vital part of the neighborhood (Epp 1998). As of 2003, HUD had awarded over $5.3 billion in HOPE VI revitalization and demolition grants to 165 developments in 98 cities (HUD 2003). Although most of the funding goes toward demolition and redevelopment, another goal of HOPE VI is to move public housing families toward “self-sufficiency.” Policy makers hope to achieve this goal through providing supportive services to the families, as well as revamping their neighborhoods physically and socially.

Though plans at each HOPE VI site differ depending on what is needed, many tenants must move during demolition and/or redevelopment. They move into other public housing units, or they use a Section 8 housing subsidy (now called a Housing Choice Voucher) to rent a unit in the private market. Housing authorities usually redevelop HOPE VI sites into mixed-income housing, rarely reserving enough new units to match the number of previously available units or the number of relocated families (National Housing Law Project et al. 2002). For example, 536 housing units (only half of which were occupied at the time of relocation) were demolished in DuBois Towers, and just over 100 of the new rental units to be constructed will be reserved for families eligible

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4 According to the definition used in Philadelphia, a family is self-sufficient if its income is at or above 50 percent of the area median and if its dependence on means-tested benefits is reduced.

5 Though this is now called the Housing Choice Voucher, at the time of the relocation from DuBois, it was still referred to as Section 8. Both the respondents and the housing officials I spoke to referred to the Section 8 program, rather than the Housing Choice Voucher program, so I will be using Section 8 in my analysis.
for public housing. Thus, for many of the DuBois families in this study, relocation is permanent. Their relocation and the subsequent destruction of their homes parallel the displacement that occurred in places such as the Boston’s West End during the urban renewal of the 1960s (Gans 1962).

The HOPE VI initiative is one of the ways in which HUD has attempted to deconcentrate poverty in cities. According to a HOPE VI study of 48 urban areas by the Urban Institute, the new neighborhoods of those families that relocated with a Section 8 subsidy were not as poor as their previous ones (Kingsley, Johnson, and Pettit 2003). However, only 31 percent of the households relocated with a Section 8 subsidy, and almost half moved into another public housing unit, which usually translates into a similarly poor neighborhood, since these units are more likely to be located in poorer neighborhoods than Section 8 units (Newman and Schnare 1997).

In another HOPE VI study, Buron et al. (2002) surveyed 818 households across eight HOPE VI sites two to seven years after grants to revitalize their developments were awarded. One-third of the sample was living in voucher-subsidized housing (funded through Section 8), half were living in public housing (either HOPE VI–redeveloped housing or another development), and 18 percent were living in unsubsidized housing.6 Buron et al. (2002) examined the social integration among these 818 respondents across subsidy types. On the one hand, the level of social cohesion7 reported by the respondents was virtually the same, regardless of whether they moved into another public housing development or into a Section 8 unit. On the other hand, there were differences in social interaction among the different groups. The Section 8 respondents were less likely than their counterparts in public housing developments to have a friend in the neighborhood or to regularly exchange with their neighbors. The individuals in this study responded to a closed-ended survey, so there is no way of knowing why social interaction might be lower for Section 8 movers. It could be due to racial or economic heterogeneity in their neighborhoods, or it could be related to individual differences that made respondents choose Section 8 over public housing.

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6 This unsubsidized group includes those who are renters or new homeowners. Moving to the private market without a subsidy was done both voluntarily and involuntarily (through eviction).

7 This was measured by the agreement to statements such as “This is a close-knit neighborhood,” or “People in this neighborhood get along with each other.”

_Housing Policy Debate_
These two HOPE VI studies indicate that relocatees can use a Section 8 subsidy to move to more affluent neighborhoods. Moreover, once in a new neighborhood, Section 8 relocatees may be less likely than their public housing counterparts to have active social ties with their neighbors. In this article, I use qualitative data from a random sample of families from one particular HOPE VI site to explore relocation decisions and barriers to forming social ties.

Methods

Because the collective knowledge of housing mobility and neighborhood effects research rests largely on quantitative data (Briggs 1997; Ellen and Turner 1997), we tend to know quite a bit about outcomes and precious little about process. By untangling the processes surrounding the moving decision and the formation of social ties in new neighborhoods, we can learn more about how policies may need to be adjusted to improve outcomes for relocated families. Rather than relying on a closed-ended survey with a larger sample, I chose to use in-depth qualitative interviews with a small random sample from one development.

Sample and instrument

Depending on the particular public housing development, several household types can be affected by relocation, and each type has different needs. I focused on families with children under 18 because I wanted to address issues related to children and working-age adults. I chose a random sample of 50 former DuBois heads of households who had children under 18 and were relocated; 41 families agreed to participate (response rate, 82 percent). Because of the sampling design, the findings from the qualitative analysis are not representative of other household types, such as elderly households. However, the sample does reflect the majority of household types from DuBois, and the findings are generalizable to this population.

All but two of these heads of households were women: One was Puerto Rican, and the rest were black. Nearly all of the households were headed by black women. The interviews lasted 1½ to 2 hours, and each

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8 The nine women whom I did not interview were, on average, two years older and had a slightly higher income. Family size and rate of welfare receipt were virtually the same for those interviewed.
respondent chose a pseudonym. This sample was interviewed roughly two years after the move.

I divided the sample into three groups based on the type of subsidy they chose for relocation: those who moved into another (conventional) public housing development (N = 13), those who moved with a Section 8 subsidy (N = 23), and those who moved into a scattered-site public housing unit (N = 5). This last group was left out of the analysis to keep the comparison between the most common relocation choices (N = 36). Table 1 highlights the similarities and differences between the two groups. The main areas of difference are in education and employment. At the time of the interview, the people in the Section 8 group were more likely to be employed and more likely to have finished high school than their public housing counterparts.

