A Relational Analysis of Mobility Within Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program

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THESIS

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To my parents, whose strength, support, and guidance have made this work possible

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHA	Chicago Housing Authority
FMR	Fair Market Rent
HCV	Housing Choice Voucher
HCVP	Housing Choice Voucher Program
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
PHA	Public Housing Authority

SUMMARY

The Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program represents the nation's predominant low-income housing strategy. The program maintains two goals; first to reduce barriers for low-income households to find and lease safe, decent, and affordable housing, and second, to support the location decisions of assisted households with the hope that the subsidy will open up better quality communities to low-income renters. A hallmark of the program is voucher portability- the ability for assisted households to search and move nationally with their voucher. While specialized programs such as the Gautreaux Consent Decree and the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing demonstration program have shown the potential for residential mobility to generate positive outcomes for households moving with vouchers, the effects of mobility on outcomes for the general voucher-assisted population are not clear. This dissertation examines the dynamics of residential mobility for all voucher-assisted households in Illinois between 2000 and 2007, with the goal of understanding not only when and where such mobility resulted in positive outcomes, but also understanding the types of institutional and interpersonal relationships that create barriers and supports to successful mobility.

This dissertation uses administrative data on individual voucher households in Illinois in order to construct longitudinal household histories which describe both household characteristics as well as residential locations for seven years. These data are used to understand the ways in which residential mobility fit into the housing careers of voucher-assisted households. These data are complimented with in-depth interviews with heads of household who have made portability moves with vouchers, landlords who rent to porting tenants, and housing authority administrators in order to understand in more depth the ways in which the motivations for moving on the part of assisted households are shaped into outcomes when examined in relationship to the actions of landlord and housing authority staff.

Results of this analysis suggest that contrary to program goals, households undertaking portability moves tend to, on average, move to communities that are demographically similar to the communities from which they left. Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data suggest that these “parallel” moves can be attributed both to supply-side factors such as the availability of landlords willing to rent to voucher households, and the availability of housing units which meet movers’ needs. These data also suggest that housing authority administrative regimes and actions during the portability process play a large role in influencing both the housing search of porting households, as well as the outcomes experienced by these households in their new residential locations. These results suggest that in order to achieve HUD’s goal of promoting opportunity moves through voucher mobility, program design, regulation, and research must pay more attention to the ways in which local administrative practices and landlord actions shape program outcomes. Results also suggest that the reduction of administrative barriers to portability via regional cooperation between housing authorities may significantly increase the power of voucher portability to serve as a means of promoting upward mobility and opportunity for low-income households.

I. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

The question of why people move has been a primary concern of housing policy researchers in the United States for the last 50 years. What started with the seminal work of Peter Rossi (1955) who first asked Why Families Move? the study of residential mobility has branched and expanded to raise questions about how moves matter for individual households, as well as how moves in turn impact neighborhoods and communities. The project of understanding residential mobility has been concerned not only with describing temporal and spatial patterns of movement, but also with understanding the linkage between changes in residential location and secondary non-housing outcomes (namely improvements in household economic and social status). The implications of secondary non-housing effects have led many housing policy scholars to question whether residential mobility may be one strategy for reducing patterns of racial and economic inequality, particularly within urban areas.

From a rational economic perspective, searching for a new place to live allows households to identify an ideal "bundle" of local resources and goods that extend beyond the specific benefits of finding a new housing unit. Early research on residential mobility, including Rossi's work stem from rational economic theory which suggests that movers approach the housing search as a utility maximizing activity. Soon after Peter Rossi described mobility as a process of matching households in different life stages to appropriate housing stock, Charles Tiebout (1956) asserted that such a matching process was focused on the "matching" of residents into communities where local governments provided optimal bundles of services to meet their needs. Tiebout theorized that it was within local governments' economic interests to develop and maintain these "customized" bundles of resources in order attract and efficiently sustain a homogenous and stable tax base.

Not surprisingly, Tiebout's theory has been brought into question, particularly by critical urban scholars who represented a next stage in residential mobility research. Many such scholars took concern with the linkage which Tiebout makes between government and households. Political economists James Logan and Harvey Molotch (1988) assert that: "Cities, regions and states do not compete to please people; they compete to please capital – and the two activities are fundamentally different." (p.42). The inconsistencies of public choice theories such as Tiebout's are also highlighted by the plight of the nation's lowest-income residents, particularly during the period 1960 - 1980. While this period saw the adoption of substantial civil rights and social equality legislation, including multiple housing antidiscrimination laws, racial and economic segregation for low-income households persisted, and in many areas, became worse. In many cases, such segregation persisted as a result of the actions of local government.

For more than 50 years, the racial and economic segregation of low-income households has been an upfront policy concern for the Federal government. Predominantly urban interventions such as public housing were designed to enable local governments to intervene in segregated low-income "ghettos" with the aim of improving housing quality and social conditions. However, the political project of transforming such communities often resulted in the replacement of poor-quality, high-density "slum housing" with federally-built and locally operated housing projects that were as a matter of practice, more segregated by income and race than what preceded them. (Hirsch 1998). Coupled with a process of suburban growth, decentralization of industry, and middle-class mobility, the growth of public housing within many inner cities further cemented the geographic separation between those of means who could afford to move, and those who were unable to move.

In their seminal analysis of American cities, Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton observe the persistence of racial and economic segregation into the 1980s, particularly in America's largest cities. They observe in places like Chicago the persistence in segregation for African-American households, where comparison of the residential dissimilarity by race indicated that more than 85 percent of African-American households would have to change their residential location in order to become evenly integrated within the city. (Massey and Denton 1993).

In light of the parallel processes of suburban growth and segregation, residential mobility has been of particular interest as a policy tool to remedy the effects of concentrated racial and economic segregation, particularly amongst low-income households. Moving from segregated inner-city neighborhoods to integrated suburban neighborhoods was the legal remedy proposed as part of the Gautreaux Consent Decree which resulted from Hills v. Guatreaux (425 US 284). Such moves resulted in what have been described as “mixed” results for program participants, with little strong evidence that such moves resulted in upward patterns of social and economic mobility. (Boyd, et al. 2010). Despite these mixed results, the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program would involve more than 5,000 households in five cities (including Chicago) in a similar quasi-experiment to determine whether using a voucher to move to more economically better-off communities would result in other positive changes for low-income households. As with Gautreaux, MTO results have been mixed in nature, and have shown in particular little evidence that moves resulted in positive benefits for heads of households, although more positive results have been noted for children in terms of both educational, health, and social outcomes. (MTO Interim Evaluation 2003, Ludwig et al, 2008, Sampson, 2008)

Contemporary research, influenced by Gautreaux and MTO suggest that the spatial patterns and social relationships that result from residential mobility oftentimes do not result in optimal access to opportunities or outcomes. In his book *The Geography of Opportunity*, Xavier De Souza Briggs analyzes the connections between place, race, and politics in order to understand the ways in which equality of access to opportunity is often systematically denied based upon race, gender, and class. Briggs notes that, "For more and more families in America, 'making it' to the suburbs and a somewhat integrated neighborhood no longer ensures access to the schools, workplaces, valuable social networks, and other institutions that shape opportunity so powerfully." (Briggs 2005, p.9).

The inability to translate the promise of residential mobility into more than mixed results continues to confound housing policy scholars as well as housing authority administrators seeking to improve local housing programs. Housing vouchers remain the primary strategy for using residential mobility to assist low-income households in moving to areas with greater promise for opportunity, despite the fact that residential mobility itself remains a "black box" for policy researchers (Rosenbaum, Reynolds, and Deluca 2002). The project of this dissertation is concerned with making a contribution to the understanding of how residential mobility matters, particularly for low-income households moving with housing vouchers. More specifically, this dissertation examines the portability feature of housing vouchers, which allow voucher-assisted tenants to move nationally between housing authorities while retaining their housing voucher.

B. <u>Plan and Perspective for This Dissertation</u>

While program evaluation research has concerned itself with understanding the mobility of voucher-assisted households, much of the analysis to-date has looked at point-in-time data which aggregates household choices and behavior into singular snapshots of residential location. Some of the most recent research including that of Feins and Patterson (2005) and Climaco, et al. (2008) has taken a more fine-grained longitudinal approach to understanding where voucher-assisted households move, and how such moves fit with prior housing and community locations which households have lived in. This research constitutes an important first step towards understanding how voucher portability is (or is not) part of larger social and economic mobility strategies for low-income households.

This dissertation expands upon this longitudinal research on voucher residence in several important ways. First, where other longitudinal studies have been national in both scope and analysis, this dissertation seeks to examine voucher-assisted residential mobility at a more local scale, the state of Illinois. Second, where prior longitudinal research has focused on describing the before and after neighborhood locations associated with residential mobility, this dissertation research also examines the "space in between" moves and outcomes by exploring the interaction between tenant behavior (moves) and program design (including key programmatic relationships (landlords, and local housing authority administrations). Where past research has "naturalized" these relationships as an immeasurable (and uniform) feature of local places in order to focus on tenants, this research remains focused on tenants, but recognizes that the key relationships built into the program are neither uniform across space or time, and may be contingent upon the actions of individual moving households as well. This research takes the view that “Places are not simply *affected* by the institutional maneuvers surrounding them. Places *are* those mechanisms… Places are not ‘discovered’ … people construct them as a practiced activity” (Logan and Molotch p. 43-44)

By exploring the ways in which the “practiced activities” of landlords, housing authorities, and (most importantly) voucher-assisted households interact to co-create a portion of place, this dissertation seeks to complement the existing descriptive literature on voucher-based mobility by generating a better understanding of how the context of place matters in terms of the outcomes experienced when voucher households make portability moves with their vouchers. While this research is aimed in particular at understanding the experiences of voucher households who have made portability moves in between housing authorities, the results also have important implications for voucher-assisted households moving within housing authorities, as well as assisted households who choose to remain in place.

C. Research Questions

This dissertation uses both quantitative and qualitative methodology to answer research questions. This mixed-methods approach relies upon a general question to provide a framework for inquiry. Several more specific sub questions will be answered using specific methodologies. This research uses the language of research questions uniformly in relation to points to be investigated using quantitative and qualitative strategies. The primary question which this dissertation seeks to answer is:

- How do local administrative and landlord practices contribute to the types of housing and non-housing outcomes experienced by voucher households after they make a portability move?

Several important sub questions which will be explored include:

- Do neighborhood composition proxies commonly used in geography of opportunity research align with the lived experiences of neighborhood opportunity which voucher households describe?
- What types of housing and non-housing needs do moving voucher households have?
- In what areas do individual perceptions of opportunity tend to overlap with the opportunity that the HCV program is designed to facilitate?

By understanding the types of practiced activities that make up the spaces of residential mobility, as well as their geographic correlates, planners and policy researchers can better understand the ways in which place matters in contributing to outcomes for low-income households on the move. Such analysis can also help researchers and program designers to understand the ways in which program design and policy interact at a local level to shape neighborhood choices and outcomes.

D. **Chapter Overview**

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I present a review of relevant literature on residential mobility, neighborhood effects, and the Housing Choice Voucher Program. I also review the academic and policy literature focused on housing vouchers and the implementation of housing vouchers as a person-based strategy for economic and residential mobility in the United States. Finally, I examine the ways in which housing policy researchers have chosen to measure the outcomes of voucher-based housing strategies. In addition to describing the criteria for evaluation of programs such as the Gautreaux Consent Decree and the Moving to Opportunity Program, I also catalog other voucher-based demonstration and consent decree efforts, and examine the various ways in which outcomes have been conceived of and evaluated. Finally, I present my perspective on the shortcomings of these past efforts to effectively conceive of a) the problem to be addressed via vouchers as a low-income housing strategy, b) the nature of the kinds of opportunity which residential mobility should address, and, c) the outcomes to be measured as evidence of the relative success or failure of mobility within the voucher program.

In Chapter 3, I provide a chronological history of housing vouchers as a strategic policy vehicle in the United States, and contextualize the development of vouchers as a tenant-based strategy in relation to place-based low-income housing strategies such as public housing. I not only examine the programmatic, administrative, and political nature of the shift in dominance from place-based to tenant-based strategies of assistance, but also examine the importance of housing authority administration and political economy as they impact the effectiveness of place-based strategies and tenant-based strategies of housing assistance.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the methods by which I undertake the task of understanding voucher-based residential mobility in Illinois. Within this dissertation, I employ both traditional quantitative and qualitative strategies in order to describe voucher-based assisted housing mobility. I use quantitative data to help describe the demographic and neighborhood contexts of mobility, utilize qualitative data to help understand rationales and motivations on the part of three sets of actors (porting households, housing authorities, and landlords), and return to quantitative data and traditional spatial econometric techniques in order to provide a more fine-grained portrait and model of mobility. In addition to synthesizing multiple methodological approaches, I also seek to examine voucher household mobility using a different strategy from more traditional research. Where traditional research has tended to employ point-in-time data on voucher portability, or examines only before and after-move conditions, I employ longitudinal data on voucher households in order to contextualize voucher portability within household tenure in the voucher program. To accomplish this, I construct longitudinal histories for all voucher households in Illinois, and then use these data to categorize particular types of mobility behavior, including moves within housing authorities, and portability moves between housing authorities.

Chapter 5 focuses on describing the geography of voucher residence and portability within Illinois. I compare the actually-existing geography of choice (where voucher households live) to the theoretical geography made available under the rules and regulations of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. I do this to try to understand whether voucher households are distributed evenly (or proportionally to the population at large) within geographies with voucher-eligible housing. I also link up these physical geographies with general descriptive demographic information in order to understand the neighborhood context of voucher residency. I examine these actually existing residential locations and compare their neighborhood demographics with theorized proxies for opportunity (most notably race and income thresholds) in order to question whether as a whole voucher households are living in areas which policy researchers have conceived of as being "areas of opportunity" within past voucher location research. In addition to applying this analysis to the voucher population-at-large, I look specifically at those households making portability moves in order to understand a) whether porting households tend to move to different areas than voucher households undertaking intra-housing authority residential mobility, and b) whether these neighborhoods moved to by porting voucher households are areas with “better” opportunity as described by policy proxies.

In Chapter 6, I explore the ways in which relationships matter in determining the outcomes experienced by porting voucher households. In particular, I use HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher program framework which describes legal relationships between housing authorities, tenants, and landlords in order to understand the motivations, rationales, and behaviors of each group. I utilize data from qualitative interviews with each of these stakeholders in order to understand the ways in which the legal relationships described in three contractual documents (the voucher, the HAP payment contract, and the lease) are mediated and placed in tension with each other via personal experiences and relationships. I focus my analysis on understanding how the dynamics of these three relationships shapes the types of residential mobility outcomes experienced by porting voucher households.

Chapter 7 connects the analysis and questions raised by the prior two chapters, primarily trying to understand which factors are important determinants of successful voucher portability in light of the shortcomings of the policy proxies described in Chapter 5 and in light of the complexities of the mobility decision-making process described in chapter 6. This chapter also provides a discussion of the implications of research results for policy. In particular, I point out several ways in which historical proxies for opportunity fall short in describing the reality “on the ground” within many communities, and that these proxies have significant implications for how we measure the success of moves within the Illinois HCVP. I also discuss several potential strategies for decreasing barriers to voucher portability (namely regional cooperation between housing authorities, spatial decision support systems, and streamlining of the administrative process by which portability occurs). Finally, I discuss whether the voucher program as it is currently designed can serve as a widespread program to leverage residential mobility into other forms of mobility. I suggest that such leverage of residential mobility requires a wide scale re-envisioning of the voucher program to be more than a housing intervention. Bringing multiple mobilities to scale will instead require a more holistic treatment of individual households, who require not only support and stability within housing, but also a range of other supportive services including linkage to community organizations, employment training and opportunities, healthcare resources, and other human service resources.

In Chapter 8, I conclude the dissertation by reviewing my findings; mainly that Housing Choice Voucher households move for a variety of reasons, many of which are not accounted for in prior housing policy research on voucher household mobility. I highlight the finding that selection of new residential locations is also influenced by a variety of factors, and that the relationships existing between voucher households, landlords, and housing authorities both shape residential location decisions as well as subsequent outcomes for voucher households. In light of these findings, I conclude by suggesting some strategies for re-shaping both HCVP design as well as research and program evaluation in order to ask and answer questions in a manner that is more respective to multiple rationales for mobility as well as to the influence of institutional relationships within household-level outcomes.

II. THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A. <u>Mobility as an Organizing Social Science Theory</u>

The social science academy has played a large role in defining mobility, particularly around relationships with space and time. Early economic theories of mobility made use of the principle of utility maximization in order to explain why people move and why they end up in certain geographic and social formations. Looking through the lens of Adam Smith's (1776) concept of the "invisible hand", economically rational mobility is based upon maximizing personal utility in situations where the cost of mobility is less than the expected personal return on utility. It is important to note that economic theories of migration tend to blur the distinction between geographic mobility (changes in location) and social mobility (changes in social or economic relations), with utility accounting for both geographic redistribution and with economic uplift through the expected returns of the decision to move. The role of geography, when accounted for in such seminal works as Ravenstein's *Laws of Migration* (1885) was focused on theorizing intervening opportunities, how the cost of physical distance would become factored into the mobility cost / return on utility trade-off. Similarly, human capital theories of mobility via migration have "personalized" the utility maximization routine slightly, by accounting for quality of life, and noneconomic place-based social returns associated with mobility. (Sjaastad 1962).

The promise of such economic theories of mobility is that the outcome of mobility process can and should be life improvements and accessibility to opportunities not available in the location moved from. Within such theories, opportunities are bundled to place, to be “unlocked” by movers. As such, freedom of geographic mobility becomes a primary strategy for social mobility. As Vincent Kaufmann et al. (2004) notes, “The majority of modern social theories favour fair access to opportunities, and, thus, propose maximal social mobility as the most effective mechanism for a just, efficient and stable society. (Kaufmann et al. 2004 p. 747)

Theories of mobility have become intertwined within larger questions around civil rights, and, particularly, the role of the state in ensuring fair access to opportunities and maximal social mobility. The civil rights debate of this 1960’s pitted the notion of equality of opportunity against equality of outcome or condition. Equality of opportunity is focused on equal access to a given good or resource for all members of society. Equality of outcome is focused on guaranteeing all members of society equal material and social conditions. Within the civil rights struggle, liberals argued for equality of opportunity for all people, asserting that government had a negative obligation – an obligation not to discriminate or treat citizens differently based upon their race. Those arguing for equality of outcome, asserted that the government had a positive right to actively redistribute money in order to improve the material wellbeing of those who had historically been excluded and underserved by the state.

The incorporation of these ideologies within policy and politics is well reflected within domestic political projects from the Great Society onwards. Great Society policies reflected both notions of equal opportunity and equality of outcome. Prompted by the civil rights movement and conflict surrounding the persistence of disadvantage for many of the nation's residents, the Great Society movement sought progressive reforms designed to create both new universalized opportunities as well as an expanded safety net for the most vulnerable of citizens. Legislation such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1968 Fair Housing Act reflected policies focused on negative rights for all citizens. Other programs, particularly those couched within the War on Poverty were focused on working toward equality of outcome through redistribution of wealth and resources to lacking individuals. While these two ideologies coexisted and created some substantial benefit during this initial time period, later changes, including those that began under the initial wave of New Federalism in the 1970's realized the dismantling or crippling of many of the policies focused on equality of outcome.

During the ensuing period through the early 1990's this back-and-forth policy debate grew increasingly contested within liberal and conservative political rhetoric. Conservatives argued that the increased service provision of the welfare state had resulted in the creation of a culture of dependence, commonly referred to as the culture of poverty. The culture of poverty camp argued that the effect of redistributionist welfare policy was to create a new series of cultural values differing from the mainstream. From this perspective, individuals who found welfare subsistence to be economically rational, at the expense of the greater society, perpetuated this culture. Conservatives sought an answer to these problems through the shrinking of the welfare state in favor of private intervention. Liberals countered that the persistence of poverty and the differences in exhibited behavior by the poor were not due to a separate culture, but were rather manifestations of the effect of long-term and systematic exclusion and disadvantage. They argued that incidences of different behavior and lack of equality of outcomes for the poor could be changed through policies of active inclusion, particularly those that focused on eliminating the persistence of geographically concentrated poverty through the intervention of the state.

Some of the more recent theoretical questions around the nature of mobility have attempted to transcend the debate over equality of outcome versus equality of opportunity. Theorists such as Kaufmann et al. suggest that a new way forward may be the transformation of mobility research into the study of *motility*. The terminology of motility has existed within the biological sciences, and in that context it refers to the ability of biological organisms to actively or spontaneously move through their environment. Rather than focusing on outcome or opportunity, motility focuses on the multiple contingencies under which individual mobility occurs. The conceptualization of motility expands upon theories of mobility by looking at three necessary prerequisites proposed by Jacques Levy (2000): possibility, competence, and capital. Possibility reflects the potential options available for a particular agent. Competence represents the ability of the agent to both identify and recognize those possibilities. Capital reflects the calculation of social and economic costs associated with the decision to be mobile. These three conceptual prerequisites provide mobility researchers with a more holistic look at mobility in context- motility- that speaks simultaneously to geographic and social elements, and that recognizes that environmental factors and social relationships may result in divergent outcomes for different movers. Kaufmann et al. aptly describe the essence of motility:

> Motility incorporates structural and cultural dimensions of movement and action in that the actual or potential capacity for spatio-social mobility may be realized differently or have different consequences across varying socio-cultural contexts. (Kaufmann et al. 2004 p. 750)

The framework of motility can help us understand how to reintegrate the classical study of mobility through space-time with the promise of motility and an examination of social relationships and contingency. John Urry (2008) points to the ways in which this motility can then help elucidate the relationship between mobility and the state. Urry states, "What constitutes social life is heterogeneous and part of that heterogeneity is a set of material objects . . . that directly or indirectly move or block the movement of objects, people, and information. In order to concretise the social science turn toward incorporating the object world, it is necessary to examine the many ways in which objects and people are assembled and reassembled through time-space." (Urry 2008 p. 15)

B. <u>**Residential Mobility Theory: Social Science Meets Policy Reality**</u>

Theories of migration and residential mobility such as those proposed by Rossi (1955) and Tiebout (1956) focused on understanding patterns of residential movement particularly as they related to the growing suburban boom characteristic of the time period. Rossi's work suggested that the choice to move was related to changes in housing needs. Similarly, Tiebout's work described residential mobility as a process of social sorting whereby households moved to locations with the most desirable local government and social service resources. Both of these pieces of work reflected the dominance of rational theories of local government regulation and housing economics. As part of the larger social science movement in the 1960's mobility theory took a turn towards describing the relationship between mobility and social inequality.

Work such as that of John Kain (1968) linked patterns of residential location to questions of economic and social opportunity. Kain's Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis suggested that low employment levels in inner-city African American communities were the result of a combination of factors resulting in spatial segregation, particularly the separation of low-income job-seekers from employment opportunities. Kain characterizes housing market discrimination and residential segregation as dual processes that result in metropolitan spatial mismatch. (Kain 1968, 1992).

Kain (1968) conducted an econometric analysis comparing residential location to work location for households in Detroit and Chicago in 1952 and 1956. From this analysis, Kain noted a differential between employment levels for white and black households, as well as differentials within racial groups by levels of residential segregation by race, with evidence of these differentials being present in both metropolitan areas. Kain attributed these differentials to two processes: 1) shifting patterns of industrial and low-income work from central cities to suburbs, and, 2) limits on the residential mobility of black households as a result of housing market discrimination and segregation. Within these cases, Kain estimated that these dual processes resulted in unemployment for nearly 9,000 black workers in Detroit and 24,600 workers in Chicago.

Kain's work in the 1960's became influential in many of the policy discussions occurring around racially-charged civil disorder. The influence of Kain's work can be seen in Federally-commissioned studies such as the Kerner Commission Report:

> Most new employment opportunities do not occur in central cities, near all-Negro neighborhoods. They are being created in suburbs and outlying areas- and this trend is likely to continue indefinitely… Providing employment for the swelling Negro ghetto population will require society to link these potential workers more closely with job locations. This can be done in three ways: by developing incentives to industry to create new employment centers near Negro residential areas; by opening suburban residential areas to Negroes and encouraging them to move closer to industrial centers; or by creating better transportation between ghetto neighborhoods and new job locations (Kerner Commission Report p. 392 as quoted in Kain 1992)

Nearly 20 years after Kain suggested that spatial mismatch resulted in some of the empirically observed phenomena in communities of disadvantage, sociologist William Julius Wilson proposed linkages between spatial mismatch, neighborhood conditions, and the behaviors of low-income residents in inner-city neighborhoods. Writing in response to conservative political and academic discourse that attributed persistent poverty in urban African-American enclaves to a "crystallization of ghetto culture," Wilson presents evidence that persistent poverty is response to a systematic denial of economic and social opportunity; the "changing [of] situational and structural factors" (For an overview, see Wilson 1987, 1996 or Kassarda and Ting 1996).

As the US labor market in central cities underwent post-Fordist restructuring, working class employment opportunities either migrated from urban centers or disappeared completely. Wilson argues that this readjustment led to a capping of the social and residential mobility of working class central city residents, particularly African Americans, still limited by the vestiges of segregation and institutional discrimination. In contrast to the mixed-income African American communities bound under the linchpin of segregation, as economic and employment opportunities began to leave African American communities without the same constraint on racial migration, so too left the middle and upper income residents who could afford to do so. From Wilson's perspective, these departing middle and upper income individuals with steady employment and upward mobility had historically set and regulated community goals and values for less advantaged members of the community. With these residents and the community institutions that they supported gone, low-income residents became concentrated into homogeneous communities with a marked lack of resources or chances for personal or collective improvement. Using demographic data, Wilson asserts that concentrated poverty and lack of access to employment opportunities has resulted in secondary effects including lack of adequate educational opportunities, an age structure skewed towards younger individuals, increased rates of violence and crime, a lack of personal or family benefit to marriage, and a lack of accessible employment opportunities.

While Wilson's analysis was targeted primarily at conservative social and policy critics who view the effects of concentrated poverty as evidence of the formation of an "underclass", his work has been cited as evidence both in support and against the underclass claim. Conservatives favoring the underclass hypothesis have found in Wilson's work a laundry list of "ghetto-specific behaviors" including low rates of marriage, sexual promiscuity, and informal economic activity, packaged as both individual activities and collective behaviors. The argument that these behaviors are indeed "ghetto-specific" has been used by conservative critics as a means of justifying cuts to social services and the creation of stricter rules for recipients of social welfare benefits.[1] Liberals have also made great use of Wilson's findings, focusing around his description of poverty-attributed behaviors as being a result of structural (as opposed to cultural) factors. In particular, this focus helped bring the issue of race back into mainstream policy research on poverty.

[1] Recently, the issue of drug testing for public housing residents has emerged as an issue being argued around the idea that low-income communities reinforce maladaptive behavior such as drug use. Among other housing authorities, the Chicago Housing Authority has recently proposed mandatory drug testing for public housing residents. As of June, 2011, the plan has been scrapped due to public outcry, concerns about the Constitutionality of the proposal, and concerns related to differential treatment for public housing and market rate residents in CHA mixed-income developments. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (110 Stat 2105) also epitomizes the amalgamation of the conservative Contact with America, and President Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign promise to "end welfare as we know it". Among other things the law (typically referred to simply as "welfare reform") created both work and family requirements for recipients of welfare benefits and also created time limits for assistance.

C. Neighborhood Effects

In addition to measuring the larger dynamics neighborhood change, studies of neighborhood effects seek to interrogate the impact of neighborhood on social behavior, paying particular attention to the ways in which such behavior may prove influential in upward or downward class mobility. Due to the contingency of context, and the use of empirical tools that gain explanatory power through aggregation and abstraction, this literature has had mixed results in decomposing the nuances of neighborhood effects in terms of individual behaviors related to social and economic mobility. Another significant limitation of this research is its ability to integrate data that has not been collected within an experimental context. Such data presents a problematic for these models due to the potential for correlation between neighborhood selectivity and a household's preferential predisposition towards observed outcomes. (Kling et al. 2006)

The problem of endogeneity in neighborhood selection that Kling points out has driven housing policy researchers to look towards the use of quasi-experimental research designs and resultant data in order to inform models of neighborhood effects on household-level outcomes. The incorporation of random selection into subject test groups in theory minimizes the overall threat of endogenaity to the model. Data derived from the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration Program (MTO) research provides the most complete empirical, quasi-experimental test of the geographies of opportunity assumptions. The value of MTO for exploring neighborhood effects comes from its quasi-experimental design, and the longitudinal measurement of outcomes in terms of education attainment, access to jobs, social networks, and health status. Kling et al. (2006) use MTO data to test whether neighborhood effects incur positive, negative, or neutral outcomes for demonstration participants. Their analysis found that neighborhood effects existed to a limited extent, but, by and large, were hard to measure due to the substantial overall change in living environment experienced by program participants. In fact, the research team suggests that improvements to the substantially distressed neighborhoods from which experiment participants came from could have as much an effect as the mobility-based strategy which the demonstration tested. (Kling et al. 2006. p. 25).

In their review of the neighborhood effect literature, Ellen and Turner (1997) point to the inconclusiveness of neighborhood effects research in helping policy analysts discern any particular dominance or hierarchy in neighborhood effects. Ellen and Turner conclude that "the existing evidence is inconclusive when it comes to determining which neighborhood conditions matter most, how neighborhood characteristics influence individual behavior and well-being, or whether neighborhood effects differ for families with different characteristics." (Ellen and Turner 1997, p. 835). One possible way forward, they suggest, is the design of "studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods. . . [in order to understand] how and why neighborhoods matter" (p. 835).

D. <u>Neighborhoods and Voucher Outcomes</u>

The concept of neighborhood has been an important component in work on opportunity and residential mobility for voucher households. While no standard definition of neighborhood exists within residential mobility research, census tracts are predominantly used to describe neighborhood context. Census tracts have been used primarily in two ways, first, as a geography to measure the distribution of voucher households within a metropolitan area, and second, as a geography of assessing neighborhood demographic features with the goal of capturing dimensions of neighborhood quality.

Measuring the distribution of vouchers within neighborhoods has been used as a strategy to understand whether the spatial distribution of vouchers has changed over time. Most research has focused on the question of whether voucher households have been able to reach a larger distribution of neighborhoods over time using residential mobility. HCV program theory suggests that the voucher subsidy and residential mobility provisions should allow voucher households access and select housing across a wide variety of neighborhoods, resulting in a more even distribution of voucher households throughout a given metropolitan area over time. There are two common strategies for assessing voucher distribution within a given area. One strategy is to examine the distribution of census tracts with at least one voucher household in relation to all Census tracts. A more refined strategy is to examine the share of tract households with vouchers to the total households that are in the tract. This strategy allows researchers to not only examine distribution of voucher households between tracts but also within tracts.

Measures of neighborhood quality seek to capture some of the non-housing benefits of neighborhoods for voucher households. While poverty rate and race are the most predominant proxies used within policy research to understand dimensions of neighborhood quality, other dimensions including educational attainment, housing tenure, and changes in housing value. Tract poverty rates have been a predominant means of assessing neighborhoods, due primarily to the uniform definition and availability of data for multiple time periods for the entire nation. Poverty has also proved a useful proxy since its characteristics at the neighborhood level are assumed to capture multiple dimensions of distress and negative effects.

Examining the characteristics of census tracts based upon their poverty rate, Paul Jargowsky (1998) has observed that the overall effects of poverty are non-linear, but that thresholds exist at which poverty rate tends to correlate strongly with other indicators of disadvantage and lack of opportunity. In his research, Jargowsky (1998) identifies a poverty rate of 40 percent as a threshold at which neighborhoods are very likely to not have access to opportunities. Conversely 10 percent poverty has been used as a lower bound to describe areas that tend to have more opportunities. The Moving To Opportunity demonstration program used 10 percent poverty at the tract level as a maximum threshold for communities which participants could move to with their experimental voucher. At the time when the program was being developed, 10 percent poverty also closely reflected the nation's poverty rate (Khadduri 2001). As will be detailed in Chapter 4, the majority of the nation's assisted households live in tracts with poverty rates that fall somewhere between 10 and 40 percent, yet while there is consensus that 10 percent poverty represents "low" rates and high opportunity and 40 percent or greater poverty represents "high" poverty and low opportunity areas, little empirical work has been done to understand how these neighborhoods in the middle range relate to theories of neighborhood effects and outcomes for the households living in such communities.

Race has also played a role in defining neighborhood-level opportunity, particularly in the Gautreaux consent decree in Chicago. Public housing residents participating in the consent decree's remedy were required to move to neighborhoods (census tracts) with less than 30 percent African-American residents. While the program served as a legal remedy for racial segregation and discrimination against residents of Chicago public housing, much of the research conducted on Gautreaux movers concentrated the secondary effects of moving to less segregated neighborhoods.

Several researchers have adopted approaches to understanding neighborhood quality and opportunity across multiple dimensions. Pendall (2000), for instance incorporates indicators of neighborhood distress (from the work of Kassarda (1993)) in order to describe opportunities for voucher households. This work supplements the poverty rate indicator with several more nuanced indicators such as percentage of female-headed households, employment and education rates, and receipt of public assistance. Similarly, the Kirwan Institute has developed a comprehensive strategy of "opportunity mapping" across 22 local and regional measures, with a focus on three general areas: accessibility to quality neighborhoods, economic opportunity, and educational opportunity. (Reece et al. 2010). For a given region, such measures are standardized and scored to compare areas with more positive dimensions of opportunity to those areas with fewer positive dimensions. In locations such as Baltimore, comparison of these multidimensional opportunity scores to measures of poverty show a wide divergence between multidimensional scores and traditional measures of poverty, with more than half of multidimensional scores diverging from the assessment provided by poverty measures. (powell 2005). These differences suggest that measures of income and poverty may not capture many community features that form important supportive factors for local residents.

E. **The Geography of Opportunity**

The goal of increasing housing and non-housing opportunities for voucher households is widely accepted to be an important aspect of the program, however, the methods of achieving this goal and the dimensioning of what opportunities may actually be are less clear. Little consensus has been reached within policy and academic communities as to what opportunity actually is, and how it can be measured in relation to outcomes for families within those communities. While the opportunity concept is still a fuzzy one, contemporary theories of the geography of opportunity tend to have two components, a process component and an outcome component. Processes reflect the ways in which structural and institutional factors interact with the choices of local residents to produce differential access to opportunities. Empirically, such differential access is reflected through the geographic sorting of households into racially and economically clustered groups. Outcomes include differential access to resources influenced by spatial proximity as well as differential treatment on the basis of class and racial identity.

The challenge faced by policy researchers is twofold. First, processes and outcomes must be defined in such a way that allows for empirical investigation. Second, such investigation must remain sensitive to contingencies in context and relationships. Given the ways in which opportunity is simultaneously relational and spatial, scale also becomes an important factor. Contemporary theories of the geography of opportunity tend to situate opportunity at a neighborhood level, while at the same time recognizing the importance of regional or metropolitan trends in shaping action and outcome within neighborhoods.

Three processes in particular- sprawl, concentration of poverty, and segregation- are often pointed to as being important empirical indicators associated with geographically varied opportunity, as well as areas that lend themselves to policy intervention. In their book *Privileged Places: Race, Residence, and the Structure of Opportunity* (2006), Gregory Squires and Charis Kubrin assert that these three concepts must be analyzed across both spatial and institutional dimensions in order to understand how opportunity is created at a local level. They state that:

> "this kind of analysis requires understanding how individual characteristics and choices … and voluntary exchanges that occur via competitive markets are both framed and complimented by structural constraints in determining the distribution of valued goods and services." (Squires and Kubrin 2006, p. 4)

The authors point to the importance of housing markets and neighborhoods in determining "constellations of opportunities" (Pulido 2004 as quoted in Squires and Kubrin 2006, p. 1) within a metropolitan region. In order to develop an empirical basis for understanding the choice-opportunity pathway around spatial dimensions such as sprawl, poverty, and race, the authors examine metropolitan demographic trends, which reveal the persistence of segregation for African-American residents even after the elimination of explicitly segregative housing policy and the advent of Federal and local policies designed to affirmatively further fair housing. The authors point to continued (though often less explicit) housing market discrimination, personal preferences, and income disparities as potential reasons for the persistence of these patterns across the majority of the nation's metropolitan areas.

Similarly, Briggs (2005) examines the linkage between spatial dimensions of housing opportunity and urban development. Briggs highlights the challenges associated with understanding and crafting policy around these linkages: "Whereas most issues primarily engender debate about *who* (the policy target group), *what* (the design of public subsidy programs or regulation), and *how much* (public generosity relative to private obligation), housing is also unavoidably about *where*." (p.5, italics are Briggs' emphasis).

Briggs attributes the uneven geography of opportunity to many of the same processes and outcomes noted by Squires and Kubrin. (Adapted from table 14-1, p.330)

Causes: Problems Leading to Segregation

- Exclusionary Land Use Policies and Limited Supply of Affordable Housing
- Discrimination by sellers, lenders, brokers, and public housing agencies
- Segregative residential choices of consumers in cities and suburbs

Outcomes: Problems Stemming From Segregation

- Educational inequality across schools or school districts
- Barriers to job access
- Spatially concentrated crime, lower quality housing and services, lack of amenities
- Neighborhood stigmas that discourage investment and hiring

To paraphrase, Briggs describes the relationship between causes and outcomes:

> The prospect of a dual society, officially welcoming but socially gated, looms. More than any other factor, high levels of segregation by race and class, by neighborhood and municipality, determine the quality of schools and other public services, rates of street crime and associated levels of fear and insecurity, geographic access to jobs, exposure to environmental hazards, and prospects for building assets through property investment. (Briggs 2005, p. 311)

Galster and Killen (1995) take a slightly different perspective to dimensioning the geography of opportunity. They conceive of opportunity as having two distinct types of dimensions; *processes* and *prospects*. Similar to Squires and Kubrin (2006) and Briggs (2005), the authors conceive of processes as the influence of local institutions on the wellbeing of people who are able to access those institutional resources. This conception is focused on the ways in which such institutions "act on and convert personal attributes into outputs affecting social advancement". (Galster and Killen 2005, p. 9). In contrast to the process dimension, the authors conceive of prospects as the prospective (or speculative) outcomes which will result from making a particular decision. The concept of prospects take influence from the neoclassical approach to economics, which suggest that actors will choose which ever prospect they assess to have the highest utility (socioeconomic outcome). However, the authors complicate the neoclassical concept by suggesting that individual subjectivities will also greatly influence perceptions of what prospects are and how they are acted upon.

Discourse around the concept of equality of opportunity, the authors note, tend to focus heavily on the process dimension while largely ignoring the prospects dimension. The concept also focuses primarily upon the concept of equal treatment-that individuals with the same capabilities should be treated the same in regards to a given opportunity. This dimension also tends to be a point of policy intervention, particularly in terms of fair housing laws and regulations. However, the authors suggest that both processes and prospects deserve further expansion to include a spatial dimension.

The authors conceive of opportunity as having a spatial dimension, particularly within markets or institutions. When describing the notion of equality of opportunity, the authors suggest that equality of opportunity is not simply about equal treatment for different individuals, but also requires an understanding of equal spatial access to opportunities within a given market. The authors ask three questions in regards to opportunity. First, if two individuals of differing backgrounds (race, class, gender, etc.) interface with a particular institution are they treated the same? Second, does the institution offer equivalent or equal resources across a metropolitan area? Third, can households locate in particular locations within the metropolitan area that offer them access to the institutions and resources that are "most desirable" to them?

1. **Opportunity and Housing Choice Voucher Program Design**

Citing results from the Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity Demonstration, the Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook (HUD 2001) describes two primary program goals; first, to carry out HUD's overarching mission of providing safe, decent, and affordable housing; and second, to promote housing opportunities for low-income households. The guidebook acknowledges that rapid program growth and housing market discrimination have "caused concern about avoiding excessive concentrations of housing choice voucher families in high-poverty or minority neighborhoods." As a result, housing opportunities are conceived of as "rental housing outside areas of poverty or minority concentration". (Section 2-1)

Citing study findings from the Gautreaux consent decree and Moving to Opportunity demonstration, the guidebook highlights that moving to such communities can result in advantageous non-housing benefits[2] for voucher-assisted families.

The HUD strategy for promoting moves to areas of opportunity through the program involves three primary tactics. First, housing authority staff identify and track areas of opportunity over time within their jurisdiction. Second, housing authorities recruit landlords from opportunity areas of offer their housing for rent by voucher-assisted households. Third, housing authorities encourage assisted tenants to move to opportunity areas, and also refer households to relocation counseling agencies that can help identify housing resources in areas of opportunity. (Section 2-1). Although these tactics overlap with several mandated portions of program design, a significant problem (which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5) remains that these activities fall largely outside of program requirements (and funding) which housing authorities must accomplish. Existing mandated activities such as tenant briefings provide an important opportunity to discuss opportunity moves; however activities related to the other tactics are largely voluntary and not standardized between housing authorities.

[2] Specifically, the guidebook highlights outcomes for children as well as improvements in neighborhood crime rates and job accessibility as important outcomes from opportunity moves. The guidebook states "…families with children moving from communities of high-poverty concentration to low-poverty communities tend to perform better in school (e.g., drop out rates are lower, grades are better, college attendance rates are higher). In addition, families report benefiting greatly from reduced crime and greater employment opportunities." (HCV Program Guidebook, Section 2-1)

2. **Empirical Studies of Voucher Opportunity**

The connection between theories of neighborhood opportunity and the housing choices made by low-income movers participating the Housing Choice Voucher Program is somewhat tenuous. While the Gautreaux Consent Decree and Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program provide some insight into the kinds of *potential* outcomes that may be experienced by making moves within the program, considerably less research has examined the moving experiences of households within the general population of housing vouchers, as opposed to those in demonstration programs who had neighborhood demographic constraints placed on their moves as well as relocation counseling, which is not generally available to all program participants.

Experimental results, however, do provide some evidence of the ways in which neighborhoods can influence the outcomes of program participants with vouchers. Evidence from the MTO demonstration indicated that treatment group participants (who moved to low-poverty areas) reported "significantly less physical and social disorder and significantly greater satisfaction with their neighborhoods compared with in-place control parents." (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003). Similarly, in an analysis of Chicago's MTO program, Rosenbaum and Harris (2001) found improvements in homeownership rates, decreased poverty, and increased diversity. They also concluded that such benefits were experienced to a greater degree by "opportunity" movers when compared to their counterparts who moved without opportunity area restrictions on their vouchers. For both groups, the prevalence of crime, graffiti, vermin, and littering declined, as did the incidence of major issues with housing conditions. Labor force participation rates rose for both experimental groups, with a greater number of unrestricted participants (64.3% as compared to MTO's 59.3%) in the labor force while restricted participants reported a higher level of employment within a year after moving (46.3% as compared to 42.9% for unrestricted movers).

It is important to note that while some positive findings did come out of MTO, some significant negative findings were also observed. The uplift experienced by the families who were able to move out of communities of concentrated poverty were often short-lived when considered in light of the social disconnection which many of these families experienced in their new location. Many MTO families ended up moving back to the "ghetto" communities from which they moved out of, due to the lack of significant social cohesion and sense of belonging in their new residential locations.[3] (HUD 2003, Sampson 2008). This point serves as a reminder of the importance which space and relationships have in the production of successful mobility.

A much smaller but similar consent-decree driven demonstration in Yonkers, New York (initiated in 1986) realized parallel outcomes. Research on the Yonkers demonstration conducted by Briggs (1998) found decreases in self-reported mental health problems as well as decreases in behavior such as drinking, smoking, drug

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[3] A similar phenomenon was observed amongst many of the households that participated in the Gautreaux Consent Decree in Chicago, which moved families from public housing to racially integrated communities throughout the Chicagoland area in the 1980s and 1990s. See in particular Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum (2000).

use, and violent victimization. Although limited only to the Chicago area, experimental results from the Gautreaux Consent Decree highlight similar transitions for low-income voucher assisted families moving to racially integrated suburban areas. Results showed market improvements, particularly in terms of resident perception of safety, employment status, and amount of public assistance income (Rosenbaum and DeLuca 2000). However, as Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum (2000) note, many of the families moving to suburban areas experienced intense racial discrimination, racially-driven violence, and social isolation within their new communities, often to such an extent that participants chose to move back to low-income central city neighborhoods after only several months living in the suburbs.

