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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Staying for Opportunity: Residential Mobility, Neighborhood Effects, and Assisted
Housing

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Kevin Beck

Committee in Charge:

Professor Isaac Martin, Chair
Professor Nancy Kwak
Professor Kwai Ng
Professor Vanesa Ribas
Professor Akos Rona-Tas

2019

The Dissertation of Kevin Beck is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California San Diego

2019

DEDICATION

For Cat

EPIGRAPH

I think affordable housing is crucial. A lot of people—I know that right now Congress is slashing funds from Meals on Wheels, stuff for like after school programs, or stuff like that. And they say, oh, it doesn't work. But they really don't see how it works because a lot of times—and I've known this because I've actually looked it up and did research on it—when kids tend to have their needs met, they tend to perform better. When you have a kid that's well fed and he has housing, he's not forced to be homeless and try to find out how he's gonna get to school where he's having a lot of absences. Like my kids, my goal is to show that here my kids are being raised by a single mom with limited income in affordable housing, and my kids are a prime example of what the outcome can be because both of them – my older two – are 4.0 students, they're very well mannered, they're about education.

But then again, unlike their other friends they get to come home, know that they have a roof over their head, know that the electricity is on, know that they'll get to eat, they have a bed to lay in. So they don't have the worries that other kids might have that are not performing at their level, and so I just wish that there'd be more funding for [affordable housing]... So I think affordable housing is a good initiative and they should make more. And I think that people just focus on, oh, it's just you know, these are the type of people that are gang bangers. There's that stigma and that stigma needs to change because people don't focus on the good parts. That's all.

–Alisha, resident of the Garden Homes

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This dissertation is not only the result of my efforts but also those of the many people in City Heights who generously agreed to speak with me about their experiences. The residents in City Heights, the staff at *Housing the Heights*, and the people waitlisted for apartments at the assisted housing complexes were incredibly patient with my questions. I thank them for their kindness.

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Chapter 3, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *City and Community* 2019. Beck, Kevin, "Social Support and Residential Stability in Privately Owned Assisted Housing," *City and Community*, 2019. The dissertation author was the primary investigator and author of this paper.

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Chapter 5, in part, is currently being prepared for submission for publication of the material. Beck, Kevin. "Staying for Opportunity: Assisted Housing and Contextual Mobility." The dissertation author was the primary investigator and author of this material.

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- 2018 “Gentrification, Property Tax Limitation, and Displacement.” (coauthored with Isaac William Martin) *Urban Affairs Review* 54(1): 33-73.
- 2019 “Trust and the Built Environment in New York City’s Public Housing.” *Sociological Perspectives* 62(1): 120-138.
- 2019 “Social Support and Residential Stability in Privately Owned Assisted Housing.” *City and Community* 18(1):302-320.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Staying for Opportunity: Residential Mobility, Neighborhood Effects, and Assisted Housing

by

Kevin Beck

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California San Diego, 2019

Professor Isaac Martin, Chair

In this dissertation, I analyze the mobility patterns of renters living in project-based assisted housing. Most research suggests that renters living in assisted housing are stuck in disadvantageous contexts and are unable to access homes in more affluent communities, where resources and opportunities tend to be concentrated. However, our paradigms of residential mobility are inadequate for explaining the mobility patterns of

assisted renters for at least three reasons. First, they assume that residents choose places to live primarily by selecting among a set of neighborhoods rather than a set of housing options. Second, they assume that all time spent living in a high poverty context is detrimental, and equally detrimental, to one's wellbeing and life chances. Third, they consider assisted housing to be a uniformly disadvantageous context where resources and opportunities are scarce. I explain when and why these assumptions are inaccurate and argue that assisted housing can increase residential stability by providing renters with housing that is affordable, safe, and accommodating of their needs. I further argue that residential stability is a resource renters use to improve their wellbeing and increase their access to opportunities. I show how residents living in assisted housing are able to access resources and opportunities from their neighbors and from an organizational resource broker that owns and manages assisted housing. To make my case, I draw on data from the *American Housing Survey*, the *New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey*, and the *San Diego Assisted Housing Survey*. In contrast with prevailing theories of residential mobility and neighborhood attainment, I find that residents may remain in assisted housing over long periods of time because doing so can improve their life chances to a greater extent than moving to a new home or neighborhood.

PREFACE

The reasons for the relationship between socioeconomic advancement and spatial mobility are not hard to understand. Opportunities and resources vary geographically. To take advantage of them, people move. In a profound way, where one lives plays a large role in determining one's life chances... Thus in urban society, socioeconomic advancement tends to be accompanied by spatial movement aimed at bettering personal or familial circumstances.

—Massey and Mullan (1984:837-838)

Scholars have long argued that neighborhoods can shape a resident's wellbeing and life chances (see Shaw and McKay 1942). It is unsurprising, then, that scholars explain residential mobility as the process of seeking out high quality neighborhoods (Logan and Alba 1993; Massey and Mullan 1984). A high quality neighborhood is typically considered to be one with a low crime rate, excellent public services, and clean air and water. It can provide its residents with job opportunities through local social networks or organizations, and it has the resources to weather economic downturns (Wilson 1987). High quality neighborhoods are also thought to be places with residents and organizations that are able to command the attention of politicians in order to improve local services (Massey and Denton 1993). Scholars often suggest that the quality of neighborhoods increases as the residential population becomes more affluent (Logan and Alba 1993).

But for Janice, a single mother with a four-year-old son whose financial situation is precarious, her search to find a new place to live is driven almost entirely by housing-related concerns.¹ Janice applied for an apartment at Paradise Hills, an assisted or

¹ The names of all research participants are pseudonyms.

subsidized housing complex located in a low-income neighborhood in the City of San Diego called City Heights.² There were no vacancies at the time she applied so Janice was put on a waitlist. The waitlist contained hundreds of names, which meant that it could be weeks, months, or even years before an apartment would become available. Janice wanted to move to Paradise Hills in order to save money on housing costs and to provide her son with his own bedroom and more space to play outside. She was not looking to move because she was dissatisfied with her neighborhood or because she thought that City Heights would increase her access to valuable social networks or higher performing schools.