Table 1. Description of Public Housing and Section 8 Groups in the Sample (Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Length at DuBois (Years)</th>
<th>Mean Age at Time of Interview</th>
<th>Mean Number of Children at Time of Interview</th>
<th>Percent Less than High School Education</th>
<th>Percent Unemployed at the Time of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 8</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 23</td>
<td>(8.2)</td>
<td>(9.0)</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public housing</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 13</td>
<td>(8.9)</td>
<td>(11.5)</td>
<td>(1.3)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

After the interviews were transcribed, I used NVivo qualitative analysis software to code and analyze the data. This analysis was both deductive and inductive. I initially coded for the general topics represented in the interview guide. However, part of the value in qualitative data analysis lies in identifying codes and patterns not anticipated at the beginning (Strauss and Corbin 1990). The inductive analysis elicited some of the salient themes explored in this article. For example, during coding, I noticed that many people used the phrase “keep to myself” to describe how they interacted with their neighbors. I went back and coded all of these instances into a “keeps to self” node so I could explore that theme further. In addition, groups were examined for nodal differences.
Limitations

Using semistructured interviews and qualitative analysis allowed me to analyze data rich in detail and produce themes that can be explored in future research. Furthermore, since I used a random sample, the findings are representative of DuBois families with children.

However, these analyses and the choice of design give rise to three limitations. The first is length of residence. While these families had lived in their new neighborhoods for 2 to 3 years, this is not long compared with the average of 18 years they had lived at DuBois. Another limitation is that this article is looking only at changes in adult networks. It is very likely that relocation will have the largest impact on children and youth, although the same failing school district still frames their educational opportunities. Finally, the sample is small and from one case study of a public housing development. The experiences of these respondents took place within a specific type of housing market and urban system. The transferability of case study findings must be evaluated on the basis of whether the new context matches the one in which the study was conducted (Lincoln and Guba 1985). For example, not all HOPE VI sites required full-scale relocation. The findings from this random sample are generalizable to families that had children and moved from DuBois and should be viewed as exploratory and pointing to directions for future research in different contexts.

Findings

Relocation decisions

Subsidy choice. Most research literature casts residential stability in a positive light and associates mobility with negative outcomes for families—adolescents in particular—and for community cohesion (Astone and McLanahan 1994; Hendershott 1989; Humke and Schaefer 1995; Sampson 1988; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Scanlon and Devine 2001). But HUD’s reasoning is that it is best for families from a severely distressed public housing development to relocate. In doing so, they can leave their crime-ridden, high-poverty neighborhood and possibly move to a better one. Ideally, HOPE VI relocation may be a chance for low-income parents in deteriorated housing to choose a neighborhood with better opportunities for themselves and their children. The question I considered is how the adults I interviewed decided where to move.
Tenants had two relocation decisions to make. First, they had to choose which subsidy to take; this decision would place them in another public housing development, a scattered-site unit, or a Section 8 unit. If they chose one of the first two options, they were limited to the units available within the public housing system. If, however, they opted for the Section 8 subsidy, their options were limited only by landlord participation (which is not an insignificant limitation) and their own individual constraints.

After the DuBois relocation plan was unveiled in late 1998, tenants were told when they could meet one-on-one with on-site relocation counselors by flyers that housing officials placed in their mailboxes and posted throughout the complex. At this meeting, the counselors filled out an assessment form, noting such details as family composition (to calculate how many bedrooms the household could have) and preferred relocation choice. The PHA manages both conventional and scattered-site units. If tenants chose to move to another conventional unit, they could continue to avoid paying utility costs (since these are covered by the housing authority), and they would have a ceiling on their rent if their earnings should increase. Moving to a scattered-site unit would add utility costs to their monthly bills; but even so, since these costs are figured in with the rent, the tenant would not have to pay more than 30 percent of income for housing costs. Thus, people below a certain income would still not have to pay for utilities. The Section 8 option offered the most flexibility in terms of where people could live, but it was also the most costly, for tenants would have to pay part of the security deposit and be responsible for utilities.

Though Section 8 does offer more flexibility, it has two primary limitations and both affect the ultimate destination neighborhood. First, DuBois relocatees had 90 days to find a unit that accepted Section 8

9 This latter condition was important for employed people who were concerned that if they moved into a Section 8 unit, their rent would increase along with their income. Although rent for a public housing unit also varies by income, there is a ceiling, which is usually lower than the fair market rent. This ceiling was eliminated in 1981 and reestablished in 1998.

10 These utility costs could be partially offset by two policies. First, the utilities are figured into the income calculation when the tenant’s portion of the rent is estimated. So, though it is not a direct proportional decrease, there is some accounting for utility costs in the tenant’s actual rent. Second, utility rebate checks, based on income need, are available from the Section 8 program.
and to get that unit inspected. Focus group participants in Smith’s (2002) study cited this time constraint as a key factor limiting their search. Second, the availability of units depends on landlords’ participation in the program. Section 8 is voluntary in Philadelphia, so landlords have to be willing to participate, and while the government’s portion of the rent is guaranteed, landlords have many disincentives. For example, they must complete lengthy paperwork and submit to an annual inspection. Moreover, landlords who opt out of the program often have concerns about the quality of the tenants (Harris 1999). However, if the real estate market is such that landlords believe they can make more money by leasing a unit through Section 8, then they might overlook the obstacles and the potential risk (Turner, Popkin, and Cunningham 2000).

The overall availability of affordable housing in cities clearly affects the supply of subsidized units as well. In 1999, when the DuBois relocatees were looking for housing, there were 77 affordable units available for every 100 very low income renters in Northeast cities. Philadelphia is, in general, more affordable than Boston and New York, but even so, this squeeze on affordable housing certainly affected the number of units for both subsidized and nonsubsidized renters (National Low-Income Housing Coalition 2001).

Section 8 ended up being the most popular option for DuBois movers. Some 56 percent of my sample chose Section 8, 32 percent chose conventional public housing units, and 12 percent chose scattered-site units. What led people to choose one option over another?