One of the few studies that has examined pre and post mobility neighborhood conditions for the general population of portability movers was conducted by Climaco et al in 2008. Their study used HUD administrative data to construct longitudinal histories for all voucher households in the nation. Looking specifically at portability moves between housing authority jurisdictions, the researchers find only slight differences in pre-and post-move neighborhood attributes. Looking at the years 1998-2005, the authors note only slight changes in minority residency within tracts where portability occurred (58.4 percent pre-move versus 55.8 percent post-move). Similarly, the authors note only moderate changes in average tract poverty (18.5 percent pre-move versus 16.3 percent post-move). Modeling the characteristics of movers and residential contexts of portability moves, the authors note that in comparison to general program participants, portability movers are more likely to live in moderate-poverty communities as opposed to high-poverty communities. It is also important to note that this research finds that while the average portability move was approximately 219 miles from origin to destination, the median move distance was 24 miles. This brings into question whether portability moves of short distances can change residential context sufficiently to result in new or different types of opportunities for household members.[4]

Studies pertaining to both policy experiments and the limited work on the general HCV program population suggest that origin and destination neighborhoods may have an important role to play in shaping the link between residential location choice and the types of social and economic outcomes realized by moving households. The focus of this work, however, has been predominantly about mobile households, and has largely not examined the ways in which such mobility results in what might be labeled "neighborhood change", or the ways that mobility impacts outcomes for the those people who choose not to move from the neighborhood. As such, a consistent finding from these studies is that neighborhoods which program participants sought mobility from were structurally spaces of disopportunity that did not contain the types of resources or infrastructure to help families break the confines of poverty and racial segregation.

[4] Such questions arise particularly in relation to education outcomes and social service outcomes, since in many cases, school districts and social service jurisdictions can be countywide or can even encompass portions of multiple counties.

3. **Opportunity within this Research**

This research seeks to synthesize theories of residential mobility and the geography of opportunity within an analytical framework that recognizes the influence of Housing Choice Voucher Program design on the types of housing and non-housing opportunities made available to program participants. In exploring these questions, this research recognizes the importance of examining the relationship between processes and prospects (as defined by Squires and Kubrin, and Briggs), but also recognizes the importance of Galster and Killen's contribution of prospects, particularly given the focus on personal choice within the design of the HCVP. This research acknowledges that processes are inherently spatial, with variation across space and time, an important focus within the literature on the geography of opportunity. Similarly, prospects are relational, and are influenced by the ways in which choices are situated and mediated within processes. From motility theorists, this research seeks to understand the ways that interactions and relationships designed into the Housing Choice Voucher Program influence possibility, competence and capital as households seek to move. Finally, the confluence of processes and prospects represent outcomes, which are experienced by individuals, but are also reflected within institutional reactions, and changes at the neighborhood and regional level.

By looking at how theory influences policy which in turn influences the design of policy-based programs, this dissertation explores the linkages between program design, policy discussions, and theoretical discussions about the ways in which mobility is shaped by notions of economic utility and social equity. The confluence of utility and equity help to underpin policy-focused theories of spatial mismatch, neighborhood effects, and the geography of opportunity. Examining the Housing Choice Voucher Program as a targeted deployment of policy theories provides insight into the "lived experience" of these theories through everyday life. The literature and discussions mentioned above also offer up some questions for consideration (Table I).

Table I: Guiding Questions Derived from Literature

Category	Influences	Guiding Questions for this Research
Mobility Theory	Theories of Economic Utility Mobility and Social Equity	• How do households measure the potential utility of a move? • What personal and community factors shape residential location choice? • Do residential location patterns for voucher-assisted households mirror those of non-assisted households? • What are the types of opportunities which households consider during housing searches?
Policy	Spatial Mismatch Neighborhood Effects The Geography of Opportunity	• Do voucher households (re)locate in areas with access to jobs, schools, and other amenities? • How do neighborhood demographic and social factors shape the everyday life of voucher households? How do they shape personal progress towards improving life circumstances? • Do opportunities match up with communities that are accessible to voucher-assisted households?
HCVP Program Design	Primary impacts of mobility Secondary impacts of mobility	• Does the voucher subsidy help people to access better quality housing? • Does the voucher subsidy help people to access communities which would otherwise be inaccessible without the subsidy? • Do voucher households move to areas with a greater depth of opportunity? Are there any programmatic barriers to accessing such opportunities?

Engaging with the guiding questions as they relate to the Housing Choice Voucher Program provides insight into the program, while also providing a framework to examine the theories themselves. The implications of this research focus specifically on voucher-assisted low-income households; however, findings have broader implications that transcend issues of income and residential mobility which are tied up in program design. In order to better understand the ways in which the Housing Choice Voucher Program has evolved along with theories of choice, opportunity, and mobility, the next chapter describes the history of the housing voucher strategy within United States housing policy, describes the linkage between literature on the spatial dimensions of opportunity and the voucher program, and discusses several of the contemporary residential mobility experiments associated with the program.

III. The Evolution of the Housing Choice Voucher Program

While the Housing Choice Voucher Program has only existed since 1999, housing vouchers and other forms of tenant-based housing assistance have been part of Federal housing policy since the Section 23 housing program came about in the mid-1960's. Proposals to make use of vouchers and tenant-based housing subsidies extend back even further to proposals considered in the 1930s as part of the draft legislation of the 1937 U.S. Housing Act. This section outlines the history of proposals and legislation leading up to the creation of the Housing Choice Voucher Program in 1999, and then discusses the features and demographics of the program at present.

A. 1937 U.S. Housing Act

The ability for states to create Public Housing Authorities, authorized in the 1937 United States Housing Act signaled the beginning of a strategy of supply-side housing intervention initiated by Federal, State, and local governments. Such enabling legislation not only allowed for the creation of public housing authorities, but also enabled the construction, owning, and management of public housing on the part of such authorities. Such housing was designed to be targeted towards low-income households, which were described as follows in the act:

> ... families (including elderly and displaced families) who are in the lowest income group and who cannot afford to pay enough to cause private enterprise in their locality or metropolitan area to build an adequate supply of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for their use. (United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1402(2))

At the time when the act was being drafted, rental subsidies in the form of rental certificates (that would pay a portion of a household's rent) were proposed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Building and Loan League, however such proposals were not included as part of the adopted legislation. The rental certificate concept re-surfaced in the next decade when in 1943 the National Association of Real Estate Boards (now the National Association of Realtors) stated that:

> Public Assistance should be given directly to families that cannot pay economic rents. This assistance should be administered through local welfare boards in the form of rent certificates adjusted to the needs and requirements of the family…. (National Association of Real Estate Boards (1943) as quoted in GAO (1974))

Although several other housing allowance proposals were made to congress, no action was taken on the concept until the creation of Section 23 housing in 1965.

B. **Section 23**

Section 23 housing served as one response to lingering concerns over the continued problems with housing quality and slum conditions found within many urban areas. Implemented in 1965, Section 23 housing operated by allowing public housing authorities to rent units on the private market on behalf of qualified low-income households. Qualified households would in return sublet the units from the housing authority. The housing authority maintained responsibility for determining the amount of rent qualifying households would pay to the housing authority as a proportion of the rent which the housing authority paid to private landlords. While the program was in general well-received by federal legislators, one primary concern about the program was that the housing subsidy might involve government intervention and competition with the private rental housing market. In order to address such concerns, households participating in the program were required to have incomes at least 20 percent below the minimum income necessary to rent housing on the private market (42 U.S.C. § 1415(7) (b) (1964)), in essence, maintaining an "affordability gap" between market rate housing and subsidized housing.

Friedman and Krier (1968) identify two primary benefits of the Section 23 program, particularly in comparison to critiques of fixed-unit public housing. First, they highlight the potential for the program to promote racial and economic integration by promoting a more diffuse geography of residency for assisted households. Where the history of fixed-unit public housing had been greatly scarred by local government NIMBYism and political pressure to locate public housing in "tolerable" locations of racial and economic isolation, a tenant-based strategy would allow for the potential to mix assisted households both in terms of race and income. The authors note with hope that, "Leased housing conceivably might be used to crack the wall of race and income segregation; public-housing poor might live as neighbors with the middle class in middle-income apartment buildings or in houses located in middle income areas." (Friedman and Krier 1968, p 614). Second, the authors note the potential for the program to "expand the prerogative of choice" for low-income households. (p. 626). Referring to fixed-unit public housing, the authors note that "Tenants must move away from friends, ethnic ties, a job or their children's schools to gain housing assistance [in fixed-unit public housing]". (p. 626).

The benefits of market-based rental subsidies were also noted by the Federal Committee on Urban Housing, who in 1968 recommended in a report entitled "A Decent Home" that the federal government create a tenant-based low income housing allowance program. The justifications for creating such a program included increasing freedom of choice in terms of housing type and location for low-income families, enabling low-income households to take advantage of existing housing stock on the private market, and encouraging homebuilder to construct "standard" units to accommodate the effective demand of low-income subsidized renters. The committee also recommended the creation of an experimental housing allowance program to test the effectiveness of tenant-based housing subsidies at achieving the goals of housing choice, market utilization, and accommodation of demand.

C. **The EHAP Demonstration Program**

The 1968 recommendation of the Federal Committee on Urban Housing resulted in the creation of the Experimental Housing Allowance Program (EHAP) which tested the feasibility of providing housing allowances to low-income families between 1971 and 1980. During this time period, some 50,000 households received federal assistance to subsidize a portion of their rent or mortgage. As of 1974 when all experimental phases of the program were in operation, EHAP participants received housing subsidies averaging $1,000 per year (the equivalent of $4,300 in 2010 dollars). Such subsidies covered the gap between 25 percent of the household's income and the area fair market rent. The program consisted of three distinct sub-experiments and evaluations, described as phases: the supply phase, the demand phase, and the administrative agency phase.

The supply phase portion of the experiment was conducted in Green Bay Wisconsin and Saginaw, Michigan with the goal of analyzing the market effects of housing allowances in medium-sized metropolitan areas. The demand phase portion of the experiment was conducted in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Phoenix, Arizona with the goal of determining the ways in which families used housing allowances in relation to overall housing expenditures, as well as the quality and location of housing selected while participating in the program. The administrative agency phase was conducted in eight locations (Springfield (MA), Tulsa (OK), Jacksonville (FL), San Bernadino County (CA), Salem (OR), Peoria (IL), Durham (NC), and a 4 county region (Morton, Burleigh, Stark, Stutsman) in North Dakota. This phase examined the effectiveness of program delivery be several types of social welfare agencies, including housing authorities, welfare offices, and county governments. Participants in all three phases of the program were subject to some standardized program features including outreach via local agencies, housing counseling, and inspection of housing units for basic quality and safety.

HUD established ten questions to be answered by the EHAP program (GAO 1974 p.20):

- How much to families receiving housing allowances improve the quality of their housing?

- Does an allowance encourage families to take responsibility for operating their own housing?
- How equitable is a housing allowance?
- How do the locations chosen by families receiving allowances compare with existing residential patterns?
- How do allowances affect the market for assisted housing?
- What would be the inflationary effect of a housing allowance program?
- Would such a program improve the maintenance and stimulate the rehabilitation of existing dwellings? Would it also encourage new construction?
- What is the appropriate administrative means for delivering allowances to families?
- To what extent can the objectives of an allowance program be defeated through adverse actions by participants, landlords, market intermediaries, and administrators and how can these be minimized?

Preliminary analysis of the EHAP program revealed that landlords often increased rents to match the upper limits payable through the EHAP subsidy. Research on EHAP conducted by the Urban Institute suggested that between 33 percent and 50 percent of the increase in household expenditure on rent (associated with the subsidy) went towards price increases as opposed to improved housing quality. (Struyk, Marshall, and Ozanne 1978). Informal evidence from several housing authorities also indicated the phenomena of upward rent adjustment as well as that such adjustment did not result in an improvement in housing quality or further investment in the property. Early evaluation of locational outcomes also indicated that residential mobility amongst EHAP participants tended to occur along racial lines. In some cases, participants moved to communities with higher socioeconomic status, but mobility did not result in racial integration. (GAO 1974). However, the evaluation of EHAP found that EHAP resulted in an overall increase in affordable housing for program participants, that families were able to select better neighborhoods via participation in the program, and that overall, the program did result in an increase in housing quality. (HUD 2001).

Surprisingly, around the time that initial evaluations of EHAP were being completed, a national voucher-based housing assistance strategy was implemented via the 1974 Housing and Community Development Act.

D. **Codifying Section 8**

The 1974 Housing and Community Development Act modified Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 to authorize two new forms of housing assistance: project-based vouchers and tenant-based certificates. Project-based vouchers replaced the previous Section 236 program and as the Federal government's strategy for partnering with privately owned housing developments to provide affordable housing to low-income tenants. While project-based vouchers remained attached to a particular unit (which would have to be rented by a low-income family), tenant-based certificates provided subsidies to landlords on the private market, were attached to a household, and could move with the household when they chose to change residences. Tenant-based assistance was initially certificate-based (with assistance payments going directly to landlords on behalf of assisted tenants), and with rent caps being established by HUD-established fair market rents. The program was popular both locally and amongst legislators primarily due to the relatively low per-family cost of assistance, ability for households to choose their neighborhood and housing unit, and due to the speed with wish assistance could be received by eligible households.

The popularity of the program resulted in rapid expansion, and the creation in 1984 of a rental voucher demonstration program (authorized in 1987 as part of the Housing and Community Development Act) which offered households more flexibility in housing choices by not requiring a fair market rent limitation, and setting up a pre-determined assistance amount which allowed families some flexibility in the amount of income which they could spend on housing. As the program continued to grow in the 1990's three conforming rules (1994, 1995, and 1998) were issued by HUD to standardize as much as possible the certificate and voucher programs. In 1998, as part of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA) the certificate and voucher programs were officially merged into one program, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, with programs being completely merged by October, 1999.

E. **The Housing Choice Voucher Program**

The merger of the Section 8 certificate and voucher programs into the Housing Choice Voucher Program involved unifying the previous programs as well as transitioning all assisted households from previous programs into vouchers governed by the new Housing Choice Voucher rules. Features of the new program closely mirrored the Section 8 Certificate program, with increased standardization of Fair Market Rents (FMRs), standardization of tenant payments and subsidies, limits to the proportion of income a tenant can pay in rent, and more local flexibility in determining rent increases (Table II).

Table II: Summary of Differences between Pre-Merger Certificates and Housing Choice Vouchers

Topic	**Certificates**	**HCVs**
Fair Market Rents and Payment Standards	No payment standards.	The PHA sets the payment standard between 90% and 110% of the fair market rent. Families may lease a unit that rents for more or less than the payment standard.
Family Share	30% of adjusted gross income or PHA minimum rent. Families may not make side payments of pay more than the TTP.	30% of adjusted gross income or PHA minimum rent. Families may rent units that exceed payment standards, but must pay for all costs outside of payment standards.
Subsidy	The difference between the Total Tennant Payment and the gross rent.	The difference between the payment standard or the gross rent, whichever is lower.
Affordability	Family rent is based on income. There was no affordability standard.	The family may not pay more than 40% of monthly adjusted income towards rent.
Rent Increases	Annually on the anniversary date, the PHA may approve rent increases based upon a HUD-published adjustment factor, but must meet a rent reasonableness test.	Rent increases are not limited by an HUD-determined annual adjustment factor, but must meet a rent reasonableness test.

Source: Adapted from HUD (2001)

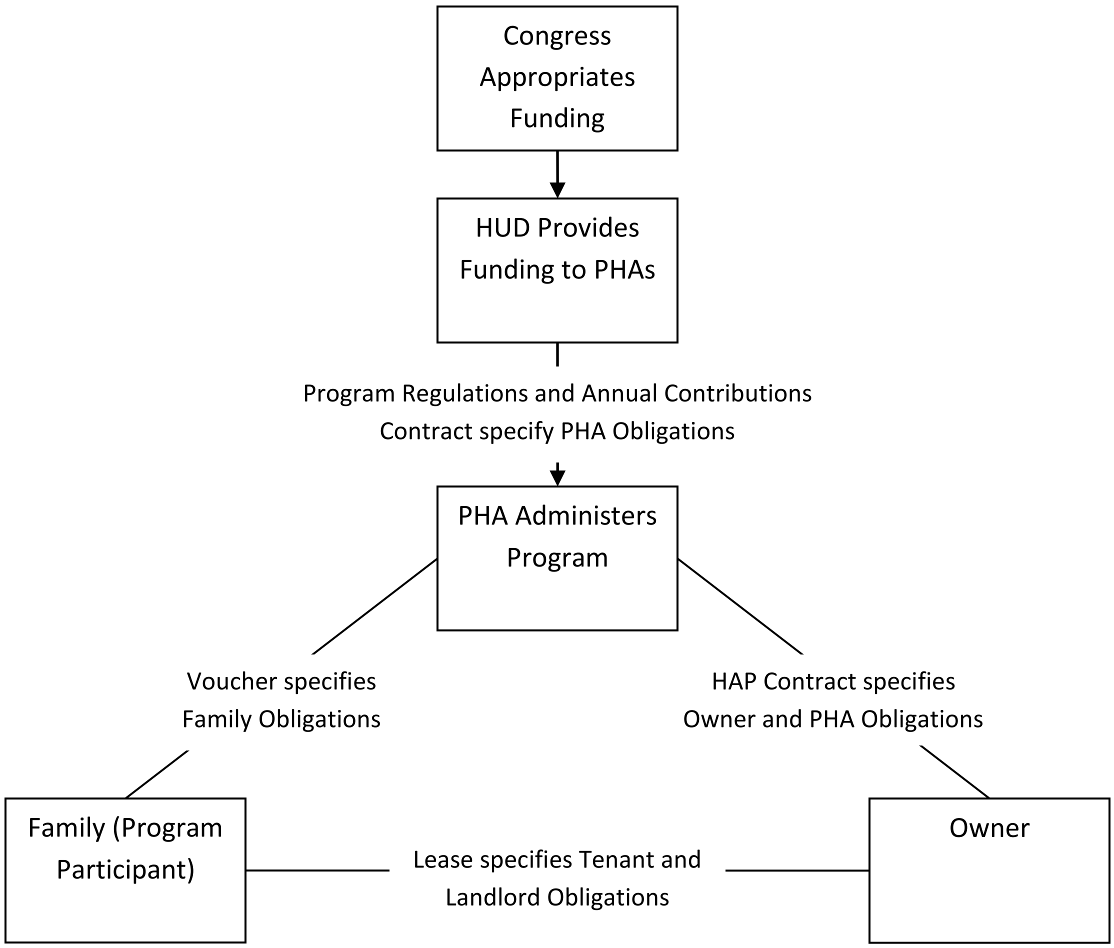
Changes to the program also created several specific types of targeted vouchers designed to help special populations including families eligible to receive TANF benefits, families at danger of losing children to the foster care system, families with a disabled household member, and other special populations, such as relocates from public housing developments that are being demolished. The flexibility of the voucher extends beyond being "customizable". The voucher program also offers housing authorities significant flexibility in setting both payment standards and rubrics for measuring rent reasonableness in response to local market conditions, with the intention that such responsiveness allows the voucher to open up housing opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to low-income renters while at the same time discouraging landlords from inflating rents for subsidized households, a problem identified by the EHAP demonstration program.

The program also maintains a focus on resident choice and mobility. By being a tenant-based subsidy program, tenants can choose to live in any housing unit that rents within the range that will be paid by the program, has a landlord willing to rent to a voucher-assisted household, and that passes HUDs minimum quality standards. Unlike many place-based housing strategies (including project-based Section 8 and public housing), the voucher affords households the ability to move both within the housing authority and also nationally between housing authorities with their voucher.

Four primary actors are involved in shaping the way that the Housing Choice Voucher Program works at a local level (Figure 1). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) maintains responsibility for oversight of the program and allocation of program operational funding to local housing authorities. Local public housing authorities are responsible for administering the voucher program through activities such as client screening, maintaining a program wait list, recruiting landlords, inspecting units, and distributing housing assistance payments. Property owners and managers (landlords) are responsible for providing housing that meets program quality standards. Tenants are responsible for leasing up housing that meets program expectations in a manner that is consistent both with the terms of the housing voucher and based upon the terms set out in the tenants' lease.

Four contractual relationships exist "in between" these groups. HUD monitors the local administration of the HCVP by PHAs by measuring performance in relation to federal program guidelines and contractual targets such as the local utilization rate of vouchers and waitlist demographics. The relationship between the housing authority and landlords is governed by a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract which determines the rent to be received for a given unit and itemizes the minimum conditions which a unit must meet (and be maintained at) to be occupied by a voucher-assisted household. As with any normal rental contract, a lease exists between the landlord and the assisted tenant which sets out the parameters of the landlord-tenant relationship. Normally, voucher households rent based upon a year-to-year lease agreement which coincides with annual unit reexaminations performed by the housing authority. Finally, the housing voucher itself governs the relationship between the assisted tenant and the housing authority. The voucher ensures the tenant an affordable rent based upon their income, while at the same time requiring voucher households to remain compliant with program rules and regulations such as following the rules of their lease agreement with the landlord, and reporting changes in household income or status in a timely manner to the PHA.

Figure 1: Housing Choice Voucher Program Structure



Source: Housing Choice Voucher Program Handbook (2001)

F. **<u>Characteristics of Assisted Households</u>**

As of May, 2011, HUD's IMS-PIC Resident Characteristics Report indicates that 1,888,225 households are currently assisted with housing vouchers, indicating that 4,710,918 individuals receive benefits from participating in the program. Of these households, 59 percent are extremely low income, and 18 percent are very low income. [5] The average annual income for voucher households in the U.S. is $12,531, with voucher households on average paying $291 per month towards their rent. The majority of voucher-recipient heads of household are white (51%), with 45% being African-American. Approximately 18 percent of voucher heads of households report their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino.

Examining numbers from IMS-PIC for the state if Illinois, 40,626 households[6] participated in the Housing Choice Voucher Program as of May 2011, with 109,625 individuals receiving benefit from the program. 60 percent of Illinois voucher households were classified as extremely low income, with an additional 16 percent being classified as very low income. 22 percent of voucher households had no income data available in the PIC data system. The average annual income for Illinois voucher households was $12,579, which is just slightly above the national average. While the majority of voucher households nationwide are White, in Illinois, the majority (66 percent) are African-American, with white heads of household representing 32 percent of voucher-assisted households in Illinois. Only 4 percent of voucher-assisted Illinois households report Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

[5] Extremely low income households make less than 30 percent of area median income, very low income households make between 30 to 50 percent of area median income. Income data on the remaining 19 percent of assisted households was not available in the PIC data system.

[6] This number significantly underrepresents the number of voucher households in Illinois due to the reduced reporting requirements for the Chicago Housing Authority, based upon a Federal Moving to Work agreement. An estimated 32,000 additional voucher households reside within the Chicago Housing Authority's jurisdiction.

G. **Conclusion**

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is currently the nation's predominant low-income housing assistance strategy. While the idea of voucher-based housing subsidy has been around for more than 70 years, it is only within the last 30 years that the concept has developed into the structure seen today. Along the way, the voucher has been used as an experimental and legal tool for addressing some of the shortcomings associated with place-based housing strategies, particularly fixed-unit public housing. The experiments and legal remedies that have used vouchers to demonstrate the impacts of residential mobility on other life circumstances have also proved influential in terms of shaping program reforms as well as the criteria for evaluating the relative effectiveness and success of the program. At the same time it can be challenging to differentiate between the effects of the program and the manifestations of household-level preferences and actions.[7] The next chapter describes the specific approach taken to address some of these issues within this research, and describes the methods which will be used to understand the residential mobility component of the Illinois HCVP.

[7] This has proven a problem even within quasi experimental research using vouchers.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. The Research Approach

This study makes use of a mixed-methods approach to gain a better understanding of the relationship between residential mobility and outcomes for Housing Choice Voucher participants in Illinois. Quantitative data is utilized in order to identify patterns of voucher-based residential mobility throughout the state, and is also used to link these patterns of mobility to evidence of opportunity. Qualitative data is used to gain an in-depth perspective on the ways in which relationships between landlords, tenants, and housing authority officials influence where voucher households move to and the types post-move outcomes observed in the quantitative data. This section provides a brief overview of the rationale for a mixed-methods approach to understanding voucher-based residential mobility, and then describes the research design.

B. Philosophical Stance of the Researcher

This research acknowledges the importance of researcher positionality in determining both the role and theory generated from this research. As a critical realist scholar, the researcher agrees with Andrew Sayer (1992) "A crucial role of social science must be to monitor and restructure the causal patterns of associations or sense-relations of unexamined knowledge, so that differences between necessary and contingent relations and behavior warranted and unwarranted associations are understood." (Sayer 1992, p.62). Creating meaningful policy analysis requires the sort of critical engagement with policy and researcher reflexivity that Sayer calls for.

While conceptual stability is an important component of policy, it is important that change-oriented policy analysts constantly engage with and critique the assumptions that underlie the objects of study. By constantly testing and maintaining the potential to destabilize the assumptions undergirding policy, this type of progressive policy analysis helps generate stronger rationales for policy instrumentation, while at the same time, creating the types of feedback practices that result in greater accountability for policy outcomes. Reza Banai refers to this as practice that upholds “accountability to the motivations, intentions, and actions of actors, agents, or participants in the context of urban and regional development processes, not just the outcome of their actions.” (Banai 1995 p. 560).

This research upholds the postpositivist value that rigorous methods are needed in order to interrogate the dominant narratives of social reality, namely the spatial dimensioning of opportunity and the notion of a theoretical mobility-opportunity pathway. This rigor implies the simultaneous use of multiple modes of inquiry, both qualitative and quantitative. Within this research context, quantitative data and analysis provides a framework to understand general trends and patterns, particularly as they relate to the decision-making apparatus used by those in power. Such analysis also reflects the normative approach to evaluation of policies and programs, including residential mobility in the Housing Choice Voucher program. Qualitative data and analysis provides a means of “complicating” this aggregate worldview by recognizing the inherent complexity, contingency, and contradiction that is often described as error in pure quantitative research. Within the context of mixed-methods research, the role of the researcher is to both ask appropriate research questions, and to conduct inquiry into those questions in a manner that that also acknowledges and responds to the strengths and limitations of each mode of inquiry.

C. **Research Design and Theoretical Perspective**

1. **Mixed Methods Framework**

This research brings together quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques through mixed methods in order to answer questions about residential mobility and opportunity in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Due to the spatial nature of the research questions, quantitative tools such as GIS mapping and spatial econometrics play an important role understanding mobility and opportunity "by the numbers". These methodologies speak to the traditional means by which housing markets, spatial determinants of choice, and spatial dimensions of opportunity are measured. Complementing and adding further insight to these quantitative models is qualitative work comprised of one-on-one interviews, which allow for the creation of rich in-depth data that does not exist in quantitative form. This research utilizes principles of concurrent triangulation (Creswell 2009) to guide analysis. This strategy is particularly appropriate, given that it promotes comparison of quantitative and qualitative data through analytical strategies such as confirmation, disconfirmation, cross-validation, and corroboration. (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham, 1989). As part of this strategy, quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed separately, and then placed "side-by-side" to be further compared and analyzed in relation to each other. Given that one of the goals of this research is to "complicate" the traditional ways which assisted housing mobility has been measured and analyzed, placing these data side-by-side allows for confirmation, disconfirmation, cross-validation, and corroboration, particularly at the local level.

2. The Concurrent Triangulation Strategy

The value of employing concurrent triangulation strategies is that it allows for questions to be posed and explored in ways that create linkages to other questions or issues that have historically been explored separately. In particular, this analysis is focused on interrogating some of the assumptions that policy-level analyses on residential mobility and the geography of opportunity make by asking and answering specific questions using the most appropriate data available to answer those questions. For each research question, the researcher has developed several questions designed to inform analysis. Questions are split up based upon the type of data and analysis to be employed (although some questions may be best answered using both quantitative and qualitative evidence).

Question 1: Do neighborhood composition proxies commonly used in geography of opportunity research align with the lived experiences of neighborhood opportunity which voucher households describe?

Quantitative Analysis

• Where are communities with more porting voucher households located?

• What types of housing units are porting HCVP households occupying?

• What is the distribution and "fit" of the porting HCVP population within housing that fits their revealed housing stock preferences?

• What types of communities does the HCVP "open up" to households that would be unaffordable without the housing subsidy? Are there differences in the availability of units at each of these price points?

Qualitative Analysis

• What rental housing features were most important during the portability move housing search?

• How difficult was it for porting HCVP households find units that met both personal and HCVP needs and standards?

• Why did tenants select a particular PHA to port into? Had they identified a particular landlord/neighborhood/property prior to making the decision to port?

• What types of screening criteria do landlords employ when considering an HCVP rental application?

Synthesis

• Do local and statewide patterns of porting HCVP household residential location match the selection criteria described by porting HCVP households interviewed in this research?

Question 2: What types of housing and non-housing needs do moving voucher households have? Do voucher households move to communities that make it easier to port?

Quantitative Analysis

• Are voucher households more likely to complete portability moves to a housing authority that is absorbing vouchers as opposed to billing?

• Do program data suggest the presence of threshold effects, whereby local portability increases significantly over time due to the presence of other voucher households who have ported in?

Qualitative Analysis

• Do the presence or absence of certain rules and regulations (e.g. residency preferences, portability time limits) impact the location decisions of porting HCVP households?

• Do porting voucher households tend move to housing authorities that offer counseling and support services that go above and beyond minimum program requirements?

• Do porting voucher households tend to move to units with landlords that are experienced with or familiar with the HCVP and voucher portability?

Synthesis

• Are there patterns of mobility that suggest that particular housing authorities are working well with each other to facilitate the voucher portability process?

Question 3: In what areas do individual perceptions of opportunity tend to overlap with the opportunity that the HCV Program is designed to facilitate?

Quantitative Analysis

• Are porting voucher households moving the neighborhoods that suggest the increased presence of opportunity as captured within local indicators of social and economic status? Do these types of communities differ from those which local non-porting HCVP households tend to live in?

• In the time period following voucher portability, is there any change in voucher household income or other indicators of socioeconomic well-being?

• Are porting voucher households more likely than non-porting voucher households to leave the program?

• Are porting voucher households selecting residential locations that are located near opportunities such as job centers, educational institutions, or healthcare facilities?

Qualitative Analysis

• What types of opportunities and community attributes (exclusive of housing) did porting voucher households identify as being important in their housing search?

• After moving, were the members of porting voucher households able to take advantage of opportunities exclusive of housing within the new community?

• Were porting voucher households able to efficiently find and receive assistance from social service agencies?

• What types of trade-offs did voucher households make between non-housing opportunities in their former community and non-housing opportunities in their post-port community?

Synthesis

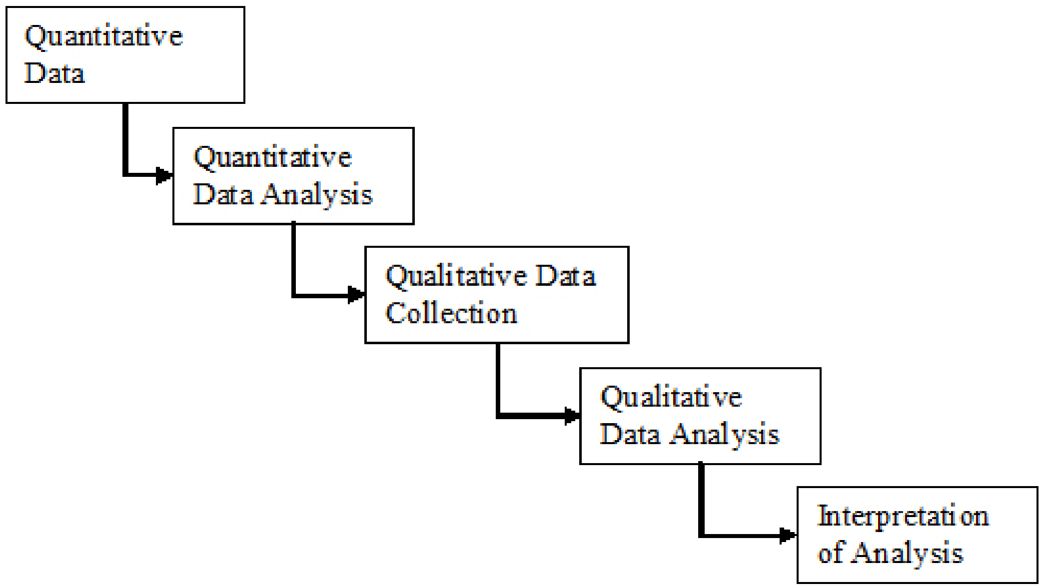
• Did the presence of opportunity or resources within a given location translate into the ability of a voucher household to take advantage of or benefit from the presence of those resources?

• Do the presence of community attributes that reflect HCVP program theory about opportunity exclusive of housing translate into tangible benefits for porting households?

D. **Research Sequence**

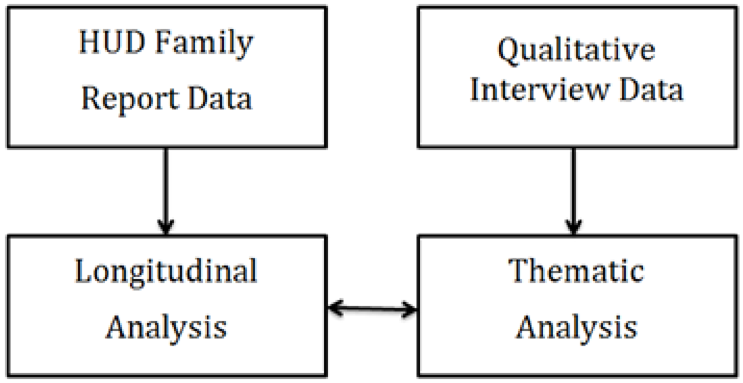
This research makes use of a three part design that incorporates quantitative and qualitative analyses to answer the question of where voucher households are moving to and from under portability, what effects these moves have on local provision of the voucher program, and how these moves are viewed from the perspective of voucher holders themselves. Parts 1 and 2 of this research draw inspiration from sequential explanatory design (Creswell 2009) to guide initial data collection and analysis (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Sequential Explanatory Design



Part 3 of this research makes use of concurrent triangulation (Figure 3) in order to compare quantitative and qualitative data and to generate another layer of analysis that leverages the strengths of each method. This strategy results in rich analysis that supports theory generation outside of the locally-specific context within which data are collected.

Figure 3: Concurrent Triangulation Design



1. **<u>Part 1 : Quantitative Data Analysis</u>**

The first part of this research focused on refining the general portrait of voucher mobility within the state of Illinois from 2000-2007 which the researcher developed prior to this dissertation research.(UIC IRB Exemption 2009-0158) This typology made the same analytical strategies that researchers have used to analyze voucher portability at the national level. This initial work contextualizes detailed work in Illinois within the national portrait of voucher mobility in order to answer general questions about where voucher households are porting to and from in Illinois.

2. **<u>Part 2: Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis</u>**

Part 2 of this research focused on collecting rich qualitative data to illuminate types of local change based upon gain or loss of voucher households via portability. Using the refined residential mobility typology developed in Part 1 as an organizing framework, local housing authority administrators, landlords, and porting housing choice voucher tenants were identified in communities with significant portability flows and were recruited to participate in one-on-one interviews about their experiences with the Housing Choice Voucher Program. (UIC IRB Exemption 2009-0158, protocol 2010-0810, and protocol 2011-0167).

3. Part 3: Data Analysis

Part 3 of this research involves synthesizing the quantitative and qualitative data on voucher portability in Illinois. Quantitative data is analyzed from two perspectives- first, in terms of changes in patterns of portability over time at the statewide and regional level, and second, based upon data on porting voucher households themselves. Evidence of changes in portability patterns and flows is examined in relation to traditional indicators of neighborhood opportunity, as well as in relation to statewide patterns of voucher residence in Illinois. Data on household status is examined for changes over time both before and after portability moves in order to understand whether voucher portability results in positive changes in household income, and whether households tend to move to areas with demographics that show signs of opportunity at the community level.

Qualitative data is analyzed for further information about experiences with voucher portability from multiple perspectives- those of housing authority administrators, porting voucher households, and landlords renting to voucher households who have ported. This analysis is focused on understanding portability process and outcomes from the perspective of the three groups which program design places into relationship to carry out processes and produce outcomes.

Under concurrent triangulation, these two types of data are compared with each other in order to understand the ways in which local and regional patterns of voucher portability and residence reflect the "local" observations made through analysis of qualitative data. This analysis also involves the use of qualitative interview data to inform the creation of a quantitative model of statewide voucher portability. Where such models typically begin with a "laundry list" of indicators that may be of important determinants of voucher portability, this model focuses on determinants of voucher portability as described through the "on the ground" experiences of housing authority administrators, porting tenants, and landlords.

E. Quantitative Data

The methodology used to transform administrative data from the HUD Family Report into longitudinal data on voucher households was first conducted by Feins and Patterson (2005) and then refined by Climaco, et al. (2008). In both cases, the researchers linked together multiple years of data from the Family Report into a database keyed to a unique voucher household ID number. By ordering household-level records chronologically, a longitudinal record of each voucher household's status, residential location, and mobility can be created. While these researchers focused on creating a national portrait of voucher portability, this study uses their methodology to create an in-depth portrait of voucher portability within the state of Illinois.

Family Report records were acquired from HUD's Washington, D.C. data office with sensitive personal information (names, exact addresses, and social security numbers) removed. Records supplied in the HUD raw dataset reflected all voucher households living (or who had lived) in Illinois between January 1st, 2000 and December 31st, 2007. Head of household identification information was replaced with a unique identification number which was used as the key variable for ordering data chronologically by household. Household location was aggregated to the Census tract level so that individual households could not be identified, yet some information about local neighborhood demographics and housing characteristics could be connected back to households participating in the HCV program.

1. **Inclusion Criteria**

The sampling frame for the quantitative portion of the study included all voucher households, who lived within the state of Illinois between the years 2000 and 2007. Quantitative analysis focused on the administrative histories of those households who moved between public housing authority jurisdictions (made portability moves) in Illinois within this period.

2. Analysis of Longitudinal Data for Evidence of Portability

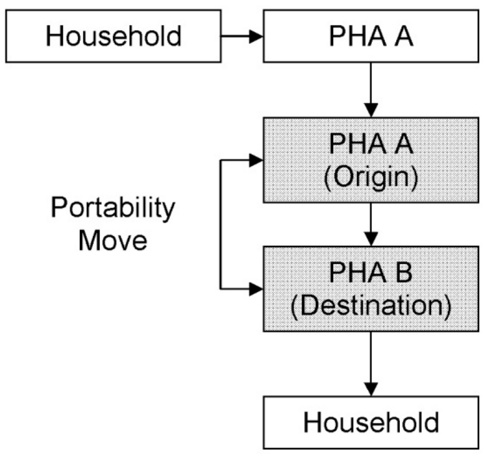
The HUD Family Report includes a coding system designed to indicate changes in voucher-assisted household status, including entrance and exit from the program, change of residential location, and voucher portability. Despite the promise which these data offer for reconnaissance on voucher portability, discussions with HUD PIC records administrators and a spot-validation check indicate that in many cases, portability moves are not recorded as such in Family Report records.[8] These anecdotal findings are backed up by the findings of Feins and Patterson (2005) and Climaco, et al. (2008), who note similar inconsistencies. As a way forward, both research teams use a series of validation criteria to analyze record changes for evidence of portability. The ideal attributes of a portability move are first defined based upon a series of expected record changes. Then, essential and contingent characteristics of portability are determined. Criteria include evidence of change of unit, change of tract location, change of PHA administering voucher, and presence of a record flag indicating a portability move. Climaco, et al. (2008). Records are first analyzed for the presence of indicators of portability, with records meeting a threshold for criteria being flagged as probable portability records.

[8] According to a HUD regional data official, much of the variability in whether portability moves get recorded correctly lies within the training and accuracy of local public housing authority officials. Although HUD has also constructed and implemented validation routines to flag and reject the entry of records or actions that do not follow program rules, some moves, including portability moves are entered incorrectly into the system.

This research uses a modified validation scheme based upon the work of the Climaco research team. First, several essential criteria for portability moves must be met (Figure 4):

Figure 4: Description of Portability Moves

Portability on the Ground



Portability in the Records

PHA	Action	Date
IL002 (CHA)	Annual Re-Exam	11.2.05
IL002 (CHA)	Port Move Out	5.6.06
IL025 (Cook County)	Port Move In	5.7.06
IL025 (Cook County)	Annual Re-Exam	10.1.07

Essential Characteristics of Portability Record Changes

- Does the PHA managing the voucher change?
- Does the census tract location of the voucher change?
- Does the destination record indicate continued participation in the program?

These criteria confirm the presence of a move in between two public housing authorities that result in continued program participation on the part of the voucher household. A series of supplemental criteria were also tested for that help to identify additional (though not essential) characteristics of moves that reflect portability.

Supplemental Characteristics of Portability Record Changes

- Do the origin and destination records indicate portability?
- Is there a change in unit owner?
- Was the record flagged by the PHA as a portability move?

Records were then scored on the number of criteria that they met, with a minimum threshold of criteria being meeting all essential portability characteristics. Records that met all essential criteria and at least one supplemental criterion were determined to be portability moves. Moves were then analyzed by tract and housing authority location in order to identify those housing authorities with large numbers of portability moves in and out of their locations. Housing authorities were ranked based upon the cumulative number of portability moves present between 2000 and 2007, with the housing authorities with the greatest number of portability moves being flagged for additional analysis via the qualitative portion of this research. It was decided to look first at the most pronounced cases where portability flows were occurring in order to develop a more refined analytical framework for analyzing more nuanced differences present in PHAs with less pronounced mobility flows.

3. **Results of Longitudinal Record Construction**

The base dataset on Illinois vouchers between 2000 and 2007 contained a total of 941,791 records representing records on a total of 130,697 program participants in both the Section 8 Voucher and Certificate programs.[9] Prior to analyzing records for base criteria, basic screening was conducted to ensure household participation in the voucher program at some point during the study period. A check for time continuity was also conducted to make certain that records reliably indicated continued participation in the program[10], a condition which 82.69% of records did satisfy. Once the base criteria for portability were applied, the number of potential portability moves dropped substantially to 9,194 records, or slightly less than 1 percent of all base records. Application of portability supplemental criteria resulted in a final portability instance count of 9,155 instances of voucher household portability over 7 years (Table III).

[9] Many participants in the Section 8 certificate program transitioned to housing vouchers during the course of this study. Those program participants who only used certificates but did not participate at all in the voucher program over the course of this study (a total of 5,095 households) were eliminated from analysis. Longitudinal data on participants who transitioned from certificate-based assistance to voucher-based assistance (a total of 16,928 households) were included in analysis.

[10] This necessity is consistent with the findings of Climaco et al. (2008) that at times housing authorities do not record program status changes in a timely manner, meaning that records spaced temporally far apart could reflect a period of no participation in the program without ever signaling an end to program participation. A period of two years was selected as the cutoff for record continuity, as units must be inspected and the inspections recorded at least once every two years.

