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### **Gautreaux mothers and their children: an update**

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## Gautreaux mothers and their children: an update

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The *Gautreaux* program was one of the first major residential mobility programs in the United States, providing low-income black families from public housing with opportunities to relocate to more affluent white neighborhoods in the Chicago suburbs and in other city neighborhoods. This paper reviews the most recent research on the *Gautreaux* families, which uses long-term administrative data to examine the effects of placement neighborhoods on the economic and social outcomes of mothers and children. We find that both *Gautreaux* mothers and their now-grown children were remarkably successful at maintaining the affluence and safety of their placement neighborhoods. As to the long-run economic independence of the mothers themselves, however, the new research fails to confirm the suburban advantages found in past *Gautreaux* research, although it does show that these outcomes were worst in the most racially segregated placement neighborhoods. With regard to the criminal records of *Gautreaux* children, it is found that suburban placement helped boys but not girls. Based on these results, we review possible new directions for successful mobility programs.

**Keywords:** neighborhoods; mobility programs; families; policy

### Introduction

Research on the effects of the *Gautreaux* residential mobility program was first conducted nearly two decades ago.<sup>1</sup> It showed that black mothers moving from Chicago's housing projects to middle-class white suburbs secured better jobs for themselves and better schooling for their children than mothers placed by the program within Chicago's city limits. This early research opened up powerful new ways of considering social environments as levers for improving the well-being of disadvantaged families. It suggested that the life chances of low-income people could depend as much on *where they lived* as *who they were*. This early *Gautreaux* research helped policymakers understand the potential importance of larger structural and social forces, and stimulated a broader research agenda to address the question of whether and how neighborhoods matter for changing people's lives.

The purpose of this article is to summarize results from a new wave of *Gautreaux* research, which provides a much longer run picture of residential and personal

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<sup>1</sup>See Rosenbaum and Rubinowitz (2000) for a comprehensive review of the history of the *Gautreaux* lawsuit, the implementation of the program, and early research results.

outcomes, and uses measures from administrative records rather than surveys.<sup>2</sup> This recent research goes beyond a simple city/suburban placement distinction by considering a more comprehensive set of placement neighborhood indicators drawn from Census and FBI crime data. To adjust for possible self-selection of families into different placement neighborhoods, it employs a more extensive set of pre-program control variables. Taken together, it sheds new light on the long-term impacts of neighborhood placement on family well-being and children's life chances.

### The *Gautreaux* program

The *Gautreaux* program resulted from a 1976 Supreme Court ruling in a lawsuit filed on behalf of public housing residents against the Chicago Housing Authority and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The suit charged that "these agencies had employed racially discriminatory policies in the administration of the Chicago low-rent public housing program" (Peroff, Davis, and Jones 1979). Administered by the nonprofit Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities in Chicago, the *Gautreaux* program provided public housing residents (and families on the waiting list for public housing) with help in moving to private-sector apartments, either in mostly white suburbs or within revitalizing areas in the city of Chicago. Between 1976 and 1998, over 7000 African-American families moved as part of the program, over half of them to suburban communities.<sup>3</sup>

*Gautreaux* provided families with rent subsidies that allowed them to live in apartments for the same cost as public housing, but provided neither employment nor transportation assistance to participating families. Participants moved to more than 115 suburbs throughout the six counties surrounding Chicago (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). Suburbs with a population that was more than 30% black were excluded by the consent decree. The "receiving" suburban communities were located an average of 25 miles away from voucher recipients' former homes. City moves were about seven miles away, on average.

Although *Gautreaux* counselors strove to place families in low-poverty, racially integrated neighborhoods, there were periods during the program's operation when it was very difficult to find housing in neighborhoods that met these criteria. In response, the program adjusted its definition of qualifying destinations to include neighborhoods that were quite poor and segregated but were judged to be improving.<sup>4</sup> About one-fifth of *Gautreaux* families were placed in high-poverty,

<sup>2</sup>The collection and preparation of the data used for the studies executed from 2000–2005 were done as a collaborative effort involving: Stefanie DeLuca, Greg J. Duncan, James E. Rosenbaum, Ruby Mendenhall, and Micere Keels. Various authors collaborated on each study, as cited in the references.

<sup>3</sup>A new round of the *Gautreaux* program began in 2002. Thus far, it has moved hundreds, rather than thousands, of families. Not enough time has elapsed for us to be able to assess long-term outcomes in *Gautreaux* Two.

<sup>4</sup>This practice began in 1981. While the program did not intend for these families to move to very segregated, high poverty neighborhoods, our Census-based analysis shows that some did. This unintended consequence may have resulted from the use of data from earlier census periods to characterize improving neighborhoods. For example, many Southside Chicago neighborhoods might have met the criterion of demonstrating economic revival according to the 1980 Census figures. However, if a family was placed in the late 1980s or early 1990s, these neighborhoods might have undergone demographic changes that were not represented by the previous Census figures.

highly segregated neighborhoods, almost all of which were within the city limits of Chicago (Mendenhall, DeLuca, and Duncan 2006). This variation facilitates research on mobility program outcomes, since it makes it possible to compare the fortunes of the one-fifth of families placed in poor and highly segregated neighborhoods with the four-fifths of participating families placed in more affluent and less segregated neighborhoods, some but not all of which were in suburban communities. Confounding these comparisons are other period effects of the Chicago area housing and labor markets that characterized the period in which families were allowed to move into these “improving” neighborhoods.