Those respondents who chose to move into another public housing development usually did so to avoid the problems they anticipated in securing and keeping a Section 8 unit. Almost half of the public housing group claimed that they did not believe the Section 8 program would last; they worried that they would have to move often, or they did not trust private landlords to make the necessary repairs. Furthermore, moving into a Section 8 unit meant taking on an extra $200

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11 This time period could be augmented by two 30-day extensions and is the same as that offered to other Section 8 prospective tenants who did not relocate.

12 The reliance on Section 8 rather than conventional public housing in my sample reflects all of the DuBois relocated households. According to relocation data from PHA, more DuBois households chose to use Section 8 than move into other public housing developments.

13 These concerns are similar to those found among other HOPE VI relocatees (Popkin et al. 2002).
a month or more to cover utilities, since these are the tenant’s responsibility. Pamela, a 42-year-old mother of three who lives on a fixed income, expressed her concerns about the instability of living in a Section 8 unit:

I didn’t want Section 8 because I heard a lot of things with the meetings we was going through that they was trying to stop Section 8 from year to year. You know, if your lease up within that year, then the manager, I mean the real estate worker can put you out and say you gotta go somewhere else and you gotta pick up and move from there and move from there and move from there. And I wasn’t trying to go through all that. I wanted to go somewhere and be permanent, stay there until I decide if I wanna go back to [DuBois] once they get it back together or whatever.

The Section 8 relocatees overwhelmingly chose their option because of what they wanted to avoid—living in another “project.” Over half of them told me that this was the factor that pushed them into the program. This line of reasoning would not be surprising if it came only from those who did not like living at DuBois, but even people who did not want to move reported this as a primary motivation for choosing Section 8. Their long residence at DuBois (an average of 18 years), combined with a close network of social relationships there, reduced the uncertainty in their physical and social environment. The prospect of living in a new development without these protective ties frightened many of them, because they feared they would not be able to counteract the negative influences that they knew, from personal experience, could be concentrated in public housing developments more than in other neighborhoods.

Two respondents specifically stated that they had wanted to avoid moving into another development for the sake of their children. Dee had four teenage children when she moved from DuBois, and three of them were sons. She told me, “I wanted to move in a neighborhood where I could learn to trust….If I was to move into another project, it would have been rough on my children.” Dee ended up in a Section 8 row house on a narrow street that backs up to a main commercial thoroughfare with several discount stores and hair salons. When I came to interview her, a tire was in the middle of the street, trash lay on the ground near her house, and her block contained a couple of vacant lots overflowing with weeds and litter. Nevertheless, Dee claimed that her children see adults engaged in more positive activities in their new neighborhood:

I think they see they have more things to do than just come out and come downstairs [at DuBois] and sit on the bench and be outside and see a lot of people around the building not doing nothing, going
nowhere. So, relocating, for me, it did a little, 'cause it had my children see the other side.

Some respondents chose to relocate with Section 8 for the new opportunities it offered, rather than the risks it helped them avoid. After years of living in a high-rise apartment, several respondents were excited about the opportunity to live in a row house, a common type of Section 8 unit in Philadelphia. Three respondents saw the subsidy as a chance to take on more financial responsibility and, related to this, as a step toward owning their own home, since they were organizing their budgets to include more realistic housing expenditures. Tamika, a 25-year-old mother of two young boys, recently graduated from a comprehensive training program and was working full-time when I interviewed her. She articulated her feelings about why she had chosen Section 8:

Because I felt like it was a different kind, it was really a different kind of responsibility, learning how to take care of a house, you know, and keep it clean and stuff....Because it’s like way different than just paying rent and, you know, whatever. You gotta keep your house clean, you gotta do, fix repairs and stuff, you got utility bills, cable, and all that kind of stuff.

In a logistic regression analysis of subsidy choice for this sample, I found that having a high school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) increased the odds that a respondent would choose Section 8 over conventional public housing by seven times. These respondents may have already been in a different position in terms of social mobility than those who chose the status quo.

Neighborhood choice. Most of the public housing respondents were offered two or three developments from which to choose. On average, they moved just over 2½ miles away from DuBois. With the limited flexibility they had, nearly half of the public housing respondents chose between these developments by looking at which was closer to family. These respondents usually decided first to stay in conventional public housing and then used proximity to family to choose among options.

Those who took the Section 8 subsidy had much more flexibility in choosing their neighborhood than those who chose to move into another public housing unit—scattered-site or conventional. Accordingly, this section will focus on what factors influenced the Section 8 group in making their decisions.

In theory, Section 8 respondents could use their subsidy to move anywhere they could find an approved unit, whether in their original neighborhood, in the suburbs, or in another state. Yet in my interviews,
respondents did not discuss this range of options. No one considered moving to the suburbs, and few considered moving to the city’s middle-class neighborhoods. Although advocates of housing mobility policies for public housing tenants view Section 8 as a vehicle for low-income people to move to low-poverty neighborhoods, the families in the sample did not consider this possibility.

Part of the reason may involve relocation counseling or people’s neighborhood preferences. PHA contracted with three housing agencies to help DuBois tenants as they looked for a Section 8 unit, and none of these agencies specialized in middle-class neighborhoods or the suburbs. When I asked Section 8 families whether they had thought about looking for a place in the suburbs, almost three out of four claimed that the suburbs were too far away or that they knew nothing about them. Also, several people commented that they could not survive in the suburbs since they did not have a car, and suburban access to public transportation can be extremely poor and quite expensive. Some people, like Virgie, a 42-year-old mother of four who moved to a narrow street in South Philadelphia, voiced a preference for nearby amenities when I asked her about moving farther out:

And then I thought about, truthfully, I thought about the convenience...that I actually have here in South Philly. That I can, like I said, I have [the outdoor market] that I can go food shopping if I want to. Plus the convenience of Center City [downtown] and the convenience of my children's school that I don’t have to go all over the globe to get to this one, to that one and that one. When I could just walk to all three of them.