Kevin: Why did you decide to apply for housing at Paradise Hills?

Janice: At the time I was worried about being able to pay my bills and pay rent at the same time. So I wanted to find a place where my rent would be lower so that I could also afford to pay off debts that I had accrued.

Kevin: Did anything in particular happen that put you in a situation where you needed to quickly find housing?

² I use pseudonyms for the names of all privately owned assisted housing complexes mentioned in this dissertation. The term “assisted housing” refers to a home that receives a subsidy, tax break, or another source of funding that reduces housing-related expenses such as rent and utilities. I also use the term “housing assistance” to refer to assisted housing. Although I focus on assisted housing that serves low-income renters, such as public housing and privately owned multifamily housing complexes, assisted housing could be used to refer to any home where a resident receives funding from the government. For example, homeowners who reduce their taxable income by deducting the interest paid on their mortgage are also recipients of housing assistance.

Janice: Yes, it was just being a single mom, and not having anyone to help me with [my son], and so therefore cutting my hours at work, but still having all these bills that aren't going anywhere. So all these bills are coming in and I'm working less hours so that I could be with my son, which is what I wanted, but then where's the money? So the hours are kind of the tough patch – I figured it out but...

Kevin: How did you figure it out?

Janice: I don't know. I don't know, it just all worked out, I think that for a little while, I got a little deeper into debt, and then I did get the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) help, so that helped. I found a really amazing nanny that helped me for really cheap, so that helped, and just try to balance it and I have good credit thank goodness for a miracle right. So there was like zero percent credit cards and that kind of thing, I was just getting farther into debt to get myself back in gear for a little while.

Kevin: What's your current situation like?

Janice: Right now, I'm still in the same one-bedroom, I work more and I found ways to spend less money I guess. I don't know, it's a better situation, it's not perfect, but I'm not living – I'm living paycheck to paycheck, but I'm not at negative after every paycheck now.

Kevin: So could you tell me a little bit about your current search for a new house, a new place to live?

Janice: I stopped looking because I just - I'm trying to make what I have work, it's safe where I live, it's big for a one-bedroom, so my son has his own bed, and I have

my own bed, but ideally I want him to have his own room. So basically next year in January or so, before he turns five, I'm going to really, really look and I'm hoping to be a little bit even more out of debt by then, so I can afford a bigger place. So I'm not looking right now. I'm just settling for what we have basically, he's happy.

Janice decided to postpone her search for a new home because she thought it was the best decision for her family. She prioritized a home she could afford, space for her son, safety, access to affordable childcare, and an opportunity to repay some of her debt. These are resources and opportunities that Janice values, and she sees her access to these resources to be contingent on the home she rents, not the neighborhood where her home is located.

Janice even perceives some of the most important place-based resources to be primarily attached to housing rather than neighborhoods. For instance, Janice wants to find a place to live that is safe for her family but she is not necessarily searching for a neighborhood with a low crime rate. Janice draws a clear distinction between safety at home and safety in the broader neighborhood.

Kevin: What about the neighborhood? Does the neighborhood factor into your search for a place to live?

Janice: Yes, it doesn't have [to] - yes, it does. [City Heights] is nice enough for me and where I live now is nice enough, but for some people I guess it had to be nicer. It doesn't - I don't know, the neighborhood doesn't have to be perfect. It just has to

feel safe within my specific community. Does that make sense? So like if a block away, it's not that safe, it's like well that's okay, like as long as I feel safe right here [in Paradise Hills], it's okay.

Janice ties her sense of safety to her home. The crime rate in City Heights is not her primary concern; instead, she needs to feel safe in and around her apartment. Like safety, Janice describes most of the things she needs as qualities of particular apartments or housing complexes rather than particular neighborhoods.

Janice's experience is instructive because our theories of residential mobility – our theories that explain why people move to new homes – expect the quality of housing to be consistent with the quality of neighborhoods. For example, if a neighborhood has a high crime rate, then we would expect all households in that neighborhood to be roughly evenly exposed to crime. We would also expect individuals to take neighborhood crime rates into account when searching for a new place to live. But Janice is not interested in a neighborhood's average qualities. She is interested in the home that her family will ultimately rent, and she perceives variation in the safety, affordability, cleanliness, and the size of apartments located within high poverty neighborhoods. This is evident when Janice recounts her experiences searching for a new apartment. She wants a larger apartment that better accommodates her son but has struggled to find one in her price range.

Kevin: What do you look for when you look for a new place to live? Are there certain things that are – that you must have or that are sort deal breakers where you say no, I can't live here?

Janice: I want - I just want a place with a yard, like or some sort of grass, like it doesn't have to be my yard, but just something where - some place where my kid could go outside and play, and not feel like he's not allowed to, because that's where we live now.

Kevin: Oh really?

Janice: Yes, you can't play in the courtyard, you can't run in the courtyard, you could play bubbles but that's it, you know it's very strict. And then honestly, like this is going to sound weird when you replay this, but when you go and look at places that are in your price range, and then sometimes you look around, and you can tell that like it's dirty and they don't take care of [the apartment], and there's roaches. I'm sorry, like I'd rather live in a smaller place that's better taken care of, than get a bigger place and worry about a leak or mold, or roaches in the middle of the day. And that's what turns you off. That's when you're like okay, I don't have enough money to move, because I'm not moving into this place where a roach is looking right at me in the middle of the day. That's what happened to me at one point. I was like, if it's the middle of the day and the roach is staring right at me, I have no idea what it looks like at night. So yes, just cleanliness, safety, and a place to play outside.

Despite Janice’s disappointment with many of the apartments in her price range, not all of the apartments she visited were unaffordable, unsafe, dirty, or too small. Janice was surprised when she visited Paradise Hills in City Heights: “I was really impressed with this place. I thought it was incredibly nice for affordable housing. As a child growing up on the East Coast, affordable housing was called the projects, and it did not look like this. It looked like dangerous and like block housing.”³ Janice’s impressions of Paradise Hills belie expectations. Researchers and critics have often referred to assisted housing, and public housing in particular, as the most disadvantageous context for a household to live in. Assisted housing is often assumed to be located in dangerous neighborhoods where resources and opportunities are scarce, and where concentrated poverty and social isolation are most intense. If residential mobility is the process of seeking out higher quality neighborhoods, and if assisted housing is a place that offers residents few resources and opportunities, then why was Janice impressed with Paradise Hills? Why did she think that moving to Paradise Hills would improve her family’s wellbeing? Moreover, why did Janice postpone her search for a new apartment if moving is the key to improving her life chances? These are the questions that guide my dissertation.