Table III: Identifying Portability Moves from HUD Administrative Data

Decision Criteria	**Records Satisfy**	**Percent**
Participation in the VO Program	931,977	100.00%
Time Continuity (less than 730 Days between Effective Records)	770,667	82.69%
Satisfy Base Criteria		
Change of PHA	16,928	1.82%
Change in Tract	104,305	11.19%
Origin Code is not End Participation	770,667	82.69%
Satisfy all 3 Base Criteria	9,194	0.99%
Satisfy At Least 1 Other Criterion		
Origin Portability Action Codes (Move Out)	5,673	0.61%
Destination Portability Action Codes (Move In)	6,683	0.72%
Change in Unit Owner	8,751	0.94%
Presence of Portability Record Flag	7,074	0.76%
Satisfy at least 1 Sub criteria	9,155	0.98%

Aggregating instances of portability to PHAs indicated that the state's two large PHAs (Chicago Housing Authority and Cook County Housing Authority) both accounted for the majority of the state's portability moves (3,122 and 2,114 port-outs respectively). The gravity of vouchers residing in Chicago and surrounding Cook County also meant that much of the portability flow observed were moves in between the Chicago Housing Authority and Cook County Housing Authority (76.5% of Cook County's port-ins moved there from Chicago Housing Authority). Other housing authorities had substantially smaller portability flows, which is to be expected, given the significant drop off in PHA size. (Table IV)

Table IV: Illinois Portability Flows by Housing Authority Size

Public Housing Authority	**Ports**	**PHA Size**	**Rate**
Chicago Housing Authority	3,122	Large	6.43%
Cook County Housing Authority	2,114	Large	10.94%
DuPage Housing Authority	505	Medium	10.17%
Lake County Housing Authority	422	Medium	8.55%
Waukegan Housing Authority	262	Medium	17.87%
Joliet Housing Authority	237	Medium	11.70%
All Other Housing Authorities	2,493		
Total	**9,155**		

4. **Data Reliability**

This research uses as a starting point the guidelines for analyzing PIC administrative data that previous researchers have used to validate and double check individual administrative records to make sure that record coding mistakes are not reported as a household moving under voucher portability. The results of this validation protocol have been shared with the HUD Region Five PIC records manager, and have also been shared with housing authority officials and other housing experts in the state. Across the board, these experts have confirmed the general accuracy of these data as they relate to portability flows in and out of housing authorities throughout the state. Historical data from HUDs Resident Characteristics Report have also been used to confirm that Family Report records in the research dataset are similar to statistics reported in HUD's estimates.

5. <u>Data Limitations</u>

This novel strategy for constructing longitudinal histories for each voucher household in Illinois provides significant insight that is not available in point-in-time datasets or local administrative records. However, there are some important limitations to these data which much be recognized. One significant limitation of the data received from HUD is that it is only for the state of Illinois. Since voucher portability can occur nationwide, the data analyzed in this research "looses" voucher households who port out of state, and also cannot fully account for the status of voucher households who port into Illinois from other states. This limits the quantitative analysis of voucher portability to in-state portability moves. The data does indicate that a port-in from out of state occurred 1,252 times, and that 22 of these households subsequently made at least 1 portability move between Illinois housing authorities.

A second limitation of these data are the geography at which voucher residency is reported. In order to protect the confidentiality of voucher households, address information is provided only at the census tract level. While census tracts provide fairly fine resolution, particularly in more populous and urban areas, tract geographies can grow quite large in suburban and rural areas. While census tract geography is designed to capture natural “neighborhoods”, an important theoretical concept of the geography of opportunity, the meaning of tract geographies in relation to neighborhoods or natural communities may not hold as well in more rural areas. While the majority of vouchers are located in urban tracts, an important aim of this research is to examine voucher residence across a wide variety of neighborhood and community contexts. As such, suburban and rural tract geographies present a challenge in terms of linking tract characteristics back to meaningful conceptions of neighborhood, community, and opportunity. One way to help round out the quantitative analysis of voucher households living in such areas is through qualitative interview data. These data offer some insight into the potential for different conceptions of neighborhood, community, and opportunity in rural and suburban contexts, which may help with interpretation of tract demographics within these areas.

6. **Measuring the Geography of Opportunity**

In order to provide context to data on voucher residential location and portability, demographic data from the 2000 decennial Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey at the tract level were joined to each household record so that changes over time could be observed. These data also provide the basis for geographic covariates which are factored into four models of voucher portability described in Chapter 5. Tract-level census data was a natural choice to join to voucher location data because the geographic identifier for voucher households was the tract Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) code.

Variables on race and ethnicity coming from the 2000 census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey were used to identify the levels of racial and ethnic homogeneity within communities of residence for voucher households. Within several national consent decrees, including the Gautreaux consent decree in Chicago, housing authorities were found to have explicitly located public housing units exclusively within African-American communities. The legal remedy for these discriminatory practices involved providing low-income households in public housing with a housing voucher, some with restrictions on the racial makeup of the neighborhood moved to. The rationale behind this was to use the voucher as a means of locating low-income households in racially diverse communities. Within this research, including variables on race and ethnicity at the tract level helps in the examination of whether the general voucher population tends to live in areas that are racially diverse.

Similarly, tract-level poverty rate has been used in frequent other mobility studies and consent decrees (including the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration) under the hypothesis that higher-income communities will result in more opportunities for voucher households. As with data on race, poverty rate data from the 2000 decennial Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey are used to test whether moves made by the population of voucher households moving without programmatic constraints tended to move to areas with lower poverty rates. Data on female headed households with children and households with public assistance income were also used as additional proxies for concentration effects related to poverty. Other indicators of wage and earnings potential including proportion of adults who had dropped out of high school, labor force participation rate, and unemployment rate were included in analyses as well. Indicators like these formed the basis for Wilson's (1987) analysis of neighborhood effects in African-American communities in Chicago, and have been used in many other studies of neighborhood effects and in describing neighborhood attributes for voucher households.

Several indicators focusing on local housing stock were also incorporated into analysis. Rent burden, an indicator of what proportion of household income goes towards housing costs, was used as a proxy for housing affordability. The Federal standard at which a household is considered rent burdened is 30 percent of household income towards rent[11]. Rent burden is a common proxy for housing stress, in that as burden increases (particularly for low and moderate income households), less money is available to meet other housing needs. An estimation of the number of units with two or more bedrooms that rent at or below fair market rent levels is another proxy for the availability of units which would be available to rent for voucher-assisted households. This estimate focuses on units with two or more bedrooms based upon the typical demographics of HCVP households, and uses Federally determined fair market rent standards as a means of estimating the proportion of the housing stock which would meet rent standards for the voucher

[11] The Federal rent burden standard also sets the tenant portion of rent levels within the Housing Choice Voucher Program, meaning that voucher-assisted households typically pay 30 percent of their income towards rent (with the remainder being made up via the voucher subsidy).

program. The residential vacancy rate and the proportion of units that are owner-occupied form two other important measures of housing availability and neighborhood stability. Vacancy rates help to compare (across origin and destination communities) the availability of housing opportunities for all residents. In areas of low-vacancy, it may be difficult to locate suitable units to rent, and demand for available units may inflate prices in such a way that units are virtually unavailable to voucher households. Similarly, areas with high vacancy rates may have a number of available housing opportunities, but may suffer from problems associated with disinvestment on the part of landlords and insufficient population to bring businesses and other amenities to the area. These housing indicators will be described in more detail as they are used for analysis in Chapter 5.

F. **Qualitative Data**

1. **Sample Selection and Participant Recruitment**

The sampling process for all three stakeholder groups was theoretical in nature, and relied upon quantitative data on portability flows to guide recruitment efforts. PHAs with greater numbers of portability flows were targeted for interviews of PHA officials, tenants, and landlords. Interviews in areas with high numbers of portability flows were complimented by interviews in areas which had fewer portability moves. Such housing authorities were selected based upon geographic proximity to housing authorities with large numbers of portability moves, or based upon significant public debate around the issue of voucher portability as reflected within local and regional news coverage. The sampling process was designed to capture the diversity of social, economic, geographic, and administrative contexts within which portability occurs.

2. Housing Authority Officials

Recruitment of PHA officials involved both emailing and sending paper copies of an invitation to participate to PHA executive directors, and in some cases, also to HCV program managers or senior staff, in the case that such officials could be identified. The invitation to participate described the nature of the study, length of interview, and the perspective audience for study findings. Potential participants were asked to respond by telephone or email to the interview request. Follow-up emails were sent out 2 weeks following the initial recruitment letter to those officials who had not responded to the initial invitation to participate.

During the course of interviews with several PHA officials, names were brought up of other PHAs or local social service program administrators who had experience working with voucher portability or who drew a large caseload of clients with voucher portability. In several cases, these officials were also recruited to participate in the study, either to provide further insight into issues brought up during the initial interview, or to add new context or insight from their perspective. In total, 18 officials with direct administrative or professional experience related to housing vouchers and portability were interviewed:

- 1 Low-wage labor market expert
- 3 Housing Authority Executive Directors
- 11 Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrators
- 2 County Health Administrators
- 1 Chamber of Commerce Executive Director

The housing authorities represented within these interviews were home to a total of 19,284 voucher holders (26% of all Illinois voucher households) in 2009 and 4,711 or 51.4% of port-in moves in the state of Illinois between 2000 and 2007.

3. Porting Voucher Program Tenants

HCV tenants who had previously made a portability move were recruited with the assistance of several public housing authorities. Housing authorities were asked to pull a list of all HCV program participants who had made a portability move into their jurisdiction. From this list, housing authority officials selected a random sample of individuals meeting the study criteria. The researcher provided housing authorities with a recruitment letter on university letterhead as well as a recruitment flyer in pre-stamped envelopes. Housing authorities then added tenant mailing addresses to the envelopes and mailed the recruitment letters. A total of 300 households meeting recruitment criteria were mailed recruitment letters. Potential research subjects contacted the researcher by phone or email at a university phone number and email address. This process ensured the confidentiality of research participants' identities until eligibility to participate in the research had been confirmed.

To be eligible for participation in the research, tenants were required to be a head-of-household currently receiving Housing Choice Voucher rental benefits, over the age of 18, and were required to have made a portability move into their current housing authority. Working with housing authorities to conduct recruitment made it possible to target recruitment towards program participants who met these characteristics, however, in a few cases, potential study participants were unable to confirm or were unsure that they met these characteristics, or had recently relocated from within the housing authority via voucher portability. In cases where participants were unable to confirm that they met study characteristics, they were deemed ineligible to participate in the research. In the case where a portability move had been made out of the "recruiting" jurisdiction, the subject was included in data collection. A total of 20 eligible tenants were interviewed.

4. Voucher Program Landlords

Landlords participating in the HCV program were recruited using the same strategy that was used for HCV Tenants. Housing authorities were asked to pull a list of all landlords currently renting to at least one voucher household who had made a portability move, with the understanding that landlords renting to tenants who have made portability moves may be able to provide insight on that feature of the program in addition to insight on the program in general. Housing authorities selected a random sample of landlords meeting the study criteria. The researcher provided housing authorities with a recruitment letter and recruitment flyer on university letterhead in pre-stamped envelopes. Housing authorities then added landlord mailing addresses to the envelopes and mailed the recruitment letters. Potential research subjects contacted the researcher by phone or email at a university phone number and email address. This process ensured the confidentiality of landlords' identities until eligibility to participate in the research had been confirmed. A total of 10 landlords were interviewed.

5. **Data Collection and Analysis**

Qualitative data for this study was collected through semi-structured in-person interviews with each of the three categories of stakeholders.

Interviews with HCV program administrators took place on-site at local public housing authorities, typically in the administrator's office or conference room. The interviews lasted between 50 and 75 minutes and were audiotaped with the permission of the interviewee after informed consent had been established. In one case, the interviewee declined to be audiotaped, and detailed notes were taken during the interview to record important concepts and themes. In several cases, PHA officials provided a tour of the housing authority in addition to the interview.

HCV tenants were interviewed at a public location of their choice, typically local fast food restaurants, coffee shops, or public libraries. After informed consent had been established, tenants were asked to fill out a short paper survey with questions about their demographics, and questions asking them to compare their current residential location to their previous residential location. After tenants had completed the survey, the interview began. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. After informed consent was established, the interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the interviewee. At the conclusion of each interview, HCV tenants received a $50 cash payment as a token of gratitude for their participation in the research.

Landlords were interviewed at a public location of their choice, typically coffee shops or local restaurants. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. After informed consent was established, the interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the interviewee.

Table V: Interview Content by Participant Type

PHA Officials	HCV Tenants	HCV Landlords
• Profile of Housing Authority • Summary of PHA Voucher Portability • Observations on Tenant Behavior • Observations on Landlord Behavior • Public Perception of the HCV Program	• Tenant history with HCV Program • Portability in HCV Program • Experiences with Landlord • Experiences with PHA	• History and Background as Landlord • History renting to HCV Tenants • Experiences with HCV Tenants • Experiences with PHA

A semi structured interview format was used to guide PHA staff through the interviews, who were asked to discuss their experiences administering the portability component of the housing choice voucher program. Questions focused first on the housing authority itself, and how the administration of portability fit into the general administration of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Questions then turned to focus more upon administrator observations on the HCVP participants who used the portability feature of their voucher, and then finally to the larger perception and interaction between the HCVP and the community at large. (Table V)

HCV tenants were also interviewed using a semi structured interview format. After asking participants to describe in their own words their history of participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program, tenants were asked questions about their most recent move and current community. Participants were then asked questions about their relationship and experiences with their landlord, followed by questions about their relationship and experiences with housing authorities. (Table V)

Landlords were first asked to describe their history renting out properties, as well as their history working with the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Landlords were then asked to describe their experiences with voucher-assisted tenants in relation to their experiences with non-assisted tenants. Finally, landlords were asked to describe their experiences working with Housing Choice Voucher Program administration. (Table V)

6. **Conducting the Interviews**

All interviews were conducted in public settings as appropriate for each constituent group to allow for a safe yet private conversation. Interviews with HCV program administrators tended to take place in their office of conference rooms. Interviews with landlords and tenants tended to take place in public locations such as coffee shops, restaurants, or public libraries. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to two hours in length, depending upon the extent of the interviewee's history of involvement with the program. In all cases where participants were comfortable, audio recordings of the interview were recorded and detailed notes were also taken. Each interview was then transcribed to allow for the identification and categorization of key ideas and concepts.

7. Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis procedures were similar for each of the three stakeholder groups. First, basic demographic and profile information from field notes was recorded for each constituent, with extra demographic information about tenants coming from the written tenant survey. Second, the Atlas Ti qualitative data analysis software application was used to perform open coding, which involved reading each interview transcript line by line and identifying concepts that emerged from the data. Coding included tagging multiple dimensions of concepts such as "definition of portability", the housing search, or "interaction with landlords". Coding for each of the constituent groups broke down as follows (Table VI):

Table VI: Summary of Open Coding Themes

PHA Administrators	HCV Tenants	HCV Landlords
Program Administration Program Finance Tenant Behavior Social Landscape	Program Administration Experience with Landlords Experience with PHA Staff Voucher Portability Social Landscape	Program Administration Program Design and Finance Tenant Behavior Experience with PHA Staff

Combined with the individual profiles for each constituent, these themes provided the basis for analysis of the qualitative research questions surrounding the ways in which these three groups work together as part of the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

8. **Data Validation Strategies**

This research relies heavily upon practices of triangulation and constant comparison in order to ensure the validity of observations, and to substantiate relationships between quantitative and qualitative findings. The sequential explanatory design, focuses first upon describing patterns of residence with quantitative data precedes analysis of stakeholder experiences via qualitative data. This data collection and analysis sequence allows quantitative analysis to guide the selection of cases for qualitative data collection, and forms a point of comparison helping to guide the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data. The division of qualitative field work into several phases also facilitates the triangulation of observations and assertions as interviews and analysis occur simultaneously.

G. **Generalizability**

One of the challenges of using intensive and extensive data within the same analysis is the question of generalizability of research findings. Similarly focusing upon patterns of residential mobility within one state raises the same question. Illinois, particularly the Chicago metropolitan area has been a common area of focus within residential mobility research, both because Chicago is a large central city, but also due to pernicious problems with racial and economic segregation, historically issues that were exacerbated by the Chicago Housing Authority's management strategies. Chicago has been home to several residential mobility demonstration programs, including research stemming from the Gautreaux Consent Decree and the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing program. The presence of these studies alone makes Chicago and Illinois a special case. At the same time, examining residential location patterns for the general population of Housing Choice Voucher Program participants allows for a unique comparison with a wealth of existing research findings from existing special programs.

While the Illinois case offers some special features, findings from this research do have important implications for the program as a whole. Evidence from existing research confirms that the patterns of voucher-assisted residence observed in Illinois largely conform to the patterns seen in other states. In general, race and income are highly correlated with the presence of voucher households throughout the nation, as in Illinois. Examination of national patterns of portability within the work of Climaco, et al. (2008) indicates that Illinois portability patterns and portability rates observed in this research correspond to the rates seen nationwide.

This study focuses on longitudinal data from 2000-2007 and uses this information to identify housing authorities where interviews took place between 2009 and 2011. The national housing landscape has changed significantly since 2007 due to increased housing and economic instability, however, the period covered by longitudinal data are comparatively homogenous in terms of overall housing conditions. In terms of qualitative interview data, tenants, landlords, and housing authority officials were all interviewed while substantial changes were being experienced in the housing market. As part of their interviews, respondents were asked to characterize any changes they noted within the program or within local housing markets within the last five years in order to help develop a sense of how housing market changes might influence responses. Tenants described little difference in their circumstances. Landlords and housing authority officials described increased landlord demand to participate in the program due primarily to guaranteed subsidy money. One limitation of this study is that quantitative data reflecting the market downturn are not analyzed to compare to interview findings.

H. Data Summary

Table VII summarizes the types of primary and secondary data assembled for this dissertation, their respective research protocols, and the resultant data. Program records that have been analyzed for evidence of voucher portability and internal mobility (hereafter referred to as the "Portability Dataset") will be analyzed in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 describes themes and findings from interview data. Chapter 7 then brings together findings from both sources of data, and provides a discussion of implications from this research.

Table VII: Summary of Data and Research Protocols

Data Type	Records	UIC IRB Number	Data to Analyze
Program Records (Portability Dataset)	130,697 Households (all households participating in the Illinois HCVP 2000-2007)	IRB Exemption 2009-0158	Longitudinal program histories including flags for intra-housing mobility and voucher portability
Interviews			
HCV program officials and experts	18 officials, managers, and experts	IRB Exemption 2009-0158	Transcribed and coded transcripts from one-on-one semi-structured interviews
HCVP tenants who have ported within past two years	20 head of households	IRB Protocol 2010-0810	Transcribed and coded transcripts from one-on-one semi-structured interviews
Landlords renting to porting voucher households	10 landlords and property managers	IRB Protocol 2011-0167	Transcribed and coded transcripts from one-on-one semi-structured interviews

V. PORTABILITY BY THE NUMBERS

A. Introduction

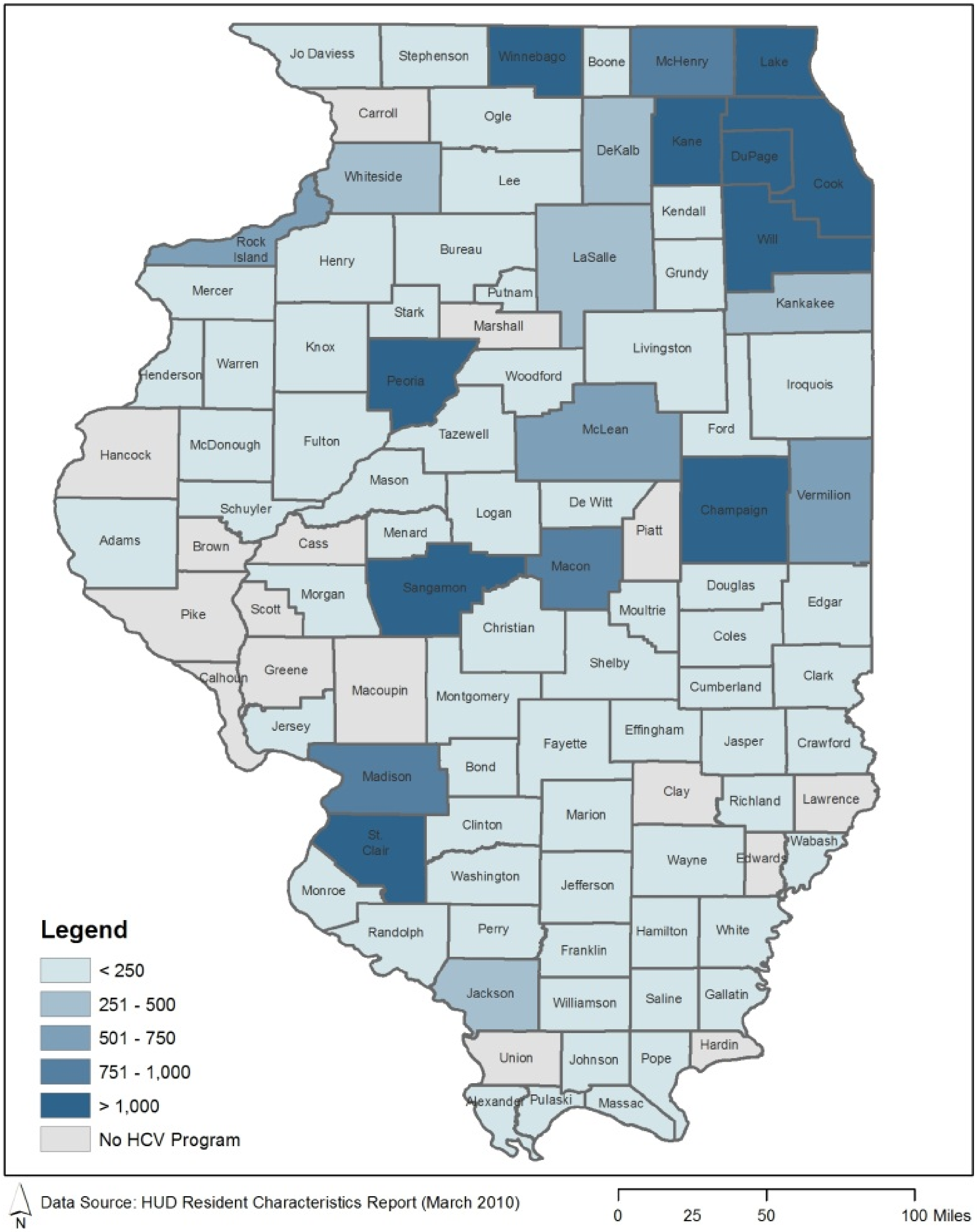
Policy research on the Housing Choice Voucher Program has contended that were people move can help provide insight as to why people move. The influence of neighborhoods on the outcomes of mobility have also factored heavily into the academic discussion on housing vouchers. This chapter seeks to explore patterns of residence for voucher households in Illinois as well as the impact of mobility upon the residential location of voucher households. In particular, this chapter seeks to examine the intersection between the types of opportunity which have been described within voucher-based policy experiments and mobility programs and the types of moves which general participants in the program undertake (without the types of supports of neighborhood constraints implemented within policy experiments).

This chapter relies heavily upon analysis of data from HUD Form 50058, which has been transformed into a longitudinal program history of all voucher households in Illinois for years 2000-2007 (hereafter referred to as the portability dataset). This strategy was developed by Feins and Patterson (2005) and extended by Climaco, et al. (2008). Records were analyzed for evidence of residential mobility (moves within a housing authority) and voucher portability (moves between two housing authorities). This chapter compares these residential locations in order to understand neighborhoods of choice within the Illinois HCVP as well as to compare neighborhood and personal characteristics for voucher households who have moved and ported.

B. <u>The Illinois Housing Choice Voucher Program</u>

During the study period (2000-2007), the Illinois HCVP served 130,697 households, with the number of households served per year nearly doubling during the study period to more than 70,000 in 2007. As of 2010, approximately 2 percent of Illinois households received voucher-based assistance. Illinois ranks sixth nationwide in terms of the number of voucher households, behind California, New York, Texas, Florida, and Ohio. 75 out of the 112 housing authorities in the state administer Housing Choice Voucher Programs. The majority of voucher households in Illinois were located within the Chicago metropolitan area (56 percent), with significant clusters focused in population centers throughout the state. Figure 5.

Figure 5: Illinois Voucher Households by County (2010)



A first step to analyze data on voucher households is to contextualize the Illinois Housing Choice Voucher Program within the nation's program. Data contained within the portability dataset was compared to data from the July, 2011 HUD Resident Characteristics Report, which summarizes program participation on a monthly basis for all housing authorities in the nation. [12] Although the portability dataset does not allow for the comparison of all features contained within the Resident Characteristics Report, several features were compared, including general income dynamics of assisted households (Table VIII), tenant payment amounts (Table IX), race and ethnicity of heads of household (Table X), household size (Table XI), and length of stay in the program (Table XII).

Comparing average income characteristics between HUD estimates and the portability dataset (Table VIII), income characteristics appear to be fairly similar (although income tranches have not been calculated for the portability dataset). Annual income for assisted households is very similar across the board- nationally, the average voucher household income was $12,519, while in Illinois, it was $12,579, a difference of $50. The average reported annual income for all households in the portability dataset was $12,349, just slightly below that reported in the Resident Characteristics Report. Incomes from the portability dataset have not been inflation-adjusted, which may account for the slightly lower household income. Similarly, average monthly total tenant payment towards rent is relatively comparable across point in time and sample estimates, with the point in time

[12] Ideally, December 2007 data would be used to compare national and state characteristics with sample characteristics; however, the HUD Resident Characteristics Report is presented point-in-time on a monthly basis, with only the most recent point in time being available for download.

estimate for Illinois ($293 per month) being just 8 dollars more than the average total tenant payment statistics from the portability dataset ($285).

Table VIII: Comparison of National and State HCVP with Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	National	Illinois	Sample (7 Year)
Number of Vouchers	1,884,736	40,507[13]	130,697
Household Income			
Extremely Low Income (< 30% AMI)	979,543	21,459	-
Very Low Income (30% - 50% AMI)	293,809	5,572	-
Low Income (50% - 80% AMI)	58,643	801	-
Above Low Income (> 80% AMI)	3,465	27	-
Income Not Determined	549,276	12,648	-
Average Annual Income	$12,519	$12,579	$12,349
Average Monthly TTP	$291	$293	$285

Data Source: HUD Resident Characteristics Report, Portability Dataset

The distribution of tenant payments (Table IX) indicates a relatively similar distribution of incomes, particularly between the Illinois point-in-time and portability dataset. Illinois voucher households tend to have an income just slightly above the national average for voucher households (Table VIII), and as such, they tend to pay just slightly more (2 dollars more per month) than the nationwide average.

[13] This number underestimates the number of voucher households in Illinois due to less stringent reporting requirements granted to the Chicago Housing Authority under their Moving to Work (MTW) agreement. I estimate that factoring in the actual number of CHA vouchers, that the number of vouchers in Illinois was approximately 73, 507 in July, 2011. Similarly, the total number of vouchers reported at the national level is also influenced by different reporting requirements for other housing authorities participating in the MTW demonstration.

Table IX: Comparison of National and State HCVP Monthly Tenant Payment with Sample Characteristics

Monthly Tenant Payment	National	Illinois	Sample
No Data	N/A	N/A	< 1%
$0	1%	0%	1%
$1 to $25	1%	0%	2%
$26 to $50	7%	11%	10%
$51 to $100	5%	5%	6%
$101 to $200	23%	24%	28%
$201 to $350	35%	27%	24%
$351 to $500	16%	18%	14%
> $500	13%	14%	15%
Average Monthly TTP	$291	$293	$285

Data Source: HUD Resident Characteristics Report, Portability Dataset

In terms of the racial composition of the program, the majority of Illinois voucher heads-of-household are African American (66 percent in both the point-in-time and portability dataset estimates), while nationwide, the majority are white (51%). Latinos are also significantly underrepresented within the Illinois HCVP, representing 4% of the point in time estimate, and 5% of the portability dataset, compared to 18% of assisted households nationwide.

Table X: Comparison of National and State HCVP Racial Composition with Sample Characteristics

Race	National	Illinois	Sample
White	51%	32%	33%
Black / African American	45%	66%	66%
AIAN	1%	0%	0%
Asian	2%	1%	0%
NHPI	0%	0%	0%
Multiple Races	1%	0%	0%
Ethnicity	**National**	**Illinois**	**Sample**
Latino	18%	4%	5%
Not Latino	82%	96%	95%

Data Source: HUD Resident Characteristics Report, Portability Dataset

Examining the average household size (Table XI), assisted households in Illinois tend to be slightly larger (2.7 for point-in-time estimate and 3.09 for portability dataset) in comparison to the national estimates (2.5). At the end of July, 2011, the program was benefiting approximately 4,700,434 individuals in 1,884,736 households nationwide. In Illinois, 109,116 individuals in 40,507 households were benefiting from program assistance. Over the 7 years represented within the portability database, 393,210 individuals representing 130,697 households benefited from participating in the program.

Table XI: Comparison of National and State HCVP Household Size with Sample Characteristics

Household Size	**National**	**Illinois**	**Sample**
1	36%	29%	23%
2	22%	22%	21%
3	18%	21%	21%
4	13%	15%	17%
5	7%	8%	10%
6	3%	3%	5%
7	1%	1%	2%
8	0%	0%	1%
9	0%	0%	0%
10+	0%	0%	0%
Total Household Members	4,700,434	109,116	393,210
Average Household Size	2.5	2.7	3.09

Data Source: Portability Dataset (2000-2007)

The final characteristic compared between point-in-time estimates and the portability dataset is length of stay within the program. This statistic can help to understand program turnover and can also help to provide insight into dynamics of the assisted housing careers experienced by low-income households. Data on length of stay within the program indicates that the majority of program participants have been in the program for more than 2 years (Table XII). Data also suggest that Illinois voucher households tend to participate in the program longer on average than the voucher-assisted population nationwide. In comparing point-in-time estimates with the 7-year portability dataset, some differences are observed. In particular, fewer households appear to be new entrants into the program, and slightly fewer appear to have been long-term participants. Part of this difference may be due to cohort shifts between the portability dataset and the point-in-time dataset. The inclusion of households who have left the program in the portability dataset may also skew the length of stay statistics when compared to the point-in-time estimates.

Table XII: Comparison of sample and point in time length of stay in the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Length of Stay	National	Illinois	Sample
Insufficient Data	N/A	N/A	2%
< 1 year	16%	14%	9%
1-2 Years	9%	8%	22%
2-5 Years	26%	26%	27%
5-10 Years	27%	29%	25%
10-20 Years	17%	20%	12%
> 20 Years	4%	3%	2%

Data Source: Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

1. **Subsidy Effect**

In order to understand the influence of the voucher subsidy on the purchasing power of Illinois voucher households, analysis was conducted to evaluate gross rent and to decompose tenant rental payments and subsidy from each other. Table XIII decomposes gross rent (rent plus covered utilities) into tenant rent and subsidy. Average subsidy ranges from $430 per month for households renting studio apartments to $1,076 for households on average for households renting units with 4 or more bedrooms. Regardless of household size, tenant rent remains fairly stable (around $210 dollars) while subsidy varies greatly to make up the difference between tenant portion of rent and gross rent.

Table XIII: Rental composition for Illinois HCVP 2000-2007

Number of Bedrooms	Assisted Households	Tenant Rent	Gross Rent	Difference (Subsidy)
Studio	1,243	$207	$637	$430
1 Bedroom	12,593	$186	$687	$500
2 Bedroom	26,475	$203	$818	$615
3 Bedroom	28,134	$228	$1,058	$830
4+ Bedroom	9,825	$235	$1,311	$1,076

Data Source: Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

To understand the impacts of the subsidy on the supply of potential rental units, data on voucher incomes was compared to the number of units statewide renting at an affordable rent given those incomes (from 2000 Census data). The annual household income of voucher households was used to estimate the rental units available with no subsidy by calculating affordable rent (30 percent of household income divided into 12 equal payments). Looking statewide, approximately 6.68 percent of rental housing units are affordable to voucher households, were they receiving no subsidy. The proportion of units available varies greatly from 3.44 percent of 2 bedroom units to 9.72 percent of 2 bedroom units. Gross rents (including subsidies) were used in order to estimate the number of units available to voucher-assisted households. Statewide, the voucher makes available approximately 87 percent of rental housing units, with percentages varying from 77 percent for 1 bedroom units to an estimated 100 percent for 3+ bedroom units.[14]

(Table XIV)

Table XIV: Comparison of Illinois HCVP Subsidy Effect on Rental Availability

Bedrooms	**No Subsidy**		**Subsidy**		**Total Rental Units**
Studio	8,340	7.53%	88,622	80.06%	110,696
1 Bedroom	45,357	9.72%	361,005	77.40%	466,412
2 Bedroom	19,495	3.44%	503,994	88.99%	566,321
3+ Bedroom	22,445	7.80%	287,675	100.00%	287,675
Total	**95,637**	**6.68%**	**1,241,296**	**86.74%**	**1,431,104**

Data Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey Data, Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

These findings confirm the power of the voucher to significantly expand the number of potential housing opportunities for low-income households in Illinois. It is important to recognize, however, that the significant shift in the number of units made available with the voucher subsidy does not necessarily mean that voucher-assisted households can (or do have) access to those units. Unit accessibility is shaped by a variety of factors including personal preferences, physical accessibility and location of the unit, and landlord willingness to rent to a voucher-assisted household. The next section examines the dynamics of where voucher households live within Illinois.

[14] Census data lumps together all units with more than 3 bedrooms. Additionally, the Census top codes rents exceeding $1,000 per month for units of this size. Given that the average subsidized rent for units larger than 3 bedrooms is $1,311, all 3+ bedroom units satisfy this criterion. This does not mean that all 3+ bedroom units are affordable to voucher households (particularly as evidenced by the experiences of many assisted households (as related in the next chapter).

2. **The Geography of Choice**

A hallmark feature of the voucher program is that it offers assisted households with a choice as to where to live. As discussed previously, voucher program theory suggests that such residential location choice can lead to improvements in housing and neighborhood conditions (increased unit quality and neighborhood stability) as well as other non-housing benefits (such as access to better schools and employment opportunities). Given some of the historical shortcomings of place-based programs such as public housing to generate such benefits (particularly non-housing benefits), the voucher has been used as both a legal remedy and experimental means of opening up access to such benefits for low-income renters. Neighborhood composition proxies have been employed within these contexts with the aim of shaping the types of opportunities available to low-income households. The *Gautreaux* consent decree in Chicago moved an experimental group of residents to urban and suburban locations that were required to have a tract demographic composition of less than 30 percent African-American, a proxy for community racial diversity. The *Moving to Opportunity* demonstration program similarly required experimental participants to locate within communities with less than ten percent poverty. Other consent decrees and demonstration programs have both racial and poverty caps in place, with some housing authorities, such as the Chicago Housing Authority adopting voluntary mobility programs to areas within their jurisdiction that contain higher levels of opportunity.

Given the emphasis within voucher program theory on residential location choice as well as the emphasis on the power of neighborhood effects within the outcomes experienced by assisted households, how often do voucher-assisted households choose to live in neighborhoods that meet the standards of opportunity used within experimental programs? Data from the 2000 Decennial Census was used to determine the number of Census tracts that meet several of the more prevalent neighborhood composition standards of opportunity (Table XV). An examination of these neighborhoods show that the majority of tracts within Illinois met these opportunity standards in 2000, although the percentage of tracts did vary significantly (from 55 percent of tracts which met both the racial integration and low-poverty standards to 80 percent of tracts with less than 30 percent African American households, the *Gautreaux* standard for racially integrated communities). The majority of Illinois households lived within communities that met these opportunity standards, with the lowest proportion (again) meeting the combined racial and economic standards (63 percent), and the highest meeting the Chicago Housing Authority's low-poverty standards (90 percent).

Table XV: Illinois Census Tracts (2000) meeting selected opportunity criteria

Criterion	**Tracts Meet**	**Total**	**Percent**	**Households Meet**	**Total**	**Percent**
< 30% African American	2,372	2,964	80.03%	3,954,901	4,591,779	86.13%
< 10% Poverty	1,791	2,964	60.43%	3,033,887	4,591,779	66.07%
< 30% African American and <10% Poverty	1,631	2,964	55.03%	2,904,741	4,591,779	63.26%

Data Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey, Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

Looking specifically at where voucher households live within Illinois, significant differences from the general population are apparent. Table XVI examines the share of voucher households statewide in 2007 that lived within Census tracts that meet various opportunity proxy standards. In comparison to all households within the state, voucher households are significantly underrepresented within tracts that meet opportunity proxy standards. 44 percent of voucher households lived within tracts that met the Gautreaux standard for neighborhood racial integration (compared to 86 percent of households statewide). 30 percent of voucher households lived within tracts that met the Moving to Opportunity standard for low-poverty neighborhoods (compared to 66 percent of households statewide). Across all neighborhood opportunity proxy categories, voucher households are underrepresented in comparison to the general population.

Table XVI: Illinois Voucher Residents (2007) by Census Tracts (2000) Meeting Selected Opportunity Criteria

Criterion	Vouchers Meet	Total Vouchers	Percent
< 30% African American	29,818	66,596	44.77%
< 10% Poverty	20,432	66,596	30.68%
< 30% African American and <10% Poverty	16,810	66,596	25.24%

Data Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey, Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

Taken in tandem with the earlier analysis of the voucher subsidy effect on the number of available units, these findings suggest that while the voucher subsidy opens up a significant number of new potential housing opportunities for households participating in the program, that voucher-assisted households are more often than not choosing to live within communities with less opportunity.

3. **Choice and the Distribution of Opportunity**

The examination of these policy standards suggest that voucher households are less likely to live in areas of opportunity (as defined by policy proxies) when compared to Illinois households as a whole. Concentration effects, particularly related to poverty and race, have served as the primary rationales for using vouchers as a legal remedy for racial and economic segregation, particularly within public housing. Given the program's goal of linking choice and opportunity to help households move from areas of concentrated disadvantage, how do patterns of residence for voucher households match up to concentrated clusters of neighborhood attributes?

Hot spot analysis is a spatial analysis strategy often used to examine the geographic clustering of people or community attributes. Traditional applications of the strategy can be found in epidemiology (Carpenter, 2001) and Criminology (Harries, 1999). Montrone et al. (2009) have used the strategy to examine the coincidence of poverty and other barriers to economic and social mobility in Italy. Wang and Varady (2005) apply hot spot analysis to the residential location of voucher households in Cincinnati, and find evidence suggesting the presence of distinct clusters of voucher households.

In order to examine neighborhood-level clustering of community attributes, the Getis-Ord *Gi** statistic (Getis and Ord 1992) was used to perform a hot spot analysis for a series tract-level demographic variables. For a given community attribute mapped to areal units (in this case, census tracts), the *Gi** statistic examines the values of the attributes in other nearby areal units, and identifies areas of clustering of high and low values that statistically are not random. The Getis-Ord local statistic is given as

$$Gi^* = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{n} w_{i,j} x_{i,j} - \bar{X} \sum_{j=1}^{n} w_{i,j}}{s\sqrt{\frac{\left[n \sum_{j=1}^{n} w_{i,j}^2 - \left(\sum_{j=1}^{n} w_{i,j}\right)^2\right]}{n-1}}}$$

Where

x_j is the attribute value for *j*;

$w_{i,j}$ is the spatial weight between feature *i* and *j*;

n is equal to the total number of features, and;

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{n} x_j}{n}$$

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{j=1}^{n} x_j^2}{n} - (\bar{X})^2}$$

The *Gi** statistic is given as a z-score which indicates statistically significant clusters of high and low values. In this case, the attributes of each Illinois census tract were compared to the attributes of other tracts within a 3-mile radius to look for evidence of clustering of high or low values. Statewide hot spot analysis was conducted to look for clusters of African-Americans, female headed households, poverty, rental housing, residential vacancy rates, and proportion of voucher households. Both statistically significant high and low clusters (α=.01) were identified for each neighborhood-level characteristic. The results of clusters for three selected attributes, percent African-American population, poverty rate, and percent of households renting with a voucher (Table XVII) identify those counties with statistically significant clusters for two opportunity indicators and the presence of voucher-assisted households.

Table XVII: High and Low Clusters by Illinois County for Selected Attributes

Attribute	**Low Cluster Locations**	**High Cluster Locations**
African-Americans (%)	Cook County Lake County McHenry County Winnebago County Whiteside County McLean County Madison County	Cook County Kankakee County Peoria County St. Clair County
Poverty Rate	Cook County DuPage County Kane County McHenry County Will County	Champaign County Coles County Cook County DeKalb County Jackson County Lake County Macon County Madison County McDonough County St. Clair County Peoria County Tazewell County Winnebago County
Households with Vouchers in 2007 (%)	Cook County DuPage County Kane County Lake County	Cook County Lake County Macon County Peoria County Sangamon County St. Clair County Tazewell County Vermillion County Winnebago County

Note: Highlights only those clusters that were statistically significant at (α=.01)
Data Source: Tract-Level Decennial Census Data (2000), Portability Data Set (2007)

Examining the distribution of clustering within Illinois Census tracts (Table XVIII), clusters of high values tend to be more prevalent than clusters of low values. Across most measures, between 22 and 30 percent of census tracts constitute clusters of high values in relation to the tracts surrounding them. Because census tracts are of variable size and have variable population, it is important to compare the proportion of population residing within high and low clusters.

Table XVIII: Distribution of Illinois Census Tracts by presence of clustering (2000)

Attribute	**Low**		**Not Significant**		**High**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
African-American Population	445	15.01%	1,748	58.97%	771	26.01%
Female Headed Households with Children	445	15.01%	1,740	58.70%	779	26.28%
Poverty Rate	559	18.86%	1,583	53.41%	822	27.73%
Rental Housing	484	16.33%	1,614	54.45%	866	29.22%
Residential Vacancy Rate	711	23.99%	1,584	53.44%	669	22.57%
Voucher Households	245	8.27%	1,907	64.34%	812	27.40%

Data Source: 2000 Decennial Census, Portability Dataset (2007)

Table XIX aggregates the tract-level population for low and high clusters, and finds that the majority of the state’s population lives in areas without significant evidence of clustering (within 3 miles of their “home” tract). The population living in areas of statistically significant high values range from 15 percent when looking at residential vacancy rate to 20 percent when examining poverty rate.

XIX: Illinois Households (2000) by Presence of Clustering of Low and High Values

Attribute	Low		Not Significant		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
African-American Population	882,515	19.22%	2,857,186	62.22%	852,078	18.56%
Female Headed Households with Children	901,337	19.63%	2,864,795	62.39%	825,647	17.98%
Poverty Rate	1,100,587	23.97%	2,590,543	56.42%	900,649	19.61%
Rental Housing	945,842	20.60%	2,565,159	55.86%	1,080,778	23.54%
Residential Vacancy Rate	1,402,258	30.54%	2,507,425	54.61%	682,096	14.85%
Voucher Households	482,454	10.51%	3,233,029	70.41%	876,296	19.08%

Data Source: 2000 Decennial Census, Portability Dataset (2007)

Using voucher tract location data from 2007, the distribution voucher-assisted households reveals evidence of increased proportions of households living in areas of statistically significant high clusters (Table XX). Based upon the 3-mile search radius, the majority of voucher households live in areas with statistically significant high clusters of African Americans and elevated rates of female headed households with children. Slightly lower proportions of voucher households live in areas with clusters of high poverty rates, high prevalence of rental housing, and high residential vacancy rates. Evidence from this analysis also suggests that the majority of voucher households live in areas with statistically significant clustering of voucher households, a finding consistent with the hot spot analysis done by Wang and Varady (2005).