Even those respondents who had family living in the suburbs rejected this option. Beth, a 26-year-old mother of three, explained that although she had a sister who had lived in the suburbs for six years, she had never gone to visit her. She confessed that she could not handle that kind of distance from her mother, who lived in North Philadelphia:

I don’t know, like I don’t wanna be too far away from my mom and them. Like they would be all the way in Philly and I’m all the way down here. Like my mom come see me all the time. Me and my mom, we close and I don’t want her to be all the way down here and I’m all the way up there and we’re just talking on the phone.

Virgie’s and Beth’s comments highlight two of the three main factors that influenced the location decisions of the respondents in the Section 8 group: staying in South Philadelphia near known amenities, moving

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14 See also Popkin et al. (2000) for a discussion of the issues related to relocating public housing tenants.
near family, and moving to a “quiet” block. Half of the Section 8 movers reported that they wanted to stay in South Philadelphia, near their former neighborhood. On average, Section 8 respondents moved 1.8 miles away from DuBois. This tendency to remain close to one’s former neighborhood has been found in a study of other HOPE VI relocatees (Popkin et al. 2002) and in a study of new Section 8 recipients and public housing relocatees in Washington, DC, Minneapolis, and Chicago (Turner, Popkin, and Cunningham 2000). In addition, Buron et al. (2002) found that less than half of the Section 8 HOPE VI relocatees in their study lived more than a mile from their original development.

The blocks in South Philadelphia contain a mixture of races and ethnicities, and they represent different stages of racial transition. Section 8 respondents landed on blocks that were, on average, more racially mixed than DuBois; this, however, wasn’t difficult to achieve, given that nearly all the tenants at DuBois were black. Respondents did not talk about race or ethnicity when they told me where they wanted to live in South Philadelphia. However, one of them was forced to come face to face with the racial tension that is simmering just beneath the surface in many white Philadelphia neighborhoods.

When I interviewed Beth, she was living in her second Section 8 row house since moving out of DuBois. Without realizing it, she had initially moved to a South Philadelphia block with almost all white families. Some of them launched a concerted effort to run her off of the block, either because she used a Section 8 subsidy or because she was black, or both. She described a variety of harassment techniques that her neighbors used, including contacting Section 8 when they saw her working (so that her rent would increase) and complaining to Section 8 about the noise she was supposedly making (she heard this from her landlord). After Beth told me about a comment that one of her white neighbors made to her, she reflected on the anxiety that she felt at the time, not knowing whether she was going to lose her house:

So as we was driving up, the guy [a neighbor] said, “Oh, I see how this neighborhood has changed.” I guess since I moved in here, the neighborhood been changed. I didn’t see nothing that had changed—that I had moved in and I wasn’t your color, that’s the only thing I see that had changed. But I would never bother them….I would cry, like why they doing this to me, and they see I have three small children. But they actually wanna see me on the street, in the cold, ’cause this was in the wintertime, right around Christmas time. I was scared, you know, they had me so burdened, like I couldn’t go—like I would go to work but I would have this stuff just all on my mind, like what’s gonna happen? What if they put me out? Then I’ll have to go to court, I’ll be sitting in court and praying, please don’t let them take my house. Where am I gonna
live with my kids? They doing all this to me for nothing. I didn’t even do nothing to these people. That’s all I kept saying. Like, I know wild people and I wasn’t one of them.

Ultimately, her neighbors harassed her landlord enough that he told her she would have to move. He himself did not have a problem with her, since he showed her his other properties, but he wanted her to leave this block so he could avoid the vitriol of her neighbors. Fortunately, no other respondents reported this type of explicit harassment.

When Beth moved into her first house, she did not know about the harassment that would follow. Assessing a new neighborhood requires a certain amount of research. Crystal, a 40-year-old mother of five, moved to a section of South Philadelphia that she had lived in as a child. But it had changed since she lived there and was rougher than she remembered. She confessed that she regretted not having researched the neighborhood enough before she moved there:

It’s not really the neighborhood, it’s the people. If I had more time to look for what I really wanted, I’m quite sure I wouldn’t have came into this area. [Interviewer: What kinds of things would you look for if you would’ve had more time?] Better places for kids— that’s my main concern. [Interviewer: Like playgrounds and stuff?] Yeah, different activities...I would’ve got a chance to really look around the neighborhood to see if it’s, you know, ’cause I could kind of judge and see, “Well, is that person a negative person?” Not saying you could just look and judge, but you have a kind of feeling. I wouldn’t say, “Well, okay, I want to live around people that I know their parents is negative—they don’t want to teach their kids nothing, so they all going to be negative.”

When the respondents talked about looking for a quiet block, they were essentially looking for an environment that would be, at the very least, safe for their children. Crystal’s comments suggest that, if she had had the time, she would have tried to ensure that the people on her block would not model negative behavior for her children. This implies a “managing” of influences for one’s children, although in Crystal’s case, she felt as if she had not been able to manage this aspect very well because of the stress she perceived from the time constraint on Section 8.

Another way of managing opportunities for children is choosing a quality school for them. In Philadelphia, children and adolescents who live within the boundaries of the neighborhood school at all levels (elementary, middle, and high school) can attend it. If this neighborhood school happens to be of poor quality, then parents can choose to send their children to private school, or they can apply to the school district for a
transfer. Thus, choosing a neighborhood usually means choosing a school. In my sample, only one parent sent her daughter to Catholic school (for one year after they moved), and a few others had transferred their children to schools outside their neighborhood when they were living at DuBois. Therefore, most parents sent their children to neighborhood schools. Yet only two Section 8 respondents mentioned schools as a factor in deciding where they chose to move. One of these respondents, Jane, had transferred her son to one of the better public elementary schools in Philadelphia while she still lived at DuBois. When she moved, she deliberately chose to remain close to this school to reduce the difficulties involved in getting him to and from school.