³ Most people refer to a place like Paradise Hills as “affordable housing.” This is a term commonly used in reference to housing complexes where most of the units are intended or reserved for low-income households. I choose not use this term because it is ambiguous. Residents living in an assisted housing complex like Paradise Hills may find it affordable or unaffordable. Indeed, residents living in assisted housing can have high rent-burdens. Similarly, residents living in unassisted or market-rate housing may find their homes affordable or unaffordable, and they can have high or low rent-burdens, as well. Therefore, “affordable housing” does not distinguish between homes that are affordable from those that are not.

Research on residential mobility suggests that Janice’s struggle to find an affordable home is common among low-income renters (Desmond 2015, 2016). For those who live paycheck-to-paycheck, the search for a new apartment entails balancing competing demands for safety, affordability, space, and potentially other needs. These competing demands can result in frequent moves, each one aimed at satisfying a need that was not met by the prior apartment. As low-income renters move from one apartment to the next, they tend to move within high poverty neighborhoods where access to resources and opportunities remains limited. Scholars refer to this movement throughout high poverty neighborhoods as churning or contextual immobility (Rosen 2017; Sampson 2012), and they suggest that it is a central way through which poverty is reproduced across generations (Sharkey 2013).⁴ Although various forms of housing assistance are designed to help renters like Janice move to more affluent neighborhoods, only one-third of renters living below the poverty line receive housing assistance (Desmond 2015), and those who do usually struggle to access homes in low-poverty contexts (DeLuca, Garboden, and Rosenblatt 2013). In sum, the existing research paints a dire picture for Janice’s future.

However, our paradigms of residential mobility are inadequate for explaining Janice’s experiences for at least three reasons. First, they assume that residents choose places to live primarily by selecting neighborhoods that maximize their access to resources and opportunities. Second, they assume that all time spent living in a high

⁴ Sharkey’s (2013) notion of “contextual mobility” refers to movement across neighborhoods with different levels of advantage/disadvantage. Similarly, Rosen (2017) uses the term “contextual immobility” to describe residents who are unable to leave disadvantaged residential contexts.

poverty context is detrimental, and equally detrimental, to one's wellbeing and life chances. Third, they consider assisted housing to be a uniformly disadvantageous context where resources and opportunities are scarce. In the following chapters, I explain when and why these assumptions are inaccurate, and I address these shortcomings in the literature by arguing for a theory of residential stability. I show that residential stability is a resource low-income renters use to make ends meet, improve their wellbeing, and increase their access to opportunities. This theory helps us understand why all residents who live in high poverty contexts over long periods are not "stuck in place" or equally disadvantaged. Moreover, it helps us understand why renters may remain in assisted housing over long periods of time – because doing so may improve their life chances to a greater extent than moving to a new apartment or a new neighborhood.

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 1 contains my critique of the literature describing the relationship between residential mobility, neighborhood effects, and assisted housing. It is here that I make the case that we need to better understand not just why people move but also why they choose to stay put and under what conditions they do so. Chapter 2 describes the sources of data that I draw on for evidence and how my methods diverge from those of other researchers. In Chapters 3 and 4, I consider how assisted housing shapes residential mobility and the wellbeing of residents. These chapters test longstanding hypotheses suggesting that assisted housing breaks down social norms among neighbors, thereby reducing the wellbeing of its residents. Chapter 3 addresses norms of reciprocity at private assisted housing, and Chapter 4 addresses the norm of trust in public housing. In Chapters 5 and 6, I consider

motivations for moving into assisted housing, why residents may stay put in assisted housing over long periods of time, and how residents access resources and opportunities. Chapter 5 addresses these questions broadly, and Chapter 6 focuses specifically on how residents access resources from a nonprofit housing provider. In Chapter 7, I conclude the dissertation by reconsidering theories of residential mobility in light of the findings presented in prior chapters, and I discuss the implications of residential stability for assisted renters living in rapidly changing neighborhoods and cities.

CHAPTER 1: STAYING PUT OR STUCK IN PLACE?

INTRODUCTION

To what extent do low-income renters decide to remain in assisted housing, and what are the effects of staying put? Most research suggests that renters are stuck in assisted housing because they lack the financial resources to move out (Briggs, Popkin, and Goering 2010). The inability to move out is presumed to have a series of detrimental effects on the life chances of low-income renters for two broad reasons. First, assisted housing tends to be located in high poverty neighborhoods (Newman and Schnare 1997), and high poverty neighborhoods tend to have more crime, lower performing schools, fewer job opportunities, and fewer amenities such as stores with fresh food (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987). Second, assisted housing complexes may be dangerous and highly stigmatized (Blokland 2008; Griffiths and Tita 2009; Wacquant 1993). To the extent that these are challenges residents experience when living in assisted housing, there is little reason to expect them to make efforts to stay put. Instead, we would expect residents in assisted housing to make efforts to move to less dangerous homes located in more affluent neighborhoods where resources and opportunities tend to be concentrated.

This perspective of residential mobility – described as a process of seeking out neighborhoods with more resources and opportunities – is referred to as the spatial assimilation model (Massey and Mullan 1984). The spatial assimilation model is not only a way of understanding why people move but also a way of understanding social mobility as a necessarily spatial process (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925). In other words, it suggests that social mobility is accompanied by moves to increasingly affluent

neighborhoods that tend to be segregated by race, ethnicity, and class (Logan and Alba 1993). Residents may seek to move to more affluent neighborhoods not only for the material benefits but also because those neighborhoods may confer a distinguished social status. For example, living in a wealthy neighborhood could reflect personal success, economic accomplishments, or civic character. The spatial assimilation model is useful for explaining how people use their resources and human capital to access high status neighborhoods. For instance, it explains why individuals may move when they receive a raise at work and why rich people rarely live in poor places.