Table XX: Illinois Voucher Households (2007) by Presence of Clustering of Low and High Values

Attribute	**Low**		**Not Significant**		**High**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
African-American Population	5,706	8.57%	27,097	40.69%	33,793	50.74%
Female Headed Households with Children	6,266	9.41%	26,156	39.28%	34,174	51.32%
Poverty Rate	6,682	10.03%	28,725	43.13%	31,189	46.83%
Rental Housing	6,395	9.60%	29,973	45.01%	30,228	45.39%
Residential Vacancy Rate	10,649	15.99%	31,082	46.67%	24,865	37.34%
Voucher Households	2,648	3.98%	27,466	41.24%	36,662	55.05%

Data Source: 2000 Decennial Census, Portability Dataset (2007)

Table XXI counts the proportion of all households and voucher households by the number of overlapping low and high clusters. For both high and low clusters, significant proportions of both the general population and the voucher population fall within areas of no clustering and high clustering. Looking at high clusters, voucher households tend to be overrepresented in areas with any clustering. In areas with evidence of statistically significant high clusters across all six of the indicators, voucher households are disproportionately overrepresented (33 percent of voucher households versus 10 percent of all households). Looking at areas with clusters of low values, voucher households are underrepresented across all categories when compared to all households in Illinois.

Table XXI: Distribution of Voucher Households (2007) and Illinois Households (2000) by Residence in Selected Cluster Categories

Number of Clusters	**High Clusters**				**Low Clusters**			
	IL Voucher HH		Illinois Households		IL Voucher HH		Illinois Households	
No Clusters	21,078	31.65%	3,053,375	66.50%	53,741	80.70%	2,863,068	62.35%
1 Cluster	7,216	10.84%	456,001	9.93%	3,094	4.65%	321,699	7.01%
2 Cluster	4,594	6.90%	195,135	4.25%	2,581	3.88%	258,483	5.63%
3 Clusters	6,530	9.81%	218,036	4.75%	2,024	3.04%	366,638	7.98%
4 Clusters	2,971	4.46%	106,897	2.33%	2,516	3.78%	285,772	6.22%
5 Clusters	2,209	3.32%	84,433	1.84%	2,066	3.10%	343,388	7.48%
6 Clusters	21,998	33.03%	477,902	10.41%	574	0.86%	152,731	3.33%

Data Source: 2000 Decennial Census, Portability Dataset (2007)

When tract-level cluster scores are counted and mapped, (Figure 6) it becomes clear that many tracts show evidence of high and low clustering across categories. In particular, clusters of high values are focused on Chicago and portions of Cook County, as well as the Chicago metropolitan area in general. Areas of high clustering are also focused on other state population centers, including Rockford, Champaign, Springfield, Peoria, and East Saint Louis. Clusters of low values are focused mainly in the suburbs of Chicago, and portions of the metropolitan Chicago area including Lake County, McHenry County, and DuPage County (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Presence of Statistically Significant High Clusters

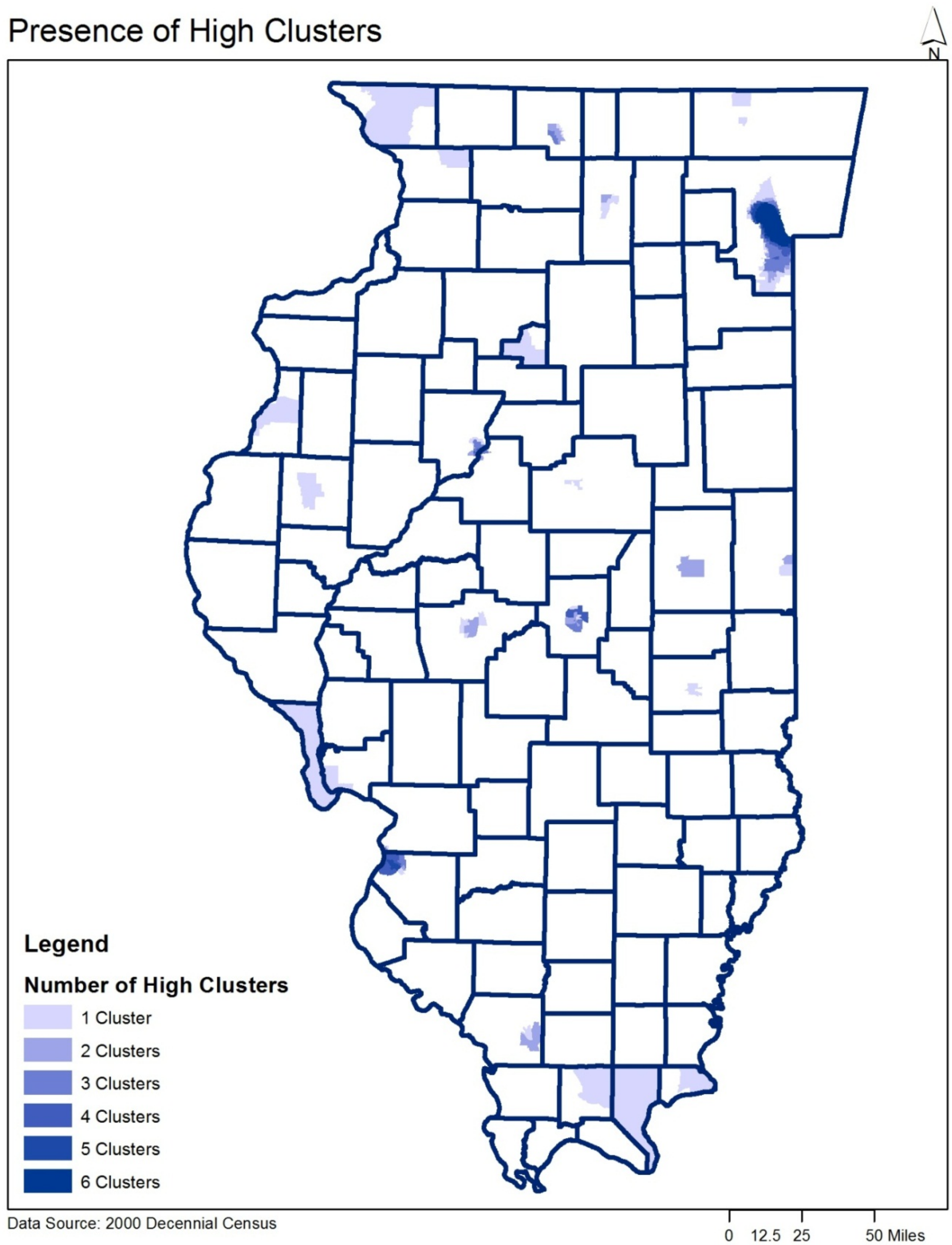
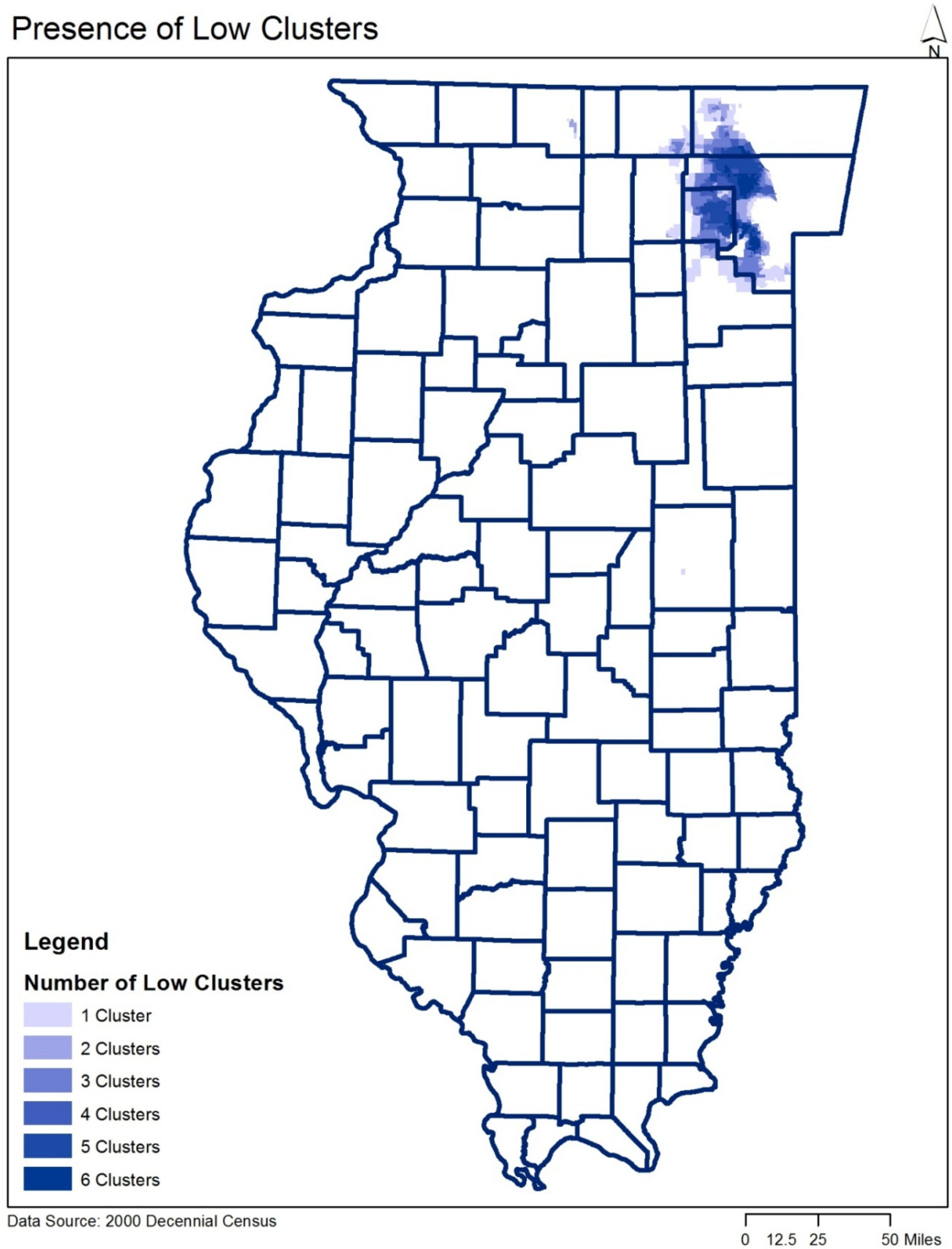


Figure 7: Presence of Statistically Significant Low Clusters


Presence of Low Clusters
N
Legend
Number of Low Clusters
1 Cluster
2 Clusters
3 Clusters
4 Clusters
5 Clusters
6 Clusters
Data Source: 2000 Decennial Census
0 12.5 25 50 Miles

Taken together, hot spot analysis indicates that voucher-assisted households tend to reside in areas where there is evidence of clustering of high values. Where policy proxies for opportunity are benchmarked to hard targets for tract-level values, hot spot analysis helps to look for areas with high and low values compared to the other tracts around them. Analysis of the spatial location of high and low values indicates that many of the areas with significant high values tend to be located within or near metropolitan areas and population centers, while significant low values tend to be located on their periphery, particularly in the Chicago metropolitan area. While evidence of clustering in and of itself is not intended to indicate whether an area contains more or less opportunity, the overlapping of high and low values across the series of indicators suggests that these areas may reflect different types of opportunity than areas without clustering.

Furthermore, findings show that compared to all Illinois households, voucher-assisted households tend to disproportionately reside in areas with significant clusters of high values. When considered in light of the earlier evidence that voucher households are residing in areas of less opportunity (based on policy proxies), these data suggest a spatially uneven distribution of housing and non-housing opportunities in Illinois. There are multiple reasons why patterns of voucher residence remain disparate compared to the types of choices that would reflect opportunity-seeking from a policy perspective. (Table XXII)

Table XXII: Potential Explanations for Disparities Between Opportunity Proxies and Voucher Household Choice

Reason	Explanation	Policy Implication
Preferences	Voucher households prefer to live in communities that are less likely to conform to opportunity proxies.	Voucher program design must either accept that households choose locations for a variety of reasons which are outside of the purview of the program. Alternately, the program must be redesigned to actively help households match their location preferences with communities they otherwise would not have considered.
Access	There are barriers that prevent voucher households for accessing communities with higher opportunity.	The effect of the voucher subsidy alone is not enough to mitigate barriers to accessing opportunity.
Relevance	Research proxies for opportunity are a poor fit for the types of opportunities that voucher households are looking for.	Policy researchers need to re-think the ways in which opportunity is operationalized across space and time.

It is likely that all three factors serve as contributory factors in shaping residential location outcomes for voucher-assisted households. One way to start to test the traction of these explanations is to examine observed behavior of assisted households over time. In particular, examining patterns of residential mobility can help to shed light on the three explanations by illustrating patterns of residential preference, highlighting patterns of accessibility, and illustrating the fit between opportunity proxies and the housing opportunities which voucher households act upon. Residential mobility and voucher portability both provide a unique lens to examine these patterns across both space and time (by comparing pre-move and post-move attributes). Within the next section, patterns of residential mobility and voucher portability are examined to provide additional perspective on the nature of opportunity within the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

C. Portability in the Illinois Housing Choice Voucher Program

Between 2000 and 2007, 9,155 portability moves were made in Illinois (by approximately 7 percent of the voucher population) and 35,755 households made moves within their housing authority, nearly four times the rate of voucher portability (Table XXIII). Amongst households who changed residence within housing authorities (hereafter “Movers”) and households who moved between housing authorities (“Porters), African-American households are overrepresented, and White households are underrepresented.

Table XXIII: Comparison of Mobility by Race and Ethnicity

Race / Ethnicity	Porters		Movers		HCVP	
White	1,703	18.6%	7,554	21.1%	42,929	32.85%
African American	7,894	86.2%	28,687	80.2%	85,408	65.35%
AIAN	46	0.5%	83	0.2%	244	0.19%
Asian	32	0.3%	76	0.2%	327	0.25%
HPI	13	0.1%	41	0.1%	147	0.11%
Latino	544	5.9%	3,027	8.5%	7,099	5.43%
Total	**9,155**		**35,755**		**130,697**	

Data Source: Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

Comparing the characteristics of mobile households with all households who participated in the program during the study period, porting households are on average younger (38 years old) than movers (42 years old) or the program average (44 years old). (Table XXIV). Porters were also less likely to be disabled, were newer to the program, and tended to have an income slightly lower than the general voucher population. Porting households also tended to be slightly larger than movers or the program average, which may be a function of the presence of young children, which may correspond to the slightly younger average age of the head of household.

Table XXIV: Comparison of Porters, Movers, and the General HCV Population (2000-2007)

Characteristic	Portability	Mobility	HCV General
Head of Household Age	38.11	41.63	43.93
Disabled	2,216 (24.2%)	10,637 (29.8%)	39,756 (30.4%)
Family Members	3.24	3.13	3.09
Average Time in Program (months)	63.7 (5.3 Years)	72.49 (6.04 Years)	68.90 (5.74 Years)
Average Assisted Income	$10,724	$11,194	$12,349
Average TTP	$240	$253	$285

Data Source: Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

The location of porters prior to admission to the program was compared to the pre- and post-portability locations, as well as the location of the entire Illinois HCV population in 2007. (Table XXV). These comparisons indicate a very slight improvement between pre-program location and the location of residence prior to portability move across most categories. Similarly, a slight improvement is seen across most indicators when comparing pre- and post-portability locations. In comparing the average characteristics of the neighborhoods occupied by porting voucher households with those of the entire Illinois HCVP in 2007, porting households tend to both move from and move to neighborhood locations that are better off when compared to the average neighborhood characteristics of all voucher households in 2007.

Table XXV: Comparison of Pre-Program and Portability Neighborhood Characteristics

Neighborhood Characteristics	Pre-Program	Sending Location	Receiving Location	HCV General (2007)
N for which Location Status is Determined	4,430	8,192	8,192	72,534
General Characteristics				
Poverty Rate (%)	15.98%	16.66%	14.25%	20.21%
Households with Public Assistance Income	6.00%	6.82%	5.80%	8.48%
Female Headed Families with Children	11.06%	12.85%	11.76%	13.80%
High School Dropouts	23.85%	23.35%	21.53%	25.83%
Unemployment Rate	6.04%	6.22%	5.62%	6.75%
Labor Force Participation Rate	63.53%	63.52%	64.90%	60.92%
Male	48.21%	47.35%	47.55%	47.14%
Female	51.79%	52.64%	52.45%	52.85%
Opportunity				
Income > 200% Poverty	66.35%	64.80%	68.78%	60.08%
% 2+ Bedroom Units Renting Below FMR	72.65%	72.51%	68.14%	77.83%
People with Education Beyond High School	66.32%	48.76%	50.82%	45.95%
Owner-Occupied Housing	58.41%	57.11%	61.30%	52.06%
Racial and Ethnic Composition				
African American	38.16%	46.03%	41.52%	48.99%
Latino Ethnicity	14.89%	12.32%	11.98%	11.18%
Non-White (Minority) Population	50.79%	57.09%	52.72%	59.26%

Data Source: U.S. Decennial Census (2000), Analysis of Data from HUD Form 50058

Several tenant characteristics and neighborhood characteristics were compared statistically using a paired-sample t-test to determine whether pre- and post-move locations were statistically different from each other (Table XXVI). Excluding the proportion of Latino households, tenant characteristics and community characteristics were statistically different from each other, although those differences remained comparatively small. Across the board, porting voucher households tended to realize slightly better neighborhoods through their moves, and tended to see slight increases in both their reported income as well as the average subsidy paid towards their rent, an indication that post-portability locations tended to have a higher gross rent than pre-portability locations. Similarly, neighborhood characteristics improved, albeit slightly. These findings present weak yet positive evidence that voucher portability tends to result in better conditions for voucher-assisted households.

Table XXVI: Difference Between Portability Origin and Destination Tracts (2000-2007)

Characteristic	**Pre-Port**	**Post-Port**	**Significance**
Tenant / Unit Characteristics			
Total Assisted Income	$10,723.77	$11,257.09	***
Total Tenant Payment	$240.25	$253.59	***
Bedrooms	2.62	2.67	***
Housing Assistance Payment	$680.52	$732.03	***
Neighborhood Characteristics			
African American Households	48.51%	44.41%	***
Minority Households	60.78%	57.36%	***
Latino Households	15.37%	15.36%	
Population with No High School Diploma	18.95%	17.73%	***
Poverty Rate	20.49%	18.13%	**
Residential Vacancy Rate	12.74%	11.67%	***
Rent Burdened Households	53.10%	52.00%	***

*** p <.05
** p < .1
Data Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey, Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

Returning to the opportunity criteria used to examine the geography of residence for all voucher households in comparison to common policy proxies for opportunity, porting voucher households tended to start off in communities that were slightly more likely to meet opportunity criteria. (Table XXVII). Examining policy proxies for opportunity, the general housing choice voucher population tended to be less likely to live in opportunity areas compared to the communities in which porting voucher households moved from. Across all opportunity criteria, voucher households who undertook portability moves were more likely to initiate portability moves from opportunity communities, and were more likely to port to communities that met opportunity criteria.

Table XXVII: Illinois Portability Moves (2000-2007) by Census Tracts (2000) Meeting Selected Opportunity Criteria

Criterion	HCV General	Portability Origin	Portability Destination
< 30% African American	44.77%	49.60%	55.99%
< 10% Poverty	30.68%	42.52%	54.08%
< 30% African American and <10% Poverty	25.24%	31.22%	39.34%

Data Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey, Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

1. **<u>Neighborhood Clustering and Mobility</u>**

The hot spot analysis generated in Section 3 was used to determine whether porting voucher households tended to move to and from areas with clusters of African American households (Table XXVIII) and clusters of poverty (Table XXIX). The largest share (31 percent) of porting households moved between areas containing significant high clusters of African-American households as both origin and destination. At the same time, very few households made the move from high to low clusters (3 percent) of from low to low clusters (3 percent).

Table XXVIII: Porting Illinois Voucher Households (2000-2007) by clustering of African-American Households in Origin and Destination Tracts

Origin	Destination							
	High		Low		Not Significant		Grand Total	
High	2,559	31.23%	265	3.23%	1,152	14.06%	**3,976**	**48.52%**
Low	187	2.28%	227	2.77%	259	3.16%	**673**	**8.21%**
Not Significant	981	11.97%	320	3.90%	2,245	27.39%	**3,546**	**43.27%**
Grand Total	**3,727**	**45.48%**	**812**	**9.91%**	**3,656**	**44.61%**	**8,196**	**100.00%**

Examining clusters of poverty (Table XXIX), the largest share of households moved in between areas without significant high or low clusters at either origin or destination (34 percent of all porters). Examining moves from high-poverty tracts, the largest proportion of households ended up moving to tracts without significantly different poverty from neighboring tracts (19 percent of all porters). 8 percent of all porters moved from tracts with clusters of high poverty to those with low poverty, while 5.6 percent moved between tracts in clusters of high poverty at both origin and destination.

Table XXIX: Porting Illinois Voucher Households (2000-2007) by Clustering of Poverty Population in Origin and Destination Tracts

Origin	Destination							
	High		Low		Not Significant		Grand Total	
High	459	5.60%	619	7.55%	1,534	18.72%	**2,612**	**31.87%**
Low	373	4.55%	449	5.48%	386	4.71%	**1,208**	**14.74%**
Not Significant	1,090	13.30%	516	6.30%	2,769	33.79%	**4,375**	**53.39%**
Grand Total	**1,922**	**23.45%**	**1,584**	**19.33%**	**4,689**	**57.22%**	**8,195**	**100.00%**

The same analysis was conducted for intra-housing authority moves. Table X3 shows that the majority (64 percent) of intra-housing authority moves were between tracts that formed clusters of high proportions of African American households at both origin and destination. 5 percent of movers moved between tracts with low proportions of African American households at both origin and destination. Figure X4 shows intra-housing authority moves by presence of poverty clusters. The majority of moves (55 percent) were made between tracts that formed clusters of comparatively higher poverty compared to neighboring tracts.

Table XXX: Intra-Housing Authority Mobility (2000-2007) by Clustering of African-American Households in Origin and Destination Tracts

Origin	**Destination**							
	High		Low		Not Significant		Grand Total	
High	21,596	63.95%	296	0.88%	814	2.41%	**22,706**	**67.23%**
Low	256	0.76%	1,580	4.68%	443	1.31%	**2,279**	**6.75%**
Not Significant	596	1.76%	432	1.28%	7,759	22.97%	**8,787**	**26.02%**
Grand Total	**22,448**	**66.47%**	**2,308**	**6.83%**	**9,016**	**26.70%**	**33,772**	**100.00%**

Table XXXI: Intra-Housing Authority Mobility (2000-2007) by Clustering of Poverty Population in Origin and Destination Tracts

Origin	**Destination**							
	High		Low		Not Significant		Grand Total	
High	18,573	55.00%	73	0.22%	1,953	5.78%	**20,599**	**60.99%**
Low	35	0.10%	1,398	4.14%	233	0.69%	**1,666**	**4.93%**
Not Significant	1,361	4.03%	344	1.02%	9,802	29.02%	**11,507**	**34.07%**
Grand Total	**19,969**	**59.13%**	**1,815**	**5.37%**	**11,988**	**35.50%**	**33,772**	**100.00%**

Findings from this analysis correspond with other data comparing portability moves to intra-housing authority moves, and taken together suggest that porters tend to start off and end up in communities with lower rates of poverty and lower proportions of African-American households when compared to the moves made within housing authorities. These findings also suggest that porting households are more likely to move to tracts of statistically significant low clusters of African American households and households in poverty when compared to movers.

2. Portability by Distance and Community Type

Data from the 2003 USDA Rural-Urban Continuum Codes were used in order to decompose moves between areas based upon their urban or rural character.[15] Based upon these categorizations, the vast majority of moves occurred between central cities within metropolitan areas and communities located within the metropolitan core. (Table XXXII). Much of the mobility between central cities and metropolitan core areas can be accounted for by Chicago and Cook County. These two locations were destinations for 55 percent of all portability moves (and contained 56 percent of voucher households). Despite high amounts of portability to Chicago, the portability rate of Chicago voucher households was lower (1.8 percent) when compared to the statewide mobility rate (2.9 percent) during the peak year for portability, 2004. At the same time, the internal mobility rate within Chicago was higher (13.3 percent) when compared to the statewide internal mobility rate (9.2 percent).

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[15] Tracts within Census defined central cities within Metropolitan Statistical Areas were flagged as a separate category. The remaining categories were aggregated at the county level from 2003 USDA Urban-Rural Continuum data:
Central City: Population center within Census Metropolitan Statistical Areas.
Metro Core: Code 1: Counties in metro area of 1 million or more, Code 2: Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population, Code 3: Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population.
Exurb: Code 4: Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area, Code 6: Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999 adjacent to a metro area.
Rural: Code 5: Urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjacent to a metro area, Code 7: Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999 not adjacent to a metro area, Code 8: Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, adjacent to a metro area, Code 9: Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population not adjacent to a metro area.

Table XXXII: Illinois Portability Moves (2000-2007) by Community Typology

Origin Location	**Destination Location**			
	Central City	Metro Core	Exurb	Rural
Central City	1,319	2,577	14	19
Metro Core	1,750	2,370	10	13
Suburb	26	21	7	5
Rural	32	18	4	10

Data Source: 2003 USDA Urban Rural Continuum Codes, Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

The average distance travelled reveals that while portability moves involve mobility between housing authority jurisdictions, that they tend to be intra-regional.[16] The average distance travelled for all portability moves was 24 miles (Table XXXIII). More than 40 percent of all portability moves were within 10 miles of origin. In comparison to moves within housing authorities, portability moves were on average approximately 10 times the distance (24 miles compared to 2.8 miles). Looking in more detail at portability moves that involved distances of 25 miles or more (Table XXXIV), most were between 25 and 50 miles of origin.[17]

[16] Distance travelled was approximated by measuring the as-the-crow-flies distance between the centroid of origin and destination Census tracts.

[17] It is important to remember that this analysis only examines portability moves between jurisdictions in Illinois. These data and analysis cannot account for those households that moved from housing authorities in other states.

Table XXXIII: Illinois Portability Moves and Intra-PHA Moves by Distance (2000-2007)

Distance	Portability		Mobility
0 to 5 Miles	1,896	20.7%	
5 to 10 Miles	1,903	20.8%	
10 to 15 Miles	1,189	13.0%	
15 to 20 Miles	680	7.4%	
20 to 25 Miles	527	5.8%	
> 25 Miles	2,000	21.9%	
Undetermined	960		
Average (Miles)	24.374		2.8
Median (Miles)	11.13		1.64

Data Source: Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

Table XXXIV: Frequency of Long-Distance Portability Moves Within Illinois (2000-2007)

Distance	Number	Percent
< 25	6,195	67.7%
25-50	1,140	12.5%
50-75	263	2.9%
75-100	112	1.2%
100-150	236	2.6%
150-200	162	1.8%
200-250	28	0.3%
250-300	50	0.5%
> 300	9	0.1%

Data Source: Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

In order to determine whether personal characteristics of porting households and neighborhood covariates played a role in the distance between portability origins and destinations, these relationships were modeled using standard OLS procedures. Distance (in miles) between origin and destination tract centroids served as the dependent variable. Independent variables included household demographic information for porting households, neighborhood characteristics, and characteristics about the residential location. The model was specified as follows:

$$Distance = \alpha + X_{i1}\beta_1 + X_{i2}\beta_2 + X_{i3}\beta_3 + X_{i4}\beta_4$$

Where

Distance is the straight line distance between tract centroids at origin and destination;

α is the constant term;

X_{i1} is the set of household demographic variables;

X_{i2} is the vector of tract-level neighborhood characteristics;

X_{i3} is the set of regional characteristics;

X_{i4} is a continuous variable measuring the number of months that household i remains in the program at year t; and

$\beta_{1,}\beta_{2,}\beta_3$ and β_4 are vectors of regression coefficients.

Household demographic characteristics factored into the model include whether the voucher household has a female head, disability status of head of household, number of bedrooms (based upon household size and HCVP standards), the total assisted income of the household and gross rent paid in the origin location. Neighborhood demographic covariates included the proportion of non-white households, the proportion of households with Latino ethnicity, the percentage of households who moved to a different community (in the prior year), proportion of workers who commute to jobs out of the county, proportion of workers with long commutes (greater than 60 minutes), adults with no high school diploma, poverty rate, residential vacancy rate, the proportion of rent burdened households, and the difference between the median household income reported by renters and owners within the neighborhood. Residential location characteristics include whether the household is in Chicago or Cook County, and whether the household is located within a central city, metropolitan area, exurban area, or rural area. Finally, the number of months of program participation at the time of voucher portability was used to control for length of program tenure.

Models were created for both origin communities (Table XXXV) and destination communities (Table XXXVI). Models had adjusted r square values of .281 and .126 respectively. The origin model suggests that households with a disability are likely to port a shorted distance on average. The model also suggests that as household size increases (as proxied by the number of bedrooms allowed based upon program guidelines), port distance increases. Higher income and higher rent (at origin) have a negative effect on distance, as does length of time in the program. The negative relationship between length of time in the program and distance moved may reflect the provision which some housing authorities have which allow households to port upon admission to the program (meaning there is no minimum residency requirement while participating in the program).

Looking at origin neighborhood demographics, the presence of Latino and minority households is negatively associated with distance, as are variables related to commuting patterns. Households porting from communities with higher poverty rates or with higher proportion of rent burdened households tended to move farther. Looking at broader community attributes, those households porting from Chicago or Cook County tended to move shorter distances on average, as did those households within non-central city metropolitan areas. Those households living in exurban areas tended to move further from origin communities.

Table XXXV: Portability Origin Distance Model

Indicator	**Coefficient**	**Beta**	**t**	**Significance**
Constant	64.547		23.113	***
Personal Characteristics				
Female Head of Household	1.460	.009	.887	
Disability	-2.160	-.023	-2.317	*
Bedrooms	3.224	.073	5.527	***
Total Assisted Income	.000	-.057	-5.872	***
Gross Rent	-.016	-.111	-7.847	***
Months in Program	-.022	-.032	-3.273	***
Neighborhood Demographics at Origin				
Minority Households (%)	-11.560	-.092	-5.284	***
Latino Households (%)	-15.819	-.079	-4.881	***
Movers to Different County (%)	174.196	.144	10.971	***
Workers who Work out of County (%)	-22.735	-.085	-6.238	***
Workers with Commute > 60 Minutes (%)	-56.152	-.123	-9.403	***
Adults With no High School Diploma (%)	-22.539	-.062	-3.305	***
Poverty Rate (%)	55.394	.190	11.194	***
Residential Vacancy Rate (%)	-26.912	-.055	-4.275	***
Rent Burdened Households (%)	10.723	.037	3.353	***
Rent vs Owner Median Household Income Difference	.000	.043	4.130	***
Residential Location Characteristics at Origin				
Move from Chicago Housing Authority	-8.013	-.097	-5.803	***
Move from Cook County	-11.169	-.134	-9.081	***
Move from Central City	Reference			
Move from Urban Area	-16.577	-.209	-15.225	***
Move from Exurban Area	41.087	.088	9.078	***
Move from Rural Area	-11.339	-.025	-2.536	**

*** Significant at 1 percent
** Significant at 5 percent
* Significant at 10 percent

The same model was run for the characteristics of destination neighborhoods (Table XXXVI). The lower r square value (.126) suggests that many other factors not captured within the model influence the distance of destination tracts as well. As is expected, personal characteristics bear the same relationships as in the origin model. Neighborhood demographics in destination communities also appear to have similar effects on the distance moved. These similarities suggest that both models may be largely capturing effects associated with moves to the Chicago metropolitan area. Given that Cook County and the housing authorities within its boundaries (most notably, Chicago Housing Authority) were the destination location for 55 percent of portability moves (and is home to 56 percent of program participants), the destination model may largely be describing neighborhood characteristics within Cook County and the Chicago metropolitan area.[18]

[18] DuPage County, Lake County, North Chicago, Oak Park, Park Forest, and Waukegan, all locations within the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area are the other top destinations for porters in Illinois.

Table XXXVI: Portability Destination Distance Model

Indicator	**Coefficient**	**Beta**	**t**	**Significance**
Constant	62.347		19.359	***
Personal Characteristics				
Female Head of Household	1.413	.008	.768	
Disability	-2.855	-.030	-2.718	***
Bedrooms	.543	.012	1.010	
Total Assisted Income	.000	-.087	-8.237	***
Gross Rent	-.008	-.052	-4.027	***
Months in Program	-.053	-.075	-7.035	***
Neighborhood Demographics at Destination				
Minority Households (%)	-3.827	-.029	-1.589	
Latino Households (%)	-15.984	-.075	-4.262	***
Movers to Different County (%)	54.326	.040	2.897	***
Workers who Work out of County (%)	-6.320	-.025	-1.593	
Workers with Commute > 60 Minutes (%)	-31.641	-.065	-4.715	***
Adults With no High School Diploma (%)	-16.672	-.044	-2.078	**
Poverty Rate (%)	38.757	.125	6.532	***
Residential Vacancy Rate (%)	-19.023	-.038	-2.601	***
Rent Burdened Households (%)	4.875	.017	1.453	
Rent vs Owner Median Household Income Difference	.000	.023	2.017	**
Residential Location Characteristics at Destination				
Move to Chicago Housing Authority	-2.075	-.022	-1.239	
Move to Cook County	-12.777	-.152	-9.626	
Move to Central City	Reference			
Move to Urban Area	-14.005	-.169	-10.776	***
Move to Exurban Area	16.717	.027	2.561	**
Move to Rural Area	-7.116	-.013	-1.247	

*** Significant at 1 percent

** Significant at 5 percent

* Significant at 10 percent

Taken together, these data suggest that those households who undertake portability moves tend to start within better neighborhoods in comparison to the general Housing Choice Voucher Program population in Illinois. Portability moves tended to be intra-regional, with the majority of moves occurring between central cities within metropolitan areas and the metropolitan core. Tenant incomes and average neighborhood characteristics also tend to improve slightly on average post-portability. Comparing data on porting households with that for all households participating in the HCVP, porters tend to be younger, are less likely to have a disabled head of household, tend to be newer to the program, and tend to have lower incomes. Porting households also tend to be slightly larger than the average household participating in the HCVP, perhaps due to the younger average age of heads of household. The distance which households port is influenced by personal characteristics including age, income, and number of bedrooms, which, given the younger and larger size of porting households may be a reflection of households with children.[19] There is a stronger relationship between origin neighborhoods and distance moved when compared to destination neighborhoods, which may indicate the “push” of origin neighborhood factors in catalyzing the decision to port. Finally, distance of portability move does appear to be influenced by neighborhood and regional variables, and appears to indicate the predominance of shorter moves occurring within metropolitan areas. In order to gain a better understanding of what individual and community factors predict voucher portability, multivariate analysis was conducted to examine these factors in relation to each other.

[19] Aside from describing head of household characteristics, the portability dataset does not provide additional information on the demographics or ages of other household members.

D. **Determinants of Portability Moves**

1. **Model Specification**

Analysis was undertaken in order to understand the influence of household and neighborhood demographic factors in contributing to the probability that an assisted household made a portability move. In particular, this model sought to identify the contribution of household demographic characteristics- such as household size, race of head of householder, age of head of householder, and tenure within the voucher program contributed to the probability that the household made a portability move. In this case, multivariate analysis was chosen so that the effect of each characteristic could be isolated, holding all other factors constant, in order to assess the impact of each characteristics on the likelihood of a portability move.

Within the model, the dependent (outcome) variable is a dummy variable indicating that a household made a portability move with their voucher in year *T*. A logistic regression model with repeated observations (Wooldridge, 2002, Climaco et al. 2008) was used to model the household decision to move:

$$log\left(\frac{P_{it}}{1-P_{it}}\right) = \alpha + X_{i1}\beta_1 + X_{i2}\beta_2 + X_{i3}\beta_3 + X_{i4}\beta_4$$

where

P_{it} is the probability that household *I has used their voucher to make a portability move in year t;*

α *is the constant term;*

X_{i1} *is the set of flags for year of entry to the program;*

X_{i2} *is the vector of household demographic variables;*

X_{i3} *is the set of tract-level geographic covariates;*

X_{i4} *is a continuous variable measuring the number of months that household i remains in the program at year t; and*

$\beta_{1,}\beta_{2,}\beta_3$ and β_4 are vectors of regression coefficients.

Where ordinary regression models (which only include one observation per subject, this type of logit model allows for multiple observations of the same household over time. The data for each household were organized in chronological order, so that each subsequent household observation represented the next data entry for that household. In most cases, household records are updated on an annual basis (representing the annual reexamination of the household for continued eligibility in the program).[20] The benefit of using this sort of model is that characteristics that may vary over time (for example household size and household income) can be factored into the model.

Analysis was conducted for all households who had entered the HCVP after the year 2000. Because the dataset used for this analysis does not include complete program histories for those households who entered the program prior to 2000, these households were excluded from analysis to avoid model bias due to missing data. As such, the model focuses solely on those households who began participation in the voucher program between 2000 and the end of 2007.

The coefficient estimates that result from logit models can be difficult to interpret. As is common practice in discussing the results of logit models, odds ratios provide a clearer picture of the influence of each variable. Odds ratios

[20] Many household records were updated in between annual reexaminations for reasons such as changes in income or changes in household members. These records were included in the model, with the understanding that such changes may contribute to the likelihood of a household making a portability move.

represent the likelihood (in relation to all other factors) that a given factor will influence the outcome represented by the dependent variable (in this case, the occurrence of a portability move). Odds ratios greater than one indicate that a variable has a positive effect on the likelihood of a portability move occurring. Odds ratios less than one indicate that the variable decreases the likelihood that a household will make a portability move.

2. **Model Results**

Results from the portability model (Table XXXVII) largely conform to findings from the earlier descriptive analysis. As in the descriptive analysis, head of household age is negatively associated with the likelihood of portability (log odds ratio of .977), and having a larger household tends to increase the probability of portability (log odds ratio of 1.058). As tenants spend more time in the program, they are more likely to make a portability move (log odds ratio of 1.01). African-American households were significantly more likely to make a portability move when compared to households of other races (log odds ratio of 5.96). Households where the head of household reports a disability do not use portability differently from other households. All year of entry cohorts were statistically significant except for the final cohort (2007). This is likely due to the minimal amount of data present for households entering within this cohort.

Neighborhood income levels and racial composition had no significant influence on the probability of portability, except for neighborhoods with more than 30 percent African-American residents which tended to reduce the probability of voucher portability (log odds ratio of 0.79). Neighborhood poverty rate and residential location do not seem to significantly influence the probability of voucher portability.

Table XXXVII: Portability Origin Model Results

Factor	Estimate	Log Odds Ratio	Significance
Household Characteristics			
Head of Household has Disability	-0.011087	0.988974234	
Number of Household Members	0.057237	1.058906742	***
Head of Household Age	-0.022587	0.977666177	***
Total Monthly Tenant Payment	-0.000641	0.999359205	***
Head of Household Race			
Head of Household Race: White	0.816946	2.263576309	***
Head of Household Race: Black	1.785729	5.963926065	***
Head of Household Race: Other	Reference		
Head of Household Ethnicity			
Head of Household Ethnicity: Not Latino	Reference		
Head of Household Ethnicity: Latino	0.375462	1.455663776	**
Months in Program	0.01765	1.017806682	***
Residential Location at Origin			
African American Population			
Less than 10%	Reference		
10% - 20%	0.062	1.063962345	
20% - 30%	-0.012194	0.987880046	
More than 30%	-0.235529	0.790152748	*
Poverty Rate			
Less than 10% Poverty	Reference		
10% - 20% Poverty	-0.008384	0.991651048	
20% - 30% Poverty	-0.110727	0.895183101	
Higher than 30% Poverty	-0.206643	0.81330995	
Location Type			
Central City in Urban Area	-0.174618	0.839777755	
Urban Area	-0.049339	0.951858395	
Exurban Area	Reference		
Rural Area	-0.071148	0.931324046	
Household Cohort			
2000 Entering Cohort	Reference		
2001 Entering Cohort	0.525062	1.69056366	***
2002 Entering Cohort	0.670497	1.955208818	***
2003 Entering Cohort	0.789559	2.202424943	***
2004 Entering Cohort	0.794725	2.213832109	***
2005 Entering Cohort	0.632656	1.882604141	***
2006 Entering Cohort	0.799744	2.224971263	***
2007 Entering Cohort	0.373944	1.453455755	

Dependent Variable = 1 if tenant ports at time period *j*, 0 otherwise.

*** Significant at 1 percent, ** Significant at 5 percent, * Significant at 10 percent
Data Source: Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

Findings related to the personal characteristics of porting voucher households largely correspond with those observed by Climaco et al. (2008), who used a similar modeling strategy to examine portability moves nationwide during the time period 1997 to 2005. Results diverge more around neighborhood characteristics. Where the Climaco model finds that households in low-poverty areas are more likely to make moves, the Illinois model does not find any significant relationship between neighborhood poverty and mobility.[21] The Climaco model also finds that nonmetropolitan and rural households are more likely to undertake portability moves, which runs counter to both the descriptive analysis and multivariate analysis conducted here for Illinois.

The analysis of portability conducted by Climaco et al. focused only on the characteristics of origin communities. To compliment my analysis of origin communities, a separate model was run to explore the influence of destination communities on the probability of portability. Testing the nature of "pull" factors is conceptually more challenging that examining the more immediate "push" factors represented by the communities that people ported from. Theoretically, however, this type of model helps to explore whether post-portability neighborhood characteristics played a role in increasing the probability of portability. Table XXXVII shows the results of the portability destination model. Results from the

[21] Log odds ratios do show, however, that as neighborhood poverty rates increase, households are less likely to undertake voucher portability.

destination model show similar effects as seen in the origin model. Household characteristics operate in a similar manner in both models as expected. Looking at destination communities, the presence of increased poverty decreases the probability of portability, with significant findings for poverty rates in the 20% - 30% category and the greater than 30% category. Destinations located within urban areas also increase the probability of portability.