*Gautreaux* employed three selection criteria to harmonize the relationships between landlords and tenants. It tried to avoid overcrowding, late rent payments, and building damage by excluding families with more than four children, large debts, or unacceptable housekeeping. Although they met these criteria, qualifying participants shared many characteristics of poor single-parent welfare-dependent families.<sup>5</sup> In principle, participants had choices about where they moved. In practice, qualifying rental units were secured by rental agents working for the *Gautreaux* program and offered to families according to their position on a waiting list, regardless of their locational preference. Although participants could refuse an offer, few did so, since they were unlikely to ever get another.<sup>6</sup> As a result, participants’ preferences for placement neighborhoods had relatively little to do with where they ended up moving, providing a degree of exogenous variability in neighborhood placement that undergirds *Gautreaux* research.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, both Votruba and Kling (2004) and Mendenhall, DeLuca, and Duncan (2006) document significant correlations between baseline family and neighborhood characteristics and suburban placements. Although these characteristics are controlled in our statistical analyses, there remains the possibility of selection bias.

The continued relevance of *Gautreaux* research is due in part to its original program design, and in part to the increased methodological rigor of our most recent studies. Early *Gautreaux* research employed mean comparisons of educational and economic outcomes for families moving to the city relative to the outcomes of families moving to the suburbs, considering city movers a control group (cf.

<sup>5</sup>With 95% of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) families having four or fewer children, *Gautreaux*’s overcrowding restriction would eliminate only a few of the many *Gautreaux* families who were eligible for AFDC (US Department of Health and Human Services 1986). All three criteria reduced the eligible pool by less than 30%. Popkin (1988) found that the *Gautreaux* participants and the sample of AFDC recipients were similar in the length of time (seven years on average) spent on AFDC; however, the welfare group had more women who were second-generation recipients. In terms of marital status, the groups were again similar: 45% never married and 10% were currently married. The two groups also differed with respect to levels of education and age. Thirty-nine percent of the *Gautreaux* women dropped out of high school compared to 50% of the AFDC sample. The *Gautreaux* participants were slightly older (median age of 34 vs. 31).

<sup>6</sup>Although only about 20% of the eligible applicants ended up moving through the program, self-selection does not appear to have played a big role in program take-up (Peterson and Williams 1995). Rather than opting out of the program, most non-moving families were not offered a housing unit and thus not given the chance to participate. Housing counselors were forbidden by the consent decree from making offers selectively among eligible families, and there is no evidence that they did so.

<sup>7</sup>Families placed in the suburbs came from slightly more advantaged neighborhoods than the city movers, with the former originating from neighborhoods with higher census-tract family incomes, rates of employment, and education (see Keels et al. 2005, Table 1 for details).

Kaufman and Rosenbaum 1992; Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). In addition, much of this work relied on data for employment and welfare receipt obtained through interviews and surveys with 340 movers chosen at random from the broader set of *Gautreaux* families in a survey with a 66% response rate (Popkin, Rosenbaum, and Meaden 1993).

In a series of recent papers (see references for specific paper citations), we have conceptually and empirically supplemented the early *Gautreaux* research and addressed many of the prior research weaknesses. First, our new studies are not premised on the fact that the city movers are a control group for the suburban movers. Rather, we exploit the ample variation in the income and race distributions provided by all *Gautreaux* placement neighborhoods. In order to examine the long-term effects of residential mobility on family outcomes, we used administrative sources of data to provide systematic information on long-term outcomes. This allowed us to recover larger sample sizes and longitudinal outcomes without the potential bias of survey nonresponse.

We use multiple neighborhood-level indicators from census data instead of a simple city-suburb distinction, which allows us to examine the effects of a range of important neighborhood characteristics such as race, crime levels, poverty, and income. To be more thorough in adjusting for non-random pre-program differences, we use program records to account for both family-level characteristics, as well as the neighborhood of origin. Last, we estimate Huber-White standard errors to account for origin tract clustering among movers, and Tobit regressions to account for the large numbers of observations with extreme values (as seen in the models predicting AFDC receipt).

### Long-run residential outcomes for *Gautreaux* mothers

A pressing concern with *Gautreaux* and other mobility initiatives is whether families will stay in their new neighborhoods long enough for their lives to change. To address this issue, we collected information on recent (as of the late 1990s) addresses of *Gautreaux* families, an average of 15 years after they moved to their placement addresses (DeLuca and Rosenbaum 2003; Keels et al. 2005). We used credit reporting services, surveys, and addresses from the Illinois Department of Human Services Integrated Client Database to acquire recent addresses for 99% of the *Gautreaux* families. However, our analytic sample is 1175 (about 78% of the sample), due to missing data, outdated or out of state addresses.<sup>8</sup> We focus on the present address characteristics of the 1175 families currently living in Illinois. The credit reporting service did not provide information prior to the early 1990s, so we are unable to characterize the full sequence of moves between placement and the late 1990s. Since a vast majority of the *Gautreaux* families were female-headed households, these and other cited analyses focus exclusively on these families. We used Census and FBI crime data to characterize origin, placement, and current

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<sup>8</sup>Our original sample consists of 1506 female-headed households. Through our various geocoding and address matching attempts, we were able to obtain geocoded addresses for all but 57 households (reducing the sample to 1449). For 145 cases the address was from 1994 or earlier. We judged these addresses to be too old and deleted these cases from further analyses (reducing the sample to 1304). Another 129 addresses were out-of-state and therefore precluded comparisons within the same metropolitan area, so we omitted these (reducing the sample to 1175).

neighborhoods. For suburban addresses the crime data are based on the “reporting agency” in which the address is located (each reporting agency roughly corresponds to a town/city), and for Chicago addresses the crime data are at the level of the police district (Chicago has 25 police districts).<sup>9</sup>

With two-thirds of *Gautreaux* families who were placed in the suburbs continuing to reside in the suburbs, mothers who moved as part of the program were remarkably successful at continuing to reside in affluent neighborhoods far from their original housing-project neighborhoods (DeLuca and Rosenbaum 2003). Figure 1 provides a more general comparison of the socioeconomic and crime-related characteristics of pre-move, placement, and current addresses for *Gautreaux* mothers.