However, the model does not account for the structural characteristics of housing markets. Most importantly, it discounts the many manifestations of racism such as redlining, predatory lending, steering, and personal bias. The place-stratification model revises the spatial assimilation model to account for the role of racism in residential mobility and neighborhood attainment (Logan and Alba 1993). It assumes that racial hierarchies exist in the housing market and that they reflect the racial hierarchies in U.S. society more broadly. This is why, for example, given two identical residents with different racial identities – one black and one white - we would expect the white resident to more easily access a home in an affluent white neighborhood. We would not expect the white resident to face the same barriers to mobility that a black resident might face. This does not mean that black residents cannot access homes in affluent white neighborhoods, but it may cost them more in terms of time, money, and potentially other resources.

Although the place-stratification model improves upon the spatial assimilation model by addressing the role of discrimination in housing markets, both models share a

deterministic view of why people move. They assume residents engage in a constant pursuit of upward locational attainment, and that the location in question is a neighborhood that can offer the mover a combination of material and social advantages. While this assumption might hold when explaining the mobility patterns of the wealthy, it often does not hold when explaining the mobility patterns of low-income renters.

Low-income renters move more frequently than any other group of residents (Mateyka 2015; Rossi 1980). They make decisions to move under constraints that are not considered in the aforementioned models. Although the spatial assimilation model accounts for an individual's resources, such as income and education, and the place stratification model accounts for discrimination in the housing market, neither model considers sources of forced mobility that disproportionately affect low-income renters. Forced or involuntary mobility stems from numerous sources such as eviction, violence, natural disasters, gentrification, and urban redevelopment (Arena 2012; Desmond 2016; Gans 1962; Goetz 2003; Martin and Beck 2018). When low-income renters move, it is often not a move accompanying a rise in socioeconomic status, and it is often not a move intended to boost their households' socioeconomic status. Instead, low-income households move frequently to solve immediate problems; for example, problems with an unscrupulous landlord, a loss of a job, a threat of violence, or the demolition of a home (Rosen 2017; Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2012; Rossi 1980; Wood 2014). To solve these problems, they engage in churning or short distance moves to new homes that are typically located near to where they are currently living (Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2012; Sampson 2012). Churning keeps low-income renters living in high poverty contexts and

is associated with diminished life chances. For example, adults who move frequently are more likely to lose their jobs (Desmond and Gershenson 2016), and mothers who are forced to move are more likely to experience material hardships, stress, and depression (Desmond and Kimbro 2015).

Sociologists are now amassing a body of scholarship that improves upon the spatial assimilation model and the place stratification model. However, they continue to make problematic assumptions about the time between residential moves. They presume that time spent living in a high poverty neighborhood, and in an assisted housing complex in particular, is time spent “stuck in place” (Sharkey 2013) or trapped in “ghetto poverty” (Briggs et al. 2010). In other words, our best theories of residential mobility would not expect a low-income renter to make efforts to stay put in a home located in a high poverty context because staying put is thought to limit one’s access to resources and opportunities. Although many low-income renters have long lived in disadvantaged contexts that they have been unable to leave, I argue that some renters make decisions to stay put in high poverty contexts, and that not all time spent living in a high poverty context reduces one’s life chances or limits one’s access to resources and opportunities. There are three problems with equating time spent in a high poverty context with time “stuck in place” or trapped in “ghetto poverty.”

First, it assumes that high poverty contexts are fairly homogeneous places with equal effects on one’s life chances. There is little evidence to suggest that high poverty neighborhoods are similar throughout the U.S. Instead, high poverty neighborhoods exhibit variation along various dimensions such as organizational density, population

density, and the resources flowing through local social networks (Desmond and An 2015; Small 2006; Small 2008; Small, Jacobs, and Massengill 2008; Small, Manduca, and Johnson 2018). This variation suggests that the experience of living in a high poverty context is likely highly variable, as well. Therefore, we should not assume that not all time spent in a high poverty context is detrimental, much less equally detrimental, to a resident's life chances. Second, residents do not perceive all of the time they spend in high poverty neighborhoods to result from being stuck against their will (Small 2008). If residents are the rational actors that models of residential mobility often presume them to be, then their decisions to remain in a high poverty context might be evidence that there are advantages in staying put – perhaps more advantages than can be acquired by moving out. Third, residents may choose to stay in a high poverty context in order to solve problems in a similar way that they solve problems by moving to new homes that are less expensive, cleaner, larger, safer, and otherwise more accommodating of their households. For example, rather than use an increase in income to move to a more affluent neighborhood, residents may choose to stay in their homes and allocate that extra income to other uses such as paying off debt, starting a small business, or pursuing an educational opportunity.

For these reasons, I hypothesize that residential stability is a resource residents use to expand their access to additional resources and opportunities. To test this hypothesis, I focus on renters living in assisted housing because assisted housing is often considered to be the most disadvantageous context that low-income renters can live in, and it is here that the effects of residential stability are most misunderstood. One reason

for this misunderstanding is that studies of assisted housing tend to focus on the largest, poorest, and sometimes the most violent public housing complexes located in the biggest cities of the U.S. For example, many books have been written about gangs, drugs, policing, and poverty in Chicago's public housing complexes (e.g. Popkin et al. 2000b; Kotlowitz 1991; Venkatesh 2000). Other studies have focused on isolation and alienation among assisted residents; these are common theme in studies of St. Louis's Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex (e.g. Rainwater 1966, 1970; Yancey 1971). Although these studies capture important qualities of some assisted housing complexes, few studies consider assisted housing in a comparative perspective or capture variation in assisted housing by region, city, or program-type. As a result, we have many studies of exceptional public housing complexes and fewer studies that might capture the more common experiences of assisted renters.