When the DuBois families were faced with the inevitable fact of their relocation, they essentially had two decisions to make about how and where to move. They could choose which type of relocation subsidy they would take, and, once this decision was made, they could choose where to move. I framed this exploration of their decision-making process in terms of a family management or an ecocultural approach. Did parents consider improving the opportunities for their children or what they needed in their daily living routines when they made these choices? Or did they consider elements of both perspectives? Those who chose to stay in conventional public housing did so largely because of their concerns about financial and housing stability. Once they chose to stay in public housing, they had few options as to where they could move, although some respondents chose their developments on the basis of proximity to family. Therefore, this group did not manage their move in such a way as to consciously change or improve opportunities for their families.

The Section 8 group, however, used a mixture of elements from both perspectives. They chose the subsidy largely to provide better neighborhoods and housing for their families. Some of the respondents chose Section 8 because they were concerned for their children's safety in another public housing development. Since they had on average more education than their counterparts in the public housing group, Section 8 respondents were perhaps making decisions from a different vantage point and could thus afford to opt for more of a change in their situation.

Once they made the initial decision to choose Section 8 over public housing, respondents relied more on ecocultural factors in choosing their neighborhoods. For this step in the relocation process, I found that they primarily used factors relating to their daily routines, such as proximity to family, public transportation, and familiar amenities. However, one family management factor they did consider—and perhaps the
most important one in their eyes—was neighborhood safety; several respondents mentioned that they had “checked out” the block before they signed the papers. Only two people reported school-related factors in choosing their neighborhood.

Shaping all of this decision making were the parameters of the situation: The impending relocation and the time limit on the subsidy made some people feel rushed. Further, Section 8 units are generally more available in some neighborhoods than in others, and the Section 8 counselors specialized in the city rather than the suburbs.

Given the relative flexibility of the Section 8 subsidy compared with conventional public housing, were DuBois Section 8 movers ultimately able to move to more affluent and less segregated neighborhoods than public housing movers? In an analysis not shown here, I found that, not surprisingly, the average Section 8 relocatee moved into a neighborhood that was significantly more racially mixed, more affluent, and more residentially stable than the neighborhoods where the public housing respondents moved.\textsuperscript{15} The average DuBois Section 8 relocatee is now living in a neighborhood where 33 percent of the people are poor, compared with 56 percent for the public housing movers. On paper, these Section 8 neighborhoods look as if they could provide better opportunities for families than public housing neighborhoods. One main way of connecting with neighborhood social capital resources is by forming social ties. In this next section, I examine the new local social ties the DuBois families created and the barriers they encountered.

\textit{Social ties in the new neighborhoods}

Social ties among neighbors may be one of the instruments through which neighborhood-level resources can influence individual outcomes (Ellen and Turner 1997). Therefore, it is important to explore how the local social ties of this sample of relocated families looked after two years, although this is still a short-term perspective.

People define friendships in different ways (Walker 1993). To account for this variation, I asked respondents about their friends in several ways: I asked them to tell me about the people to whom they felt

\textsuperscript{15} Buron et al. (2002) conducted a similar analysis with HOPE VI relocatees from eight sites. They found that while relocatees who moved with a Housing Choice Voucher ended up in more affluent neighborhoods than those who moved into other public housing units, those neighborhoods were not more racially mixed.
closest. I asked them whether they had made friends in their new neighborhood and whether there were people with whom they exchanged food, money, babysitting, or information.

There was a dramatic contrast between the way most respondents talked about their relationships at DuBois and their current relationships with people in their new neighborhoods. Although a few people said they kept to themselves at DuBois, many described the social environment there in the same way: “Everyone was family.” Since respondents had lived at DuBois for a long time, many had local social ties that were quite close. After the move, around 60 percent of the public housing and Section 8 groups remained in close contact with at least one friend from DuBois, although this contact was usually just by phone. Regular phone contact was critical to keeping up the friendship, because only one-third of the public housing movers and one-quarter of the Section 8 movers reported living near at least one friend from DuBois. For the sample as a whole, networks of current friends consisted of people who moved from DuBois and were also in their new neighborhoods, people from DuBois who were in other neighborhoods, or people in their new neighborhoods.

Building new friendships. Whether they moved into another public housing development or into a Section 8 row house, only a few respondents reported having friends in their new neighborhoods who were not also people who had moved from DuBois. All but one of the people who made new friends were in their early 20s, had young children, and were in an area where other young children lived. Tamika has two young children, and she told me that making friends was easy on her block: “It’s been fine. Just like I said, I’m moving into a block, fortunately, that I, you know, was friendly with. Everybody [says] ‘How you doing,’ introduce themselves, and everything.” She and another woman her age regularly exchange food and child care.

Most of the respondents currently living in public housing developments still gave social support to or received it from their neighbors, but they stressed that it was only with one or two people (often other DuBois relocatees). The situation is therefore different from the one at DuBois, where they exchanged with a broader group of people. The Section 8 movers reported even less exchange. Most had not given or received help with child care, food, or money from their new neighbors.

It is difficult to assess whether attempts at friendships have been made by the respondents and subsequently rebuffed or whether the respondents simply have not made any attempts. Margaret, a 44-year-old mother of four daughters, made a remark that was typical for the sample: “I mostly, you know, just stay to myself, yeah…I see them [my

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neighbors] coming, you know, say hi and stuff like that, but you know, I still stay to myself.” This comment reflects the level of relations that most people identified—a quick greeting in the street, rather than a stronger tie through which exchanges can occur.

Almost half of the overall sample used a variation of the phrase “stay to myself” to describe contact with their new neighbors. This strategy was not related to employment or educational level; however, the Section 8 relocatees were more likely than their counterparts to claim that they stayed to themselves. Respondents used this phrase in at least two different ways: First, they used it to note that they did not care about making new friends and preferred to stay in their homes. Some were the same way when they lived at DuBois, while others have changed since they moved. Roneesha is a 41-year-old mother of two older daughters and lives in a Section 8 row house. She knew a lot of people at DuBois and was involved in activities there, but described how she has changed since moving:

It’s just that when I was [at DuBois], it was like everybody, it was like a neighborhood; in the neighborhood, you know what I’m saying, everybody knew each other and our doors was always open. Not here, these people like more to theirselves so I stay to mines.…It’s not been hard [to get to know people]; really, it don’t really matter to me.