*Gautreaux* families came from very poor neighborhoods, with census-tract poverty rates averaging 42%, close to the lower boundary commonly used to define concentrated-poverty or “ghetto” neighborhoods (Figure 1).<sup>10</sup> On average, *Gautreaux* moves resulted in neighborhood poverty rates for these families that were less than half the original rate – to 17%.<sup>11</sup> As of the late 1990s, on average, mothers continued to live in neighborhoods with poverty rates that matched their placement neighborhoods; current neighborhoods averaged 16% poor residents. Nor was there regression to original neighborhood conditions in a more general measure of neighborhood affluence – average household incomes. In fact, current neighborhood household incomes (in 2000 dollars) were \$63,754, some \$9800 higher than placement-neighborhood incomes (not in figures).<sup>12</sup> The persistence of the residential socioeconomic successes of families moving in conjunction with the *Gautreaux* program is indeed striking.

The *Gautreaux* program also achieved notable successes in moving low-income black families into safer and more racially integrated neighborhoods (Figure 1). Bearing in mind that crime comparisons are confounded by overall increases in violent crime between the time of placement (which, on average, took place in 1982) and the late 1990s, violent crime rates were somewhat higher in current than placement neighborhoods (20 vs. 16 violent incidents per month), but both of these rates are lower than crime rates in original neighborhoods (22.7 violent incidents per month).

<sup>9</sup>The crime data were obtained from two sources, the Chicago Police Department’s records and the FBI uniform crime reporting data (UCR) for the suburban addresses. For addresses in the city of Chicago, we used data from the Chicago Police Department’s annual reports. These data are compiled for the 25 Chicago police districts. We used census tract boundaries of each district to match city addresses to the police district via census and police maps. The UCR data are collected by a “reporting agency,” which can be a town or a city. We matched the suburban addresses to these towns and cities by zip code.

<sup>10</sup>Neighborhood poverty rates averaged 61% among *Gautreaux* participants that resided in public housing at the time of enrollment. Half of *Gautreaux* families were on the waiting list for public housing and lived in somewhat lower poverty neighborhoods.

<sup>11</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all of the current versus origin neighborhood differences are statistically significant at the 5% level or less.

<sup>12</sup>This average masks substantial changes among participants placed in the lowest and highest fifth of neighborhood affluence. Participants placed in the lowest income neighborhoods experienced an increase of \$24,700 in moving from placement to current residence, while subsequent moves for participants placed in the highest income communities resulted in an \$11,100 decrease in neighborhood income.

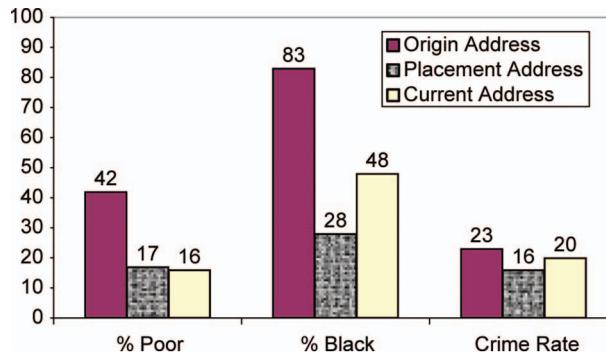


Figure 1. *Gautreaux* mothers' neighborhoods: percent poor, percent black and crime rate in origin, placement, and current neighborhoods.

By the design of the program, *Gautreaux* families placed in Chicago's suburbs underwent a particularly striking change in the racial composition of their neighborhoods.<sup>13</sup> The consent decree required that suburban placements be in communities with fewer than 30% black residents. Critics assumed that such radical changes would lead families to leave their new suburban neighborhoods later on and return to racially segregated city neighborhoods.

Data on neighborhood racial composition show that *Gautreaux* families began in highly segregated settings; on average, 83% of their neighbors in their origin communities were black (Figure 1). The program placed its families in communities that reduced this percentage by two-thirds, to 28% black. In contrast to stable rates of neighborhood poverty in subsequent neighborhoods relative to placement neighborhoods, the post-placement moves of *Gautreaux* families were to neighborhoods that contained considerably more blacks – on average, a fairly even balance of blacks and individuals from other races. Although the average fraction of black neighbors in the late 1990s had increased from placement levels, it was still only about half of what it had been in the origin neighborhoods.<sup>14</sup>

### Mothers' long-term economic self-sufficiency

An assumption behind mobility programs is that dramatic improvements in neighborhood quality will boost economic outcomes for mothers and, eventually, children (Wilson 1996; Massey and Denton 1993; Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist 1998;

<sup>13</sup>Unsurprisingly, there was much less change in the racial composition of the current neighborhoods of *Gautreaux* families who were placed in the city of Chicago. The current neighborhood percent black for these movers is 79%, which is close to the 83% black of their origin neighborhoods.

<sup>14</sup>After regression adjusting for background factors and city versus suburban placement, the probability of ending up in a relatively integrated neighborhood (30% African American or lower) is higher for those families who had been placed in low black (2.1–5%) neighborhoods than it is for all placement neighborhoods. Holding city location at placement constant, families who moved to the highest black neighborhoods (50%) are significantly less likely to reside in integrated neighborhoods years later. These differences are statistically significant. (see DeLuca and Rosenbaum (2003) for details).