Today, most project-based assisted housing in the U.S. is not publicly owned (Schwartz 2010).⁵ Since the late 20th century, the federal government has been privatizing housing assistance by incentivizing municipal housing authorities to demolish public housing, expanding the use of federal housing choice vouchers (commonly referred to Section 8 vouchers), and subsidizing privately owned housing complexes with grants and tax breaks like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). Although funding allocated for housing assistance is moving away from public housing, much of what we

⁵ Assisted housing can be of two types: project-based or tenant-based. Project-based refers to a home where the housing assistance is affixed to the home, or unit, regardless of who lives there. An example of project-based assisted housing is public housing. Tenant-based housing assistance is not attached to a particular unit but rather to a particular recipient or household. In this case, as tenants move from one home to the next, the housing assistance moves with them. An example of tenant-based housing assistance is the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program.

know about the ways in which housing assistance shapes residents' life chances derives from studies of public housing. If we are to understand variation in the effects of housing assistance, then researchers must move away from public housing in large cities on the East Coast and in the Midwest. Moreover, they must diversify their studies to examine not only public housing but also private forms of housing assistance. Therefore, I focus my dissertation on both publicly and privately owned assisted housing complexes in cities both commonly and uncommonly studied.

The rest of this chapter is dedicated to fleshing out my critiques of existing theories of residential mobility, neighborhood effects, and the effects of housing assistance. The following sections also demonstrate how my dissertation improves on existing research, why we need a theory of residential stability, and why it is important to study renters living in assisted housing complexes owned by local nonprofit organizations.

RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY AS A NEIGHBORHOOD EFFECT

Scholars who study residential mobility have paid particular attention to so-called neighborhood effects and have hypothesized that one of the most important of these effects is that neighborhoods sort residents by socioeconomic status and guide their decisions about where to live (Park et al. 1925; Sampson 2012). In this section, I provide an overview of the ways in which neighborhoods are thought to shape the wellbeing and life chances of individuals, and how it is that neighborhoods may affect an individual's mobility patterns, in particular.

The contemporary notion of a neighborhood effect stems from two ecological theories of neighborhoods that I refer to as the concentrated poverty thesis and the social organization thesis. Both of these theories try to explain how high poverty neighborhoods shape the life chances of their residents. The first – the concentrated poverty thesis – proposes that neighborhoods lacking resource-rich people and institutions have few buffers from economic shocks such as a spike in unemployment or a housing foreclosure crisis (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987). When a city experiences economic decline, a resource-deprived neighborhood can physically and socially deteriorate, as evidenced by a decreasing number of local organizations, crumbling infrastructure, and higher rates of social problems such as violent crime. Wilson (1987) argues that concentrated poverty first arose after WWII as large cities deindustrialized, manufacturing moved overseas, and middle class residents living urban neighborhoods moved to the suburbs. These conditions had the effect of concentrating poverty in urban neighborhoods, especially predominantly black neighborhoods. Wilson argues that concentrated poverty increases “social dislocations” or non-normative behaviors such as dropping out of school and drug abuse, and that it isolates residents from middle class social networks.

An alternative view focuses less on macroeconomic and demographic changes as the causes of concentrated poverty but instead on the history of housing policy and racism in the United States. Massey and Denton (1993) argue that cities receiving flows of migrants during the first wave of the Great Migration developed racially segregated communities, often-large sections of a city such as Chicago’s Black Belt and New York’s

Harlem. As the number of migrants swelled in northern receiving communities, housing shortages became severe and the boundaries between segregated black and white neighborhoods were increasingly contested. Housing shortages were widespread in cities through WWII, but as the war came to an end the U.S. government enacted a series of policies that would alleviate shortages by opening up opportunities for white residents to own homes in burgeoning suburbs. Increased access to FHA-insured loans, housing assistance from the Veterans Association, the creation of an interstate highway system, and slum clearance projects sponsored by the Housing Act of 1949 redrew the boundaries of segregated neighborhoods in urban America. Private efforts upheld those boundaries through the use of restrictive covenants, intimidation, and violence among other tactics. Massey and Denton (1993:145) argue that, by the 1970s, the intensity of segregation coupled with escalating black poverty ensured that the geographic concentration of poverty would be “inevitable.”

The two explanations of concentrated poverty are complimentary. Taken together they suggest that high poverty neighborhoods can limit social mobility and personal wellbeing through two mechanisms: socialization and resource deprivation (Small and Newman 2001). Socialization is the process through which behaviors are inculcated among children. Scholars have proposed at least six types of neighborhood-based socialization effects: peer effects, role modeling, institutional effects, linguistic isolation, relative deprivation, and oppositional culture (Small and Newman 2001:33). Socialization mechanisms suggest that when children develop behaviors that are not valued by institutions outside of their neighborhood, or when they are discriminated

against at institutions staffed by neighborhood outsiders (e.g. at local schools), they will face additional obstacles in finishing their education and finding high quality employment. Resource deprivation is the other mechanism through which concentrated poverty might affect social mobility and personal wellbeing. This mechanism derives from Wilson's (1987) social isolation thesis, which suggests that social networks in high poverty neighborhoods are cut off from outside networks, limiting residents' ties to individuals who can provide job referrals, information about employment opportunities, and resources that mitigate material hardships.

The second ecological theory of neighborhood effects is the social organization thesis. This theory considers how the structural characteristics of neighborhoods shape social norms and interactions among residents. Social organization theory suggests that residents have more difficulty building social norms and exercising control over non-normative behavior, in particular, crime, in neighborhoods where the population is rapidly turning over, where residents have little in common with their neighbors, and where there are few institutional resources available to maintain social control (Sampson 2012; Shaw and McKay 1942). Scholars argue that social organization is the mechanism linking neighborhood social structure (i.e. economic resources, racial and ethnic diversity, and population turnover) with social outcomes such as crime (Sampson and Groves 1989; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). More recent work extends the theory to explain differences in neighborhood social capital or collective efficacy (Sampson 2012). These extensions consider how neighborhood social structure is associated with friendship networks, reciprocated exchange among neighbors, and civic

engagement (Massey and Denton 1993, Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999; Sampson et al. 1997; Small 2004). Research in this vein finds a positive association between neighborhood social capital and a neighborhood's wealth, stability, and racial and ethnic homogeneity (Sampson 2012).