Second, people said they stayed to themselves to avoid potential conflict with neighbors. This perceived conflict can range from gossiping to physical fighting. A larger number of respondents in the public housing group described staying to themselves for this purpose. Kesha lives in a low-rise development with her two young daughters, and she attributed the constant bickering and fighting to a “project mentality.” She tries to stay away from these battles, which often erupt between children and spread to their parents:

I mean I live in [the projects] but I don’t be associated with all of the craziness that goes on with it. I try my best not to. That’s why I try not to deal with, you know, a lot of people and just, I try to mostly have my own, you know, and my kids have their own bikes or whatever and let them just, you know, have fun.

Karen lives with her 11-year-old son in a Section 8 house, and she describes her lack of involvement with neighbors as a way of safeguarding against gossip and potential “drama”: “But I mainly stay to myself. ’Cause I know when you have people coming in your house, you sit there and a lot of trouble starts.”
The DuBois respondents who mentioned staying to themselves meant this primarily in terms of adult relationships, because I did not ask them if they used this as a parenting strategy. However, other researchers have categorized this self-isolation as a parenting strategy, and it has been associated with positive outcomes for children growing up in poor neighborhoods (Furstenberg 1993; Jarrett 1995, 1997). Jarrett (1997) gives several ethnographic examples of how some black parents in low-income neighborhoods set strict social boundaries around their families. They isolate their families so that their children do not play with neighborhood children whose behavior the parents disapprove of. Nevertheless, when people keep to themselves either for their own reasons or for their children, they will not build relationships in their new neighborhoods and will be unable to use these ties to take advantage of new resources if they are living in a more affluent neighborhood.

**Barriers to building new networks.** On an individual level, factors such as personality, the psychological effects of relocation, children’s age, duration of neighborhood residence, and patterns of daily routines can make a difference in how people build friendships. I have already discussed one way that personality can make a difference in terms of how people decide to stay to themselves. Other personality factors, like being extroverted or introverted, are beyond the scope of this study but are important to consider.

Being forced to leave where one has lived for a long time, no matter how deteriorated the housing may be, can be a devastating experience, at least for the first few years after the move. Fried (1963) studied the psychological effects of relocation in a sample of women who were displaced from Boston’s West End when urban renewal leveled their neighborhood. He found that two years after the move, nearly half were exhibiting symptoms of grief.

While I did not measure psychological variables within the sample, I did find two patterns that were related to the relocation and subsequent building of new relationships. A handful of the respondents spontaneously mentioned how depressed they had been since the move. All of these women had lived at DuBois for 14 years or more, and all but one of them had older teenagers. Pamela, who lives in a newly redeveloped public housing development, told me how her depression, along with a fear of violence on her street, inhibited her getting to know people:

> I know a couple of people but I don’t go in their house, nothing like that. It’s like it’s not safe no more, you know what I mean. So it’s like I go through this little depression stage and you know, I watch

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the kids, I go out and do whatever but other than that, I been in the house the last three months, I didn’t go nowhere, just depression just sitting in, you know what I mean. I don’t need to go outside because they out there fighting or somebody out there shooting and you don’t wanna be here, you know what I mean.

The relocation from and redevelopment of DuBois fostered a sort of limbo for families that anticipate moving back to the new housing. Feeling that their new neighborhood is simply a temporary arrangement could affect the energy that people put into strengthening ties. Just over half of the overall sample told me that they wanted to move back to the new housing, although they were not sure whether they would be able to. If people view their new neighborhoods as temporary, they may not see the point in building relationships.

Young children can play a key role in facilitating adult relationships (Goode and Schneider 1994). Although most of the sample has at least one child under 12, perhaps their children are starting to move out of the age where parents meet the parents of their children’s friends. When asked whether they knew the parents of their children’s friends in their new neighborhoods, most adults said they did not, although they did when they lived at DuBois. In several cases, the parents had all grown up together at DuBois, which contributed to an intergenerational closure of networks (Coleman 1990). Another way that children can facilitate adult relationships is through their informal play in shared space. When a lot of small children live on a block and the street or sidewalks are safe for them to play, this can provide an environment for adults to meet each other. Beth, a young mother of three, lives on a narrow street densely lined on both sides with two-story row houses. Children are often outside playing in the street, and she describes the block as being very friendly, although she has not made close friends due to her work schedule. She told me, “I like how the children play and how everybody keeps an eye on each other and all the kids….Everybody just be real friendly.”

Although their facilitating role is clear, children can nevertheless sometimes act as barriers to adult relationships. Taylor lives on a dense South Philadelphia block and has two older teens. Her nephews (also teenagers) often come to stay with her, and her neighbors have complained about their activities, such as talking loudly out on the stoop with girls. She ardently defended her nephews to me and wanted nothing to do with her “nosy” neighbors who criticized her children yet said nothing about their own.

Social ties take a long time to build. Although people have lived in their new neighborhoods for two or three years, this is not long compared
with the average 18.4 years that they had lived at DuBois. Hope, who raised her four children at DuBois for 14 years, explained how this affected the way she viewed her new neighbors:

They’re not as friendly [as those at DuBois]. And they may feel the same way about me. It may be me. You know, ’cause I may be shut off, ’cause I just, you speak, everybody around here speaks and stuff. But it’s just not the same. You know how you grew up and you met people, and you knew them. And you just don’t connect with [the new people], you don’t connect.