McLafferty and Preston 1992; Holzer 1991). Earlier *Gautreaux* research showed that families placed in the suburbs did indeed fare much better than families placed in the city (Rosenbaum and DeLuca 2000; Popkin, Rosenbaum, and Meaden 1993). More recent research on *Gautreaux* mothers' employment and welfare receipt outcomes, measured up to 22 years after program placement, has attempted to replicate the earlier suburb/city results as well as examine differences in outcomes across a broader set of placement neighborhood characteristics (Mendenhall, DeLuca, and Duncan 2006).

In contrast to earlier *Gautreaux* research's reliance on participant surveys, Mendenhall, DeLuca, and Duncan (2006) minimized non-response and reporting error by using administrative data on welfare receipt and employment. The analyses of welfare receipt focused on the amount of time participants eligible for welfare from Illinois's AFDC program received income from that program in the early 1990s.<sup>15</sup>

A first surprise was that families placed in suburban neighborhoods received AFDC just as often as families placed in the city of Chicago (see Table 1). However, a more detailed examination of placement-neighborhood characteristics showed welfare receipt differences by racial composition; women placed in neighborhoods with few (0–10%) black neighbors spent 7% less time on welfare than women placed in areas with more black residents (61–100%)<sup>16</sup>. Combining placement neighborhood race and socioeconomic resources produced the best fitting model, with women placed in high-black, low-resource<sup>17</sup> neighborhoods receiving welfare 7% longer, on average, than women placed in any other neighborhoods.

The employment and earnings analyses in Mendenhall, DeLuca, and Duncan (2006) were based on data from Illinois state unemployment insurance records gathered for the period between 1995 and 1999. As with the welfare records, and in contrast to earlier *Gautreaux* research (see Popkin, Rosenbaum, and Meaden 1993), employment rates and earnings were virtually identical for mothers placed in city and suburban locations. Here too the racial and socioeconomic characteristics of placement neighborhoods were what mattered (Table 1). Women placed with few (0–10%) versus many (61–100%) black neighbors had employment rates that were

<sup>15</sup>The data covered the period from 1990 to 1992. Demographic eligibility for the program was determined by projecting the ages of children present in families at the time of their original *Gautreaux* moves. Estimations employed Tobit regression models and included a host of controls for family and origin neighborhood characteristics.

<sup>16</sup>Previous research by Rosenbaum and DeLuca (2000), found that both tract racial composition and the education level of tract residents in *Gautreaux* placement neighborhoods was related to later welfare receipt, but that the education level retained significance after both were included in the models. These results differ slightly from the more recent work presented here, largely due to differences in the way the dependent variable was defined. For example, the data for this previous study focused on AFDC receipt at one point in time, did not include neighborhood crime rates, and did not factor AFDC eligibility into spells of receipt. The independent variables also differ across these studies, since Rosenbaum and DeLuca (2000) use single Census tract variables to characterize neighborhoods, and Mendenhall, DeLuca, and Duncan (2006) use race and a neighborhood resource indicator (see footnote 16).

<sup>17</sup>We used tract-level measures of residents' education, median family income, crime rates, and male unemployment as proxies for the neighborhood level processes and resources commonly associated with child and family outcomes. The "neighborhood resource" variable was created by subtracting standardized measures of crime level and male unemployment from mean family income and the percent of individuals with a college degree or more in a tract. We used the average of the composite value.

Table 1. AFDC, employment, and earnings outcomes for *Gautreaux* mothers by placement neighborhood characteristics.

Current outcomes	Placement neighborhood characteristic	“Bivariate” difference in outcomes	Regression-adjusted difference in outcomes
Percentage of time received AFDC	Suburban vs. city placement	No significant difference	No significant difference
	Neighborhood income	No significant difference	7% less time if placed in low black/high resource
Percentage of time employed	Neighborhood % black	7% more time if placed in high vs. low % black neighborhood*	vs. high black/low resource neighborhoods*
	Suburban vs. city placement	No significant difference	No significant difference
Earnings	Neighborhood income	No significant differences	6–9% more time if placed in almost all but the highest black/lowest income neighborhoods**
	Neighborhood % black	6% less time if placed in high vs. low % black neighborhood	No significant difference
Earnings	Suburban vs. city placement	No significant difference	No significant difference
	Neighborhood income	No significant difference	\$2400 and \$2900 less per year in almost all but the highest black/lowest income neighborhoods*
Earnings	Neighborhood % black	\$2100 less per year in high vs. low % black neighborhood	

Note: “Bivariate” differences come from regressions that control for baseline family differences and the characteristics of origin neighborhoods but not for any other placement neighborhood characteristics. “Regression-adjusted differences” also control for other placement neighborhood characteristics.

\*Significant at the 5% level or below.

\*\*Significance ranges from 10% level or lower. See Mendenhall, DeLuca, and Duncan (2006) for details.

six percentage points higher and earned \$2200 more annually. Women placed in neighborhoods with a combination of many black neighbors and low neighborhood resources worked 6–9% less and earned between \$2400 and \$2900 less per year than women placed in any other kind of neighborhood. Although some of the neighborhood race results were only at the margin of statistical significance, they constitute an important possible direction for future research on residential mobility.

To better understand the mechanisms behind these patterns, Keels and Mendenhall selected 25 *Gautreaux* participants who had been placed in a variety of neighborhoods to participate in two- to three-hour semi-structured interviews about their placement communities and employment experiences.<sup>18</sup> These conversations revealed that both jobs and educational opportunities were more plentiful in communities outside of the high-black and low-resource areas. Participants placed in the integrated, higher resource areas – in both suburbs and the city – reported finding jobs by just walking around in their neighborhoods.<sup>19</sup> Others were able to take advantage of two- and four-year colleges in their communities to acquire new skills.