When residents plan a move they may implicitly take these neighborhood effects into account. Before moving, they may evaluate a neighborhood's economic status or its racial and ethnic composition – the very structural characteristics of neighborhoods that are thought to shape social capital and collective efficacy. They may similarly take into account the quality of local schools, organizations, and public services – the very resources that are thought to shape social mobility. And residents' may take into account numerous other characteristics of neighborhoods that they believe will benefit their household, such a neighborhood's location relative to the workplace or the level of disorder they perceive in public spaces. In sum, residential mobility is partly a neighborhood effect because the qualities of neighborhoods may determine which residents are attracted to them, or in other words, they guide residents' decisions about where to live (Sampson 2012).

Neighborhoods do not shape the mobility patterns of all residents in the same way. Our understanding of how neighborhoods shape residential mobility is skewed by a common problem in the neighborhood effects literature known as the problem of "effects on average" (Small and Feldman 2012). This is the assumption that neighborhood effects operate evenly within neighborhoods and universally among neighborhoods, when in reality neighborhood effects are likely conditional on a host of factors that are difficult to

perceive, especially in quantitative analyses (Small 2004). In the case of residential mobility, scholars often assume that all residents evaluate the quality of neighborhoods in a similar manner before moving. However, it is more likely that certain characteristics of neighborhoods are salient for some residents but not others. Specifically, I suggest that the way in which residents perceive a neighborhood may be contingent on their economic status. For example, a renter struggling to make ends meet may be almost entirely focused on securing a more affordable home; this renter may not have the privilege of evaluating all of the characteristics of a neighborhood before deciding whether to move there. Wealthy residents, on the other hand, might be more likely to select places to live based on the aggregate characteristics of neighborhoods, such as local home values or the quality of local schools. If this is true, then residential mobility might be a neighborhood effect for wealthy movers and a housing effect for low-income movers.

THE OPPORTUNITY IN STAYING PUT

Recent studies suggest that residential mobility can be driven by housing effects and that low-income renters select places to live by prioritizing their housing needs (Rosen 2017; Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2012; Wood 2014). Low-income renters may be particularly focused on housing because they often have difficulty finding homes that are affordable, safe, and meet the needs of their households. This difficulty finding a satisfactory home can increase the pace at which low-income renters make residential moves or it can result in long periods of time living in the same apartment located in a high poverty context (Rosen 2017). While most researchers argue that staying in a high

poverty context over long periods of time limits one's access to resources and opportunities, this may not be the true for all low-income renters. In this section, I explain why the mobility patterns of low-income renters are unique and how staying in a high poverty context might increase one's access to resources and opportunities.

Although low-income residents they may desire to live in the same types of places as wealthy residents, their mobility decisions are disproportionately shaped by financial insecurity, coercion, and violence. Financial insecurity circumscribes housing searches to less expensive homes, and coercion affects the pace of residential mobility. Renters experience coercion from landlords who, on the one hand, have a large degree of autonomy in deciding whether to evict tenants (Desmond 2012), and on the other hand, can force renters with housing assistance to stay in "hard-to-rent" units located in dangerous neighborhoods (Rosen 2014). The mobility patterns of low-income renters are also disproportionately shaped by violence. Some cope with a violent context by cognitively delimiting their neighborhood to the street they live on, and others may keep to themselves to avoid potentially threatening interactions (Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2012). Renters experiencing financial insecurity may stay in a home located in a violent neighborhood so long as they feel safe but may move as soon as that perception of safety is broken (Rosen 2017). Subsequent moves rarely remove the threat of violence – they are not typically moves into objectively less violent neighborhoods – but they can restore a sense of safety. One forced or unplanned move resulting from a threat of violence or an eviction can instigate a succession of unplanned moves into dissatisfying homes and neighborhoods (Desmond, Gershenson, and Kivat 2015).

The mobility patterns of low-income renters are further shaped by the lack of affordable housing in the U.S., stagnating wages, and a lack of housing assistance. In 2013, 52% of households below the federal poverty line allocated more than half of their incomes to housing costs, only one-third of families living below the federal poverty line received some form of housing assistance, and nearly 13% of poor renting families could not pay all of their rent (Desmond 2015). These statistics suggest that many low-income renters live with the possibility that they might be forced out of their homes sometime soon.

Between experiencing forced mobility and facing threats of forced mobility, many struggle to find stability or a home where they can stay put until they are ready to move out. Because fewer homes in U.S. housing markets provide low-income renters with a degree of stability, it is reasonable to expect renters to stay put for long periods of time when they finally secure a home that satisfies their needs, even if it is located in a high poverty neighborhood. Researchers tend to view stability in a high poverty neighborhood as a form of isolation from crucial resources and opportunities that are needed to improve one's wellbeing and life chances. They fail to see the opportunities that become available when a household has a home that is affordable, safe, and accommodating of its needs.

A central reason why prior research fails to see stability as a resource is because of a longstanding view of high poverty neighborhoods as bounded entities with a similar set of characteristics. For example, many scholars have built on Wilson's (1987) description of high poverty neighborhoods as places that lack institutions, that are depopulated, and that lack networks residents can use to access information and

opportunities. Although Wilson might accurately describe some neighborhoods in Chicago at the end of the 20th century, high poverty neighborhoods in the U.S. are heterogeneous places (Small 2008; Small et al. 2018). Therefore, the consequences of staying put in a high poverty neighborhood may be highly variable. For example, some poor neighborhoods have very few organizations and the organizations they do have may do little to benefit local residents (see Wacquant 2008). Other poor neighborhoods have a large number of organizations that directly distribute resources to residents or that broker access to opportunities provided by organizations in other parts of the city (see Small 2009b). For example, organizations like childcare centers, beauty salons, and churches may serve as resource brokers that mitigate material hardships and expand residents' access to opportunities that lie beyond the boundaries of their neighborhoods (Delgado 1997; Small 2009b; Small et al. 2008).