Table XXXVII: Portability Destination Model Results

Factor	Estimate	Log Odds Ratio	Significance
Household Characteristics			
Head of Household has Disability	0.039600	1.040394533	
Number of Household Members	0.073800	1.076591466	***
Head of Household Age	-0.021700	0.978533751	***
Total Monthly Tenant Payment	-0.000018	0.9999824	
Head of Household Race			
Head of Household Race: White	1.030000	2.801065835	***
Head of Household Race: Black	1.960000	7.099327065	***
Head of Household Race: Other	Reference		
Head of Household Ethnicity			
Head of Household Ethnicity: Not Latino	Reference		
Head of Household Ethnicity: Latino	0.494000	1.638858561	***
Months in Program	-0.004240	0.995768976	**
Residential Location at Destination			
African American Population			
Less than 10%	Reference		
10% - 20%	0.144000	1.154884109	
20% - 30%	-0.004620	0.995390656	
More than 30%	0.086900	1.090787596	
Poverty Rate			
Less than 10% Poverty	Reference		
10% - 20% Poverty	-0.241000	0.785841626	
20% - 30% Poverty	-0.439000	0.64468078	*
Higher than 30% Poverty	-0.613000	0.541723259	***
Location Type			
Central City in Urban Area	0.789000	2.201194131	
Urban Area	1.450000	4.263114515	*
Exurban Area	Reference		
Rural Area	0.733000	2.081315197	
Household Cohort			
2000 Entering Cohort	Reference		
2001 Entering Cohort	0.335000	1.397940385	**
2002 Entering Cohort	0.332000	1.393752849	**
2003 Entering Cohort	0.290000	1.336427488	*
2004 Entering Cohort	0.151000	1.162996658	
2005 Entering Cohort	-0.113000	0.89315066	
2006 Entering Cohort	-0.022900	0.977360215	
2007 Entering Cohort	-0.602000	0.54771511	

The same modeling strategy was used to examine the factors influencing intra-housing authority residential mobility. (Table XXXIX). As with porters, head of household age has a negative influence on the probability of mobility (log odds ratio of 0.98). Similarly, household size has a positive influence on the probability of voucher mobility (log odds ratio of 1.08). Although not statistically significant, African-American households are more likely to move (log odds ratio of 1.02) in comparison to households of other races. In comparison to portability moves, neighborhood characteristics exhibit more of an influence on the decision to move. Living in a neighborhood with 20% to 30% African American population tends to increase the probability of moving (log odds ratio of 1.22). Similarly, neighborhoods with poverty rates above 30 percent are more likely to lead to mobility (log odds ratio of 1.15). Unlike the portability model, location urban and rural character has an influence on mobility. Living in a central city increases the chances of mobility (log odds ratio of 1.28), while living in an exurban or rural area tend to lower the probability of mobility (log odds ratios of 0.78 and 0.68 respectively)

Table XXXIX: Mobility Origin Model Results

Factor	Estimate	Log Odds Ratio	Significance
Household Characteristics			
Head of Household has Disability	0.1300	1.13883	***
Number of Household Members	0.0796	1.08285	***
Head of Household Age	-0.0145	0.98560	***
Total Monthly Tenant Payment	-0.0002	0.99983	**
Head of Household Race			
Head of Household Race: White	-0.2030	0.81628	**
Head of Household Race: Black	0.0280	1.02840	
Head of Household Race: Other	Reference		
Head of Household Ethnicity			
Head of Household Ethnicity: Not Latino	Reference		
Head of Household Ethnicity: Latino	0.2570	1.29305	***
Months in Program		1.00652	***
Residential Location at Origin			
African American Population			
Less than 10%	Reference		
10% - 20%	0.0308	1.03128	
20% - 30%	0.2010	1.22262	***
More than 30%	-0.0062	0.99387	
Poverty Rate			
Less than 10% Poverty	Reference		
10% - 20% Poverty	-0.0179	0.98226	
20% - 30% Poverty	0.0753	1.07821	
Higher than 30% Poverty	0.1410	1.15142	***
Location Type			
Central City in Urban Area	0.2510	1.28531	**
Urban Area	-0.2460	0.78192	*
Exurban Area	Reference		
Rural Area	-0.3800	0.68386	**
Household Cohort			
2000 Entering Cohort	Reference		
2001 Entering Cohort	0.2310	1.25986	***
2002 Entering Cohort	0.3610	1.43476	***
2003 Entering Cohort	0.3360	1.39934	***
2004 Entering Cohort	0.2450	1.27762	***
2005 Entering Cohort	0.1340	1.14339	*
2006 Entering Cohort	-0.4500	0.63763	***
2007 Entering Cohort	-0.4740	0.62251	

Dependent Variable = 1 if tenant moves within housing authority at time period *j*, 0 otherwise.

*** Significant at 1 percent, ** Significant at 5 percent, * Significant at 10 percent
Data Source: Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

Destination communities from intra-housing authority residential mobility were also modeled to examine their effect on the probability of moving (Table XL). Household characteristics all carry the anticipated signs. This model suggests that higher proportion of African-American households in destination communities tend to positively predict the mobility decision. As with the origin model, central city destinations tended to result in higher probabilities of portability when compared to urban or rural areas. Evidence from descriptive data that shows higher rates of internal mobility in central city locations like Chicago (13.3 percent in 2005) when compared to (9.18 percent in 2005) for the state as a whole suggest the "churning" of households within central cities.[22]

[22] In 2005, the statewide portability rate was 2.94 percent while it was 1.8 percent in Chicago.

Table XL: Mobility Destination Model Results

Factor	Estimate	Log Odds Ratio	Significance
Household Characteristics			
Head of Household has Disability	0.1565	1.16941	***
Number of Household Members	0.0841	1.08771	***
Head of Household Age	-0.0150	0.98515	***
Total Monthly Tenant Payment	-0.0003	0.99972	***
Head of Household Race			
Head of Household Race: White	-0.1628	0.84979	*
Head of Household Race: Black	0.0510	1.05232	
Head of Household Race: Other	Reference		
Head of Household Ethnicity			
Head of Household Ethnicity: Not Latino	Reference		
Head of Household Ethnicity: Latino	0.303195	1.35418	***
Months in Program	-0.0075	0.99256	***
Residential Location at Destination			
African American Population			
Less than 10%	Reference		
10% - 20%	0.0687	1.07109	
20% - 30%	0.1526	1.16484	**
More than 30%	0.1764	1.19289	***
Poverty Rate			
Less than 10% Poverty	Reference		
10% - 20% Poverty	-0.0648	0.93728	
20% - 30% Poverty	-0.0716	0.93093	
Higher than 30% Poverty	-0.0874	0.91627	*
Location Type			
Central City in Urban Area	0.2996	1.34933	**
Urban Area	-0.1620	0.85045	
Exurban Area	Reference		
Rural Area	-0.3794	0.68430	**
Household Cohort			
2000 Entering Cohort	Reference		
2001 Entering Cohort	0.0717	1.07438	
2002 Entering Cohort	0.1176	1.12484	**
2003 Entering Cohort	0.0180	1.01819	
2004 Entering Cohort	-0.1480	0.86246	**
2005 Entering Cohort	-0.3276	0.72067	***
2006 Entering Cohort	-0.9839	0.37384	***
2007 Entering Cohort	-1.1187	0.32670	***

Dependent Variable = 1 if tenant moves within housing authority at time period *j*, 0 otherwise.

*** Significant at 1 percent, ** Significant at 5 percent, * Significant at 10 percent
Data Source: Portability Data Set (2000-2007)

E. **Conclusion**

Results from both the portability and mobility model appear to conform largely to findings from the descriptive analysis. In comparing the portability and mobility models, neighborhood characteristics appear to be more influential in predicting moves within housing authorities compared to portability moves. This difference may be due to variability in the ways that portability moves and internal mobility are recorded in the data (despite the work done to identify portability moves uniformly), or they may indicate that the "push" factors represented by neighborhood characteristics do not factor in to the reasons why households undertake voucher portability.

The results from the multivariate model suggest that while household characteristics such as income, age, and household size influence the chance of portability, the effect of neighborhood characteristics are more ambiguous (particularly when compared to results from prior studies). Findings from this analysis indicate a significant difference between the influence of neighborhood factors within the internal mobility process and the portability process. Given the added logistical and programmatic complexities of undertaking a portability move, these differences may reflect a kind of "filtering" amongst households by motivation into those who undertake internal mobility and those who undertake voucher portability.

The results from the descriptive analysis indicate that the voucher program tends to be a largely concentrated within Illinois metropolitan areas. Examining the overall distribution of voucher households throughout the state, the geography of residence roughly corresponds to overall patterns of residence throughout the state, with nearly three quarters of voucher households located within the Chicago metropolitan area, and with the remaining households being located elsewhere in the state. This analysis also reveals that voucher portability remains a largely urban and metropolitan phenomenon that is characterized by portability between Chicago and Cook County (as well as the metropolitan area).

Housing choice and residential location choice is complex, and a highly individual process. While this chapter has sought to explore patterns of mobility for voucher households, it is clear that there are limitations as to what these data can tell us about the decision to move and the ways in which assisted households search for and find new places to live. Aside from revealing existing residential location patterns, these data also offer only limited insight into the dynamics of housing choice. While this analysis tells us something about the "actually existing" residential location choices of voucher households, it does little to help us understand what factors played into those choices, or the ways that choices were constrained due to factors outside of the purview of the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Given that this analysis only provides limited evidence that voucher households are choosing to move to areas of opportunity (as defined by past policy studies and experiments), different data may be able to provide more insight into the types of opportunities that voucher households are looking for, and the ways that these opportunities are filtered through the residential location choices which households make. In order to gain further insight into the dynamics of choice for voucher households, the next chapter seeks to compliment the descriptive and multivariate analysis contained within this chapter with the "on the ground" experiences of program stakeholders, with the goal of adding more perspective on the nature of choice within the program.

VI. THE PORTABILITY EXPERIENCE

A. <u>**Introduction**</u>

This section explores the ways in which the lived experiences of program officials, landlords, and tenants come together to create a portrait of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. This chapter seeks to cover a wide range of themes revealed through interview data, but the primary focus remains on understanding the interaction between these themes and the dynamics of voucher-based residential mobility. Because voucher program theory emphasizes the importance of strong relationships between landlords, tenants, and housing authorities, certain aspects of their experiences will be analyzed together. In some cases, however, perspectives exclusive to one stakeholder group will be analyzed separately.

This chapter starts off by examining the ways in which stakeholders describe the voucher program in their own words, relating their understanding of what the program is meant to do, and how it is viewed by the public at large. Discussion then moves into the process of residential mobility with a voucher, namely the housing search and voucher portability process. I then proceed to explore the nature of the experience of adjusting to and coping with new communities.

B. <u>**Program Identity**</u>

"So, I'm like, "Okay, it's not just on Lake Shore Drive next to IIT, it's everywhere...""

Landlord, Western Suburbs of Chicago

Landlords and housing authority officials described program identity in a significantly different manner than tenants did. All three groups were asked questions about what they understood the purpose of the program to be, how they saw it impacting participants' lives, and what they thought the outside or public perception of the program was. For tenants, program identity was described most often as a function of individual identity- as a personal experience. For landlords and PHA officials, program identity was not personal, but was rather described as an activity or function of role- renting to a voucher tenant or administering the program. While perspectives on what the program was designed to do differed greatly between groups, thoughts on the public perception of the program tended to be similar across all three groups.

1. **Public Perception of the Voucher Program**

The primary aspect of program identity focused on by landlords and housing authority officials were the public misconceptions about what the voucher program was and how it operated. Housing authority officials described the public perception of the program based upon the misconceptions associated with it- that the voucher program (often referred to as "Section 8" within the contexts of describing public perception) was largely a central city urban program, that it was linked to failures in public housing, and that voucher tenants tended to be prior recipients of such failed public housing. In many communities, housing authority officials described the connotations associated with the public perception of the program as largely negative, with voucher households reflecting negative aspects of central city public housing (namely the types of highly visible and publicized problems associated with the Chicago Housing Authority).

In discussing the public perception of the voucher program, officials across the board described a general misperception about the role of housing authorities within their community, as well as more specific issues with the ways in which the public at large thought of the voucher program and tenants receiving voucher subsidies. An official from a small PHA in central Illinois reflects, "… I keep hearing over and over again this misattribution, you know. All of a sudden, anything housing related that's negative [in the community], well, it’s the housing authority. You know, it’s a very narrow slice of stuff [that housing authorities are involved in]." Similarly, an official from a suburban Chicago housing authority describes the issue as it relates to tenants receiving voucher subsidies: "I know it’s a hardship for them [voucher-assisted households] because they’re being labeled as problem makers and there are families that use that, that really are using it for the correct reasons. That’s hard for them."

Public perceptions of voucher-based mobility also play a large role in the construction of program identity. Housing authority officials pointed consistently to the very public Chicago Housing Authority Plan for Transformation as a source of misperception about the voucher program. The coupling of the very visible demolition of several of the nation’s most distressed public housing complexes coupled with the use of vouchers as one of several strategies for providing both temporary and permanent replacement housing for public housing relocatees has worked to create a highly negative association between the voucher program and the types of mobility which it affords households. Says a landlord renting to voucher households on his perception of the program prior to participating in it, "My understanding as a regular American DuPage County resident is, "Oh, the Section 8 means these are people that live in the projects that get subsidized housing." Or that they wouldn't have to be, but that's my thinking. I'm thinking of Robert Taylor homes. I'm thinking of the different CHA developments and I primarily thought that it was in an urban area."

Housing authority officials commonly framed voucher-based residential mobility in terms of a type of specific “mythology” associated with it. In most cases, this mythology described the movement of voucher-assisted households from Chicago to local areas, with a focus on the negative consequences of such mobility on local communities. In many cases, housing authority officials noted that very few (if any) voucher-assisted households had actually made such moves. One central Illinois housing authority Executive Director describes two urban areas associated with this public mythology:

> There's two areas that seem to get all the disrespect and that's the city of Chicago and East St. Louis. We hear this rumor all the time that this huge influx of people are coming in from East St. Louis. I don't know where they’re going, you know. And, of course, they always, you know, the city of Chicago is ruining our town, because they’re sending all their wayward folks down here, because Daley did what he did. You know, this has been going on since the ‘90s.

2. **Politicizing Voucher Tenancy**

Local news accounts, politics, and community interactions shape public perception of the voucher program. Several housing authority officials described significant local misconception about the voucher program. Because the program is relatively well-known as a means of providing low-income housing, it serves in many communities as a lightning rod for many issues unrelated to the program itself. The executive director of a small housing authority in central Illinois relates the experience of dealing with public complaints about voucher households:

> …more times than not it's not affiliated with our Section 8 program, you know. I mean, they [voucher tenants] get a bad rap, because like if someone is driving down the street and they see a yard that has stuff out in the yard, like toys and stuff, and maybe it needs mowed and it has, you know, a lot to be desired. Well, they automatically assume that a Section 8 client lives there, so they're calling us, you know. And I just love to tell them, "I'm sorry. That unit is not affiliated with our program." You know, I get such joy out of that.

Housing authority officials conveyed that voucher households oftentimes were inappropriately blamed for local crime and disorder, with the notion of "section 8" often serving as discursive code for African-American, crime, disorder, and urban.

> What, two years ago we had a murder. Well, it's a drug deal gone bad and it was an execution. Now, the next day, we were blamed for the Section 8 murders. They weren't on the program. Nobody was affiliated with the program. The only problem was the unit was a duplex and the woman in the other half was a Section 8 client, and she was scared to death. We moved her ass the next day. Well, as soon as we could.

Given the ability for households to move with the voucher, and the misperception that many voucher households are moving en masse to areas outside of the Chicago metropolitan area, vouchers also come to represent other forms of racial and ethnic changes being experienced throughout the state. Housing authorities are often accused of actively recruiting households from metropolitan areas to move to local communities.

> But, you know, we're always accused of recruiting. We don't recruit. We don't have no boards. Have you seen any billboards up north advertising our housing authority "Nope, not a one. They claim that we do. [Laughter]

The same housing authority official describes an interaction with the local sheriff:

> The sheriff just thinks we're the cause of – the root of all evil in town. And he said, "Well, you guys have a van and you bring people down here." No, there's several agencies in the south suburbs that have vans and they do bring people down here, and they probably stop in Champaign and Kankakee and Bloomington on the way. And we're not the only location.

The official also describes efforts to dispel rumors and misinformation about the local housing authority's role in mobility:

> You know, the city continues to tout that, you know, all these voucher holders came here. Well, you know, we keep trying to prove to them that it's minuscule what comes here with a voucher. ... I've provided this data to the board [PHA Board of Directors] and to the public, so they can say, "Oh, wow, there's really a local need, because 66 percent of the people came from local addresses." Of course, they still said, "Well, they probably moved here from Chicago and used a [local] address." And it's like, oh my gosh. If they have a [local] address, they live here. They're a [local] resident, right. You know, I didn't ask them, you know, if they came from the moon or Mars or Chicago.

Associations between certain spaces and their occupants clearly play a role in creating misperceptions within the voucher program. At the local level, the coding of a messy yard as being associated with voucher tenancy represents certain expectations about how low-income households maintain their space. Similarly, the inability to accept movers from locations such as Chicago as "locals" represents an unwillingness to decouple negative associations of urban living with present behaviors and identity. While this discursive treatment is not exclusive to voucher households, it is clear that in many communities such discourse is deployed in order to “other” and contain the behavior and presence of low-income households.

The production of stigma associated with the voucher program is tied up not only within the discourses of the identity of the tenants participating within the program but also within the spaces in which they occupy as community residents. Community associations of the voucher program with disinvested central-city urban areas sets the expectation for where voucher households should live within the local environment. Although this expectation runs counter to program theory, a combination of local housing economics, landlord filtering,

> The people probably – with us, work with us and workers – we get frustrated and see it. I don’t think they really get stigmatized. I think a lot of them I see go to one place in town here and they kind of get based in that one area. It’s an area that – kind of funny to say that in a way, though it’s not funny, but to think about it, they’re usually at a place called the Iowa Court, that’s the road that goes through the little community there of subsidized housing. And they usually end up there because other people in our community don’t really choose that area to be in. So in a way, they have their own little community there. I guess if they’re in their own little community, they’re really not getting stigmatized by other views, ‘cause they’re all together.

One of the essential questions moving forward within research on assisted housing mobility is that of choice- are the concentration of assisted households into certain developments and neighborhoods a function of their own choosing, as the above voucher program director suggests, or are they a function of significant limitations on the types of choices available outside of these areas. Another essential question pertains to the ways in which public misperception of the voucher program and the stigma associated with the program may result in differential treatment or outcomes for voucher-assisted households.

C. **The Housing Search and Making Moves**

> Some of them are they say because we've heard it's cheaper to live here. Some of them will say they have family here. Some of them will say that they've found a job, which, you know, that's kind of hard to believe, you know, relocating here for a job, because they're far and few between...
>
> Central Illinois Housing Authority Executive Director

Voucher program theory focuses heavily upon the potential for the subsidy to leverage positive changes in the quality of both rental units as well as the types of neighborhoods that units are located in. Much of the prior research on assisted housing mobility has also pointed to the potential for positive benefits resulting from improved neighborhood environment. This section explores the qualities which voucher-assisted households described as being important about neighborhoods and communities when they were undertaking their housing search. The section in turn examines some of the qualities of housing units which were important in making a location decision. Finally, this section explores the process of unit "lease up", whereby a landlord agrees to rent to a voucher household and a contractual agreement (the HAP contract) is formed between the housing authority and landlord.

1. **Rental Neighborhoods**

Neighborhood context was of varying importance for voucher households in their selection of a housing unit. Many voucher households emphasized the challenges of locating a landlord willing to accept the voucher as being a more significant determinant of location, with neighborhood features being of secondary concern. As described by a landlord in Rockford, Illinois renting units to several voucher households,

> It's not much about the neighborhood. I guess they kind of know the neighborhoods. Most people that we do rent to are in this city area or Rockford area and familiar with the different neighborhoods. It's more obvious, "What do we have to pay?" What their responsibilities are and things like that. They don't really ask about how old it is or anything like that. They don't care about that, honestly. It's more about is the place presentable when we show it to them, what their responsibilities will be, and how much the rent is going to be. That's about it.

Many housing searches were driven by the availability of housing units with landlords willing to accept vouchers, but past experiences in communities and neighborhoods often helped households to decide where to begin their housing searches. One female tenant living in a western suburb of Chicago accounts her housing search criteria:

> Tennant: I used to work in Wheaton, so I always wanted to live in Wheaton, and that's where the Housing Authority is. So I was pretty familiar, and I said if I'm moving [I'm going to move] to the west 'burbs first. That would be my first preference. I wanted the western 'burbs. I didn't want to live in the city.

Interviewer: [What were the things that you were looking for in a community?]

Tenant: Yeah, in the community, the parks, the schools, neighbors, of course, and then finding a home, how well it's taken care of and what all is included, if anything is included…

Tenants described many different ways in which they became familiar with the communities where they chose to start or focus their housing search on. Past employment, prior visits, and the experiences of friends and family were often cited as important factors shaping where housing searches began. A tenant who ported to a western suburb of Chicago recounts how past experience shaped her housing search:

> I used to hang out here every now and again. [Laughter] When I was younger, we'd go down to the Riverwalk. I think comin' up as a young girl, we always thought it was an expensive town. I always have known that their school systems were good, and that's pretty much it other than the fact that I used to, you know, hang out here as a kid and I always knew that it was a good area. I've pretty much known it's a good area for raising children as far as the community is concerned. That's pretty much about it.

While for many households, prior experiences with a community played a positive role in their housing search, in some cases, familiarity with the area resulted in negative outcomes. In these cases, the voucher portability process oftentimes played a role in "locking" housing searches into certain communities. While households can informally search anywhere for rental housing, in order to officially initiate the portability process, a household must designate a housing authority to move to, at which point they can officially begin their housing search. While it is possible to change which housing authority is designated as the "receiving" housing authority, the process is often cumbersome and unclear to porting households.

A female who had made three portability moves with her voucher describes her experience making an initial portability move from Chicago to Maywood, a small inner-ring suburb with its own housing authority:

> Well, I'm not familiar with the city. I was never raised in the city, I was raised in Maywood. And at the time my … voucher for CHA in the city was $1,375. But once I moved into Maywood it dropped down so low that to get a nice place was impossible. So I just took what I could afford at the time and what was able – what was convenient for me because I didn't have transportation. So I ended up moving on [X Street] which was the biggest [mistake]…

One of the challenges faced by many households upon selecting a housing authority to port to was not knowing much about the local rental market, or knowing very little about the ways in which local payment standards and housing authority regulations would influence their ability to locate adequate housing within the new community. While most housing authorities require tenants to attend a briefing for porting tenants which discusses such local rules and regulations, many tenants search for and identify a potential housing unit prior to attending a briefing or officially initiating the portability process. A housing authority voucher program manager describes this phenomenon:

> And we do find that a lot of people do their research first. We have people who are sitting in our briefing and they just can't wait to get the request for tenancy approval so the owner that they chose and then the unit so they can fill it out that particular day. So we do have quite a few of those. They come prepared if they already know

> basically what unit they're interested in, but we encourage them to look...

Landlords also expressed reluctance about divulging characteristics about the neighborhood or rental unit which might dissuade a potential assisted household from leasing up with them. A property manager who frequently rents to voucher-assisted households describes his reluctance to share fully information about one of his developments:

> Yeah, there is stuff that – There's a lot of noise. The schools are great. It's Naperville, schools are great, all this stuff. And at the same time I'm wondering like… Am I going to lose this tenant if I tell her that, um, uh, that there was a domestic dispute…

One of the means of offsetting some of the uncertainty about a particular neighborhood or unit is to rely upon friends and family to provide recommendation or guidance about where to move to. A female voucher tenant with four children describes the role her extended family played in choosing to port from a western suburb of Chicago to a far southern suburb:

> Well, I have a son and it's pretty bad in [my past location] and I just kind of wanted to get my son away from that. Plus I had, at the time, my oldest daughter and I just wanted a change in my life. I was tired of dealing with the friends that I had. Everybody was having babies and though I was pregnant I just wanted to see what else was out there. So my aunt and his wife lived in Romeoville and was like, "Come on out. Come on. This is a lot better."

In this particular case, the portability move described above was followed within a year by a subsequent portability move to another housing authority within the Chicago metropolitan area, due to dissatisfaction within the local social environment. For many other voucher households, however, locating near family was viewed as a stabilizing factor, and was viewed as more important than the local neighborhood environment. One tenant residing in a western suburb of Chicago describes her search for balance between accessibility to her family in Chicago and her job in another western suburb:

> I like the area. I like the home, the updates that were done in the home, and I like kind of being in between the city and between my job, like in between, because I was further out at first, like in Aurora, so I was looking for something a little closer to the city so I come and get to my family on the weekend.

Another tenant residing in a northwestern suburb of Chicago discusses family influence on her location decision:

> Well, where I wanted to be – I wanted to be as close to my mother as possible in Schaumburg, but of course I have this boyfriend that's in Maywood and he's just like, "Why do you want to live all the way in Schaumburg. Don't live out there. Try to find a medium ground so, "I want to visit too." So it's like, "Okay." So I found a middle ground. Edison was not my first choice because when I first started looking for an apartment in Edison, they took me down Middle Road and Middle Road is no different than living on the worst streets of West side of Chicago and I was just amazed like oh my gosh, they have this out here?

She goes on to explain more about how she balanced her desire to live within proximity of her mother and boyfriend with her perception of crime and disorder in the area:

> I guess I'm just – a lot of people say I'm boojie and real uppity because I was raised in Schaumburg, but just – there is no comparison to these two, so I honestly – I'm just settling with Addison till I can do better for myself so, you know. It's not Chicago so that's what I tell myself. It's not the south side, it's not the west side of Chicago so that's what I tell myself. I'll say what a fine, quiet area within all the madness.

Another tenant describes working with a friend to create connections to landlords and units:

> I ended up coming across a young lady who was like the wonderful person in the world and she introduced herself as a realty for Section 8 people. And I told her what I was looking for, I told her I was homeless and within I think two weeks I found my place that I'm in now.

Perceptions of safety also played a role in location decisions. Many households spoke of safety less as a function of neighborhood, and more as a function of their unit or complex, however, several tenants related safety as a function of the neighborhood at large:

> Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. You know, you don't have to hear the police sirens every day. You just – I mean, you know, living in a better environment where you can look out of your window and see less poverty gives you more visions and space and room to grow, you know, less looking over your back about what's happening here and what's happening there, always keeping your eyes open. I mean these things, you know – crime can happen anywhere, just less of it, a less worry of it, and I think that's conducive to growth, you know. It's just less poverty, less crime. Yeah. Yeah.

Somewhat surprisingly, tenants across the board failed to highlight the importance of neighborhood racial or economic composition as being important determining factors in residential mobility. While tenants sometimes observed differences in neighborhood ethnic composition, and, as in the example above, may have described less poverty than in their previous location, these items were not highlighted as explicit criteria which shaped the types of neighborhoods or communities considered as part of the housing search. Similarly, discussion of schools, another often highlighted factor within the geography of opportunity literature, tended to be subordinated to other community features, and proximity to family and social networks. Oftentimes, community features such as schools are valued, but become subordinated to other household needs. A mother with a preschool-aged child contemplates her next move:

> I'm coming back to Naperville if I'm still within DuPage. I like it here. If I were to move somewhere, it would be somewhere within a close proximity with better transportation, public transportation. I am thinking about that. My lease is up in August. I'm looking at a couple of surrounding areas, but I don't know, you know. But I know that's going to be like a high priority. I don't really want to take my daughter out of the school that she's in, so, oh, I wish I had researched the transportation area. But we need to survive, and I believe that she's young and resilient enough to be able to make a transition and then possibly within a year come back to Naperville once I'm, you know, a little bit more stable as far as financially.

While it is clear that location plays an important role in shaping the housing search, voucher-assisted households choose locations for many different reasons, including proximity to friends and family, access to jobs, perceptions of neighborhood quality, and prior history and knowledge of community features. One thing that underscored many of the conversations with voucher tenants about their housing searches (both those conducted within housing authorities and those involving voucher portability) is that the search for desirable neighborhood characteristics is often subordinated to the availability of local housing units that meet three characteristics- the needs of the household, the requirements of the voucher program, and the openness of landlords who are willing consider leasing to a voucher-assisted tenant. The next section focuses upon the types of criteria which voucher-assisted households find important in selecting a housing unit.

2. **The Housing Unit**

Assisted households are looking for a variety of different characteristics within their housing units. Of primary importance is finding a unit that will meet program quality standards and that will also fit within the allowable unit characteristics for the profile of the particular household who seeks to lease it. Of the allowable characteristics (rental cost, utilities, number of bedrooms), cost was the primary concern which voucher-assisted households described as shaping their unit selection decision. It is customary that housing authorities maintain a list of units for rent where landlords can provide information about vacant units. However, tenants described making use of other resources including housing search firms, internet housing listing services, word of mouth, and real estate agents in order to locate appropriate housing units. One tenant explains how she conducted her housing search when undertaking a portability move:

> Well, yeah, the housing list, of course, but then you have some in the paper or Craigslist or through a real estate – because I went to a real estate for the home that I'm in now, and you have to sign. You have to kind of dig through a haystack type of thing. There's a lot of them, but all of them [landlords] aren't receptive, but you've got a few that are. The landlords, they've been pretty prompt as they can be, not the best, just more concerned with their money…, receiving their money than anything else.

Another tenant describes her impression of the types of units which tend to be advertised on the housing authority available unit list:

> …there wasn't a lot of places [that met my needs]. Housing Authority has a list, and some of the places are nice, and some of them are kind of crappy. A lot of them are like – like a lot of houses you might find on there, they probably wouldn't be anything necessarily that a buyer would pick first, so kind of, you know, kind of like seconds, like leftovers, some of them, a lot of them.

While the list maintained by the housing authority serves as one means of finding landlords who are prepared to accept voucher households, many tenants described looking both on and off of the housing authority list for a unit to rent. Many households framed the challenge of finding a unit as being twofold- first finding a unit that meets the tenant's needs (as well as criteria laid out in the voucher), but also finding a landlord who was willing to rent to a voucher-assisted tenant. Many voucher recipients described flat-out rejection from landlords when they mentioned that they were participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. A tenant living in a suburban Chicago PHA describes her interaction with a prospective landlord:

> And this one lady, she [said], "No, I don't want any of that around here." She – and I asked her, I said, "Well, why?" And she said, "Well, they –" she said, "They bring the property value down." I said, "They?" And she's like, "Yes." She's like, "Yes, they bring the property value down." I was like, "Well, what do you mean by they?" She's like, "The ones from Chicago. They have all of the kids and they're running –" so she really has like a bad, bad perspective of the Housing Choice Voucher and I'm like – I told her, I was like, "Well, not a lot of people are like that." And I explained to her my situation and she's just like, "Nope, don't want it. Because if I accept it from you, I accept it from everyone else." So I was like, "Okay." So I just left it at that.

In most municipalities in Illinois, voucher subsidy is not considered a protected source of income under fair housing legislation[23]. As such, landlords may explicitly refuse to lease to a prospective tenant based upon their use of a housing voucher. Of the voucher households interviewed, there was a wide range of experiences in initial meetings with prospective landlords. Some renters had never encountered a landlord who was unwilling to consider renting to a household receiving voucher assistance, and other renters thought that this type of discrimination was quite prevalent. Review of interview data does not point to any patterns based upon residential location.

Another significant issue faced by many voucher households is that of affordability. While the voucher is designed to open up a significant number of units renting at a rate that is higher than the households would be able to afford without the subsidy, many households described continued problems with finding units that met their criteria while also being affordable. Many households described affordability of units as being one motive for making portability moves. A mother of 8 children living (and making a portability move) in central Illinois describes the attributes she was looking for in a housing unit when she moved from a location with a comparatively tight rental market to one with more latitude:

> I wanted a nice place to stay where I could finish raising my kids. The house would be nice and decent, and wouldn't fall apart on me before

[23] Seven Illinois municipalities including Chicago (as well as Cook County, Harwood Heights, Naperville, Urbana, and Wheeling) have local ordinances prohibiting discrimination against a prospective tenant based upon source of income (including Housing Choice Vouchers). 13 states currently maintain statewide laws prohibiting source of income discrimination.

> my kids left home… The neighborhoods- it's not where you live, it's how you live. It doesn't matter to me.

She later describes what benefits she saw when making a portability move to another city in central Illinois:

> The housing here is cheaper, so I can actually find a place for what my voucher is worth. That was really hard in [previous location]… It'll just give you a migraine trying to figure it out. You have to work at it every day… It was a lot to try to find a house, and when you get a house, you stayed. I don't care if it was falling apart, or not. You stayed. You didn't want to go through that again.

Tenants and housing authority officials described several factors that influenced the overall affordability of housing for subsidized households. Housing authority officials often cited direct and indirect costs associated with living in particular locations as having significant impacts on the "success" (length of stay) of movers and porters. As one case manager from a largely suburban county in the Chicago metropolitan area remarks, many housing authority officials observed that there are often hidden costs to living in certain areas which households may discount or not account for in their moving decisions:

> After the waiting, the calling, and the appointment, the affordability is really a big issue when they do port in to [X] County. I think they fail to realize that yes, there's opportunity here, but if you don't have the job and the transportation, or a good running car to get there, you're not going to make it… even to get to the store or the doctor.

Another program manager from a suburban Chicago PHA described many voucher households, particularly those moving under voucher portability as choosing to sign leases on units where they were paying the maximum amount allowable within the voucher program[24]. Program managers report that many of these households end up in situations where they are unable to afford the housing they have chosen to lease. A program manager from a suburban Chicago PHA describes the phenomenon:

> The majority at that point have selective memory- they do not realize that it's called a housing choice voucher, and it was their choice to go up to 40[%]. But if something happens at that point, it's our [the housing authority's] fault. It's like I can't afford this, and they're told at the briefing. But at that point, they're over a barrel. See if your landlord will let you break out of the lease. That's really your only choice.

Landlords with multiple vacant units are often able to provide some flexibility in terms of matching units with tenants' ability to pay. Tenants described being shown different units (oftentimes within the same complex) at different rental price points. Landlords would often work to "match" tenant rent to particular types of units. A tenant in a western suburb of Chicago describes meeting with a landlord who showed her multiple units within a rental complex ranging in price based upon whether recent remodeling or upgrades had occurred to the unit. When lease negotiation began and the landlord determined how much the tenant's voucher was worth, he refused to rent an upgraded unit to her, but offered her another unit which she describes below:

> I mean everything's old, even the carpet. Everything is so old. And it's like there's no insulation in there whatsoever, but I'm in love with the layout, it's so big. Two bedroom and then I have two walk-in closets,

[24] While program regulations normally require households to pay 30 percent of their income towards rent, in situations where housing costs slightly exceed the maximum amount payable by the voucher, households may elect to pay up to 40 percent of their income towards rent in order to make up the difference between the maximum payable by the voucher and the cost of renting the unit.

> so I was like, "Okay. I can make it work." I can call my friends over. We can have a couple of drinks and just decorate the mess out of this place.

In higher-cost locations, tenants described signing leases on units that were "seconds" in comparison to other units available within the same building or complex that had been upgraded. When asked what made units "seconds", tenants often cited older appliances, older carpeting, and a sense of more general wear. While there were clearly some negative aspects of finding units that fit within the limits of the voucher, many assisted households indicated that some landlords were willing to find ways to make units more affordable. Tenants described landlords waiving or deferring security deposits as being one of the main ways to assist with unit affordability. Some landlords even served as linkages between tenants and human services resources which assisted with unit affordability. A tenant describes her experience working with her landlord to be able to pay the security deposit on her unit:

> He – I called him. He was like, "Yeah, inspection's done. You can come get the key and I'll let him know." I'm like, "Well, I don't have the full security deposit. $875.00." And he's like, "Don't worry about it." He's like, "I got a number for you to call. Just come on, get the key." I was like, "Okay." So I went on ahead and moved my little items in there and he gave me the key. He gave me a phone number [to Catholic Charities], and I set up an appointment with them and they paid my whole security deposit for me.

Landlords also at times developed flexible payment plans for security deposits and rent:

> The process was pretty easy with this particular landlord, and, you know, they allowed me to pay, like, every week or two weeks in the

> beginning to get that security deposit up prior to me actually moving in. They worked well with me. So I don't know if it was just a good time that I was moving and they needed that unit rented or what it was [laughter], but everything worked well once I, you know, got everything working. It seems like everything just fell into place.

Landlords described their motivation for exhibiting such flexibility with assisted tenants, particularly in terms of accepting late or partial rental payments:

> I'll let the Section 8 go because what am I supposed to do? In this case, $800.00 instead of 1,350.00 beats the shit out of nothing. And I've been told I'm supposed to serve five-day notices on her and on Section 8 and any service for eviction, but I know that the second she's out, I stop getting my HAP payment…

Another landlord talks about offering many channels for tenants to pay rent:

> Partial is better than zero. We'll take partial payments and if they want to use a debit card or a credit card, charge them the fee for the cash advance and we'll take it. That way they can pay on their credit card.

Another landlord described extending free financial counseling to voucher-assisted tenants with the hopes that such assistance would help to guarantee that tenants paid the rent on time:

> And I'll do stuff for them. I'll direct them to … food stamps. I'll tell them how to negotiate a bill. I've got a bookkeeper. If they want, I'll have the bookkeeper look over their money and tell them how to balance their budget so they can make it. 'Cause Section 8, when I know somebody's got Section 8, in particular, I know, theoretically, that they have enough money to meet their bills or Section 8 would have granted them a larger amount.

Landlords cited significant problems with collecting rent on time (from both market-rate and assisted households). When asked whether assisted households represented a disproportionate number of the households late on rent, landlords tended to indicate that late payment was across the board. In the case of voucher households, however, some landlords felt that nonpayment of rent was actually of some benefit to their relationship with assisted tenants:

> Getting their portion of the rent is like pulling teeth. Sometimes I let them get behind because when they're current they're very demanding and what I find is that if they owe me a little bit I never hear from them. As soon as they get caught off it's like, "I had a light bulb burn-out, would you come fix it?" And it becomes – so they go from either really trying to hide from you to overly- demanding and it's hard to find real balanced tenants.

Another landlord who is a minister and who runs a homeless shelter describes his experience with late and non-payment of rent with assisted households:

> I've hardly had one that hasn't moved out owing me something and a lot of – I mean I'm being driven by a ministry desire more than a business decision and so in trying to help out the families so I think it could jeopardize there with them owing me money and leaving I think it could jeopardize their Section 8 standing but I've never pursued them. I've never – in fact there's been situations where I basically told them, you know what, if you'll just go ahead and leave quietly I'm not gonna pursue you and stuff.

In several instances, landlord flexibility and accommodation of affordability issues was characterized as going too far or taking advantage of the program. Multiple tenants described affordability issues with units that were the result of under-the-table agreements with landlords who required voucher tenants to pay additional rent to the landlord on top of what was being paid through the contract associated with the voucher itself. A tenant who ported to a suburb of Chicago described her experience with the housing search and dealing with landlords:

> …you had to get in the paper and ask. So you had to know somebody that had an apartment building and even with that, they have a lot of landlords that try to make you pay under the table. And that's – it's so hard to do that because so many people [voucher households] are [searching] for these nice homes and they don't have a problem paying under the table where you have a person like me, single, four kids, barely making ends meet, can't do it. So it's really, really hard and a lot of those landlords are on there, but they're looking for something extra. So it's really, really hard to find.

Another tenant describes in detail the types of under-the-table arrangements which landlords where seeking to make:

> "You have landlords who they know their homes are not – and they know that we can't afford them and our vouchers can't cover them. So they would say, "Okay. Well, how about how much is your voucher?" And once you make that mistake of telling them, they say, "Okay. Well, how about I'll say it's $100.00 less so you can afford it, but you're gonna make it up in $400.00 and something dollars?" Most people would go for that, especially if you got a good job and you can afford it or you have extra help coming to you, you can do it. And it's just – it's terrible because a lot of the landlords are looking for that. And like I tell them, that's why it took me so long to find a place because I'm not gonna lose my voucher for none of that..."

While there is no data available to judge the extent to which landlords are demanding under-the-table payments in exchange for agreeing to lease up to voucher-assisted households, it is clear that there is significant room for abuse of voucher households, particularly those renting in areas with a limited supply of housing units with landlords willing to accept subsidized tenants. Housing authorities maintain a responsibility for investigating allegations of fraud or indiscretion, however, such allegations must be brought to the attention of housing authority officials, and such claims must be substantiated with some type of proof or documentation. As such, housing authority officials did not report being able to successfully evaluate and enforce such claims. More often, housing authorities reported investigating and enforcing tenant violations of lease contracts (as will be discussed later in this chapter).

D. **Leasing Up**

> There's no such thing as an ideal tenant- you know, there's no such thing. I mean I would like a family also, because then you know they're stable, there's at least one income, although these days it has to be both working. So, there's really no such thing as an ideal tenant for me.
>
> Landlord renting in a suburb of Chicago

Leasing up describes several processes within the housing voucher program. The first stage of leasing up occurs when a tenant submits an application to rent a unit, and the application is approved by the landlord. As in most non-subsidized rental agreements, the household and tenant draw up a lease agreement. The second stage of the lease-up procedure involves review of the agreement by the housing authority. The housing authority reviews the contract for conformity with rules and regulations associated with the voucher, and, if all criteria are met, sends an inspector to the unit to insure that the unit meets the physical quality standards laid out in program regulations. Inspectors may deny a lease agreement if a unit does not meet standards, or can offer the landlord the option of fixing unit deficiencies, at which time the unit is re-inspected. Once the unit passes inspection, the housing assistance payment contract is certified between the landlord and the housing authority, and the tenant can move into the unit.

1. **Tenant Backgrounds**

While somewhat complicated when compared to a non-subsidized rental agreement, landlords described the lease up process as being relatively manageable. However, several aspects of the lease-up process came up as more contentious or more difficult to navigate. In particular, landlords often found it difficult to assess the past histories and backgrounds of voucher households in order to determine whether to lease to them. Housing authorities do perform periodic background checks on all household members, but most landlords continued to do their own supplementary background checks. A landlord in northern Illinois describes why she supplements the housing authority's background check:

> Oh, I do my own, because housing's background might be six months ago or three months ago, and like I said, we get that 24 hour window from... If they did something yesterday and we do the check today, we get that. So, we still do it…

Landlords across the board described criminal history as being an important initial screening criterion for all tenants, including those assisted with vouchers. Landlords described varying levels of tolerance for past infractions:

> I pretty much look at the criminal record. I go based on that pretty much now. If they don't – if they've got a clean record, I go on the cleanest record I can find with the group. I just – if they have the ability, if they look like they have the ability to pay, they're not high… I give 'em a chance. That's all I could do. I mean, it's a rough neighborhood. It's gotten worse over time here. I think I got a good group in there now.

Landlords also valued the opinions of tenant references, including past landlords, however, many landlords described not being able to get honest opinions about tenants:

> There's a factor of if they've been a challenging tenant and the people are moving across town they, unless they go to court, the landlord often knows that they're stuck with this person unless they can move them on and so sometimes landlords are not being the most honest because they're wanting to move the person, yeah. So I really operate off of more my gut and what the people are saying, what I feel like the legitimate need is, trying to balance is this a person that does have some work history? That's probably what I look at more than anything is that they've had somewhat, a stable job, then probably anything and then sometimes the – you know – how the grooming is and just personally how they seem to – and one of the things I have done through the years is they'll come and I'll tell them that I'll drop off on an application if they're interested.

Following in importance after criminal history and basic personal background information was income, or some indication of the assisted tenant's ability to pay their portion of the rent. Again, here landlords maintained different criteria for what was "acceptable", but most criteria tended to involve a history of steady prior employment, or indication of current employment. In comparison to criminal history, landlords expressed having a more challenging time making sense of assisted tenants' work and income histories:

> It's hard to compare a population where you have someone who's paying $13.00 a month for rent, versus someone who's paying – $500.00 or $1050.00

A landlord from the western suburbs of Chicago explains his criteria:

> I do ask about vouchers and I – unless somebody is elderly, I don't accept vouchers from people who are not working. That's the criteria.

> You have to be working because I know something happens, you'll pay. And I don't accept, under any circumstances, tenants who get SSI, unless they're also getting SSD… That's the criteria. You working because I know something happens, you'll pay.

Landlords expressed some difficulty in adjusting their typical rental criteria in order to meet the realities of some voucher households' backgrounds. The challenge varied, however, from landlord to landlord, oftentimes based upon their typical pool of rental applicants. For some landlords, voucher-assisted household backgrounds tended to look more similar to those of non-assisted households, resulting in an easier decision. For those landlords that had less experience with the program or that tended to have units located in higher-rent areas, the challenge was more pronounced, particularly comparing voucher-assisted applications to those of market-rate tenants.

1. <u>**The HAP Contract**</u>

While a market-rate rental agreement is typically governed by one contractual document, the lease, the voucher rental contract involves two separate contracts. In addition to a typical rental contract between the tenant and the landlord (the lease), the landlord also enters a contractual relationship with the housing authority (the Housing Assistance Payment "HAP" contract). The HAP contract governs the terms of and amount of payment the landlord will receive from the housing authority, and also notifies the landlord of the amount which the assisted tenant is responsible for. A challenge for many landlords is that the HAP contract is drawn up after a more general lease agreement is signed. This means that landlords may not know how much rent they will be receiving for their unit until after the lease agreement is signed.