### **Second-generation effects: adult children's residential location and participation in crime**

Whether the enduring residence in high-quality neighborhoods enjoyed by *Gautreaux* mothers is matched by their children is the subject of two recent studies (Keels 2006a; 2006b). Keels (2006a) investigated the residential outcomes of *Gautreaux* children who were age 17 or younger at the time of move and were age 25 or older when their current address was located (between 1995 and 2000).<sup>20</sup> Name, social security number, and date of birth were needed to match participant records to administrative data sources. Unfortunately, more than half of all children had missing or incomplete social security numbers in the paper files. This meant that only 447 of the 1077 children could be included in these analyses.<sup>21</sup> A post-1994

<sup>18</sup>Keels (2006b) and Mendenhall (2004) randomly selected *Gautreaux* participants to interview based on the following characteristics/criteria: racial composition of placement communities (75% or higher black and 30% or lower black), residence in the city or suburbs, age of their children at the time of move, and birth cohort (born after 1951). They were thus able to interview women who represent the full range of *Gautreaux* participants: city movers to high black areas, city movers to low black areas, and suburban movers to low black areas.

<sup>19</sup>Research analyzing interviews conducted with mothers closer to the time of move (in the late 1980s) suggests additional ways that new suburban environments improved employment prospects, including an increased sense of self-efficacy and assistance from neighbors with child care and transportation (Rosenbaum, DeLuca, and Tuck 2005; Rosenbaum, Reynolds, and DeLuca 2002).

<sup>20</sup>This is a sample of 273 children and draws residential information an average of 14 years after children moved to their placement community. Eighty-four percent of these children continued to reside within Illinois. None of these now-adult children resided in the same apartments or houses into which they were initially placed and only nine continued to reside at the same address as their mother.

<sup>21</sup>Based on logistic regressions (not presented here), year of move was the only factor significantly associated with whether children had complete social security number information. Families moving later in the program's operation were more likely to have provided children's social security number information, a result of the program's imposition of strict verification requirements in response to increasing demand for the program. Importantly, none of the origin or placement neighborhood Census characteristics was significantly associated with whether social security information was missing.

address was located for 343 of the 447 now-adult children. However, 70 of these children were under the age of 25 when that address was last updated and therefore could not be included in these analyses. The analyses presented in this paper focus on the residential outcomes of this final sample of 273 now-adult children.

Remarkably, the initial dramatic improvements in placement neighborhood socioeconomic status were maintained as successfully for *Gautreaux* children as for their mothers (Figure 2). As with their mothers, poverty rates in the placement and current neighborhoods for children averaged 19% and 18% poor, respectively, while neighborhood income levels were \$49,174 and \$61,290. These averages conceal some upward mobility from the worst placement neighborhoods and some downward mobility from the better ones. Now-adult children placed in the poorest neighborhoods (51% poor) currently reside in neighborhoods that average 19% poor residents. Children placed in communities with the fewest poor neighbors (3% poor) currently reside in neighborhoods that average 15% poor residents.

Keels (2006a) also found that *Gautreaux*'s primary programmatic goal of residential integration was largely accomplished for these children; they resided in neighborhoods in the late 1990s that were substantially more integrated than their overwhelmingly minority origin neighborhoods (Figure 2).<sup>22</sup> Placement neighborhoods were 30% black and current neighborhoods were 44% black. Although the percentage of black neighbors increased substantially as children moved from placement to current addresses, it was still far lower than the 86% average black residence in these children's origin neighborhoods.

With most *Gautreaux* children still too young for a reliable assessment of career successes, Keels (2006b) turned to children's arrests and convictions during their young adult years as revealed in data compiled by the Illinois criminal justice system (Table 2). Administrative data on criminal justice system involvement come from the Illinois State Police (ISP) arrests database, which contains all arrests made in Illinois between 1990 and 2001 for individuals' age 17 and older. There were a total of 1055 age-eligible males and 1072 age-eligible females. Unfortunately, successful matches

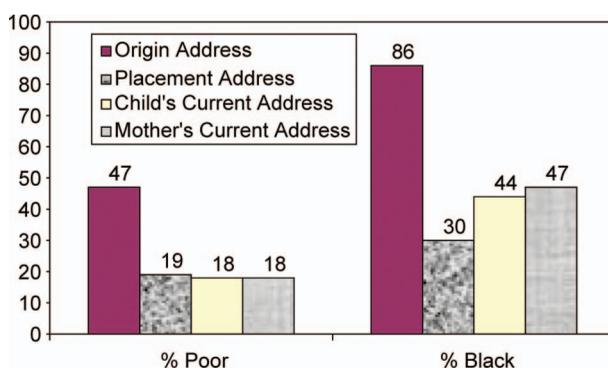


Figure 2. *Gautreaux* children's neighborhoods: percent poor and percent black based in origin, placement, and current neighborhoods.

<sup>22</sup>As with our discussion of Figure 1, all noted differences are statistically significant at the 5% level or below.

Table 2. Arrest and conviction outcomes for *Gautreaux* children by placement neighborhood characteristics.