Because high poverty neighborhoods are heterogeneous places, stability in some high poverty neighborhoods might help low-income renters access resources and opportunities to a greater extent than a move to a more affluent neighborhood. Residential stability might help renters build ties to organizational resource brokers in their neighborhood. Similarly, it might help them build and maintain ties to neighbors with whom they can exchange information, goods, services, or emotional support (Sampson and Groves 1989; Stack 1974). Renters who are able to stay put in a neighborhood with a stable residential population may be less likely to experience a violent crime (Sampson et al. 1997), more likely to have neighbors who watch out for their children's wellbeing (Sampson et al. 1999), and more likely to have civically

engaged neighbors (McCabe 2016). For any of these reasons, low-income renters may find it advantageous to stay put in a high poverty context.

NONPROFIT HOUSING PROVIDERS

In recent decades, nonprofit organizations have become crucial developers of assisted housing in high poverty neighborhoods, helping more low-income renters find affordable places to live. Some of these nonprofit housing developers not only provide affordable housing but also work to mitigate financial insecurity by providing residents with goods, programs, services, and information about employment opportunities. Nonprofit organizations that administer assisted housing might thus provide a pathway through which low-income renters can improve their wellbeing and life chances without moving to a more affluent neighborhood. In this section, I describe how nonprofit organizations have taken on a larger role as developers of assisted housing and how they may help low-income renters access resources and opportunities.

In the United States, project-based assisted housing is intended to reduce housing costs for low-income renters, and it can be publicly or privately owned. Public housing got its start under the Public Works Administration and expanded under the Housing Act of 1937. Early public housing consisted mostly of segregated low-rises intended to house middle class residents experiencing short-term financial difficulties. Public housing changed dramatically after WWII. It was instrumental in postwar slum clearance programs and played a role in concentrating neighborhood poverty (Hirsh 1983; Jackson 1985). The Housing Act of 1949 provided federal funding for large-scale modernist

public housing structures that sheltered a growing share of the urban poor. By the 1970s, the restructuring of urban neighborhoods and economies had created large contiguous areas of concentrated poverty. Because public housing of this era largely served residents with the lowest incomes, neighborhoods with more units of public housing were among the poorest and least likely to attract middle class residents, homeowners, and investment.

Private assisted housing was largely developed in neighborhoods that already contained public housing or already had a high concentration of residents living below the poverty line. In the 1960s, the Housing and Home Finance Agency – what would later become the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – began experimenting with programs that would subsidize the construction and acquisition of privately owned apartments while requiring developers to pass the savings on to low-income residents in the form of reduced rents. The country's stock of privately owned assisted housing quickly grew. By the end of the 20th century, most municipal housing authorities were reducing the number of public housing units in service while state and federal agencies supported the expansion of privately owned assisted housing with block grants, tax-exempt bonds, and tax credits. By 2009, public housing had become a far smaller portion of all project-based assisted housing in the U.S. with roughly 1.2 million units, and the number of privately owned assisted units had grown to nearly 4 million (Schwartz 2010:8).

Both nonprofit and for-profit organizations administer project-based assisted housing. Nonprofit organizations, such as community development corporations, began developing assisted housing in the late 1950s and early 1960s using below market-rate

loans (Bratt 2019). They participated in federally sponsored programs that sought to provide affordable homes to elderly low-income renters and to low-income families. The role of nonprofit housing providers has expanded in recent decades due to the increasing preference for private assisted housing and for the LIHTC program in particular.⁶ The LIHTC program was created in 1986 and has since become the largest source of funding for project-based assisted housing. The LIHTC funds approximately 36% of all project-based assisted units in the U.S. (Bratt 2019), and 10% of all funds from the LIHTC are reserved for nonprofit housing developers. This ensures that nonprofits own and manage a substantial portion of the county's assisted housing. Some for-profit organizations find it advantageous to partner with nonprofits when developing assisted housing, which similarly increases the involvement of nonprofits.

One implication of relying on nonprofit organizations to develop and manage assisted housing is that they may provide assisted renters with numerous services intended to improve their wellbeing and life chances. Nonprofit housing providers may help residents sign up for government sponsored programs such as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Women, Infants and Children (WIC). They may disseminate information about dental clinics, health services, and job opportunities. They may connect elderly renters to free medical services and discounted food programs. Nonprofits may provide services such as job preparation programs, regular food distributions, emergency food pantries, and they may sponsor scholarships for high school students heading off to

⁶ The LIHTC is a complicated mechanism for funding assisted housing. I describe how the LIHTC program works in subsequent chapters.

college. Nonprofits that own assisted housing may provide their residents with amenities such as computer rooms with Internet access and learning centers for children. In sum, nonprofit housing providers in high poverty neighborhoods may broker access to resources and opportunities that low-income renters might not otherwise be able to access.

A second implication of having nonprofit organizations develop assisted housing is that they might change the structural conditions under which low-income renters interact with their neighbors. Although low-income renters living in high poverty neighborhoods tend to move often, the resources provided at assisted housing complexes might encourage them – and their neighbors in assisted housing – to stay put for long periods of time. This is important because rapid population turnover can increase anonymity among neighbors and make it difficult for them to achieve shared goals or act collectively. High rates of turnover in poor neighborhoods tend to result from low rates of owner-occupied housing and the commonality of financial insecurity and displacement. However, with more affordable homes and greater access to resources, residents in assisted housing might move infrequently and have the same neighbors over long periods of time.

If assisted housing complexes create pockets of stability in high poverty contexts then they may allow residents to live in an environment where social norms are clear and collective efficacy is high. According to the social organization thesis, high poverty neighborhoods tend to exhibit more violent crime because social norms are weak and collective efficacy is low (Sampson et al. 1997). Residents in high poverty neighborhoods

may be less likely to intervene when they see trouble or less likely to trust the people living around them because the population is constantly changing. In assisted housing, however, where residents know their neighbors, we might expect trust and other social norms to be strong. Prior research on this topic suggests that the built environment has a large impact on social norms and collective action in assisted housing complexes. For example, the high rate of crime in public housing has often been attributed to the physical features of built environment (Griffiths and Tita 2009; Newman 1973; Newman and Franck 1982). It is possible, however, that social norms are more strongly impacted by other features of assisted housing such as how it shapes the mobility patterns of its residents.