While landlords were clear on the basics of the voucher payment formula (whereby the tenant pays 30 percent of their income towards rent and the housing authority makes up the difference between that amount and the gross rent stipulated in the HAP contract), interpolating how much rent they would be able to get for the unit, and how much of the rent would come from the housing authority was unclear. Because final rent determination is made after an initial decision to lease has been made, many landlords expressed reluctance to lease to voucher tenants when they were unclear as to how much of the rent would be covered by the voucher. A landlord renting in the Chicago metropolitan area describes the challenging decision making process:

> [I] [d]on't let them move in unless they have security deposits. And see, you're in a situation saying, "Okay well the decision that I'm making is based off their income and what the resources are." So what are you guys [the housing authority] gonna pay? And they're like, "We can't tell you that." You know and often times depending how long they've been in the system the tenant's often saying, "Well you know they're gonna pay a certain percentage," or they seem to be – it's real big to them. And so I'm here trying to make a decision off someone with no credit, a bad renting history, knowing that potentially Section 8 is gonna come in and help out but at this point I don't know if Section 8 is gonna help out with $1,200 a month or $300 a month ....

However, recent economic challenges have clearly helped to increase the willingness of more landlords to accept voucher households. When asked about the dangers of having landlords back out of lease agreements when the HAP contract was being negotiated, most housing authority officials found that landlords were more flexible and willing to accept lower rents than in the past:

> But, you know, it's just kind of hit or miss. It depends on the tenant, and a lot of them [landlords] are willing to go down. We – when they're wanting to have a tenant move into their unit, they might be asking, you know, $800.00 in rent. Well, based on the tenant's income, they can't get the 800. Before, they were just like, "Nope, I won't bargain with you. I don't – you know, I'll move on." Well, nowadays, they're happy to get just about anything. So we've seen a lot who have been willing to drop like $150.00. Because it's been vacant for three months, and they're at least going to get some part of it.

Not all landlords perceived the process of leasing up as being cumbersome. In particular, those landlords with a larger proportion of their rental portfolio occupied by voucher households characterized the process more favorably:

> Well, I mean, if they come in with Section 8, you assume that they're clean, you know? And they usually are. If – now this year, I haven't had any openings, but when I get a call – I mean, I take their application and I review it. I mean, if they are Section 8, I usually grab [them] because it works out good most of the time, you know.

Landlords described little issue with the process of unit inspection and certification for voucher tenancy. In situations where issues did exist, they tended to be related to the time elapsed before the unit was inspected and approved for occupancy by the voucher household. Landlords also characterized some of the items which inspectors asked them to fix as being either arbitrary or not related (in their opinion) to the habitability or quality of the unit.

Speaking of the time to wait for inspection, a landlord in a western suburb of Chicago describes choosing to rent to a market-rate tenant because of delays in the inspection process:

> I guess they [the housing authority] got rid of some people, so sometimes you have to wait a week or two for someone to come out. And it's really ridiculous because in the meantime your place is vacant. And I actually had to give up one apartment to a regular renter. And I told that voucher holder also, "Listen, I can wait for a week, but if the inspector doesn't come and somebody comes along, you know, I'm so sorry." And I only had to do it one time though, only because it's taking them forever. And it's hard to get tenants. If you have somebody who is willing to move in, why not?

In general, housing inspectors were viewed in a positive light, and landlords expressed an understanding of why their unit went through inspection at lease-up and on an annual basis. Many landlords expressed pride in their relationship with inspectors as well as the quality of their rental properties as evidenced by inspections resulting in few or no problems:

> I have a good rapport with Dan, and that to me is important; to make sure that he has, he thinks that I'm a man of integrity and when I tell him gonna have something done, it's gonna be done.

Many landlords also expressed some latitude in dealing with cost-intensive issues in addressing inspectors' concerns, such as replacing linoleum in bathroom or replacing windows. However, landlords sometimes saw a disconnect between the purpose of inspections and the types of concerns which inspectors brought to their attention.

> I'll get an inspection list and I'll be marked as failing in six areas and I read the list and I call up the inspector and the inspector always takes

> more time to get back to you than anybody else… I'll get marked as failing and I'll get the list of six things that causes me to go into a panic. "What are you freaking crazy?" And it'll be stupid stuff. The battery is out of the smoke detector, again… It'll be stupid stuff that can be fixed by the tenant willingly inside of ten minutes. Bulbs are out. I hate that…

Landlords maintain varying opinions as to which elements of unit upkeep fall upon tenants and which are the landlord's responsibilities. Many landlords preferred to field and address any issue that tenants had with the unit, while other landlords expected tenants to be more autonomous in terms of dealing with certain types of minor problems. Many landlords expressed frustration with tenants at having to fix minor issues such light bulbs burning out, or found that batteries from household equipment such as smoke detectors were frequently removed to be used in remote controls and other electronic devices. However, most landlords expressed some value in fielding calls for such minor issues in that it provided them with the opportunity to be in contact with the tenant, and to look for other potential maintenance issues in the unit. For landlords who expected tenants to be more autonomous, however, these types of issues created more conflict at inspection time:

> So they're playing hardball with some of these and it really depends on the inspectors because you've got inspectors who are underpaid, sometimes pretty stressed out themselves …. I mean so you know I'm not always dealing with professionals, you know.

When asked how they responded to these types of conflicts of concerns expressed by inspectors, most landlords reported simply fixing the problem and then asking for re-inspection. However, several landlords also spoke of under-the-table payments to landlords as being a means of resolving minor issues to lead to faster lease up of the unit. A landlord with rental properties in multiple housing authority jurisdictions compares working with inspectors in a suburban county to working with inspectors in an urban housing authority:

> They're more unreasonable. Of course somebody told me, "Oh, stupidity. Why should I give $20.00 to him [the inspector]? I guess a lot of you have to give him $20.00." I don't want to encourage his people to do that. I never do.

The voucher lease-up process includes multiple layers of protection in order to ensure that assisted tenants are granted safe living conditions that comply with program standards. Formalizing the relationship between the housing authority and landlord during the lease-up process also provides some safeguards for the landlord as they prepare to rent to assisted households. The lease-up process is also the most "invasive" and hands-on process involved with voucher tenancy, which often creates grounds for conflict, as evidenced by some of the landlord experiences working with unit inspectors. While landlords had complaints about the process, particularly the time cost associated with waiting for inspections to occur, most landlords expressed understanding as to how the lease up process fit into their relationship with the assisted household and the housing authority:

> They're doing right by the landlords. The landlords get their check. They're always gonna err to the side of the tenants, because you know, bottom line is the tenants are their customer, not the landlord. The landlord's just kind of, like, you know – the landlord's not their customer. The landlord's just, like, the vendor, you know.

In terms of the negative aspects of the process, most landlords expressed some level of resignation to the nature of working with local housing authorities:

> You know you're dealing with the government so you just kind of – you just learn to deal with it but there's not a whole lot – there's not a whole lot of cooperation in the sense of it's hard to get calls back and I mean it's they're really busy.

Landlords characterized their involvement with the voucher program as going beyond the value of the government-insured monthly revenue stream. When asked what motivated them to continue renting to voucher households, most landlords cited (beyond the money) having a desire to help those individuals who they considered less fortunate than themselves:

> … if it wasn't for my desire to help these tenants I would be done with Section 8, no question. If it were strictly business, no question, I wouldn't deal with them… I do it in spite of them [the housing authority], not because of them.

Just as tenants have a wide range of motivations for moving; landlords have a wide range of motivations for working with low-income voucher-assisted households. Financially, the program offers landlords with a "protected" revenue stream in the form of the HAP contract as well as rental income coming from the assisted tenants themselves. Strategically, landlords willing to rent to assisted households can often quickly fill vacant units, particularly by maintaining a close and positive relationship with the housing authority. Socially, renting to assisted low-income households helps some landlords find extra meaning in being able to fulfill a personal sense of social mission through working with those they consider less fortunate.

E. Voucher Portability

> Yeah, they say that it's nothing like it is up there. The transportation's awful. The nightlife is awful. Things to do with their children is awful. They absolutely hate it. You know, not all of them.
>
> Executive Director, Central Illinois

All three groups were asked about voucher portability. Landlords by and large did not differentiate between tenants seeking to lease up after a portability move and tenants who were moving locally. From their perspective, they identified all voucher-assisted tenants as being similar, and were not able to provide any substantial differentiation between porting tenants and local tenants. Housing authority officials and tenants who made portability moves, however, indicated substantial differentiations in both process and outcome in comparing moving locally and making a portability move. Households who had made portability moves characterized them as being more stressful in general, and felt that the housing authority was often less helpful or less informed about the portability process when compared to the process of moving locally. Housing authority officials described the portability process as being considerably more labor-intensive, requiring more staff time and financial resources. Program administrators also described the challenge of communicating with and working with other housing authorities in order to efficiently process portability moves.

1. Framing Portability: Expectations and Community Response

In talking with assisted tenants about portability moves, the first question asked was typically about the rationale for undertaking the long-distance move. Tenants expressed many reasons for porting, including a desire to be close to friends or family, a desire to escape negative influences in previous locations, and a desire to improve conditions for children living in the household. These desires are reflected within the previous sections on the housing search and the neighborhood and housing unit qualities that porting households were interested in. When asked about the types of opportunities that households were looking for when they undertook portability moves, many households spoke of the desire to live in quieter and safer neighborhoods, a desire to find good schools to send children to, and a desire to find good community services to help support needs of household members. Many households also expressed a desire for a change of scenery- a hope that moving might bring new or different experiences for movers.

For some households, the move represented a challenge to create positive changes across a wide variety of areas. A woman who ported from Rockford to South Carolina to be closer to her daughter described her hopes for the move:

> I wanted to get far enough away from Rockford so that knew that I would give myself a chance to not have to say that I'm coming back… I didn't want to have to keep coming back. Because I wanted to be able to go to school and reach higher goals in my life and then be able to take my grandkids to see different parts of the world, not just Rockford, Chicago, Milwaukee.

Households all characterized their portability moves as being loaded with high hopes and expectations. When asked whether portability moves met household expectations for the new location, to a large extent, households responded in the affirmative. For many households, the overall experience of moving was positive, but typically some downside or caveats were present. A woman who moved from Tennessee to central Illinois describes her experience making the portability move:

> I felt good coming. Things have got to be different- things have got to be better. Well, it wasn't quite what I thought it was going to be. The bus service is horrible. They don't have any night service… There are just little things here and there.

Other porting tenants expressed differential outcomes for different household members. A mother with eight children porting between two housing authorities in central Illinois describes her children's experience with the move:

> For me it was exactly what I thought it was going to be, but the kids didn't like it at all. They didn't like the schools… everything. It was just kind of downhill for them.

When asked whether she experienced any downside from the move, she responds:

> The distance… it made me miss my family… It's good to go and see them when I go home. My mom wasn't happy at all when I left… She's in denial about that whole thing.

For some households, the "on the ground" experience looking for housing within the new location did not match expectations. An African-American tenant who ported from Champaign, Illinois describes searching for housing in a new location in central Illinois:

> When I lived in Champaign, I lived in predominantly white neighborhoods. When I got here, the housing that I could actually find was in the black neighborhoods on the east side of town… in the hood, so they call it. That was a change for my kids, because they weren't raised in black neighborhoods.

She goes on to describe her interaction with some of her neighbors: "Where I live at now, there's more black people. So when I say "hi" they say "you're not from around here". I'm like, "no"." Many tenants described some sense of culture shock and a sense of not "fitting in" to new residential locations. For some households, this feeling of distance in the new community decreased with time, while for other households, the feeling of isolation and distance remained after multiple years of residence. Some tenants also felt that their race created an extra barrier to fitting in. In describing her experience moving to a location in central Illinois, an African-American voucher tenant describes her neighbor's reaction to her moving in:

> It's almost like when a new person moves in, people watch them to see what they're about, what their kids are about. White people do the same thing, but they go to the death. They Google you… if a person moves in, everyone goes to their curtains… they're not going to say something good about you. They're going to bring all this negativity.

Many assisted households, particularly those who moved to communities where they were the minority population, expressed a sense of burden to prove that they were "deserving" of living in the area. For many tenants, this process involved intentionally engaging with existing residents with a desire to create connections, while at the same time dispelling stereotypes that they associated with being minorities. A mother of three describes her experience moving to Bolingbrook, Illinois:

> Well, in Maywood everybody was pretty much either Section 8 or low-income or subsidy or – and when I first moved to Bolingbrook, I moved to a very nice area. It was a brand new subdivision so it was more like a lot of the looks and frowns and things like that. I was still speaking in spite of everything that went on. I tried to get out then, let

> everybody see that okay, just because I might have government funded houses don't mean that I'm just this big ghetto female and I'm gonna act ignorant. And once they started to see and to get to know me and my kids, it became a lot easier…

Dispelling perceived negative notions about the household or household members was achieved over time for most tenants. For others, there was more of a sense that a sense of distance and isolation remained, even after they considered their new location "home". When asked about what would need to change locally in order to help eliminate the isolation, a tenant encourages her neighbors and community members to think more openly about the presence of "different" people in the community:

> There is a stigma, but they [community members] have to get out of that. Like I said, because of the diversity of the population, you've got to get out of that mindset and treat everyone equally regardless of where they came from. They have the same problems, the same goals, and the same expectation as any other population.

When asked what some of the foundations of stigma and local bias against voucher-assisted households, one tenant who had ported in between several states described what she saw as the basis for negative community response:

> Like a lot of – I don't want to use the wrong words… Like a lot of urban, ethnic, because people have moved from Chicago, Milwaukee, different urban areas that might not be the nicest places there, so they probably have to put on a whole other attitude in dealing with these sorts of people. They're nice little five, ten years ago, right. Now it's not just local anymore. It's a lot of outsiders there, so they kind of want to defend their town…

When asked whether she thought she was treated differently by locals because of her status as a "non-local" she responds:

> Uh-hmm. You can feel that they ["locals"] don't want you here. They're not friendly. They don't speak. They're just against housing, period. Why did you guys open up the housing? You've got all these people coming here now and tearing up our place. So really sort of resentment for the fact that people are coming there. Yeah, for – yeah, for housing, yeah, so they have like a big disagreement, and they closed that list. They had closed their lists, and my friend said – he said they closed their list and started giving everybody on the list their voucher, and they're telling them they can leave before a year.

Continuing to talk about whether this type of local response was justified, she responds:

> I mean, if I was a local, I would feel the same way. I mean, at home you can't – you still can't approach each person. You approach the destructive … people, you might feel that way about them. There's some that's there to be productive, so you've got to approach each situation as that situation versus putting everybody in one category because of their background.

While most housing authority officials acknowledged a significant stigma and bias against voucher households within their community, they also noted that at times voucher households, particularly those who ported in, maintained preconceived notions of the communities they were moving to as well:

> I remember two families that moved out to Bolingbrook [far suburb of Chicago]. They were fearful of coming out. I remember one lady calling me saying hey my kids are gonna be there and I'm scared. They were the only black family on the block, so they were fearful… So it was something that they were frightened- well my kids are in the house by themselves. I'm like; you're in one of the safest neighborhoods over there. Literally. Fear of the unknown…

Fear of the unknown clearly plagues both voucher households and community members as they seek to make sense of each other's presence and roles within the community. What may be seen as taking advantage of an opportunity on the part of a voucher household may be seen as taking over the community by a local who is wary of newcomers, particularly those who arrive with a Federal housing subsidy.

1. <u>The Portability Process: Motivations for Moving</u>

Moving between housing authorities with a voucher is a time and paperwork-intensive process that requires significant coordination between both "sending" and "receiving" housing authorities. When a tenant decides to undertake a portability move, they notify their current housing authority of their intent to port with the voucher. If the tenant is eligible to make a portability move, the housing authority asks the tenant to select a location to port to. Once a "receiving" location has been designated, the "sending" housing authority sends paperwork including the client file to the receiving housing authority, who must then issue a temporary voucher in the new location. With this temporary voucher, the household can undertake a housing search in the new location. Typically the housing search window lasts between 90 and 120 days, depending upon housing authority protocols. Once a tenant finds an appropriate unit, the lease-up process proceeds as previously described, however, once the tenant is leased up, another round of paperwork must be sent back to the "sending" housing authority notifying them of the successful lease up of the household within the new location. At this point, the receiving housing authority can decide whether to bill the sending housing authority on a monthly basis for the cost of the tenant's HAP payment, or they can choose to absorb the voucher, becoming financially responsible for the tenant.

Should a household not locate a unit within the allocated search time, they can be considered "lapsed" and can be dropped from the program. In some cases, housing authorities will grant extensions for housing searches on a case-by-case basis.

Given that voucher portability is a time-intensive process that involves communication and coordination between multiple housing authorities- who are used to acting relatively autonomously of each other- portability puts stress on the assisted household as well as the housing authorities processing both ends of the portability moves. In talking about some of the stresses involved in making portability moves, tenants tended to indicate that amount of time granted for the housing search was often not enough. A tenant who had made several portability moves characterizes the search:

> It was like you've got 20 days to find something. If you don't find something here, you're out of it. It's kind of like rushing… pushing… It was hard- to move like that. It wasn't 30 days lapsed. You've got to move, get in, clean up, get out this place, get in that place. It was kind of hard, but I did it.

While tenants officially tend to have 90 days in order to find a residence, oftentimes their search clock starts when the sending housing authority sends paperwork to the receiving housing authority. The receiving housing authority is then responsible for notifying the household that they can officially begin their search. The longer this notification process takes, the less time assisted households have to officially search for housing. Some tenants also felt that housing authorities were of little help in working with porting households to identify areas of opportunity in new communities.

Tenants most often characterized housing authorities as putting pressure on the households to get leased up:

> I want to be in a nice area where I don't have to be on the porch doing this [searches back and forth]. A lot of times, they [PHA administrators] don't understand that. They just want you to go ahead and take whatever.

For many housing authorities, putting pressure on tenants to lease up quickly is means of reducing the likelihood of failed housing searches and is also a strategy for minimizing the number of "active" portability files at a given time, since these files often require more staff time and resources.

3. <u>**The Portability Process: Administering Voucher Portability**</u>

Administering voucher portability requires a significant amount of communication between housing authorities that may be separated by a great amount of physical distance. Unclear communication channels and an overall lack of communication between housing authorities can significantly confound the portability process and can oftentimes jeopardize the status of porting households within the program itself. Program administrators consistently highlighted the state's two largest housing authorities, Chicago Housing Authority and Housing Authority of Cook County, as being particularly notorious for having poor communications and coordination capacities around portability. A housing authority executive director from western Illinois describes the process of communicating with these housing authorities about porting tenants:

> No one – you send the paperwork. We sent the paperwork. No one gets it. Like what are you guys doing here? You know, like, you know, it was kind of a rant on them, but I guess they were asking for it. But it was interesting to see that, oh, I'm not the only one that you never call me back. You never call the tenant back. You never get the paperwork. You know, like I don't know what you guys are doing in here. I mean I know you're huge but – Maybe you'll pay attention. They give you – like we've had multiple issues with like fax numbers and they're disconnected, and you know, like I'm like, "You're a huge organization. How do you have disconnected fax numbers." Or like how is this off one day and not on. You know and it was interesting to see, and it was – I mean I almost felt bad for them because I'm like, "You're sitting here taking the blunt of all." But I'm like, "Get yourself together." You know, like it's not that hard.

Another housing authority official describes the types of special instructions they give to tenants seeking to port to Chicago:

> So we have a lot of clients that port to Chicago, Chicago area, Cook County. And the process, okay, it's quick on our end, very slow on theirs, very slow. Not that I want to badmouth, you know, them. They don't return phone calls. They don't answer their phones. They don't do anything that they're supposed to do. And we get very aggravated with them. You know, but they don't cooperate with us. It's very hard communicating with them. And I realize they're very busy, but, you know what, if you're very busy, you have very poor customer service and I would think that after so many complaints that HUD might start, you know, might step in and do something about it. We tell our clients not to move out of their unit here until their unit up there has a passed the inspection, because if their voucher expires and they're not leased up somewhere, then they're going to lose their voucher. So they're pretty good about that. You know, we're very informative with them.

Despite the challenges which some housing authorities face with communicating with the "big two" housing authorities, several housing authorities had developed strategies that helped to streamline communications. A program manager in an inner-ring suburb of Chicago describes their strategy for communicating with other housing authorities:

> Yeah, right. So we communicate via e-mail and we have the capability to scan documents and send those documents via an electronic file. So that works well. We have that agreement or that communication with CHA. The other Housing Authorities we do faxes and snail mail, regular U.S. Postal Service. It's not as effective. Things tend to get lost. Not lost, but things tend not to get implemented as quickly as if they would if we would to do it the way CHA and [our] housing authority are currently doing business…

Problems with communication are not limited to local housing authorities. Program officials described issues in communicating efficiently with other housing authorities, particularly those located out of state:

> A few other small suburbs. We do have a few that go, you know, to Tennessee, Mississippi, here or there. The only issues we really have is, when we send the paperwork, a lot of times, they don't get it. We can send it three times and get the confirmation back, but it went through a fax machine. I don't know where it goes. I know they're a lot bigger than us, you know, at some of those places, but we try to direct it to whomever we're supposed to direct it to. But it just doesn't get there.

The housing authority official describes problems with the responses provided by the housing authority once contact is finally made:

> And then they don't – we don't always get the appropriate forms back. They don't ever tell us if they need stuff – especially if they're just going to absorb them into their program. So that kind of comes into question. Usually, they don't forget to send paperwork if they're billing us. So I don't know where they've mysteriously gone to and then sometimes you find out that they never even came in for like intake appointments.

Housing authority officials also observed that sending housing authorities oftentimes misrepresented the portability process to tenants seeking to move. The most common form of misrepresentation noted was that housing authorities would only accept porting voucher households when they were absorbing vouchers.[25] A housing authority executive director talks about the prevalence of misinformation which tenants wishing to port often receive about the process:

> It's kind of interesting because you have a lot of tenants that call and ask for billing or absorbing, and then, you know, before it was kind of in the back of our heads that we could only let our tenants go if they were either absorbing or at or below our payment standard. Well, come to find out, you're required, by HUD requirements, to let them go anywhere unless you can show that you're in financial struggle. Then you can only make it so it's – they have to be absorbing. So we have tenants that – so they call constantly, and I kind of try to wisen them up and let them know your housing authority can't really tell you you can't come here unless, you know, a few things. But it's always kind of interesting because we used to kind of send a questionnaire to the housing authority to ask if they were bill or absorbing and what their payment standard was just to give us a little idea of what we were going to, you know, get back – in six months. For, you know, some huge bill.

For sending housing authorities, providing misinformation that tenants can only port when the receiving housing authority is billing may represent an attempt to limit the extent to which the housing authority remains responsible for tenants who have ported. Billing remains a largely manual process for most housing authorities, involving "sending" housing authorities mailing paper checks to each

[25] Housing authorities may either "absorb" the voucher, meaning that they accept all financial responsibility for the porting tenant, or they can bill the sending housing authority on a monthly basis for the cost of the Housing Assistance Payment. Housing authorities must accept a porting voucher household whether they choose to absorb or bill and can only turn away a household looking to port if they can prove to HUD that financially, administering one additional voucher would distress the housing authority.

"receiving" housing authority with monthly payments for tenants who they remain financially responsible for (Greenlee 2011). Housing authorities are required to split administrative fees associated with the voucher between the sending and receiving housing authority, meaning that that receiving housing authorities receive less administrative dollars for each billed voucher than they do for a local voucher.

4. **The Portability Process: The Tenant Experience**

Tenants also related the ways in which inadequate coordination between housing authorities impacted their experience with voucher portability. In several cases, porting tenants had to have their search time extended simply because the sending and receiving housing authority were unable to process the portability move within the initial time granted. As a tenant describes, this can at times put significant stress on a moving household, as well as their relationship with a prospective landlord:

> Yeah, it was a little nerve-wrackin'. You know what I'm sayin'? Yeah, because I was thinking I was going to lose my house if I don't meet within this time. So then they had to extend it, you know, another 30 days basically due to, you know, some mistakes that [the sending housing authority] were making. Yeah, it was not together.

Tenants described an overall lack of communication and inadequate information about voucher portability from their case managers. A tenant describes her experience entering into the voucher program with a CHA voucher while living in the suburbs:[26]

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[26] Some housing authorities (such as the Chicago Housing Authority) allow tenants to port upon entry to the voucher program. In this case, the tenant lived in the suburbs of Chicago and applied for the Chicago

> I called one time, they told me that it was too late for me to port. And then – so that got me kind of down because I'm like, "I don't want to move to Chicago." So I talked to a few people, just surrounding friends about it and so forth and they're like, "No, it shouldn't be. Call up there again. Speak a supervisor, something like that." So then they – so then I called again, I got someone new and they told me that I would be able to, but I need to hurry up and get the paperwork and everything started to port because my time was running out.

Another renter describes her challenges dealing with the housing authority as she attempted to port out to escape a domestic violence situation:

> Maywood Housing Authority was a mess. It was a complete mess. I wasn't given all the information that I needed in the original process as to what I needed to do, and I didn't feel that they were, you know, in the beginning willing to actually work with me under the simple fact that I was being threatened and, you know, my life was in danger. I kinda got the impression that they really didn't care, or I don't know. It was hard at first having to go back and forth, you know, quite a few times instead of it kind of like just being taken care of. Once I had gotten the restraining order – what's her name? I forgot her name. There's a particular woman who helped me, Charity, and once she got on the ball, it just got to rolling. You know what I mean? She helped me to find the other places that I would be able to be ported to and this and that, but at first I didn't get the impression that they wanted to do that. From what I understand is that, you know, the housing authorities out here have a higher expense voucher and that Maywood would still be paying it for a portion of that first year. So once I transferred over to the DuPage, once we got the ball rolling there, it happened fairly quick. They had a lot of units available. There was easy access. I could go on the website and actually get that information without having to travel all the way there and back. I have no transportation at this point in time, so it kind of made it a little bit easier for me to be able to either, you know, use online or that sort of

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Housing Authority's HCV waitlist. As described previously, many housing authorities maintain a one-year residency requirement, meaning that households must rent "locally" with their voucher within the housing authority jurisdiction for one year prior to becoming eligible to port to another housing authority with the voucher.

> thing in order to find leasing units. So, yeah, they were a little bit more put together, I guess [laughter] than the Maywood Housing Authority.

She goes on to express her opinion of voucher portability:

> There should be more porting [laughter], more portability. You shouldn't have to be locked within one housing authority forever. You know what I mean? If I had not – you know, sometimes I don't know whether my situation was a blessing or what, but if I didn't have a life-threatening situation, I would still be stuck in Maywood.

Another tenant describes her experience in navigating literature on voucher portability and customer service staff:

> I mean it's nice how Chicago Housing Authority had the whole setup and everything with the booklets on the table for the debriefing and then it was really nice and clean and so forth. But as far as you're calling over the phone, trying to get someone in customer service, that is just – it just makes you want to pull your hair out so – but – and then it's a lot of different stories that a lot of people are being told so – Yeah. Don't have a consistent – there's not a consistent information in there. No, there is not. And it's like – But being able to get back to that same person that you talked to. Exactly. And then even when you read through the booklet and the booklet is totally different from what everyone says over the phone. So it's like they need to read the booklet and you call them and they're like, "No, you're wrong." And I'm like, "Well, that's what it says right here in the booklet." So it's just like – but I think that it would be a lot better when the consistency …

Voucher households seeking to make portability moves must navigate a variegated landscape where prospects of successfully completing a move are influenced by many factors outside of their control, including information provided by housing authorities, inter-authority relationships and lines of communication, and whether housing authorities are billing or absorbing vouchers. In seeking to facilitate portability moves, proactive housing authorities can have their hands tied by other housing authorities who choose not to return phone calls or send correct records. While in many cases, such foot dragging does not result in a significant negative impact on the porting household, it can change the dynamics of their long-distance housing search, especially the amount of time which the household has to search for a new residence. Putting out fires and dealing with crises associated with processing paperwork for porting voucher households also decreases the effectiveness and ability of housing authorities to undertake important (but not mandatory) activities, such as providing basic mobility counseling to porting tenants. Given the potential for significant complications within the moving process, how do households who are able to successfully undertake a portability move adapt to, and become part of a new community?

5. **Shaping Prospects**

"Making it" in a new residential location involves an array of supporting factors that differ based upon the needs of who is moving. Porting tenants described a wide range of individuals and institutions that constituted a supportive network that transformed "making it" from a problem to a possibility. For many porting households, the residential location decision was heavily influenced by the local presence of friends or family who could step in to help ease the adjustment into a new community. For other households, the presence of certain types of human services including food pantries, community centers, and doctors willing to accept Medicaid or state health cards formed an important layer of support as movers settled into new residential locations. Yet for many other households, the key to making it in new locations was having adequate means of transportation, in most cases, access to a car, in order to run errands, link up with friends and family, and find steady employment.

Very few voucher households interviewed for this research moved to locations where they did not know anyone. A major factor in many portability decisions was the presence of family or close friends already living in the location. When asked why friend and family networks were important, movers tended to talk about being able to rely upon family and close friends as resources, particularly to assist with transportation and childrearing.

> Just like in a time of need, like if I switch a day, like if I switch day if I want to work on the weekend instead of the week, I can call up a family member, or if my car breaks down, I can call them up on the weekend to come take me to the store or anything. I need to fix up my resume. I'm gonna have to drive to the city, but I could leave my son with them for a few hours, things like that. Oh, yeah, those little things. It's those little things.

Friendship networks often came up as important determinants of where people chose to live. As with family, friends were important sources of companionship, but also served as a source of support similar to that received from family members. Voucher households often relied upon friends to help them locate housing, and often chose to take up residence within the same area, and at times, the same housing complex as their friends and family. In many cases, the extreme physical proximity that this brought served as a way to share limited household resources. A tenant who ported to a far suburb of Chicago describes finding housing across the street from another friend who also rented with a voucher:

> She actually – a friend of mine, we were trying to – cause she was homeless as well. And she and I, we met and had similar issue. She has four kids. I have one boy and three girls. She has one girl, three boys. So we figure maybe if we moved across the street from each other we can help each other. That worked out pretty good. Unfortunately her town home, she ran into one of those slumlords. So she's probably gonna move as well.

Companionship, including locating other people with similar life histories and situations was important for many porting voucher households to find within new residential locations. Respondents reported that having such companions close by oftentimes helped to make it easier to approach life in a new area. Such companionship also helped to create a fast-track linkage to local resources, such as food pantries, doctors, and employment opportunities. Porting tenants often felt that without having timely access to such assistance from friends and family that they would be very likely to return to their previous residential location.

Another significant determinative factor shaping the success of portability moves was reliable access to transportation. For many of the households interviewed for this research, access to a car was the primary (and only) means of "making it". Many program stakeholders observed that areas of higher opportunity (in both metropolitan and micropoitan areas) often were designed for auto-based connectivity. A county human services executive of a county within the Chicago metropolitan area describes the challenge faced by transit-dependent voucher households in the area:

> A lot of people even though they may have good jobs, they live on the edge… Transportation becomes a real big issue out here in [this] County… If they can't get around like they were getting around in

> Cook County, they're going to go back. Transportation is a real big problem. You have to have an automobile. You have to be able to go to work, and our transportation in [the] County is not good. It's just not a good transportation system. People want to be employed, and they want to go to work. Whereas in Cook County you can go anywhere, basically.

Access to a car was still essential, even in areas where some public transit was available, particularly for working individuals. When asked about how people living in her complex get around, the manager of a tax credit-financed affordable housing complex in a suburb of Chicago talks about the available choices:

> Cars. We're in the burbs. There is PACE. It does exist. It's limited hours and limited locations. I do know a lot of residents who use it. It actually stops right outside one of our buildings, and it will take you to like the grocery store or a local mall. I used to live in the city. It isn't the same transportation. You're extremely limited, and you have to be very careful because I know they don't run all night. I think they run maybe like once an hour or something crazy. Oh wow, so you really have to – You have to know the schedule, and it's much easier getting around with a car. So most of the residents have a vehicle.

Reliable access to transportation not only impacts the opportunities available to heads of households and working household members, but also to other family members. A single mother living in a suburb of Chicago related the challenge of not having access to public transportation when her car was vandalized:

> I wish we had bus service, definitely. When my car was down I had an issue with [a neighbor who sliced my tires] on a couple of occasions and I wasn't able to get to work so therefore I lost money. And my youngest child is in the program that they call Stars which also is a government funded program which is the best thing in the world. It really hindered that because I had it set up where I would drop her off at daycare and then her school bus from school would pick her up, but because I wasn't able to do that she missed school as well and it was

> really hard. If they had bus service, it would be the best thing in the world.

Assisted households without vehicles tend to rely upon friends and family for transportation to work and for other basic activities. A tenant who ported from northern Illinois to a city in South Carolina talked about having to walk 4 miles from her housing complex to the nearest bus stop. For her, family played an important role in providing daily transport to and from work, but making trips independent of her family (particularly for shopping) was nearly impossible given the distance between her house and the bus:

> It has been my sister that gets me to and from work because she lives with me. My job is 15 minutes away and then she has to take the highway to get to her job. Everything is – you need a car. You just got to have a car. There are certain parts of town that does have a bus line. Like when you get on the road where my job is at, okay, then you're like on the bus line. But it's very complicated to find out where is the bus line, where does it go, where does it start at because you rarely see a bus running around here.

Lack of regular access to an automobile makes it more difficult to search for, and find good jobs. For many of the unemployed tenants that were interviewed as part of this research, lack of access to a vehicle was cited as a primary reason for continued unemployment:

> I'm kind of on and off looking only because I have no way to get there, even if I do a better job. I have no way of getting there. So I've been looking as far as to see what's in the area, but I haven't been really applying to it only because I can't get there. So – until I'm able to get my car fixed I won't be able to get anywhere and I don't want to put myself in a position whereas even if I asked my mom like, "If I get a job, can I use your car to get back and forth?" I don't want to start a position being dependent on someone else's schedule and then me

> and my mom get in an argument, she could take her car away from any time she wants and then I'll just be stuck and then I'll lose a job and that's gonna go on my resume and it's not gonna be good…

When asked about how she manages to run errands, the same tenant describes relying upon friends and family to leave her housing complex:

> I have to call people. "Can you come and take me to the store?" "No, I don't have any gas money, I'm sorry." So I have to wait on their time so I can be in the house and I probably won't have anything in there to eat or drink until they can take me. And I don't know anything – I've never known anything about public transportation. Never known anything about public transportation and I would probably get lost. So – and I don't have cab fare to take cabs anywhere so I'm pretty much in that house every day unless someone comes to get me so it's hard… Chicago probably would be a lot easier, getting on the bus and transit and stuff like that...

Adequate public transportation was often an afterthought to the residential location decision:

> The only thing I don't like about this particular area that I'm in is the public transportation. There is only a Metra train that goes east and west. There aren't any buses that travel along the main routes. Fifty-nine, no buses, which, you know, most of the stores and shopping facilities are located. Yeah, and it makes it hard to find a job when you don't have transportation. Now, I had no clue [laughter], which was something that I should have looked for as a requirement. You know what I mean? So there's a possibility I may be moving out of Naperville next year. [Laughter] Yeah.

When asked about the barriers that assisted tenants faced to accessing community resources and opportunity, a landlord with properties in northern Illinois identified reliable access to auto transport as being a key link to community resources:

> Yeah. I mean, they're not very good cars and that. But they need – they don't have a car, they're really hurting. They need that car to get them to Point A to B. I'm right next to a grocery store, so it's not that bad for them. That's why a lot of 'em like that location there. They can walk across the parking lot and get it. But, yeah, a car would open up opportunities. It's almost like if you get the car, [you might] be better off than giving 'em Section 8…

The supports needed in new residential locations differed with each porting tenant interviewed for this research. The local presence of friends and family not only was an important prerequisite for selecting residential locations, but also an important influence for households as they adapted to new locations and forged their own personal and institutional linkages. As important as friends and family were as supportive factors, forging linkages to local institutions and the local economy also required adequate transportation. For many assisted tenants living outside of central cities, there is no alternative to relying upon an automobile to get around, even in cases where some public transportation may exist. Access to transportation options, however, is only one of many considerations which porting households must factor into their mobility decision. Adequate alternative transportation options were often subordinated to other concerns, such as finding a landlord willing to rent to an assisted household. Given the importance of transportation options in determining the employment and wage prospects of households receiving welfare assistance (Thakuriah and Metaxatos 2000), policies seeking to impact opportunity for low-income households must recognize that proximity to opportunity does not always translate into accessibility, unless adequacy of transportation options is addressed.

F. **Conclusion**

> So are we serving this community anymore? You know? … We have so many people go to Chicago which, in many cases, it's because that's where employment is or opportunities – or education opportunities or, in some cases, they just went shopping…
>
> Voucher Program Manager, Northern Illinois

The process of describing the patterns of residential mobility of voucher households is very different from that of describing motivations for moving, and the factors influencing outcomes from moves. The types of opportunity that assisted households seek to find when the move is not monolithic, and is shaped by many factors. At the same time, the ability to carry out a successful portability move and the ability to integrate into a new community is similarly not uniform across space or time. It is clear that voucher portability is one strategy that can create significant positive changes for movers seeking some of the many types of opportunities that come with a change of location. At the same time, opportunities are mediated through local relationships, including those which tenants have with landlords and housing authorities, and also through the types of relationships and experiences that are involved in becoming a "local". It is also clear that narratives of assisted housing mobility have generated certain types of stigma which are projected onto voucher-assisted households (and low-income households in general), and which, may, at times, negatively influence prospects for taking advantage of local economic, social, and housing opportunities. This chapter has demonstrated the ways that relationships matter in parsing the dynamics of local opportunity. Given the patterns of mobility observed throughout Illinois and the complex ways in which relationships shape opportunity at the local level, the next chapter examines the prospects for this "actually existing opportunity" within the voucher program.

VII. DISCUSSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A. Introduction

The findings from the prior two sections provide a great deal of insight into patterns of residence for voucher-assisted households. Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that assisted households move to capitalize upon many different types of opportunity, and that such moves are shaped by numerous factors, many of which are exogenous to the program itself. The results further suggest that while the types of proxies employed to describe communities with more opportunity can have powerful positive impacts for voucher-assisted households, that such households often subordinate neighborhood characteristics to other factors, such as finding a landlord willing to rent to voucher-assisted households, or locating in a particular area to benefit from the support of friends and family. These results challenge the ways that policy researchers have conceived of the choice – opportunity pathway in the past, and suggest that despite the significant leverage which the voucher subsidy generates for assisted households, barriers to real housing choice remain.

B. Choice in the Housing Choice Voucher Program

The Housing Choice Voucher Program upholds the value of tenant residential location choice under the theory that assisted households will choose the most optimal unit and residential location, given their needs at the time. The findings from this research do not in and of themselves contradict this notion, but they do suggest that the "opportunity space" or number of choices available to voucher-assisted households is not simply equal to the number of available units that rent for less than the voucher is worth.[27] Without the voucher, an estimated 6.8 percent of Illinois housing units would be available to the low-income households who receive voucher subsidy. With the subsidy, an estimated 86.74 percent of rental units are accessible (in terms of their price) to voucher households. Although the voucher subsidy makes low-income tenants more financially "attractive" to landlords, the additional burden of working with a local housing authority and the prospect of calculating the risk associated with low-income tenants in comparison to that of a market-rate tenant often create barriers to lease-up. Landlords play an important role in shaping the types of housing opportunities available to assisted households throughout the state. Similarly, housing authority officials play an important role in setting the tone and offering informational resources to shape the local housing search, particularly in cases of voucher portability.

Many of the tenants interviewed for this research characterized their portability housing search as being stressful due to the challenges of finding a rental unit within a new residential location. The challenges and expense of looking for housing far away from origin locations may explain partially why the average Illinois portability move was approximately 24 miles from origin. The existing presence of friend and family networks within the region may also be influential in the decision to port to a nearby housing authority. When asked about their future prospects participating in the program, landlords often mentioned the time and labor-intensive lease-up process and the challenge of working with housing

[27] Just as there are other constraints impacting the number of units available to market-rate renters and homebuyers

authorities as being potential reasons why they would stop renting to voucher-assisted households. Housing authority officials described spending a significant amount of time and effort working to maintain good relationships with the landlords currently participating within the program, while, at the same time, working hard to recruit new landlords to participate in the program. Table XLI compares observed housing authority strategies based upon the administrative rationale, desired outcome, and challenges to achieving the outcome. From the perspective of many housing authority officials, demand for places to live far outstrips the supply of landlords who have “bought in” to the program, resulting in housing authority officials pressuring tenants to accept the first housing opportunity with a landlord who is willing to work with the program. Such time pressure also shapes the types of choices and the amount of information that is available for porting voucher households. Similarly, inconsistent information about the voucher portability process and the role of different actors within the process creates additional informational barriers that can have a negative impact on the breadth of choices available to porting households.

Table XLI: Comparison of Housing Authority Strategies

Strategy	Administrative Rationale	Desired Outcome	Challenges
Retain Existing Landlords	• Prior experience with program and working with voucher tenants reduces administrative burden and keeps tenants happy • Potential ambassador to landlords who have not participated in program • Clear expectations about housing authority, tenant, and landlord roles	• "Proven" landlords will continue to accept HCVP tenants • Experience with program will help expedite lease up and administrative processes • Increased stability for voucher households • Experience with program will help the landlord to effectively work with voucher tenants	• Landlords with "proven" track record with housing authority desire rent increases • Bad experience with an individual tenant can discourage continued landlord participation • Landlords want housing authority to serve as mediator of tenant issues • Increased demand for rental units makes it easier to find market-rate renters
Attract New Landlords	• Potential to open up new housing units and neighborhoods to voucher households • Create more housing opportunities and choices for voucher households	• Create more housing opportunities and choices for voucher households • Develop a continued relationship with landlords willing to rent to voucher households	• Misconception about the voucher program and stigma against voucher households • Outreach to landlords costs money and time • More regulations involved with leasing up to a voucher tenant • Multiple parties involved in most negotiations

One of the most important findings from this research is related to landlords, whose role has been largely taken for granted within the existing literature of vouchers and residential mobility. Landlords play a significant role in shaping the types of "real choices" which voucher-assisted households have by controlling the supply of housing units that are available in a given location (Table XLII). While this research finds no evidence that landlords are working together to systematically exclude voucher-assisted households from particular areas, in practice, landlord rental criteria and preferences for certain types of tenants are often similar across space and time and may be having the same effect. Landlords make choices to rent to voucher households based upon complex and often individualistic criteria, just as moving voucher households choose units and neighborhoods for a multitude of reasons. While the voucher subsidy theoretically reduces the risk or uncertainty of renting to low-income households, it is clear that powerful kinds of stigma about low-income and voucher-assisted households still play a role in shaping local geographies of choice in ways that may be intangible to porting households during their housing search. It is also clear that landlords have many different motivations for participating in the voucher program.

Table XLII: Landlord Impacts on Processes and Outcomes

Area	Process	Outcomes
Unit Advertising	Landlords with prior program experience are likely to advertise to voucher households via PHA	Voucher household more likely to start search with units actively advertising that they accept HCVP tenants, as opposed to looking at alternate options
Tenant Selection	In most places, landlords can actively discriminate against rental applicants with vouchers	Voucher household rental application denied
Lease Up Process	Landlord cannot let tenant occupy unit until after unit has passed inspection	Landlord may decide to accept market rate tenant if inspection / lease up are delayed
Security Deposit	Landlord may provide flexibility or assistance in locating help with security deposit	Tenants may receive assistance or flexibility in reducing the up-front cost of moving
Rent Payment	Landlord may provide flexibility in accepting tenant portion of rent weekly, bi-monthly, or accepting rent late	Voucher household has increased flexibility in timing income and expenses
Tenant Violations	Landlords take legal action against tenant and/or inform housing authority of violations	Tenants may experience more surveillance from landlords and may face more substantial repercussions from the landlord and housing authority for violating terms of lease
Informal Agreements	Landlords demand under-the-table payments from voucher tenants	Voucher tenants pay more than their affordable rent towards housing, and have little recourse if things go wrong with landlord
Other Landlords	Landlords may misrepresent their experience in dealing with a problematic tenant	Other landlords find it difficult to get reliable information about perspective renters and choose to rent to a “safer” tenant

Without significantly more extensive and intensive data on the individual housing searches of voucher households, it remains difficult to determine the extent to which landlords actively discriminate against voucher-assisted households, or the extent to which voucher households self-segregate into certain types of communities. Even in residential locations that have passed source of income protection ordinances, it is difficult to substantiate claims of discrimination unless a landlord overtly admits to not renting to a prospective tenant because of their voucher. Given the increasingly diminished resources which housing authority officials receive to operate the program, particularly in the case of portable vouchers (Greenlee, 2011), identifying cases of discrimination on the part of landlords is a low priority at both the local and Federal level. The current assumption is that continual recruitment of "good" landlords willing to work in the program will result in spatially diverse residential housing opportunities which offer sufficient choices to promote opportunity moves. This research suggests that in many locations, this assumption does not hold true, and that residential location decisions are still driven primarily by the need to find a unit that meets program standards.