Crime category	Placement neighborhood characteristic	Males		Females	
		“Bivariate” difference in outcomes		“Bivariate” difference in outcomes	
Arrests for drug, violent, & theft offenses	Suburban vs. city placement % Poor	26% lower odds for suburban placement 16% lower odds for every 1 SD increment in placement neighborhood income	No significant differences	No significant difference	No significant differences
	% Black	No significant differences	No significant differences	26% lower odds for every 1 SD increment in % black in placement neighborhood	No significant differences
Convictions for drug, violent, & theft offenses	Suburban vs. city placement % Poor	No significant differences	No significant differences	190% higher odds for suburban placement	No significant differences
	% Black	No significant differences	No significant differences	No significant differences	37% lower odds for every 1 SD increment in % black in placement neighborhood
Arrests for drug offenses	Suburban vs. city placement % Poor	42% lower odds for suburban placement 24% lower odds for every 1 SD increment in placement neighborhood income	No significant differences	NA	NA
	% Black	No significant differences	No significant differences	NA	NA
Convictions for drug offenses	Suburban vs. city placement % Poor	51% lower odds for suburban placement No significant differences	No significant differences	NA	NA
	% Black	No significant differences	No significant differences	NA	NA

Note: “Bivariate” differences come from regressions that control for baseline family differences and the characteristics of origin neighborhoods but not for any other placement neighborhood characteristics. It proved impossible to adjust for other placement neighborhood characteristics owing to a high degree of correlation among placement neighborhood measures. All differences are statistically significant at the 5% level or below.  
 NA: Drug offenses were not calculated separately for females owing to their infrequency.  
 See Keels (2006b) for details on the analyses.

to the ISP data require children's social security numbers and these were either missing or incomplete in the paper files for about half of the age-eligible children. This meant that 499 of eligible males and 477 of eligible females could not be included in these analyses. Logit regression showed that families moving later in the program's operation were more likely to have provided children's social security number information. The sub-sample of 556 males was further reduced to the final sample of 519 males by removing those who were residing outside of Illinois based on their last known address and therefore likely ineligible for inclusion in the ISP database. In the same way, the sub-sample of 595 females was reduced to the final sample of 566 females.

For males, placement in low-poverty or suburban neighborhoods was associated with much less criminal justice system involvement, primarily for drug offenses. Males placed in suburban locations experienced significantly lower odds of being arrested or convicted of a drug offense compared with males placed within Chicago; specifically, there was a 42% drop in the odds of being arrested and a 52% drop in the odds of being convicted for a drug offense for suburban movers relative to city movers.<sup>23</sup> Among males placed within Chicago, 40% were arrested and 21% were convicted for a drug offense at least once. In comparison, among males placed in the suburbs, 28% were arrested and 13% were convicted at least once for a drug offense. Suburban placement did not affect the likelihood of being arrested or convicted of a theft or violent offense.

As is generally true, arrest and conviction rates for *Gautreaux* females were much lower than corresponding rates for their male counterparts. Surprisingly, females placed into suburban neighborhoods with low percentages of black residents or lower rates of poverty experienced significantly higher criminal justice system involvement based on convictions, but they were not more likely to be arrested. For example, female children placed in the suburbs had approximately three times the likelihood of being convicted of a drug, theft, or violent offense compared to females placed within Chicago. Among females placed within Chicago, 16% were arrested and 5% were convicted for a drug, theft, or violent offense at least once. In comparison, among females placed in the suburbs, 19% were arrested and 9% were convicted at least once for a drug, theft, or violent offense.

The qualitative interviews with their sample of 25 *Gautreaux* mothers enabled Keels and Mendenhall to explore how suburban placement might have affected their son's involvement with crime. (The low rates of offending among daughters precluded a corresponding qualitative look at them). The city-suburban divide appeared important in children's experience of their placement communities. Although city placement neighborhoods were generally safer and more affluent and integrated than origin neighborhoods, the larger urban community to which children had easy access continued to be dangerous and offer ample opportunities for participation in delinquent activities. Moreover, children placed within Chicago continued to attend lower performing minority segregated public schools.

In comparison, children placed in the suburbs had relatively little direct neighborhood exposure to gangs, drugs, and other illegal activities and attended higher performing public schools with greater financial and teacher resources.

<sup>23</sup>It is important to bear in mind that *Gautreaux* participants were placed in thriving middle-class suburban communities, not suburban areas characterized by high rates of poverty and segregation (see Harris 1999b).

Interviews revealed that mothers perceived suburban neighborhoods and schools to have had substantially fewer opportunities for involvement in gang and delinquent criminal activities. In particular, mothers believed that their children were much less likely to be actively recruited into gang and drug involvement by adults and peers in the suburban neighborhoods and schools. This is not to say that mothers believed that drugs and other illegal activities did not occur in their suburban neighborhoods. Rather, mothers said that in their original inner-city Chicago neighborhoods they were in a daily fight to shield their children from ever-present exposure to delinquent and illegal activities.

The quantitative and qualitative findings provide support for the belief that the neighborhood environment plays a substantial role in an individual's participation in crime. The neighborhood environment determines many of the choices children face. Some of these are provided by drug dealers out on the corner actively looking for new clients and recruits; others are provided by local adults or peers, who might emphasize education and employment as reliable routes to self-sufficiency (see Galster and Killen 1995).

The different findings for *Gautreaux* males and females add to the conflicting evidence regarding gender differences in the impacts of residential mobility on children. Votruba and Kling (2004) match *Gautreaux* program records with mortality data and find fewer deaths among male youth who moved to neighborhoods with more educated residents and more employed professionals.

## Conclusions

Drawing policy implications from *Gautreaux* requires us to weigh its mixture of successes and disappointments and compare them with those of alternative policies.<sup>24</sup> Given the similarities between *Gautreaux* and the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program, we concentrate our comparative discussion on those two programs, despite the fact that much longer run outcome information is available for *Gautreaux* than for MTO.

Stimulated by both *Gautreaux*'s promise and its methodological weaknesses, the MTO program was legislated and funded in the 1990s and it was designed as a rigorous social experiment providing residential mobility opportunities for public housing families in five cities, including Chicago. MTO randomly assigned families who volunteered for the program to one of three groups: control group families (who received no subsidy), a Section 8 group (who received Housing Choice Vouchers with no locational restrictions), and an experimental group (who received a voucher valid only in a low-poverty neighborhood and assistance from housing counselors).