Finally, the daily routine in these new neighborhoods may be quite different. Only one-third of adults who lived at DuBois were employed at the time of a survey taken a few months after relocation. Many respondents described their typical daily routine at DuBois as focused around getting their children to and from school, grocery shopping, and talking with friends. It may be harder to get to know people with a change in routine. Just over half of the Section 8 movers are employed, and most of them are employed full-time. About one-third of the public housing group is employed; they may have more time to form relationships in their developments. A few of the Section 8 movers suggested that they had less time to socialize because of their work habits. Rachel is a mother of four who works full-time. She described how work patterns affect her block:

And they [neighbors] work everyday just like I do. They don’t really have time for nonsense. That’s why it ain’t no riff-raff on the block, you know, ain’t nobody sitting in each other house talking and none of that. Everybody goes to work. And at night at a certain time, before 9:00, this street’s quiet, quiet. And the kids be in the house, everybody getting ready for work the next day.

Moving to the next level, the neighborhood environment (defined by most in the sample as the level of their immediate block) shapes these contacts in several ways. Families living in Section 8 housing or in a public housing development faced very different neighborhood environments, as shown in the previous analysis. Although there are many elements in the neighborhood environment, such as design and safety, I will address only the respondents’ perceptions of how they fit in with their neighbors in a larger sense than discussed previously.

There is a social aspect of neighborhood context that appears to be quite different for those in the public housing group compared with the Section 8 group. People who moved into other public housing developments reported more conflict with neighbors than people using Section 8. Some people claimed that they were challenged by their neighbors.
because they moved in from a different development. Jazzy, a 42-year-old mother of six, after claiming that “I am very lonely up here [in her new development],” went on to tell me that someone from her project shouted, “You DuBois bitches, go back down to DuBois.” These inter-project rivalries may simply be an initial reaction to in-movers. Although Jazzy has had a lot of conflict with some of the people in the development, namely the tenant council head, she has also made acquaintances. When Tasha first moved into her new development, she was in a few fights, one of which ended in her arrest. She viewed these fights as a way of gaining respect from her new neighbors, who were challenging her because she was from DuBois. She now gets along fine with her neighbors. Her description of this transformation is informative:

> When we first moved here, you had to fight your way in and then you got your little respect and nobody mess with you. You know, it’s like that when you come from other projects, it’s like that sometimes. Even though you all gotta fight, you gonna fight to prove your point, just ‘cause you’re from another project, you gonna prove your point, you know. And I proved my point and now the whole neighborhood love me.

Other people in the public housing group reported a more general feeling of outsider status. This may stem from comparing the tight-knit nature of their relations at DuBois, where they were the insiders, with others’ tight-knit relationships in the new development. David, a 35-year-old father of two, reflected, “I feel like the people down here [in the new development] is already like a family and I’m an outsider.”

Like the public housing group, a few Section 8 movers experienced the stigma associated with moving from DuBois, which had a certain notoriety in the larger neighborhood, or a general stigma associated with Section 8 housing. Liz lived with her teenage son on a street where another DuBois family had moved in. She told me that her next-door neighbor criticized this family for being from “the projects” without knowing she had just moved from them too.

Most of the Section 8 movers remained within the larger neighborhood of South Philadelphia, and the blocks they settled on were frequently a mixture of white, Asian, and black residents. The average Section 8 respondent lived on a block that was 60 percent black, compared with 94 percent for the public housing movers. For the most part, Section 8 respondents viewed this mixture as positive, particularly for their children. Living in a racially mixed environment caused some people to confront contradictions in the racial/ethnic stereotypes they held, while for others, their stereotypes were confirmed. On the one hand, Rachel
remarked that the “Chinese” on her block were very different from the way she had imagined them:

Adapting to living with the white people, I’m cool with. Now these are the people that are strange, the Chinese people, or whatever they are, Koreans or whatever. They the ones that got me a little bit puzzled because they just open and they give you their hearts. And I’m like, I thought Chinese people was about themselves, their group, we gonna make this money and we gonna step off. Should we trust these people?...They come and knock on the door and offer you, if they have barbecues and stuff. Me, I’m kind of leery about eating food that I don’t know, but they good people.

On the other hand, Jane laid the blame for the trash in her street at the feet of the Cambodian families living on the block, even though her son was harassed and eventually beaten up by a gang of black boys. When I asked her how the racial mixture of whites, Cambodians, and blacks worked on her block, she replied, “Well, uh, basically everybody just stay to themselves. You know, uh, the Cambodians, they’re not as clean as, as most of us are.”

Most of the Section 8 movers characterized the white residents on their blocks as “elderly.” In fact, the average Section 8 respondent in my sample moved to a neighborhood where one-third of the whites were 65 or over (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001). The relationship between elderly white residents and reduced racial conflict has been found on a citywide level in an analysis of Philadelphia (Yancey, Stout, and Freely 2002). The Section 8 respondents claimed that, in general, their elderly white neighbors were not unpleasant to them, but they did not have a relationship beyond a casual greeting in the street. In this situation, generational, racial, and perhaps class barriers would need to be overcome in order for relationships to develop.

The demographic composition of the neighborhood makes a difference in the type of people with whom respondents will be in contact. If a neighborhood is socioeconomically or racially mixed, this may either provide for more social mobility opportunities or act as a barrier to building ties. Contact theory suggests that positive interactions occur more easily between people of equal status (Allport 1954; Kleit 2001); thus it would predict more ties in the public housing group than in the Section 8 sample. However, interproject rivalries or unsafe public spaces within public housing may prevent relationships from being built, even among people of similar status.

These barriers to building networks in the new neighborhoods have implications for the type of neighborhood-level resources relocated

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individuals can use. If few relationships have been built, this calls into question the ability of low-income families to access the improved resources of their neighbors after they are relocated into more affluent neighborhoods or into mixed-income housing.

**Discussion and conclusion**

The emptying out of DuBois Towers was both a hardship and an opportunity for the families that lived there. On the one hand, living there for so long made it difficult for some families to leave social networks that offered a great deal of support. On the other hand, families had the chance to relocate into neighborhoods with improved opportunities.