C. **The Geography of "Actually Existing" Opportunity**

Given the housing supply constraints that may shape the types of housing and non-housing opportunities available to voucher households, what types of opportunities does the program offer to porting tenants? This research underscores the idea that opportunity itself is highly individualistic and varies within all three stakeholder groups (Table XLIII). Models of voucher portability showed that household-level factors contributed more to the decision to move when compared to neighborhood attributes. Interview data showed that households prioritize and act upon perceived opportunities differently. For some households interviewed in this research, moving represented the opportunity to relocate near family. For other households, opportunity represented the ability to relocate near employment centers. Because of the many different preferences which households maintain (and the fact that these preferences can shift over time and circumstances), moving low-income households to low-poverty or racially diverse communities (while an excellent goal) has not produced the types of desired long-term improvements because such moves discount the importance of preferences and the types of individual supports which households need. Below, I ask a few fundamental questions to explore the implications of this research on the prospects of opportunity policy within the program.

Table XLIII: Voucher Opportunity Frameworks

HCVP Tenants	Participating Landlords	Housing Authority Officials
• High-quality housing unit • "Good" neighborhood and local community • Improve lives of household members • Connections with friends and family • Stable employment and exposure to new employment opportunities • Transportation and access to employment and amenities • Change of environment • Chance to start over	• Providing stable housing for "deserving" low-income households • Desire to fulfill a personal or institutional social mission • Chance to fill vacant units and receive "guaranteed" rent from housing authority	• Link tenants with high-quality housing in "good" neighborhoods • Provide low-income households with residential location choices that would not be available without the program • Help low-income households achieve their personal goals • Educate the community at large about what the housing authority does to create positive relationships for stakeholders, including landlords and tenants

1. **Does portability provide "fair" access to opportunity?**

Portability can form an important means of accessing opportunities that are distributed unevenly across both space and time. One of the powerful goals of the voucher program is that it opens up both housing and non-housing opportunities that may be spatially (and temporally) dependent. Given the preeminence placed upon mobility (see the discussion of Kaufmann et al 2004 in the literature review), by both social scientists and policy analysts, what can this dissertation tell us about the mobility-opportunity link within the Housing Choice Voucher Program?

There is no doubt that residential mobility within the voucher program offers significant potential for voucher-assisted households to access both housing and non-housing opportunities that would not be spatially accessible (or affordable) without the subsidy. Subsidy effect calculations show the significant impact which the program can have on the number of units which a low-income household could rent. However, this research suggests that increased financial accessibility of units (via the subsidy) does not always create a direct link to housing opportunities. Actionable opportunities are filtered through access to information which housing authority officials provide in regards to available housing and high-quality neighborhoods. Opportunities are also directly filtered through the choices which landlords make in selecting tenants to rent to.

Gaps exist between the experience of moving locally and porting with a voucher. On average, porters tended to be better off in terms of household income and in examining the neighborhood characteristics at origin. Movers tended to have lower incomes on average, and tended to start off and end up in areas with less advantageous characteristics. While local movers oftentimes have the benefit of knowledge of local housing markets and some sense of which landlords are willing to work with voucher-assisted households, porters are less likely to have such in-depth knowledge at the time of their move, and oftentimes have trouble getting linked to such local knowledge resources until after they move. The initial lack of support and local connections during this adjustment period will make a household reconsider their move, with the outcome potentially being a “port back” to an existing residential location. This phenomenon may help to partially explain the large number of portability moves with destinations in central cities and throughout Illinois' urban areas. Housing authority officials often felt that porting tenants didn't have enough information to make an informed residential location decision, particularly in regards to personal transit and accessibility to schools, employment, and shopping. Many of the tenants interviewed for this dissertation described not having sufficient information to make an informed residential location decision at the time, with the results at times being acceptable, and other times resulting in another portability move. The types of information that made a difference varied greatly, but often pertained to commute times to job centers, availability and accessibility of transportation options, the presence, location, and quality of human service and public health facilities, and information pertaining to the reputation of the landlord (particularly in working with other voucher-assisted households).

These findings fall in line with much of the analysis done on movement patterns of households participating in the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration Program. Turner and Briggs (2008) note that moves to opportunity areas tended to be short-lived and tended to result in "port-backs" for experimental group movers:

> Although MTO families moved to low-poverty neighborhoods, few moved to the suburbs or to majority-white neighborhoods. And few MTO families stayed long in their new neighborhoods; instead, most moved several times over subsequent years, ending up in moderate-poverty, central-city neighborhoods. (Turner and Popkin 2010)

These findings about MTO movers are mirrored within findings here that pertain to the general Housing Choice Voucher population in Illinois. As there are many rationales for moving, there are also many reasons why moves do not work out. One of the tasks moving forward with assisted housing mobility research is that of understanding more closely why certain moves work and why others do not. Porting voucher households indicate that local support systems including family, friends, and institutional connections play an important role in the post-move adjustment to a new community. Little empirical data exist to measure the influence of local support systems, however, modeling strategies such as agent-based modeling may help to capture the influence of these factors on residential location choices. Adequate access to transportation and the accessibility of schools, employment opportunities, health care, and social outlets are also important supportive factors that have not been incorporated within measures of opportunity. These data could be incorporated into future measures of local opportunity that capture the presence of such resources as well as the cost of gaining access to them. Moving in and of itself often has hidden or unanticipated costs, which can financially destabilize households around the time of the move, and which can make it even more difficult to settle in to a new environment. In his discussion and analysis of findings from the Baltimore Moving to Opportunity Program, William A.V. Clark (2005) points out the complexity of the mobility-opportunity pathway, particularly when we attempt to institutionalize it within the voucher program.

> …HUD's concern to find mechanisms for diffusing the geographic concentration of minorities, also is a telling indication of how difficult it is to intervene in the complex process of housing choice. Income and assets are critical and integral parts of the choice process, as are neighborhood composition preferences. Simply providing a housing voucher does not negate the powerful forces of concerns with neighbors, friends, and access to work in the choice process. (Clark 2005, 15312)

This observation applies well to the voucher program at large. Given that MTO movers were provided with significant additional resources not available to the general voucher population, there are significant limitations to the types of choices we can expect households to make. It is also unreasonable for policy researchers to expect that low-income households will choose to move away from friends, family, and familiar environments in order to take advantage of communities that are abstractly "better". While this research finds that some households did move long distances, and often moved away from local friends and family, that there was often some type of preexisting connection to the new community which "grounded" the move (be it extended family, a job offer, or a change of lifestyle).

It is also important not to discount the significance of households who move to new residential locations in order to get a voucher. By becoming local in locations where waiting lists are shorter, households can oftentimes significantly decrease their wait times for housing assistance, particularly when compared to waits in larger housing authorities. This reflects not only the massive amount of demand for the voucher subsidy, particularly in large urban areas, but also represents another opportunity to translate mobility (even outside of the voucher program) into a means of generating other types of household improvements prior to receiving a voucher. In times where public resources can be scarce, the challenge facing local communities is how to remain open and receptive to new low-income movers seeking opportunities who also need extra resources and assistance to achieve basic quality of living within new locations. Stigma and bias against low-income households can make it difficult for communities to view such opportunity-seekers as community assets, particularly at times when an increasing share of existing community members may be struggling to get by. This dissertation finds evidence that some communities in Illinois (and other nearby states) are actively seeking out ways to limit housing opportunities for low-income individuals, in the hopes of discouraging mobility to those areas. Oftentimes, the narrative used to mobilize the public points directly at the housing voucher program as the cause of all types of community concerns; however, this research finds overwhelming evidence that the predominant flow of low-income households is actually towards opportunities in central cities and metropolitan areas and away from smaller communities and rural areas.

2. **Do neighborhoods impact outcomes for voucher households?**

Neighborhoods form an important "background" element of moves, but the type of improvement realized through moves is not terribly significant when compared to household characteristics. In their analysis of the literature of residential mobility, Ellen and Turner conclude that "the existing evidence is inconclusive when it comes to determining which neighborhood conditions matter most, how neighborhood characteristics influence individual behavior and well-being, or whether neighborhood effects differ for families with different characteristics." (Ellen and Turner 1997, p. 835). In contemplating a way forward, they suggest "studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods. . . [in order to understand] how and why neighborhoods matter" (p. 835). This research finds that neighborhoods matter for a variety of reasons, but that many of the proxies which policy analysts have proposed for "good" neighborhoods (including race, poverty rate, income, homeownership rate, and employment rate) do not map on well to the types of choices which voucher-assisted households are making. At most the portability models from this research suggest that very high rates of poverty at origin reduced the likelihood that a household would undertake a portability move. One reason for the disconnect between the voucher subsidy and opportunity may be that the HCVP is designed as a "housing first" strategy, meaning that choosing a high-quality housing unit (presumably in a community of choice) will result in positive non-housing behaviors and outcomes. However, this research finds that while the program is often able to meet the goal of providing housing of a good quality to assisted households that finding an available unit with a landlord willing to work within the program can place significant constraints on the choice of neighborhood or other community features. The implication of this finding is that households may not have the luxury to choose between neighborhood characteristics due to lack of viable housing options.

Furthermore, tenants most often described "safe" and "quiet" as being the important minimum attributes which their new community had to meet. Race and income did not come up as being particularly important primary attributes for communities. Other attributes associated with opportunity such as locating near employment centers, better schools, or in range of public transportation were subordinated to finding an available unit within the community of choice. Despite the significant impact of the voucher subsidy on opening up potential housing opportunities, evidence from this research suggests that the voucher subsidy itself has the potential to create a dual housing market- one for households who pay market rate, and one for households with a voucher. While the voucher was intended to create more leverage for low-income households to break out of low-income housing markets, the behavior of landlords, housing authorities, and public discourse runs together with housing choices to create a new basis for market segmentation (another word for spatial segregation) based upon the presence of a housing subsidy.

The analysis of spatial clustering of voucher households over space and time help to reveal these patterns, however, there is still very little information available that helps to understand whether such patterns of clustering represent explicit exclusion on the part of local landlords, the unfettered choices which low-income households make. Evidence from this research, suggests that both factors come together at a local level to shape where low-income households search for- and find housing. While this research gets us one step closer to understanding the interaction between housing choice and local structural and social factors that shape the spaces of opportunity, it is clear that more work needs to be done at the local level to understand the ways in which these factors interact to result in actual opportunity.

3. **<u>What structural constraints impact outcomes?</u>**

Changing neighborhoods can clearly have powerful impact on housing and non-housing outcomes for voucher households. At the same time, the reading of the choice-opportunity pathway on the part of theorists and policy analysts needs to be revisited. The types of choices which assisted households make play a major role in shaping the types of possible outcomes of the move. At the same time, choices and their outcomes are embedded within the context of place, and are influenced by local actors both within and outside of the voucher program framework.

The literature review cited the work of Galster and Killen (2005), who split opportunity into two dimensions, *processes* and *prospects*. Processes reflect the ways in which individual identities impact institutional response, resulting in differential responses, and hence, differential opportunities for people with different characteristics. Within the context of this research, processes reflect the ways that landlords and housing authorities interact with and manage voucher-assisted households in general and porting households specifically. The process dimension within the Housing Choice Voucher Program is also influenced by program design, and specifically, by the types of relationships which housing authorities have with each other. Based upon the different types of relationships present between housing authorities, porting voucher households may experience differential treatment during and after the portability move attempt. Contingency within the process dimension exists not only at the inter-housing authority level, but often at even finer levels of detail, such as the relationship between the case managers at the sending and receiving housing authorities, or the accuracy of the information which a case manager shares with the porting tenant.

Galster and Killen also highlight the importance of prospects in determining outcomes in relation to opportunities. Prospects reflect the perception (on the part of porting voucher households) of the potential opportunities present within new residential locations. Within residential mobility policy research, prospects have largely been defined by particular types of neighborhood social and demographic conditions, with the assumption that (normatively) “better” conditions will be more likely to result in more positive outcomes for moving households. The big assumption about these types of prospects, however, is that the types of prospects which social scientists view as being important will be prioritized in the same manner by households as they make residential location decisions.

This research finds that the Housing Choice Voucher Program does an effective job of creating more *potential* housing opportunities for low-income households. Comparing the availability of units at the tract level, the voucher opened up on average (and across all unit sizes) 86 percent of rental housing units, as compared to 6.8 percent of units which would be affordable to voucher households were they not participating in the program. However, this research also finds that there is a substantial disconnect between the potential opportunities reflected by the number of units renting at a particular price point and the number of actual opportunities which a voucher household can take advantage of.

Opportunities are shaped by the highly individualistic types of housing preferences which voucher households have. While most tenants described wanting a “good” unit, units were often evaluated in tandem with the prospects of getting along with the landlord, unit location, and neighborhood attributes (oftentimes focused on areas being quiet and safe). Preferences for particular unit characteristics also had to be filtered through other community attributes, including proximity to friend and family networks, accessibility to community resources including schools, parks, shopping, and healthcare), and accessibility to employment opportunities.

This research also suggests that preferences must also be filtered through access to housing opportunities. Landlords play a significant role in shaping the housing opportunities available to voucher households, as they control access to their particular housing units. Even in those communities with source of income protection which prevent overt discrimination against households with voucher subsidies, landlords still have significant discretion over who they rent to. Within many Illinois communities, there is a stigma associated with voucher households via their association with the failures of some inner-city public housing, crime, and disorder. While this stigma may be highly unfounded in most circumstances, it can play a powerful role in shaping landlord and community sentiment towards the program and its stakeholders, resulting in an unwillingness of landlords to consider renting to voucher-assisted households.

Longitudinal portability data provide some clues as to the geography of choice for voucher households, as revealed through their aggregate location patterns and clustering within certain neighborhoods and housing developments. One avenue for future research could involve observing individual housing search processes in order to gain a better understanding of how and where households look for units, and where landlords are responsive to inquiries related to renting units from voucher-assisted tenants. Responsiveness of landlords could be related back to the attributes of the neighborhoods within which they own properties, their history of participation in the voucher program, and the types of management strategies employed within their rental property.

The ways in which policy researchers define choice is also deeply intertwined with how we choose to measure opportunity. This research suggests that while the types of proxies which policy researchers have implemented in the past (namely racial composition criteria and economic composition criteria) can result in positive benefits to households that move to those communities, that the general population of "unconstrained" voucher households are more likely to locate in communities that do not meet these criteria. There are significant fair housing implications to these findings that go beyond household neighborhood preferences. While racial and economic diversity may not represent primary neighborhood selection criteria for porting voucher households, barriers to access these communities still exist which shape the other characteristics which households identify and search for. Past research on the Moving to Opportunity program shows that even for households whose moves were constrained to opportunity neighborhoods, that length of stay within these communities tended to be shorter on average, and tended to result in relocation to a community that did not meet opportunity criteria (Kingsley and Pettit, 2008).

Analysis of the moving attempts of experimental households in the Moving to Opportunity program revealed many constraints upon successful mobility. Fifty-three percent of experimental group movers and 39 percent of Section 8 group movers participating in the demonstration were unable to lease up with their vouchers in new locations. (Kingsley and Pettit, 2008). This alone suggests significant barriers to accessing the mobility-opportunity pathway. While this dissertation does not seek to assess the extent to which porting attempts result in a "successful" move, evidence from the experiences of porting voucher households, and housing authority officials suggest that portability attempts are not always successful. Within the context of this study, two factors, reliable access to transportation, and presence of support from friends and family both came up as important factors for successful portability moves.

Quantitative models of portability show that household demographics do a better job of predicting portability moves when compared to neighborhood features. Yet at the same time, neighborhood features formed an important background to process and outcome dimensions of moves. The nature and depth of local connections to new neighborhoods varied greatly based upon individual values and strategies for place making. However, neighborhoods are also constantly in flux. Analysis of data from the MTO demonstration compared neighborhood characteristics in 1990 and 2000 based upon the residential location of the experimental group and Section 8 group and found that while 90 percent of households moved to neighborhoods with less than 20 percent poverty in 1990, only 60 percent of the experimental group movers lived in neighborhoods with less than 20 percent poverty in 2000. (Comey et al., 2008). These findings suggest two things: first that subsequent moves post-opportunity move were likely to be to higher-poverty locations, or, second, that experimental group movers chose to relocate to neighborhoods that disproportionately experienced a drop in income between the years 1990 to 2000.

While this research does not compare residential location demographic change over time within the communities in which porting voucher households move to and from, the evidence from this work does suggest that porting voucher households tend to move to communities that are on average just slightly "better" than the communities they moved from. Although many of these neighborhood-level geographic covariates were still below average when compared to the state as a whole, they showed improvement and also reflected that porting voucher households tended to start off in better locations on average than general program participants. One question for future research is whether voucher households tend to move to or from communities in which demographics are changing more significantly than in communities which voucher households tend not to move to.

As mentioned in other parts of this discussion, residential locations reflect more than the choices of low-income households. Most importantly, they are shaped by the willingness of landlords to rent to assisted households. Outcomes are also shaped by the types of support which the housing authority provides during and after the relocation process, as well as the ability of the household to create important linkages to community resources.

These findings corroborate the theoretical work of researchers who have sought to conceive of the geography of opportunity as "lumpy" and spatially uneven across space and individual experience. This research confirms some of this lumpiness, and notes correspondence between the uneven distribution of resources and patterns of racial segregation. Pulido (2004) introduced the idea of constellations of opportunities, which are determined by the intersection of personal preferences, local housing markets, and local neighborhood conditions. Similarly, Briggs' (2005) calls for a reexamination of the importance of space in determining the outcomes of Federal programs.

This analysis has sought to also engage with the idea that different institutional structures and regulatory frameworks play an important role in shaping highly individual outcomes for voucher households. Gregory Squires and Charis Kubrin assert that reading of both spatial and institutional dimensions are essential to understand how opportunity is created at a local level. They state that:

> [T]his kind of analysis requires understanding how individual characteristics and choices … and voluntary exchanges that occur via competitive markets are both framed and complimented by structural constraints in determining the distribution of valued goods and services. (Squires and Kubrin 2006, p. 4)

In undertaking this type of analysis, this research finds that the choices of porting voucher households are mediated through local housing markets, through the behavior and actions of landlords and housing authority officials, and through interactions with other institutional actors, as well as physical and social environments in order to shape what we describe as opportunity. The Housing

Choice Voucher Program is designed with particular rules and regulations that govern the interaction between the housing authority, tenant, and landlord, which has been the primary focus of analysis. Clearly, all three of these relationships matter for the types of outcomes which will ultimately be "lived out" by voucher households. At the same time, this dissertation only begins to scratch the surface as to how choice as mediated within the voucher program is then filtered through other institutional actors, and the local built and social environment. Clues from this research suggest that these relationships and their instrumental and spatial dimensions also matter, giving purchase to the notion of the geography of opportunity. However, unlike much of the past research that has attempted to instrumentalize opportunity as a function of local demographic characteristics, this research suggests that opportunity is far more nuanced and relational than how it has been conceived in past policy studies.

These findings do not preclude the potential for voucher-based residential mobility to positively impact the opportunities available to low-income households. There is significant potential to make use of location and person-specific strategies to leverage increased housing and socioeconomic mobility for low-income families. Developing strategies of person-specific opportunity development is undeniably a more difficult task that involves building upon past strategies (such as location counseling) in order to bring together locations of informed choice with local resources. Other voucher-based residential mobility programs have tackled local opportunity from a more holistic strategy. For instance, the Baltimore Special Housing Mobility Program (which originated via a consent decree, *Thompson v HUD*) includes race and poverty based geographic targeting, life counseling for assisted families, housing search assistance, multiple years of post-move counseling, counseling for households looking to make second moves, and assistance in finding employment and expanding transportation options. (Engdahl, 2009). Treating voucher household residential mobility as a framework for developing holistic life changes presents one strategy that recognizes that housing choice alone is not enough. In this vain, the next section identifies several policy implications that stem from the findings of this research.

D. **Summary of Findings**

The findings from this research have significant implications for policy as well as program design and evaluation. This section connects study findings back to the initial research questions described in Chapter 1, and presents policy and research implications that stem from these findings.

1. **Connecting Stakeholders to Outcomes**

This research explores the connection between three program stakeholders through the process of voucher portability and the resultant outcomes of those moves. Scholarship related to neighborhood effects and the geography of opportunity suggest that the voucher subsidy should significantly reduce barriers to “moving up” in terms of neighborhood demographic attributes and the trajectories of life experiences. Longitudinal data on voucher portability provides a unique opportunity to compare origin and destination communities. Conversations with stakeholders help to add depth to our understanding of the moving process as well as the resulting outcomes (Table XLIV)

Table XLIV: Findings Related to Outcomes

Observation	**Policy Implication**	**Program Implication**
Tenant residential location outcomes are filtered through tenant choices, landlord willingness to supply housing, and housing authority relationships with stakeholders	The geography of opportunity is not only reflective of community demographic attributes but is also influenced by institutional and interpersonal relationships.	Tenant outcomes are influenced by PHA practices and relationships with landlords. Strong relationships will lead to better tenant outcomes.
Program stakeholder relationships influence both process and outcome dimensions	Research and program evaluation focus on outcomes needs to be complimented by a focus on process	Providing more housing authority support to landlords and tenants can improve process and outcomes for all stakeholders.
Conflict exists between everyday choices and the notion of Choice within the Housing Choice Voucher Program	Residential location is an important choice which households make. However analysis of housing choice must account for complex factors that are exogenous to housing and neighborhoods which shape residential location choice.	Housing authorities can play a more active role in helping tenants match their housing and personal needs with available opportunities

Most importantly, this research finds that relationships do matter in governing the process and outcomes of portability moves. Existing research has focused primarily upon porting voucher households without examining the ways that their relationships to other stakeholders and communities influence post-move outcomes. In terms of policy, this finding suggests that future research needs to analyze and understand process and outcomes from multiple perspectives. In terms of program design, these findings suggest a more important role for housing authorities and landlords in supporting the residential location choices which voucher-assisted households make. This finding complicates the notion of choice as being solely an individualistic decision on the part of a subsidized tenant. If the goal of the voucher program is to connect participants to local opportunity, housing authorities and landlords can play an important role in helping to make and sustain such connections.

Relationships are influential across both process and outcome dimensions of opportunity. Process reflects not only the type of institutional relationships and resources that are brought into play during the portability process, but also reflects the ongoing local relationships necessary to engage with community resources. Outcomes reflect the positive and negative ramifications of processes over time. Program evaluation and policy research has focused on measuring outcomes for porting households at specific points in time. In contrast, this research connects processes and outcomes across space and time, and finds that housing authority, landlord, and tenant relationships shape processes and outcomes. Providing more programmatic resources to help tenants, landlords, and housing authority officials to work together and engage with program issues will likely improve the outcomes realized for tenants, and will form a supportive factor to retain landlords participating in the program.

Emphasis on housing choice as a novel housing strategy discounts the complicated personal and situational factors that are behind the choices that people make. Being able to choose a housing unit as part of a low-income housing strategy is fundamentally different than place-based strategies, but the logic of housing choice remains largely the same as for non-subsidized households. Research has placed choice over housing units on a pedestal, yet there is little evidence to suggest that voucher-subsidized households choose housing any differently than non-subsidized households (aside from the influence of program rules, regulations, and the leverage provided by the voucher subsidy). Housing and neighborhoods are only two components of a complex decision-making process that includes many factors that are exogenous to the voucher program and which are challenging to measure and aggregate empirically. For some tenants, the availability of more support and counseling about local housing options may facilitate better housing and neighborhood choices.

2. **Connecting Opportunity Measures to People**

This research compared commonly used policy measures for opportunity in order to question how these measures compared to the housing and community attributes which tenants described as important in determining new residential locations. Findings from this research indicate that the majority of Illinois voucher households do not live in, or move to areas characterized as having opportunity. This research has explored whether this is a problem of construct validity, meaning that the proxies do not capture opportunity, or whether the proxies do not match the types of neighborhood attributes which voucher households value. (Table XLV)

Table XLV: Findings Related to Measuring Opportunity

Observation	Policy Implication	Program Implication
Neighborhood proxies for opportunity did not describe the characteristics which porting tenants prioritized in their housing search.	Individual preferences and circumstances matter. Measures of opportunity must account for individual capability to engage with local opportunity.	Expanding housing opportunities for voucher households requires working one-on-one to match needs and preferences with opportunities.
Opportunities which tenants engaged with changed over time	Opportunity is a fluid process that changes across space and time. Measuring opportunity as a function of place must recognize its fluidity.	Improving tenant outcomes requires active engagement with changing tenant needs over time.
Looking beyond race and poverty measures of opportunity will advance knowledge about tenant needs	Current proxies are better at measuring the number of locally available housing units	High rates of locally available units may represent local rental price inflation due to the voucher program
Voucher-assisted households tend to cluster spatially around areas with less advantageous demographic conditions	Deconcentration of negative conditions via mobility is only one strategy for improving resident circumstances. Government investment in communities of choice may prove a more effective strategy for improving circumstances.	Including measures of neighborhood wellbeing and tenant satisfaction in measures of HCVP success could provide valuable feedback to local voucher programs and to HUD.

Findings reveal that neighborhood proxies for opportunity do not describe the characteristics which tenants prioritized during their housing search. Evidence suggests that the availability of housing opportunities oftentimes took precedence over the attributes of housing units and neighborhoods. Tenants also based their characterization of “good” communities based upon a variety of characteristics. Analysis of the factors influencing moving decisions show that household characteristics were more influential in determining the probability of making a portability move when compared to neighborhood characteristics at origin and destination. These findings underscore the importance of relationships and local supportive factors that help to connect tenants with resources. These findings also suggest that empirical measures of opportunity must account for the influence of personal factors in determining how local resources will be engaged with. In terms of program design, these findings underscore the importance of tenant counseling, particularly post-portability, in order to help connect newcomers to resources.

Tenants described opportunities as changing over time, based upon personal needs and changing circumstances. In addition to recognizing that opportunity is highly individualistic, policy research must also acknowledge that personal needs alter which resources are necessary at any given time. These findings support the need for a multidimensional approach to measuring the breadth of potential opportunities available in a given location. This also supports the notion that tenants require ongoing counseling and support in order to respond to changing housing and non-housing needs.

Looking at neighborhood attributes and resources across space, voucher households tend to cluster in comparatively less advantageous neighborhoods when compared to the population as a whole. This clustering reflects a variety of factors including personal preferences, housing supply constraints, and programmatic limitations. Each residential location reflects a complex choice. While there has been a policy push to encourage deconcentration of low-income households via residential mobility, policymakers must also recognize that not moving is also a choice that should be respected and supported. Local government and public housing authority policy should seek to facilitate residential mobility, but should also invest in the communities which voucher households choose to live in.

3. **Connecting Needs to Resources**

Housing subsidy is only one intervention that can help address the needs of low-income households. Evidence suggests that while a housing subsidy can provide increased stability for low-income households, that the housing subsidy alone is not enough to catalyze economic and social mobility. This research explores the type of housing and non-housing needs which tenants describe, and relates them back to the resources which the voucher program provides. (Table XLVI)

Table XLVI: Findings Related to Housing and Non-Housing Needs

Observation	**Policy Implication**	**Program Implication**
Connections to friends and family form the basis for addressing housing and non-housing needs	Social and personal networks play an important role in shaping local opportunity.	Tenants tend to port to places where friends and family are present, or where friends and family have had positive experiences.
Reliable personal transportation influenced access to resources and opportunities	Transportation options influence the types of choices which households make. Providing better low-cost transportation options can create more viable housing choices for low-income households.	Helping tenants identify access to reliable personal transportation can improve both short-term and long-term outcomes.
Landlord flexibility helped to support tenants in times of need	Landlords play an important role within both process and outcome dimensions of opportunity	Housing Authorities should encourage landlords to work with tenants to develop individual occupancy plans that are responsive to tenant needs

Porting tenants described a variety of supportive factors which helped to ease the transition into new communities. Of the many factors described, the presence of friends and family were most important. Thinking about empirical measures of residential location choice, presence of friends and family is exogenous to the voucher program and is difficult to capture in measures of local opportunity. At the same time, the presence of friends and family help to explain the residential location patterns of voucher households. Future insight into residential location choice should factor friend and family networks into models of location choice and consider such connections as a form of local support.

Personal transportation was also a key feature facilitating access to local resources. Transportation options were an important determinant of the success of portability moves, as was the presence of reliable transportation. Particularly for those households moving outside of central city areas, access to reliable personal transportation was an essential factor in making a new community work. Transportation options (and their costs) influence the number of viable housing choices which households can choose from. Helping voucher households to understand the transportation costs and limitations of locating in a particular housing unit may help households to make more sustainable moves.

Landlords also directly provided important support services to tenants. Program regulations view landlords as a housing provider, yet in practice, many landlords provide other types of support and resources to tenants as well. In many cases, landlords found creative strategies for making tenant finances work, including non-traditional rent payment schedules and flexibility around security deposits. Some landlords also provided work opportunities and connections to outside resources to help tenants make their living situation work. This underscores the importance of landlords within the program as going beyond providing housing goods on the private market. Providing landlords with training and resources to help them support tenants can help to improve outcomes for voucher-assisted households.

4. **Connecting Opportunity to Stakeholders**

Program regulations and design place boundaries on the types of opportunities which the voucher program can facilitate. This dissertation identifies the types of opportunities which the program provides and compares them with the types of resources which tenants desire. (Table XLVII)

Table XLVII: Findings Related to Program Opportunity and Personal Opportunity

Observation	**Policy Implication**	**Program Implication**
The HCVP does open up new housing opportunities for low-income tenants	The presence of potential housing opportunities does not always translate into access to such opportunities.	The program is effective at delivering upon its first goal of providing safe, decent, and affordable housing
Affordability challenges remain for voucher-assisted households	While housing subsidy alleviates some financial stress, other financial stressors remain that can render subsidized housing unaffordable and that creates barriers to economic and social mobility.	Housing affordability may only be one of several financial challenges faced by low-income households.
The HCVP provides landlords with the opportunity to make money while doing good	Scholarly and policy communities would benefit from more research focused on the role of landlords within the HCVP.	Targeted recruitment and training of landlords can help to support their role and commitment to providing housing opportunities to low-income households.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is designed primarily as a housing subsidy for low-income households. The leverage which the subsidy provides opens up a significant number of housing resources that would otherwise be unavailable to low-income households. In addition to opening up a variety of potential housing opportunities, program regulations ensure that housing meets basic quality standards. There are still barriers, however, to translating potential housing opportunities into actual housing opportunities based upon many factors described previously. Despite the oftentimes deep subsidies which the housing voucher provides to tenants, housing affordability is also still an issue in many cases. Because the voucher is only designed to address the costs associated with rent and some utilities, other costs of occupying a housing unit, including rental deposit, maintenance fees, and transportation costs are completely outside the current purview of the program. The financial challenges faced by low-income households may be eased somewhat by the voucher subsidy; however, affordability challenges in other areas often form additional barriers to getting ahead.

While the opportunity provided by the voucher program is often touted solely as benefiting low-income tenants, landlords also benefit greatly from participating in the program. While some landlords characterized their participation in the program as being primarily profit-motivated, others characterized their participation as being an opportunity to carry out a social mission (while at the same time benefitting financially). Currently, landlord involvement in the program has not been a focus of scholarly or policy research. Gaining further insight into landlord motivations for participating in the program may help to design housing authority programs to better support landlord-tenant relationships.

E. Policy Implications

1. Choice Isn't Enough

Residential mobility alone is not enough to secure access to opportunity for low-income households. This research, in line with past studies, points to significant challenges for securing equal access to opportunities (including housing opportunities) for voucher-assisted households, as well as those low-income households who do not have the benefit of housing assistance. Households move for a variety of reasons, and they value and prioritize housing and neighborhoods differently, based upon their needs at the time. The Moving To Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program: Final Impacts Evaluation (Sanbonmatsu et al. 2011) offers a similar concluding remark in regards to housing mobility:

> The MTO findings suggest that housing mobility programs alone are unlikely to be a panacea for the schooling problems and labor market difficulties faced by disadvantaged families living in public housing projects and other high-poverty, inner-city neighborhoods. Policies to increase skills and directly address other individual barriers to work remain essential if we are to improve the long-term life chances and economic self-sufficiency of disadvantaged families living in high-poverty areas.

Within assisted housing mobility research, neighborhood opportunity has been described by easily measurable racial and economic indicators. At the same time, studies (including this one) continue to find mixed results in terms of voucher-assisted households choosing to move to such opportunity areas, as well as the outcomes which do result for households that do choose to move to such areas. Some researchers have found that voucher households may choose better but not "good enough" areas to move to, and that multiple moves may be necessary to result in significant improvements in neighborhood demographic standards (Feins and Patterson, 2005). While these findings offer some purchase to the notion of moving to opportunity, such a reading of opportunity through mobility continues to read the notion of opportunity and the housing search process too narrowly.

This research suggests that while tenant choice is an important (and valued) component of the Housing Choice Voucher Program, that multiple factors which are exogenous to the choices which tenants make can fundamentally impact the moving process and resulting outcomes. Looking at the stakeholders described within voucher program design, housing authorities play a significant role in shaping the ability of households to smoothly transition between housing authority boundaries. More importantly, findings suggest that poor communication and coordination between housing authorities can have a significant negative impact on the ability of households to successfully transition to a new community. Time and resource constraints also make it difficult for housing authorities to provide anything more than basic information to tenants about potential new residential locations, not to mention that many tenants do not approach housing authority officials until they have already identified a new residential neighborhood or unit.

The barriers to successfully getting to a new community don't stop with the housing authority. Landlords also play a significant role in shaping the housing search process, as well as resultant outcomes. Landlord participation in the voucher program is voluntary, and what often amounts to misconceptions about the voucher program can make it difficult to achieve HUDs goal of attracting new landlords to the program across a diverse variety of neighborhoods and communities. Landlords must also deal with a significant number of unknowns when entering into a rental agreement with a voucher-subsidized tenant (and the housing authority). Time costs, inspections, and delays in payment contribute to potential risks for landlords, which may not be offset by the housing assistance payment.

This discussion does not seek to portray housing authorities or landlords in a negative light. Throughout the course of this research, the housing authority officials and landlords who participated were all committed to the improvement of the program, and the goal of providing types of support that can help to improve the lives of low-income families. At the same time, deficiencies in program design and administration make it extremely challenging for both of these stakeholders to approach voucher tenancy and portability in different and innovative ways. Housing authorities must contend with the unpredictability of their budgets and lease-up rates, particularly due to the way that voucher portability is accounted for as part of housing authority operations. (Greenlee 2011). Despite the positive leverage of the voucher subsidy, landlords must balance the risk and extra regulations of renting to voucher –assisted households with the benefits of participating in the program. Oftentimes, landlords do not have the tools available to evaluate the risks and benefits completely, particularly when their point of reference is other market-rate tenants.

Changes to the voucher program- some simple, and some more complex, are necessary in order to help housing authorities and landlords become more effective co-creators of housing and neighborhood opportunity for program participants. The choices which voucher households make remain an important primary determinant of outcomes, but program policy must also recognize the linkage between tenant choice, and the behavior exhibited by landlords, housing authorities, and other program stakeholders, including local government officials.

2. **Program Reforms**

This research contains some serious implications for program reforms. Of primary importance, this research suggests that significant changes to program regulations could help to standardize and improve communication and coordination between housing authorities, in order to help streamline (and standardize) the portability process. Part of streamlining the coordination process may also be reforming the way in which housing authorities bill each other. At present, housing authorities mail each other paper checks on a monthly basis for housing assistance payments at other housing authorities. There is presently also no accounting system to keep track of accounts payable and receivable for billed vouchers (Greenlee 2011). Developing a system which would standardize billing would potentially free up significant administrative resources which could be re-allocated towards providing more in-depth relocation counseling for moving and porting households.

Voucher households described being provided with little (if any) information about new communities. The information which housing authorities provided about the portability process was also not standardized, and differed not only by housing authority but by who happened to answer the phone. Standardizing information about portability may be one strategy which could help to support the decision-making process of households looking to make portability moves. Developing some standards for information about new communities which housing authorities could provide to tenants before they start the housing search process might also help to support the decisions of porting households. Michael Johnson (2005) has proposed the development of a spatial decision support system for voucher-assisted households, however as proposed such a system relies upon traditional measures of opportunity. Longitudinal data such as that used within this dissertation and alternate measures of opportunity hold significant promise in helping to inform such systems.

Developing better information to support decisions would also benefit landlords, particularly as they evaluate rental applications for voucher-assisted households. This research finds that landlords oftentimes find it difficult to evaluate the rental applications of voucher-assisted households particularly in comparison to those of market rate households. Landlord rental decisions are also influenced by their perceived benefit from renting to a particular tenant. Given that most housing authorities do not certify the housing assistance payment until after a preliminary lease exists between the landlord and tenant, risk-averse landlords or landlords who are on the fence about renting to voucher households are likely to decline the rental application. Providing some information up front, including an estimate of fair rent ranges, and the split between the tenant rent and housing authority payment would help landlords and voucher-assisted tenants to make better initial matches prior to initiating the lease-up process.

Legislative proposals to modify the voucher program such as SEVRA, the Section Eight Voucher Reform Act (approved by the House Financial Services Committee in July 2009) take some steps that begin to remedy some of the problems identified in this research. Among other proposed reforms included in SEVRA are streamlined inspection procedures for units, including a provision that would allow a tenant to occupy a unit needing “minor repairs” for up to 30 days before such repairs need to be completed. Other reform proposals such as the Section Eight Savings Act (SESA) similarly seek to lessen administrative burdens, encourage landlords to participate in the program, and help housing authorities to be able to ration funds more effectively over time. (Center for Budget and Policy Priorities 2011). It is important to note, however, that reform proposals such as SEVRA and SESA are not new and have been languishing for several years amidst tight budgets and partisan politics. Other proposed changes, including re-defining fair market rent standards based upon postal code areas (as opposed to metropolitan areas) are also promising means of creating more local specificity in adjusting rent standards to meet local conditions. At the same time, such a policy shift is likely to have significant negative consequences, particularly in areas with lower rents that are currently affordable (and often accessible) to voucher households. The adjusting down of rent standards in such areas is likely to have a negative impact on the number of landlords willing to rent to voucher-assisted housing, given that voucher rent standards are likely to pay at or above market standards under regional FMR calculations.

3. **Regional Cooperation**

As it currently stands, housing authorities have little incentive to encourage voucher portability. Administering voucher portability requires more administrative coordination and time on the part of housing authority officials, often for a fraction of the administrative "fee" which the housing authority receives for each voucher household. As described by Greenlee (2011), housing authorities who bill a receiving housing authority for a voucher that has ported in must split the administrative fee for that household with the "sending" housing authority, resulting in fewer administrative dollars to administer a more resource-intensive voucher. Administrative costs are also exacerbated due to the need for close coordination and communication between sending and receiving housing authorities throughout the portability process. As described in the previous section, housing authorities are not always well-equipped to coordinate their efforts within the current program framework. Amidst increased costs and mis-coordination between housing authorities, tenants can literally fall through the cracks.

Analysis of the portability dataset indicates that much of the voucher portability happening within Illinois occurs within the same region. In the case of Illinois, the Chicago metropolitan area forms the central hub of portability within the state. The Chicago Housing Authority and Housing Authority of Cook County account for 55 percent of all portability moves within the state of Illinois during the study period. Analysis of the top ten portability flows in Illinois between 2000 and 2007 (Table XLVIII) reveal that all of the most significant flows have their origin and destination in housing authorities within the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area. These flows also suggest bi-directional linkages in terms of portability flows, meaning that many of the housing authorities with significant flows in one direction also have similar flows in the opposite direction.

Table XLVIII: Top 10 Portability Flows Between Illinois Housing Authorities (2000-2007)

Port Origin	Port Destination	Count of Port-Ins
Chicago Housing Authority	Cook County Housing Authority	2,186
Cook County Housing Authority	Chicago Housing Authority	1,326
Chicago Housing Authority	DuPage Housing Authority	239
Lake County Housing Authority	Waukegan Housing Authority	201
Cook County Housing Authority	DuPage Housing Authority	199
Cook County Housing Authority	Park Forest Housing Authority	189
Waukegan Housing Authority	Lake County Housing Authority	150
Chicago Housing Authority	Joliet Housing Authority	147
Park Forest Housing Authority	Cook County Housing Authority	137
DuPage Housing Authority	Cook County Housing Authority	116

Data Source: Portability Dataset, 2000-2007

Analysis of statewide flows indicated similar patterns, with the majority of portability flows either being central city to central city, or within the areas surrounding central cities statewide. The average distance between portability move origin and destination is 24 miles, reflecting the prevalence of regional moves within the state, as opposed to longer distance moves.

Provided that intra-state portability is largely regional, reducing administrative and financial barriers to such mobility could potentially help to expand program assistance to more families in locations of their choice. Regional cooperation between housing authorities has been suggested as one means of reducing some of the barriers and disincentives for housing authorities to encourage the mobility of voucher households outside of the housing authority jurisdiction. Under regional cooperation, housing authorities work together to allow tenants to move freely from other cooperating housing authorities without having to go through the process of porting their voucher. Depending upon the regional agreement, housing authorities will either allow each other to operate across jurisdictional lines[28], or they will agree to instantly absorb vouchers from other regional housing authorities.

In their 2001 proposal for voucher program reform, Katz and Turner suggest that regional cooperation would improve the voucher program in three ways. First, regional cooperation within metropolitan areas would help to match the geography of mobility with the geography of regional economic activity, thereby reducing barriers that make it difficult for low-income households to move to areas of emergent regional economic growth. Second, the authors contend that regionalizing the program would also increase housing choice, again, by reducing administrative barriers to mobility, particularly from central cities to suburban areas. Finally, according to the authors, regional cooperation would further housing authority

[28] Although some functions such as unit inspection may still be carried out by staff within the “receiving” location.

innovation, primarily by freeing housing authorities from some administrative obligations.[29]

This research suggests that advancing regional cooperation efforts will certainly be a step in the right direction. In line with Katz and Turner's suggestions, the administrative boundaries which delineate housing authority jurisdictions do not often map on to the types of housing or economic opportunities that voucher-assisted households are looking for. By removing administrative barriers to mobility, households may find it easier to attenuate their residential location to match evolving residential preferences and employment opportunities without having to go through the process of porting their voucher.

F. **Future Research**

Combining quantitative voucher program data with qualitative data from the perspective of program stakeholders reveals findings that are consistent with past studies that have exclusively employed one strategy or the other. However, there are clear benefits to adopting a strategy that employs both approaches simultaneously. Linking large-scale patterns of mobility with data on the lived experiences of porting voucher households provides insight into the ways that program design intersects with the behavior and experiences of program stakeholders. The novel approach of constructing longitudinal program histories from voucher household administrative data has been used in the past to examine nationwide patterns of voucher residential mobility, but this is the first study that

[29] Katz and Turner suggest that regional voucher programs could be run by private agencies other than housing authorities, potentially promoting competition (and thereby, innovation) amongst agencies competing for the regional voucher contract.

brings this analytical strategy into relationship with local communities and the experiences of local stakeholders. Future research can continue to draw on this strategy to learn more about patterns of residential mobility. One significant limitation of this research as it stands is that the geographic scope of this research is limited to the state of Illinois. Given that the voucher is designed to be nationally portable, a profitable next step will be to compare

Voucher portability in Illinois does not occur within a vacuum. Because portability allows voucher households to move nationally, it is important that future research contextualizes intra-state flows with those that are occurring between states. Analysis of nationwide patterns of portability has already been conducted by Feins and Patterson (2005) and Climaco et al. (2008), but only at an aggregate level. Using an approach similar to that used within this dissertation could provide perspective on patterns of longer-distance (interstate) mobility, and could examine outcomes for those households for which residential location choice is made even more complicated by distance. This type of research could also start to assess whether the decision space for long distance moves differs from that for local or intrastate moves.