Despite superficial similarities, *Gautreaux*'s program model differs from MTO's in important ways. MTO's criterion for a qualifying neighborhood was based on

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<sup>24</sup>Despite demographic similarities, *Gautreaux* families do differ from other public housing families because they volunteered for the program. Thus, our findings generalize most readily to families voluntarily choosing to participate in residential mobility programs in which the decision to move to a new, more integrated, higher income community is left up to the family. As the Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program and the transformation of distressed public housing projects continues, families are often involuntarily forced to move, and then often move to new segregated communities; involuntarily relocating families may not result in the same outcomes as those we found for *Gautreaux* participants.

class (i.e., a census tract poverty rate under 10%), while *Gautreaux's* was based on race (i.e., fewer than 30% black neighbors). Partly as a result, MTO families did not move as far away from their original neighborhoods as did *Gautreaux's* families (Keels et al. 2005). MTO experimental families were allowed to choose their own units, whereas housing counselors assigned *Gautreaux* families to units as they became available. MTO families moved in the late 1990s, while the bulk of *Gautreaux* moves occurred in the 1980s, in the midst of the decline of the urban manufacturing sector but generally before the crack cocaine epidemic devastated inner cities.

In comparing the two programs, it is crucial to understand the nature of the comparisons that are being made. What we would really like to know is how a family fared when given the program's opportunity to move to a lower poverty or more integrated neighborhood, relative to what would have happened to that family had it not been given that opportunity. *Gautreaux* research studies can only compare subgroups of families that moved in conjunction with the program – there is no comparison group of similar families who did not move as part of the program. MTO's evaluation design is much stronger since it tracked the fortunes of a randomly assigned control group of families who expressed interest in the program but, owing to the luck of the draw, were not eligible for it. At the same time, however, the program-driven assignment procedures of *Gautreaux* can inform us about what happens when families move from uniformly poor and highly segregated neighborhoods into communities not chosen by the families themselves, which showed variations in racial integration, poverty, and safety.

In terms of outcomes from the *Gautreaux* and MTO programs, both succeeded admirably in enabling families to escape from their violent, gang-ridden neighborhoods; the evidence we have reviewed shows that these escapes were permanent for many families in the case of *Gautreaux*. Mental health outcomes were not measured in *Gautreaux*, but experimental evidence from MTO shows that moves to low-poverty neighborhoods led to dramatic improvements in mothers' mental health and in the mental health of daughters (Kling and Liebman 2004; Kling, Liebman, and Katz 2007).

The racial and socioeconomic characteristics of MTO placement and subsequent neighborhoods differ markedly from those in the *Gautreaux* program. MTO set no race-based limits on placement neighborhoods, and MTO families moving in conjunction with the program both began and ended up in highly segregated neighborhoods. MTO placements were in neighborhoods with much lower poverty rates (11% poverty on average) but at the time of the five-year MTO follow-up, experimental families had moved on to neighborhoods with poverty rates that averaged 20%.

Why were long-run neighborhood poverty rates for *Gautreaux* families lower than short-run rates for MTO experimental movers? One possibility is that only in the case of *Gautreaux* did program officials locate units for the participants and either the landlords of these units or the neighborhoods in which they were located may have facilitated permanent relocations. We know from previous research on housing vouchers that families will often choose neighborhoods (even within program-designated census tracts) that look similar to the areas they came from (Cronin and Rasmussen 1981). Therefore, the mix of housing counselor assistance and placement in high resource, less racially segregated communities seemed to yield the greatest long-term benefits for families and indicates the policy significance of

both components for mobility programs. Indeed, even though their vouchers enabled them to do so, virtually no MTO families found housing in mostly white or even integrated suburban communities.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps it was the counseling and assignment to specific units and neighborhoods that helped *Gautreaux* families overcome landlord discrimination, lack of information about rental markets, or fears about more affluent white areas. Subsequently, these experiences might have helped families make successful second moves in the same or similar neighborhoods, thus contributing to residential stability and well-being (cf. Briggs and Turner 2006).

In terms of what many policymakers were hoping for – increases in work and earnings and greater independence from welfare – MTO mothers were no more likely to be employed, earned no more and received welfare no less often than mothers assigned to the control group (Orr et al. 2003; Kling et al. 2004; King, Liebman, and Katz 2007). In *Gautreaux*, moves to suburban neighborhoods did not appear to make much difference, but the racial composition and level of resources in placement neighborhoods did. It is important to highlight that even after controlling for socioeconomic resources in our welfare, employment, and earnings models, race remained a contributing factor in women's outcomes. Women who moved to racially mixed or predominantly white neighborhoods with higher levels of resources did better than their counterparts in areas with low resources and high levels of black residents. We suggest that the percentage of black residents in a census tract (i.e., racial segregation) may also be a proxy for the disadvantaged socio-political status of this group (Shapiro 2004; Feagin and McKinney 2003; Patillo-McCoy 1999; Harris 1999a; Dymski 1997; Massey and Denton 1993).

The lower levels of economic success experienced by families living in poor, racially segregated neighborhoods may reflect blacks' unequal treatment in markets, institutions, and service delivery systems. If this is the case, a two-pronged policy paradigm should be considered. The first approach involves continued dismantling of barriers to residential mobility and access to higher resource neighborhoods. Audits show that racial discrimination in housing continues to be a formidable barrier for black families from all income levels (Yinger 1995). In addition to dismantling racial barriers, it may be important to further develop the resource base that already exists in low-income communities. Our qualitative work pointed to the importance of employment opportunities and educational institutions (Keels 2006a; Mendenhall 2004).