I found that people who chose to move with a Section 8 subsidy did so because they believed they could find a better place for their children than another public housing development. In this way, they were managing their moving decisions to improve their families’ social capital. Respondents who chose to move with a Section 8 subsidy were more likely to have a high school diploma, and by choosing the subsidy, they further positioned themselves to increase their social mobility. Nevertheless, when they made decisions about where they would look for housing, they largely based their choice on the neighborhoods that would fit their current daily routine rather than on future possibilities for social mobility.

Public housing movers chose this option because it maintained the status quo in terms of both living and financial arrangements. This may have worked well for them if, for example, they were living on a fixed income and could not afford higher utility costs. However, in the process of deconcentrating poverty with the HOPE VI program, those with less human capital may be those who choose to remain in the public housing system and live with neighbors who are even less likely to have jobs than their former neighbors. This may result in a further concentration of poverty in non–HOPE VI public housing developments.

In the short term, the DuBois relocation appears to have winners and losers. Both groups experienced a net loss of neighborhood friends in their networks. The families in the public housing group lost the most; they lost their support networks at DuBois (for those who had close ties) and did not gain much by moving to other public housing developments, which are demographically similar. Moreover, respondents often became the outsiders, rather than the insiders, in the community. Their
bid to maintain the status quo left them, on average, with few improvements in their economic and social condition.

Those in the Section 8 sample moved to neighborhoods with more racial diversity and less poverty, and their neighbors were more likely to be employed. Although one out of three people in these neighborhoods is poor, these areas may eventually become a place where their children can access opportunities they lacked at DuBois. One way of connecting with this changed opportunity structure is by forming social ties in the new neighborhoods. As I have shown in this article, there have been barriers, at least in the short term, to creating these local ties.

I have explored how families make decisions following a forced relocation from public housing and what happens to their social ties once they move. The inability to become a part of the local social structure in the short term, at least, may be why we do not see dramatic effects on individual outcomes for families that moved to more affluent neighborhoods through housing mobility programs. For example, those participants in the experimental group of the five-city Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program used their Section 8 subsidies in the late 1990s to move out of public housing and into housing units in low-poverty neighborhoods. Four to seven years after they signed up, families in the experimental group were still living in more affluent neighborhoods than those in the control group. Nevertheless, there were no significant differences between experimental and control adults in terms of employment or receipt of public assistance (Orr et al. 2003). Though opportunity structure is certainly affected by place, it is not clear how long it takes for relocated families to get connected to this change in spatially specific social capital.

Is it possible to focus more attention on the relocation aspect of HOPE VI so as to improve the opportunities for relocated families? There are at least four ways in which HOPE VI redevelopment and relocation could be modified to improve chances for social mobility.

First, housing officials may want to reconsider the advantages and disadvantages of relocating families into other public housing developments. The concern about expenses and the perceived instability of Section 8 housing led some families to choose to move to another development, which was rarely an improvement for them. Housing officials need to ensure that information about housing options is disseminated clearly and accurately. If deconcentrating poor neighborhoods is the goal, it may not be wise to relocate people into public housing developments.
Second, there are both demand- and supply-side issues to consider in using the Housing Choice Voucher as a tool to move public housing families into more affluent neighborhoods. On the demand side, public housing tenants who get vouchers need to have both the information and the desire to move to a different kind of neighborhood. Housing officials need to either increase funding for housing counseling or refocus the emphasis in counseling that is already being offered through HOPE VI supportive services for relocating families. Housing counseling has been the instrument through which the MTO program guided participants into finding housing in more affluent neighborhoods. This type of targeted counseling can help families realize the mobility potential of vouchers, as well as give them the tools to make a decision about moving to a neighborhood with increased opportunities for themselves and their children. Nevertheless, more intensive counseling is, of course, more expensive. Across all five MTO cities, the average cost of counseling per experimental family was $1,672, compared with $348 to $500 for basic counseling for families that got vouchers to move from public housing but were not in the MTO program (Varady and Walker 2000). Even so, these extra costs may be offset by the benefits that families could accrue by living in low-poverty neighborhoods.

Third, on the supply side, housing officials need to convince landlords in working-class and affluent neighborhoods to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher program, so that relocated families have more opportunities to use their vouchers. Turner, Popkin, and Cunningham (2000) have made several suggestions on ways housing authorities can recruit landlords and enforce high quality standards. These suggestions include holding landlord “fairs” in target neighborhoods, raising fair market rents, reducing barriers to the portability of subsidies across housing authority jurisdictions, and imposing sanctions for poor property management.

Finally, an effort needs to be made to connect relocated families with institutions in their new neighborhoods and to foster strong cross-status ties in mixed-income neighborhoods—either in newly redeveloped HOPE VI sites or in their new neighborhoods. This can be done through counseling during the relocation, and, for those families that continue to live in federally subsidized housing, these connections can be encouraged through HOPE VI supportive services.

The array of such supportive services, as well as their delivery, varies from site to site, so it is difficult to make a general statement about what is offered. The main goal is to push families into self-sufficiency. Services include job training, drug rehabilitation, child care, and education. In many redeveloped HOPE VI sites, these services are offered.
on-site or at a center near the development. However, families that are
going to be permanently relocated need to connect with institutions
such as recreation centers, after-school programs, and other commu-
nity-based organizations in their new neighborhoods. Such connections
may be instrumental in deepening relationships with neighbors or
offering employment or educational opportunities, as well as services.

Redeveloping communities and encouraging individuals’ economic self-
sufficiency are some of the far-reaching goals of the HOPE VI program.
Improving severely distressed public housing developments is a neces-
sary step in community revitalization. However, in the process, we
cannot forget social ties. The kind of neighborhoods relocated families
move into and the way they reconstruct their social networks has
implications for their current support needs and their future
possibilities for social mobility.

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