This research also has significant implications for the mobility of low-income and voucher-assisted households as a result of human or natural disasters. Generating longitudinal portraits of households who are compelled to relocate from areas that experience disasters can help us to understand post-disaster prospects for such households. Given the potential of longitudinal program data to show short-term and long-term impacts, such analyses may help emergency management planners and housing authorities to better plan for evacuation and relocation of vulnerable households during disaster events. Such analysis may also help hazards and disaster researchers to better understand the ways that certain types of communities foster the social vulnerability (Cutter, et al. 2003) of low-income households to human and natural hazards.

These data may also benefit from other modeling strategies, especially generative strategies (Epstein 2006), such as agent-based modeling. Non-deterministic modeling strategies are becoming increasingly more common within policy analysis, particularly around questions related to housing markets and behavior (Meen and Meen 2003). In terms of the housing search, preliminary work such as that of Paul Torrens (2007) provides a good framework to transport over to modeling assisted housing mobility. While such a modeling strategy is not focused on determining or predicting future behavior, it can help policy researchers to understand the ways in which factors may work together to contribute towards manifested outcomes and patterns. As a potential extension to this research, an agent-based model of assisted housing mobility could combine some of the revealed preference data contained within the portability dataset with some of the stated preference data contained within the in-depth interviews. These data could help inform agents which within the modeling context would then act out particular behaviors across virtual space and time. As in this research, agents might potentially represent housing authorities, landlords, and tenants, allowing for a model that could examine the influence of agent preferences and behaviors on the resultant relocation patterns of “moving” voucher-assisted households.

This dissertation has only scratched the surface of the potential of the portability dataset. While information within the dataset is focused primarily upon changes in household status in location, it also contains some key information about landlords who are renting to voucher-assisted households. This dissertation has sought to engage with the ways in which landlord decisions and strategies bear influence on the prospects of assisted tenants, yet there is still a lot more which can be learned about the interaction between landlords and the voucher program. Future research may be able to combine information from the portability dataset with additional qualitative data (expanding upon the type of landlord data collected for this study) in order to provide additional insight into the decision-making process of landlords.

VII. CONCLUSION

The task of this dissertation has been to examine the ways in which administrative and landlord practices contribute to the types of housing and non-housing outcomes experienced by porting voucher households. Given that most prior studies of voucher-based residential mobility have all but ignored the role of these two program stakeholders, this dissertation adds to the knowledge of how the voucher program works "on the ground" in the hopes of helping to design better policy interventions that link residential mobility with household economic and social mobility. By analyzing the relationships between the three stakeholder groups that form the basis of the voucher intervention, this research links program policies with the types of outcomes that manifest themselves in terms of the lived experiences of program participants, and in terms of the local and regional patterns of voucher household residence and mobility. The use of longitudinal data coupled with in-depth interviews allowed for this research to look across space, time, and experience to understand outcomes and their spatial manifestations.

The implications of this work are important for Housing Choice Voucher Program officials, but also contribute to a larger discussion around mobility theory and empirical practice. This work helps program officials understand the ways in which local relationships influence the moving process and the types of outcomes experienced post-move. This research also has significant implications for continued research linking residential mobility and the distribution of the community factors that support the economic and social development of households.

This dissertation shows that while the idea of a geography of opportunity has significant theoretical purchase, that in practice, measuring and understanding opportunity as a lived experience is significantly more complicated. Past research and policy evaluation viewed neighborhood-level demographic attributes as an important proxy for the types of underlying opportunity factors that are present at the local level. At the same time, the practice of using such demographic attributes to quantify opportunity has been considerably more successful at identifying areas of disopportunity as opposed to identifying areas of opportunity. Research associated with legal remedies like the Gautreaux Consent Decree and policy experiments like the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration Program have used "inverse" of measures of racial segregation and concentrated poverty in origin communities a means of separating "high" and "low" opportunity neighborhoods. Yet, moves constrained to areas with low amounts of the negative demographic features of these origin communities resulted in mixed outcomes at best for those households who moved to "high opportunity" areas.

Voucher-assisted households who are unconstrained in their residential location choices tend to on average make "lateral" moves to communities with relatively similar demographic characteristics as the communities from which they left, as opposed to moving "up" demographically, contrary to the aim of policy experiments and legal remedies. Three contributing factors, personal preferences, access to opportunity communities, and the relevance of opportunity proxies were explored. Findings indicate that all three factors bear importance in understanding why voucher-assisted households as a whole are moving over and not moving up. Examining the influence of preferences, voucher households moved and chose new residential locations for a variety of reasons, including local connections to family, friends, and access to community resources. Racial and economic integration may have been part of "good" communities, but it was not the primary driver of location choices. In terms of access, stakeholders described a variety of barriers that limited the number of actually existing housing choices available. While the voucher subsidy opens up a wide range of housing opportunities, housing authority officials and landlords maintain significant control as gatekeepers to these resources. Findings also indicate that the types of proxies for opportunity described within past research bear little resemblance to the types of neighborhood attributes which research subjects described as contributing to "good" neighborhoods. Instead, the attractiveness of particular neighborhoods was highly individualized, and was often linked to factors exogenous from the overall "look" of neighborhood demographics.

Given the complexity and highly local nature of residential mobility within the Housing Choice Voucher Program, what can housing authority officials, housing policy analysts, and residential mobility theorists take away from this research to benefit program policy and operations, research empirics, and theory development? Below I highlight some insights and implications around personal preferences, access to opportunity communities, and the relevance of opportunity proxies.

A. **Addressing Tenant Preferences**

The findings from this research show that tenants identify and choose housing opportunities based upon a variety of factors that differ based upon preferences, past experience, and goals at the time of the move. Fundamental to the choices which tenants made was a desire to find a "good" housing unit in a "good" community. What was considered to be good varied widely. At the same time, fundamental to good neighborhoods was a sense of order, stability, and support, whether from factors such as proximity to friends and family, to access to public transportation, to being close to people of similar racial, ethnic, or situational backgrounds.

Research from past policy experiments has shown that overriding tenant preferences by constraining moves to particular types of neighborhoods can result in positive life changes for voucher-assisted households, particularly the children who participate in these types of moves. At the same time, those studies as well as some insights from tenants and housing authority officials participating in this research show that tenants moving under these circumstances have historically moved back to the communities that they came from due to dissatisfaction or an inability to make the move "work".

The housing and neighborhood choice decision is a complex one, amalgamating household needs and preferences with an assessment of available options as well as a forecast of future outcomes. Programs involving residential mobility policy to the extent that the HCVP does can best serve clients by providing information to help households make good decisions, while at the same time working to develop and maintain positive relationships with landlords so that a greater number of potential opportunities can be translated into actual opportunities.

These findings also suggest that while mobility can play an important role in changing life circumstances for some low-income households, that other households maintain a preference to stay in place. Going forward, studies of mobility need to evaluate the decision to move in relation to the decision to stay in place. Applying this recommendation to local housing policy and the role of urban planners and local government officials, this research suggests that while mobility can be an important part of an overall strategy for improving resident circumstances and neighborhood outlooks, that respecting and supporting tenant decisions to stay in place must be a complimentary strategy.

B. Addressing Housing Supply

The voucher subsidy opens up a wide range of housing opportunities that would not be available without the subsidy. At the same time, analysis of the geography of residence for voucher households shows substantial patterns of clustering that persist across space and time. While this phenomenon is partially attributable to similarities in household preferences (see the discussion above), supply of available housing opportunities also shapes the overall patterns of residence and the resultant outcomes. This research identifies many reasons why housing opportunities may not translate into actionable choices. Available units may not meet tenant needs or program standards. Landlords may find it difficult to assess the risk associated with renting to a voucher assisted household. Non-housing affordability issues may make some housing opportunities less attractive or unviable for a household.

Tenants, landlords, and program officials provided substantial insight into the issues affecting housing supply. Housing authority officials' primary task is to focus on maintaining the relationships with landlords who are already participating in the program. Attracting new landlords is something which housing authorities do, but scarce staff resources prevent a focus on targeted recruitment of landlords, and make it difficult to spend much time working to retain existing landlords. (Greenlee, 2011). Landlords have little choice but to compare voucher-assisted tenants to their market-rate counterparts in terms of personal and financial history. In most situations, the security of the voucher subsidy cannot fully mitigate the differential risk reflected within background checks, credit reports, and personal references. Partnerships between housing policy scholars and housing authority officials that study the successes and challenges of households in meeting their obligations as tenants within the program may be able to help landlords make more informed decisions regarding potential voucher-assisted renters. At the same time, analyzing and presenting such information must be done in such a way that does not create substantial bias against those households who are assessed as being more risky tenants.

Supply of housing is also influenced greatly by public perception of the voucher program. Even in situations where landlords may be willing to rent to voucher-assisted households, community sentiment and bias against low-income households may make certain communities unviable places to live. While program officials and landlords can play an important role in dispelling rumors and misperceptions about who voucher-assisted households are, where they live, and how they relate to their communities, more research and dialog about the root causes of these perceptions is necessary. Deconstructing such perceptions also requires a better understanding of the types of social, economic, and demographic transitions that are happening within these communities, including analysis of patterns of residential mobility amongst non-subsidized households. Contextualizing the moves of voucher-subsidized households within larger patterns of mobility and geographies of residence can help to disentangle unique patterns of voucher household residence from more general patterns of local and regional demographic change.

C. **Addressing Opportunity Measures**

Comparing popular proxies of opportunity to the choices which households make reveals significant shortcomings in terms of the ways in which opportunity is measured. Opportunity is highly individualistic, and is difficult to measure, even in the aggregate. This finding does not preclude identifying strategies for encouraging low-income households to move to racially and economically integrated communities. Instead, it is a reminder that the beneficial influence of these neighborhood attributes may be counterbalanced and superseded by other negative attributes, some of which are quantifiable, and many which are either not quantifiable within a policy context or which reflect individual circumstances.

The proxies for opportunity which have been applied to voucher-based residential mobility programs were developed around specific concerns, namely around legal mandates to reduce segregation and policy goals of reducing poverty. The benefit of such measures is that they are easy to measure with readily available data, which is uniformly available nationwide across a variety of geographic scales. These measures are also important means of describing some fundamental characteristics of communities. At the same time, this research shows that these characteristics do not improve substantially when households undertake voucher portability, although porters are more likely to start off within demographically “better” communities than households who stay in place or who make local moves. Conversations with tenants indicate that while racially and economically integrated communities may form part of the individual rubric for “good” communities, that many other factors, including personal preferences and the availability of housing opportunities may supersede preferences for racial or economic integration.

From a policy perspective, these findings have multiple implications. First, these proxies may not be adequately capturing the types of opportunities which households seek and act upon. Second, these proxies may capture opportunity, but the residential mobility process may not address structural and programmatic barriers to accessing communities that are substantially different in terms of demographics from the communities which voucher-assisted households moved from. Third, the use of these proxies to describe areas of opportunity may be dangerous in that it dichotomizes porting voucher households based upon an external measure of the success of their residential location choice.

Thinking about program evaluation, adjusting local quantifications of opportunity to reflect other types of tenant concerns including non-housing affordability, utilities cost, transportation cost, and access to community resources may help to situate geographic patterns of opportunity within local contexts. Situating opportunity within local contexts, however, does not preclude continuing to use existing measures to better understand the spatial and temporal dimensions of residence and residential mobility. Making use of relative measures similar to the hot spot analysis performed as part of this research may help to extend the power of standardized data for understanding the spatial dimensions of opportunity measures across a wide variety of geographies.

D. <u>**Re-Phrasing the Problem**</u>

This research finds evidence that administrative and landlord practices significantly shape the outcomes of voucher portability. Housing authority administrative practices shape the cumbersome process of voucher portability and the accompanying housing search in a new residential location. Landlords bear significant control over the supply and location of rental housing available for households choosing to rent with vouchers. Housing authority practices and landlords willing to rent to voucher-assisted households are not evenly distributed spatially, a fact that has been overlooked in past analyses of residential mobility outcomes within the voucher program. While the program goal of providing safe, decent, and affordable housing is relatively easy to meet with minimum housing standards and inspections, the second program goal of leveraging the voucher subsidy to open up spaces of housing opportunity that otherwise would not be available is harder to quantify and to achieve. Recruitment of new landlords does little to actively address the potential for spatial "lumpiness", particularly at the regional level, in terms of units available for voucher households to rent.

Residential mobility associated with the voucher has been upheld as one potential means of addressing the problem of "lumpy" opportunities. By allowing individual households the flexibility to choose from housing options nationwide, program theory suggests that individual residential location choices will overcome the barriers of uneven distribution of opportunity, as households move over time. This research has examined the spatial patterns of voucher residence in relation to several policy proxies for neighborhood opportunity, and finds that on average, voucher households do not reside in or relocate to areas of opportunity. This observation should not be taken as a discounting of the powerful effect which the voucher subsidy can have for low-income households. In comparing the pre-program residential locations of households who leased up with a voucher, neighborhood conditions on average improved significantly across the board.

This research finds mixed support for housing mobility intervention alone to serve as a pathway to better neighborhoods. While descriptive analysis of portability patterns suggests a slight improvement on average in household income and neighborhood demographics, conditions pre- and post- move remain largely the same. By talking with voucher households who have made portability moves, this research captures what moves (and their outcomes) mean for porting households. Findings indicate that porting households move for a variety of different reasons, of which improving neighborhood and housing conditions are only one of many considerations. Furthermore, households described selecting new residential locations based upon a variety of factors, including presence of landlords willing to rent to voucher households, access to friend and family networks, and access to employment opportunities. Oftentimes, being selective about neighborhoods became subordinated to other search constraints, some associated with program regulations, some reflective of local housing markets, and some reflecting personal preferences.

For the households who participated in this research, housing opportunities did not always translate into the types of expected non-housing opportunities that were anticipated. Of the many barriers to opportunity, particularly for those households who moved to suburban areas, lack of reliable transportation options is a significant barrier to shopping, social activity, and employment. Even for those households with a vehicle, the implication of a breakdown and costly repair was losing access to important resources and opportunities. This research finds that non-housing opportunities are also filtered through the actions of other program stakeholders. Housing authorities play an important "up front" role helping to shape the porting experience and housing search. At the same time, housing authorities play an important role in linking tenants searching for units to potential housing opportunities. The landlord role in shaping opportunity is more direct. Landlords not only have the discretion to offer or deny housing opportunities for prospective tenants, but they also play an ongoing role in working with their tenants. Some landlords went beyond standard landlord – tenant requirements to link tenants with security deposit assistance, financial counseling, and odd jobs or exhibited flexibility in accepting rent when households experienced an unforeseen expense. Other landlords played a more passive role or inflexibility in dealing with their tenants. The implication is that landlords and housing authority officials can be a significant supporting factor in the success of assisted households over time. Of course, this means that the potential also exists for housing authorities and landlords to also exert negative influence on the housing experience.

As it stands, the Housing Choice Voucher Program's strategy places housing first, in the hopes that quality housing and residential location choice will translate into other benefits for households. The findings from this research suggest that housing choice (and residential mobility) is not enough for many low-income households to create strong linkages to communities and opportunities that extend beyond the housing unit. For residential mobility and voucher portability to be a successful and substantial pathway to opportunity, program design must accept that seeking opportunity is a highly individualistic pursuit, requiring different types of supports for different movers. Program reforms that streamline the portability process, promote regional cooperation between housing authorities, and actively engage with the spatial lumpiness of participating landlords constitute a few programmatic changes that can support more individualistic projects of household opportunity generation. On top of this, ongoing programmatic support for households going beyond residential location counseling residential location counseling is another means of cultivating the types of stabilizing connections and resources necessary to turn a new residential location into a home town.

The implications of this work also extend back to place-centered theories of opportunity. While this dissertation has attempted to assess the influence of neighborhood effects on outcomes for moving households, it is clear that this linkage would benefit from more research. Porting household faced significant barriers to mobility and many unknowns when entering new residential housing markets. Such constraints make it difficult to differentiate between the neighborhoods which households rent in and the characteristics of the ideal neighborhood of choice which a household would select. This balancing of choice and housing search constraints is not at all unique to voucher-assisted households; however, this research finds that many of the constraints on choice which stakeholders identified have not been explored in detail through past research. Such past research has illustrated the power of neighborhoods to support positive outcomes for porting voucher households, but reading such outcomes through the lens of this research suggests that such outcomes are mediated through program design, stakeholder relationships, as well as the goals, desires, and motivations of the individual household. As it stands, this research suggests that neighborhood effects themselves are shaped heavily by the types of institutions and existing relationships present within the community, as well as the way the community mobilizes resources to support and integrate newcomers to the community.

This work also speaks to the literature on the geography of opportunity, and suggests that while opportunities are distributed unevenly across space and time, that access to opportunities is also contingent upon many different local relationships. As such, unlocking opportunity-rich areas is more complicated than just matching opportunity seekers with areas where relevant opportunities exist (as is suggested by the Tiebout hypothesis), but it also involves catalyzing and cultivating local relationships that help to break down barriers to accessing such opportunities. Within a programmatic framework, fully harnessing the power of the geography of opportunity requires a more time and labor-intensive process of linkage and maintenance to support the relationships and choices which move households towards opportunity. The dwindling federal support for administration of the voucher program raises doubts as to whether the program can meet its goal of actively expanding spaces of opportunity for low-income households. At the same time, program reforms, many of which are filtering through the Federal legislative process show some potential to begin to address some of the programmatic and structural barriers to successful residential mobility within the program.

Finally, this work suggests that significant barriers still exist that reduce the power of the voucher subsidy to link households with new and different opportunities through residential mobility. Across many of the location contexts that were part of this research, evidence of significant bias and stigma against voucher households was present. Such stigma translated into among other things, reluctance for landlords to rent to voucher households, and in some locations it resulted in active efforts to cut off access to local resources and opportunities for households on the move. Public perception of “Section 8” housing is influenced in many of these communities by associations of the program with the failure of fixed unit public housing within central cities like Chicago. Even though analysis of residential mobility patterns of voucher households shows that the predominant flow of porting households is to central cities and the surrounding metropolitan area, popular mythology about the program is often dangerously mobilized into bias against the voucher program and voucher households as well as any other households who display characteristics that map on to unfounded stereotypes of program participants. While these findings are not terribly different from those from early mobility experiments such as Gautreaux where households who moved to suburban areas were met with outright racial discrimination and violence, stigma and bias against the voucher program today translates into more subtle forms of exclusion, particularly as many communities turn towards local revanchist strategies amidst scarce public and private resources, and uncertain economic futures.

By connecting statewide patterns of mobility with local accounts of program participation, this research adds insight to past studies of residential mobility. Where the majority of studies have either sought to analyze patterns of mobility or understand the lived experiences of voucher households on the move, this research melds the two strategies to learn more about the ways that spatial patterns of mobility reflect the lived experiences of movers. Furthermore, this research finds that lived experiences indicate that residential location decisions and their outcomes are more complicated and more dependent upon local relationships than what past research has described and mobilized into policy interventions. The findings from this research suggest that the types of policy proxies for opportunity which have been used in past mobility experiments do not map well onto the community attributes that porting voucher households are looking for or the constraints which they face in the portability process, and subsequent local housing search. These findings also speak to the limited success particularly in terms of long-term outcomes for families participating in special mobility programs. Because of the "mismatch" between policy proxies for opportunity and the types of opportunities which households factor into their residential location decisions, it is no surprise that many households made subsequent moves to areas that looked demographically "worse off" than their initial opportunity move sites.

The results from this study shed light on the processes shaping the outcomes of residential mobility in Illinois, and suggest that the program overall could better meet its goal of connecting tenant choices with opportunities. At the same time, the program is designed to operate as a housing intervention. Evidence from this research shows significant improvements in neighborhood characteristics between neighborhoods of residence before participation in the program, and during participation in the program. The importance of the financial stability that comes with the voucher subsidy should not be discounted, but has been largely overlooked within past research. Part of this is due to the focus of past research on special mobility programs which involved using vouchers to relocate residents of public housing. As the body of knowledge about the general Housing Choice Voucher population grows, so too will our understanding of the ways in which the program supports the financial and residential stability of participating households. Studies such as this one that integrate analysis of statewide and large-scale patterns of mobility with local accounts and analyses of the ways that relationships shape program outcomes provide a profitable approach for future research.

E. **Moving Forward**

Program stakeholders recognize the potential of the voucher program to result in powerful impacts on the long-term welfare of low-income tenants and communities across the nation. Yet, the barriers to more fully realizing the potential of the voucher program remain great given the national scope of the program, the scarce financial resources available to support program operations, and the fragmentation of a program that operates across thousands of housing authorities nationwide. Moving forward within the program may require stakeholders to re-think the promise of opportunity within a choice-based program. Provided that opportunity is highly individualistic, and representative of complex behaviors, relationships, and factors exogenous to the voucher program and residential mobility, does opportunity belong in the Housing Choice Voucher Program?

Displacing opportunity from the program and policy analytics (as an aggregate form of measuring process and outcomes) creates space for a more highly individualized and more personalized understanding of the linkage between mobility and opportunity within the program. Displacing opportunity does not mean exculpating housing authorities, landlords, or neighborhoods from the types of outcomes experienced by voucher assisted tenants, but instead it requires a closer examination of the ways in which the program helps individual households thrive in communities of their choice. For policy evaluators and academics, displacing opportunity from the program does not eliminate the need for research that links program stakeholders and neighborhoods to outcomes, but it calls for focus on the process dimension of the individual pursuit of opportunity. This research shows that by blending intensive and extensive methods, process and outcomes can be brought into focus and tension with each other in ways that reveal the complexity of linking residential mobility with the pursuit and realization of opportunity.

Removing the promise of opportunity from the voucher program does not eliminate the need for accountability or the need to support the development of low-income households. Instead, removing the promise of opportunity calls for a more personal and holistic treatment of what opportunity means for individual households, as well as more intensive work on the part of the program to help leverage scarce resources to connect tenants with the opportunities they desire. This study underscores the idea that moving can be an important catalyst for some households to create positive changes in other aspects of their life. At the same time, residential mobility is only one pathway for achieving positive change. Rossi (1955) and Tiebout (1956) suggest that mobility allows households to sort into areas that offer the amenities and services which households need. This perspective has driven the underpinnings of how residential mobility and opportunity have been measured within the voucher program. Contrary to that view, this research suggests that personal relationships and community connections, preferences, as well as programmatic and structural barriers can all contribute to the choice not to move. Moving forward means respecting the range of choices which households make, and working across scholarly, professional, and programmatic boundaries to support the transformation of choice into opportunity.

F. **Personal Reflections**

This dissertation has been highly transformative in my development as an academic, researcher, and individual. I remain in awe at the passion and generosity of the research participants who contributed their time and insight towards this work. Their commitment to the power of the Housing Choice Voucher Program to positively transform life circumstances provides me with great hope for the future of the program, despite an array of daunting challenges. Undertaking a research project of this magnitude requires significant reliance upon the generosity of strangers to help achieve often abstract and far-off objectives, yet I found again and again that many people valued and wanted to contribute to this project.

Moving forward, I see great promise in approaching future questions using the same analytical strategy that I employed here. Many contemporary policy questions require new approaches that gain insight to questions through their complexity. At the same time, this strategy is both time and labor intensive, both things that are scarce resources. My challenge going forward is to think about how this type of approach can be infused into processes involving significant time and resource constraints. One potential strategy is to split up the work, tackling the portions of analysis that require significant technical skill, while partnering with the bearers of “indigenous” knowledge to understand how these information can come together to provide insight that is greater than the sum of their parts.

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X. APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
203 Administrative Office Building
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

Exemption Granted

February 24, 2009

Andrew Greenlee, MS
Urban Planning and Policy
Urban Planning and Policy
412 S Peoria Street, M/C 345
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Phone: (312) 996-4401 / Fax: (312) 996-5766

RE: Research Protocol # 2009-0158
"A Relational Analysis of Porting Illinois' Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program"

PAF#:	2008-06045
Grant/Contract No:	H-215505G
Grant/Contract Title:	A Relational Analysis of Porting Illinois' Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program
Sponsor:	US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Dear Mr. Greenlee:

Your Claim of Exemption was reviewed on February 21, 2009 and it was determined that your research protocol meets the criteria for exemption as defined in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects [(45 CFR 46.101(b)]. You may now begin your research.

Exemption Period: February 21, 2009 – February 20, 2012

Your research may be conducted at UIC and with adult subjects only.

The specific exemption category under 45 CFR 46.101(b) is:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You are reminded that investigators whose research involving human subjects is determined to be exempt from the federal regulations for the protection of human subjects still have responsibilities for the ethical conduct of the research under state law and UIC policy. Please be aware of the following UIC policies and responsibilities for investigators:

1. Amendments You are responsible for reporting any amendments to your research protocol that may affect the determination of the exemption and may result in your research no longer being eligible for the exemption that has been granted.

2. Record Keeping You are responsible for maintaining a copy all research related records in a secure location in the event future verification is necessary, at a minimum these documents include: the research protocol, the claim of exemption application, all questionnaires, survey instruments, interview questions and/or data collection instruments associated with this research protocol, recruiting or advertising materials, any consent forms or information sheets given to subjects, or any other pertinent documents.

3. Final Report When you have completed work on your research protocol, you should submit a final report to the Office for Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

4. Information for Human Subjects UIC Policy requires investigators to provide information about the research protocol to subjects and to obtain their permission prior to their participating in the research. The information about the research protocol should be presented to subjects in writing or orally from a written script. When appropriate, the following information must be provided to all research subjects participating in exempt studies:
   a. The researchers affiliation; UIC, JBVMAC or other institutions,
   b. The purpose of the research,
   c. The extent of the subject's involvement and an explanation of the procedures to be followed,
   d. Whether the information being collected will be used for any purposes other than the proposed research,
   e. A description of the procedures to protect the privacy of subjects and the confidentiality of the research information and data,
   f. Description of any reasonable foreseeable risks,
   g. Description of anticipated benefit,
   h. A statement that participation is voluntary and subjects can refuse to participate or can stop at any time,
   i. A statement that the researcher is available to answer any questions that the subject may have and which includes the name and phone number of the investigator(s).
   j. A statement that the UIC IRB/OPRS or JBVMAC Patient Advocate Office is available if there are questions about subject's rights, which includes the appropriate phone numbers.

Please be sure to:

→Use your research protocol number (listed above) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact me at (312) 355-2908 or the OPRS office at (312) 996-1711. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Hoehne
Assistant Director, IRB # 2
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Enclosure: (1) Optional Form 310 - Protection of Human Subjects, Assurance Identification/Certification/Declaration

cc: Charles J. Hoch, Urban Planning and Policy, M/C 348
Janet Smith, Urban Planning and Policy, M/C 345
OVCRAdmin

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
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Approval Notice
Initial Review (Response To Modifications)

November 15, 2010

Andrew Greenlee, MS
Urban Planning and Public Affairs
Urban Planning and Policy
400 S Peoria Street, Suite2100, M/C 345
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (312) 995-0215 / Fax: (312) 996-5766

RE: Protocol # 2010-0810
"A Relational Analysis of Mobility in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program"

Dear Mr. Greenlee:

Your Initial Review (Response To Modifications) was reviewed and approved by Members of IRB #2 by the Expedited review process on November 5, 2010. You may now begin your research

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: November 5, 2010 - November 4, 2011
Approved Subject Enrollment #: 30
Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors: These determinations have not been made for this study since it has not been approved for enrollment of minors.
Performance Sites: UIC
Sponsor: US Department of Housing and Urban Development
PAF#: 2010-00498
Grant/Contract No: H-21572SG
Grant/Contract Title: A Relational Analysis of Mobility in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program
Research Protocol(s):

a) A Relational Analysis of Mobility in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program, Version 1.0, 9/28/2010

Recruitment Material(s):

a) Follow-Up Re-Contact Script, Version 1.0, 10/05/2010
b) Initial Eligibility Script, Version 2.0, 10/05/2010
c) Recruitment Flyer, Version 2.0, 10/05/2010

Informed Consent(s):

a) Informed Consent Document, Version 3.0, 11/03/2010

Your research meets the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific categories:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.,
(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note the Review History of this submission:

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action
09/29/2010	Initial Review	Expedited	10/02/2010	Modifications Required
10/13/2010	Response To Modifications	Expedited	10/14/2010	Modifications Required
11/03/2010	Response To Modifications	Expedited	11/05/2010	Approved

Please remember to:

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2010-0810) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the enclosure,
"UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects"

Please note that the UIC IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 355-2939. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Jewell Hamilton

Jewell Hamilton, MSW
IRB Coordinator, IRB # 2
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Enclosure(s):

1. **UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects**
2. **Informed Consent Document(s):**
   a) Informed Consent Document, Version 3.0, 11/03/2010
3. **Recruiting Material(s):**
   a) Follow-Up Re-Contact Script, Version 1.0, 10/05/2010
   b) Initial Eligibility Script, Version 2.0, 10/05/2010
   c) Recruitment Flyer, Version 2.0, 10/05/2010
4. **Form 310 - Protection of Human Subjects, Assurance Identification/Certification/Declaration**

cc: Michael Pagano, Urban Planning and Public Affairs, M/C 350
Janet Lynn Smith, Faculty Sponsor, Urban Planning and Policy, M/C 345
OVCR Administration, M/C 672

OMB No. 0990-0263
Approved for use through 1/31/2012

Protection of Human Subjects
Assurance Identification/IRB Certification/Declaration of Exemption
(Common Rule)

Policy: Research activities involving human subjects may not be conducted or supported by the Departments and Agencies adopting the Common Rule (56FR28003, June 18, 1991) unless the activities are exempt from or approved in accordance with the common rule. See section 101(b) the common rule for exemptions. Institutions submitting applications or proposals for support must submit certification of appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and approval to the Department or Agency in accordance with the common rule.

Institutions must have an assurance of compliance that applies to the research to be conducted and should submit certification of IRB review and approval with each application or proposal unless otherwise advised by the Department or Agency.

1. Request Type	2. Type of Mechanism	3. Name of Federal Department or Agency and, if known, Application or Proposal Identification No.
[X] ORIGINAL [ ] CONTINUATION [ ] EXEMPTION	[X] GRANT [ ] CONTRACT [ ] FELLOWSHIP [ ] COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT [ ] OTHER: ____	US Department of Housing and Urban Development PAF# : 2010-00498 Grant#: H-21572SG

4. Title of Application or Activity	5. Name of Principal Investigator, Program Director, Fellow, or Other
A Relational Analysis of Mobility in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program, UIC Protocol #2010-0810	Andrew Greenlee, MS

6. Assurance Status of this Project *(Respond to one of the following)*

[X] This Assurance, on file with Department of Health and Human Services, covers this activity:
Assurance identification no. FWA00000083 , the expiration date January 18, 2011 , IRB Registration no. IRB00000116

[ ] This Assurance, on file with *(agency/dept)*____, covers this activity.
Assurance No.____, the expiration date ____; IRB Registration/Identification no.____ *(if applicable)*

[ ] No assurance has been filed for this institution. This institution declares that it will provide an Assurance and Certification of IRB review and approval upon request.

[ ] Exemption Status: Human subjects are involved, but this activity qualifies for exemption under Section 101(b), paragraph ____.

7. Certification of IRB Review (Respond to one of the following IF you have an Assurance on file)

[X] This activity has been reviewed and approved by the IRB in accordance with the Common Rule and any other governing regulations.
by: [ ] Full IRB Review on (date or IRB meeting) ____ or [X] Expedited Review on (date) November 5, 2010
[ ] If less than one year approval, provide expiration date ____

[ ] This activity contains multiple projects, some of which have not been reviewed. The IRB has granted approval on condition that all projects covered by the Common Rule will be reviewed and approved before they are initiated and that appropriate further certification will be submitted.

8. Comments: This research meets the criteria for expedited review as defined in [45 CFR 46.110(b)(1)] under the following specific categories: **(6)** Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes. **(7)** Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. **Approval Period: November 5, 2010 – November 4, 2011**

9. The official signing below certifies that the information provided above is correct and that, as required, future reviews will be performed until study closure and certification will be provided.	10. Name and Address of Institution
11. Phone No. *(with area code)* (312)-996-1711 12. Fax No. *(with area code)* (312)-413-2929 13. Email: uicirb@uic.edu	University Of Illinois At Chicago Institutional Review Board Room 203 AOB , M/C 672 1737 W. Polk Street Chicago, IL 60612
14. Name of Official Cynthia Tom- Klebba, M.A., C.I.P.	15. Title Associate Director
16. Signature Cynthia C. Tom Klebba	17. Date November 15, 2010

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
203 Administrative Office Building
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

Approval Notice
Initial Review (Response to Modifications)

April 12, 2011

Andrew Greenlee, MS
Urban Planning and Public Affairs
Urban Planning and Policy
400 S Peoria Street, Suite2100, M/C 345
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (312) 995-0215 / Fax: (312) 996-5766

RE: Protocol # 2011-0167
"Landlord Perspectives on Portability in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program"

Please submit letters of support from each non-UIC site along with Appendix K via an Amendment. Please note that the letters of support and Appendix K must be accompanied by an Amendment Form when submitted to the UIC IRB.

Dear Mr. Greenlee:

Your Initial Review (Response to Modifications) was reviewed and approved by the Expedited review process on March 17, 2011. You may now begin your research

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: March 17, 2011 - March 15, 2012
Approved Subject Enrollment #: 20
Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors: These determinations have not been made for this study since it has not been approved for enrollment of minors.
Performance Sites: UIC
Sponsor: None
PAF#: Not Applicable
Research Protocol(s):

a) Research Protocol; Version 1.0; 02/17/2011

Recruitment Material(s):

a) Recruitment Flyer; Version 2.0; 03/09/2011
b) Initial Eligibility Email; Version 1.0; 03/09/2011
c) Initial Eligibility Script; Version 2.0; 03/09/2011

Informed Consent(s):

a) Informed Consent Document; Version 2.0; 03/09/2011
b) Waiver of Signed Consent Document granted under 45 CFR 46.117 for eligibility screening
c) Alteration of Informed Consent granted for eligibility screening

Your research meets the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific categories:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note the Review History of this submission:

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action
02/24/2011	Initial Review	Expedited	02/26/2011	Modifications Required
03/09/2011	Response to Modifications	Expedited	03/17/2011	Approved

Please remember to:

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2011-0167) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the enclosure,
"UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects"

Please note that the UIC IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 996-9299. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Marissa Benni-Weis

Marissa Benni-Weis, M.S.
IRB Coordinator, IRB # 2
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Enclosure(s):

1. **UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects**
2. **Informed Consent Document(s):**
   a) Informed Consent Document; Version 2.0; 03/09/2011
3. **Recruiting Material(s):**
   a) Recruitment Flyer; Version 2.0; 03/09/2011
   b) Initial Eligibility Email; Version 1.0; 03/09/2011
   c) Initial Eligibility Script; Version 2.0; 03/09/2011

cc: Michael Pagano, Urban Planning and Public Affairs, M/C 350
Janet Lynn Smith, Urban Planning and Public Affairs, M/C 345

XI. VITA

Andrew Jordan Greenlee

Doctoral Candidate in Urban Planning and Policy, College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs University of Illinois at Chicago

Lecturer, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

M210 Temple Buell Hall (MC 619)

611 Lorado Taft Drive

Champaign, IL 61821

(217)-333-9069 (Work)

(773)-682-8753 (Mobile)

agreen4@uic.edu

Education

8/2006 – Present	Doctoral Candidate in Urban Planning and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago
	Dissertation: A Relational Analysis of Mobility in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program
	Advisor: Janet L. Smith
8/2004 – 5/2006	Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning, The University of Iowa
	Master's Project: The Height of Good Living 2035: A Comprehensive Plan for The City of University Heights, Iowa
	Advisor: Heather I. MacDonald
8/2000 – 6/2004	Bachelor of Arts in English and Sociology, Grinnell College

Professional Experience

2011 – Present	Lecturer, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
2007 – 2011	Research Assistant, Nathalie P. Voorhees Center, University of Illinois at Chicago
2008	Consultant, Mayor's Office of Special Events, City of Chicago
2006-2007	Intern, Mayor's Office of Special Events, City of Chicago

2005	Policy Intern, Chicago Rehab Network (Chicago, IL)
2004	Community Development Consultant, Office of Community Enhancement, Grinnell College

Grants and Funded Research

A Relational Analysis of Mobility in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program: Produce a model exploring the relationship between residential mobility and local opportunity for Housing Choice Voucher households in Illinois. (PI, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of University Partnerships, $25,000) 8/09 – 12/10

A Relational Analysis of Porting in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program: Conduct a longitudinal analysis of Illinois voucher household residential location and mobility, and analyze housing authority administrator's perspectives on voucher household mobility in impacted communities. (PI, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of University Partnerships, $11,000) 8/08 – 8/09

Publications

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2011. "A Different Lens: Administrative Perspectives on Portability in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program." Housing Policy Debate. 21(3): 377-403.

Greenlee, Andrew, Janet Smith, Sharon Legenza, and Katherine E. Walz. 2011. "Moving or Moving Up? Understanding Residential Mobility for Housing Choice Voucher Families in Illinois." Clearinghouse Review. May/June 2011.Edited Volumes and Book Chapters

Research Reports

Smith, J., Andrew Greenlee, Sharon A. Legenza, and Kate Walz. 2011. Moving or Moving Up? Understanding Residential Mobility for Housing Choice Voucher Families in Illinois. Illinois Affordable Housing Action and Research Project. UIC Voorhees Center with Sargent Shriver National Poverty Law Center, Housing Action Illinois, and Latino Policy Forum.

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2010. Illinois Assisted Housing and Residential Mobility Data Guide: County Level Fact Book and Index. Illinois African-American Family Commission.

Smith, J., Andrew Greenlee, Sharon A. Legenza, and Kate Walz. 2010. Are We Home Yet? Creating Real Choice for Housing Choice Voucher Families in Chicago. Illinois Affordable Housing Action and Research Project. UIC Voorhees Center with Sargent Shriver National Poverty Law Center, Housing Action Illinois, and Latino Policy Forum.

Greenlee, Andrew J. and Ryan Hollon. 2009. "The Making and Remaking of Urban Peripheries: Chicago and the Dynamics of Socioeconomic Exclusions Within and Without." AREA Chicago.

Greenlee, Andrew J. With Jane Fleming, Eric Gutstein, Pauline Lipman, and Janet Smith. 2009. Examining CPS' Plan to Close, Phase Out, Consolidate, Turn-Around 22 Schools. Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education, and the Nathalie P. Voorhees Center.

Greenlee, Andrew J. With Nancy Hudspeth, Pauline Lipman, Danielle Akua Smith, and Janet Smith. 2008. Examining CPS' Plan to Close, Consolidate, Turn-Around 18 Schools. Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education, and the Nathalie P. Voorhees Center.

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2004. The Downtown Grinnell Improvement Survey: Summary of Findings. Grinnell College Office of Community Enhancement.

Conference Papers and Presentations

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2011. "Landlord Influence in the Housing Choice Voucher Program." Paper presented at the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning Annual Meeting (Salt Lake City, UT)

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2011. "Moving Up or Just Moving? A Relational Analysis of Mobility in Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program." Paper presented at the Urban Affairs Association Annual Meeting (New Orleans, LA)

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2010. "Moving Up or Just Moving? Tenant Perspectives on Portability in Illinois' Housing Voucher Program." Paper presented at the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning Annual Meeting (Minneapolis, MN)

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2010. "The Geography of Choice Within Illinois' Housing Choice Voucher Program." Paper presented at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting (Washington, DC)

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2010. “Where Are We Going?: Tenant Perspectives on Portability in Illinois’ Housing Choice Voucher Program.” Paper presented at the Urban Affairs Association Annual Meeting (Honolulu, HI)

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2009 “A Different Lens: Administrative Perspectives on Portability in Illinois’ Housing Choice Voucher Program” Paper presented at the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning Annual Meeting (Crystal City, VA)

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2009 “A Different Lens: Administrative Perspectives on Portability in Illinois’ Housing Choice Voucher Program” Paper presented at the International Sociological Association Research Panel 43 Conference (Glasgow, Scotland)

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2009 “The Geography of Social Vulnerability in Illinois’ Housing Choice Voucher Program” Paper Presented at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting (Las Vegas, NV)

Greenlee, Andrew J. 2009 “A Longitudinal Assessment of Voucher Portability in Illinois’ Housing Choice Voucher Program” Paper Presented at the Urban Affairs Association Annual Meeting (Chicago, IL)

Greenlee, Andrew J. and Jerry Anthony. 2008 “The Chicago Low Income Housing Trust Fund: Evolution, Performance, and Prospects.” Paper Presented at the ACSP/AESOP Joint Congress (Chicago, IL)

Invited Lectures

October 1, 2010	“Segregation and Other Problems Experienced by Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Recipients” Invited Talk. Fair Housing / Fair Lending: New Developments in Federal and International Law. The John Marshall Law School”
June 22, 2010	“Placing Mobility in Context: Reconnaissance on Assisted Housing Mobility in Illinois” Invited Talk. The State of the African-American Family Symposium: The Migration Pattern of Chicago Public Housing Residents
October 21, 2009	“Is Chicago Making the Third Ghetto?” Invited talk, The University of Iowa
May 16, 2009	“The CHA Plan for Transformation’s Impact on Homelessness.” Invited talk, The Hyde Park Transitional Housing Project Annual Meeting

Courses Taught

Spring 2012	UP 505: Urban and Regional Analysis
	UP 508: Survey Design and Analysis
Fall 2011	UP 473: Housing and Urban Policy Planning
Summer 2010	Co-Instructor, UPP 596: Research and Writing Boot Camp, University of Illinois at Chicago
Spring 2009	Teaching Assistant, SOC 501 / EDPS 594/ UPP 594: Studying the Education, Housing and Economic Development Policy Nexus in Chicago, University of Illinois at Chicago
Fall 2008	Instructor, UPP 403: Intro to Urban Planning, University of Illinois at Chicago
Spring 2004	Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Sociology, Grinnell College

Awards and Distinctions

2006 - 2010	Abraham Lincoln Fellowship, University of Illinois at Chicago
2006	AICP Outstanding Student Award
2006	Iowa American Planning Association Chapter Service Award
2004 - 2006	Dean's Graduate Fellow, University of Iowa ($19,000 / year)
2004	Senior Alumni Award, Grinnell College
2004	Student Employee of the Year, Grinnell College

Affiliations and Memberships

2010 – Present	The Urban Affairs Association
2009 – 2011	Association of American Geographers
2004 – 2009	The American Planning Association
2006 – 2009	Illinois Chapter, American Planning Association
2004 - 2006	Iowa Chapter, American Planning Association

Service

2011- Present	FAA Library Committee
2011	Economic Development Faculty Search Committee, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
2011	Urban Design Adjunct Search Committee, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
2008 - 2009	Member, Local Host Committee, Urban Affairs Association 2009 Conference
2007 – 2008	Member, Local Host Committee, ACSP/AESOP Joint Congress
2005 - 2006	Member, Faculty Search Committee, Urban Planning, University of Iowa
2003 - 2004	Member, Faculty Search Committee, Sociology, Grinnell College