When looking at the *Gautreaux* findings, it is tempting to suspect that MTO's lack of impacts may be due to its focus on deconcentrating poverty rather than promoting racial integration. Two considerations argue against this conclusion. First, MTO's design provides comparisons between families who were and were not offered help in moving to low-poverty neighborhoods, while *Gautreaux* research can only compare among families placed in different kinds of neighborhoods. Second,

<sup>25</sup>Early results from the Thompson program in Baltimore suggest that receiving vouchers that target the income and racial composition of neighborhoods has helped hundreds of families lease-up in less segregated, low-poverty neighborhoods (DeLuca and Rosenblatt 2006). These current and former public housing residents are moving as part of the partial consent decree in the *Thompson v HUD* case (#95-309-D. MD.). They receive Housing Choice vouchers and must use them in census tracts in the Baltimore metropolitan area that have less than 30% African-American residents, less than 10% poverty, and less than 5% public housing residents.

MTO's moves took place in the late 1990s, in the midst of welfare reform and a booming economy, which provided a very different context for work and welfare receipt. MTO families did indeed boost their employment and reduce their reliance on welfare, but these changes were no different, on average, from those experienced by the control group. *Gautreaux* welfare outcomes were measured in the early 1990s, well before welfare reforms were adopted by the state of Illinois.

Program impacts on children's outcomes were also mixed. The most important second-generation successes in *Gautreaux* were that, when grown, children were just as likely to reside in affluent neighborhoods as their mothers. *Gautreaux* children did not move back to their old neighborhoods when they became adults, and suburban placement may have reduced crime among boys (but not girls). MTO girls generally fared better than boys, although neither group acquired more achievement-related skills than their control-group counterparts. MTO evidence suggests that merely changing neighborhoods, and even moving to considerably more affluent neighborhoods, fails produce the kind of long-term achievement-oriented successes in either generation that many had hoped for.<sup>26</sup>

As we think about the implications of these results, we need to be mindful of cohort differences. Can the residential patterns of *Gautreaux* be realized today? Families moving in conjunction with the original *Gautreaux* program faced very different circumstances than families moving with the MTO program. Most of the original *Gautreaux* families were first- or second-generation residents of Chicago public housing; qualitative interviews document that many of them came from two-parent families that imparted high levels of motivation (Mendenhall 2004). These backgrounds are considerably more favorable than those of families participating in MTO, many of whom had long family histories in public housing.

Both *Gautreaux* and MTO bet heavily that residential mobility and neighborhood change would be adequate to promote families' self-sufficiency; neither program provided family-based employment support, transportation help, or educational assistance. Producing program impacts on self-sufficiency may require coupling neighborhood change with the provision of services and supports tailored to individual families' needs (cf. Briggs and Turner 2006). Of course, these supports can be provided independently of mobility programs while still available to program participants; a number of experimental work support programs run in the 1990s boosted work, family income, and children's achievement (Morris et al. 2001).

Evidence from MTO suggests that landlord problems figured prominently in distinguishing families that stayed in their placement units from those who moved on, often to higher poverty, more segregated neighborhoods (Orr et al. 2003).<sup>27</sup> Providing tenants with assistance in securing units or dealing with difficult landlords might help address these kinds of problems, and might ensure that families remain in

<sup>26</sup>Recent qualitative research on the MTO program has shed light on interesting mechanisms behind the differences in results for girls and boys. Popkin, Leventhal, and Weismann (2006) suggest that some of the benefits for girls might be the result of less sexual harassment and predation in low-poverty areas. Clampet-Lundquist et al. (2006) show that MTO parents supervise girls more than boys, and that boys are not as socially flexible as girls when facing new environments; they are more likely to demonstrate old behaviors that will get them into trouble in lower poverty neighborhoods.

<sup>27</sup>Boyd, Edin, Duncan, and Clampet-Lundquist (2006) conducted a qualitative study of a random sample of families participating in a new round of *Gautreaux* moves which began in 2002. They also find many reports of problems with landlords in placement neighborhoods.

opportunity-rich communities, even after a second move (Cunningham and Sawyer 2005).

To help promote children's educational and behavioral achievement, it would be useful to test a program model in which mobility counselors were trained to inform parents about the new schooling opportunities in the area, since low-income parents are not always aware of these choices and their potential benefits (Briggs and Popkin 2006; DeLuca and Rosenblatt 2010). While assisting with the sometimes disruptive effects of school transfers, counselors could help ensure that special needs are met, receiving schools have information about the child, and that little instruction time is lost in the transition between schools. In addition, if children attend safer schools with fewer drug problems, they might be less prone to engage in the kinds of delinquent behavior that leads to arrests (Rajaratnam 2006).

A final policy issue unaddressed in either *Gautreaux* or MTO research is the program's impact on receiving neighborhoods. Designers of both programs worried that individuals living in the receiving neighborhoods might be subjected to higher crime rates and/or lower property values. For example, during the implementation of the *Gautreaux* program, counselors tried to make sure that they did not place too many families in any one community (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). But there are potential spillover benefits to these moves as well if, for example, moving minority families into white neighborhoods helps promote racial tolerance and understanding.

In conclusion, we find that the initial gains in neighborhood quality that many of the *Gautreaux* families achieved with vouchers and housing assistance persisted for at least one to two decades. This is encouraging, and suggests that it is possible for low-income black families to make long-term escapes from neighborhoods with concentrated racial segregation, crime, and poverty. However, we also find that it is difficult to translate the benefits of sustained residence in better neighborhoods into economic and social success for families and children. Housing mobility may be a necessary but insufficient lever for improving the lives of poor families trapped in inner-city neighborhoods.

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