CONCLUSION

Although our theories of residential mobility expect residents to move as a means of improving their access to resources and opportunities, low-income renters often move because they have no other choice. They move frequently in efforts to find housing that satisfies their needs, and they move frequently because they are forced to do so. Many of these moves keep low-income renters living in high poverty neighborhoods, which is thought to diminish their wellbeing and life chances. However, researchers have not considered many of the reasons why low-income renters may decide to stay put in a high poverty context. Some may stay put after acquiring a home that is affordable, safe, and accommodates their household. Assisted housing administered by a neighborhood nonprofit organization could provide low-income renters with this sort of stability.

Moreover, a nonprofit housing provider might broker access to numerous resources and opportunities from outside the neighborhood, providing low-income renters with an additional incentive to stay put.

I test the hypothesis described above in the following chapters. To do so, I draw on three sources of data. One is a national survey of housing in the U.S. that allows me to analyze broad trends in residential mobility among renters. The second is a citywide survey of housing in New York City, which is useful for analyzing the social effects of the built environment. And the third is a dataset that I created by surveying residents in the City of San Diego. In the next chapter, I describe each source of data in greater detail and the data collection procedures I used in San Diego. I also describe my critiques of the methods used in past studies of assisted housing. Each empirical chapter that follows my discussion of the methods draws on a different combination of datasets and answers a different set of questions. In the conclusion, I summarize the findings from each chapter and connect them to the literature on residential mobility and assisted housing.

CHAPTER 2: STUDYING RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I test the hypothesis that assisted housing increases residential stability and thereby shapes the wellbeing and life chances of low-income renters. My goal is to improve our understanding of why low-income renters move, when they choose to stay put in a home, and how they access new resources and opportunities. In the following sections, I describe the challenges that scholars face in answering these questions as well as my critiques of the methods used in prior research. I then describe my sources of data and the data collection procedures. Because each of the subsequent chapters relies on different methods for analyzing those data, my discussion of the analytic strategies will follow in subsequent chapters.

CHALLENGES AND CRITIQUES

There are at least two challenges to studying the effects of assisted housing on residential mobility and resource acquisition. First, there is no single dataset identifying all assisted housing complexes in the U.S., nor is there a dataset identifying all residents who live in assisted housing. Much of the data researchers use to study assisted housing come from city-level surveys, from datasets created by merging HUD records, and by collecting data at particular housing complexes through surveys, interviews, and observations. Like other researchers, I rely on data from multiple sources including data from large-scale surveys and data that I personally collected.

Large-scale surveys administered at the national and municipal levels are the best sources of data for making inferences about the mobility patterns of renters. For example, the *American Housing Survey* (AHS) and the *Panel Study of Income Dynamics* (PSID) have been crucial for understanding residential mobility throughout the U.S. (e.g. South and Deane 1993; South and Crowder 1997). However, these data are not suitable for understanding the experiences of renters living in assisted housing or the strategies they use to seek out resources and opportunities. To understand how assisted housing shapes the lives of its residents, researchers typically collect ethnographic or observational data at particular housing complexes (e.g. Feldman and Stall 2004; Venkatesh 2000), they carry out surveys and interviews with assisted residents (e.g. Chaskin and Joseph 2015; Bennett and Reed 1999), or they analyze administrative documents and historical records about public housing authorities (e.g. Hunt 2009; Vale 2013). Much of this data describes public housing in large cities on the East Coast and in the Midwest, often ignoring the experiences of assisted residents living in other parts of the country or in privately owned assisted housing. To improve our understanding of assisted housing that is less often studied, I collected data at privately owned assisted housing complexes in a city on the West Coast.

A second challenge to studying the effects of assisted housing is finding appropriate comparison groups, or groups of residents who are similar to assisted residents in most respects except for their housing tenure. Surprisingly, some of the most notable studies of assisted housing lack the comparisons needed to inform us of how assisted housing uniquely shapes the wellbeing and life chances of its residents. Consider

two examples: First, consider Rainwater's (1970) book, *Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Families in a Federal Slum*. In the 1960s, Rainwater (1970) and his colleagues interviewed, surveyed, and observed residents living in St. Louis's Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex to learn about the effects of segregation, poverty, and housing assistance. Rainwater (1970:408) concluded that public housing projects have "provided very few with good housing and have had almost no impact on the poverty problem as such." However, the study is generally not comparative. Aside from a few quantitative comparisons to private rental housing in the first chapter, the study provides no descriptions of the experiences of residents living in private apartment complexes in St. Louis during the 1960s.⁷ Because Rainwater and his colleagues provided no accounts of daily life in private rental housing, we do not know if the experiences of residents in Pruitt-Igoe were any different from those of residents living in other high poverty contexts in St. Louis.

Next, consider Newman's (1973) influential study of defensible space in New York City. Newman wanted to understand the relationship between modernist architecture and crime so he compared two public housing complexes in Brooklyn. One was Brownsville, a low-crime public housing complex built as a series of buildings three to six stories high. Across the street was the Van Dyke project. Van Dyke had a higher crime rate and was built as a series of three-story low rises and fourteen-story modernist

⁷ Some of the few comparative statistics seem to contradict Rainwater's conclusion about public housing having no impact on the problems of poverty and housing attainment. For example, he finds that 78 percent of residents at Pruitt-Igoe were satisfied with their homes compared to only 55 percent of residents living in private rental housing, suggesting that public housing may be more likely to accommodate the needs of low-income households than private rental housing.

high rises. Newman argued that crime was lower in Brownsville because it contained defensible spaces, or spaces where it was easier for residents to assert social control. Even if Newman accurately identifies this quality of buildings that he refers to as defensible space, his study can tell us little about how public housing in New York City shapes the lives of its residents. It is impossible to know whether, or to what extent, a lack of defensible space is unique to public housing because Newman does not include a comparison to privately owned buildings. It is possible that privately owned high-rises are equally dangerous because they, too, lack defensible spaces. Newman's study may improve our understanding of the social effects of the built environment but we learn little about how assisted housing shapes the wellbeing and life chances of its residents.

The problem resulting from the lack of comparisons to unassisted housing is exacerbated when authors generalize their findings to all assisted housing in the U.S. The titles of some influential studies illustrate the problem. For instance, consider Kotlowitz's (1991) *There are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing up in the Other America*. Kotlowitz chronicles two years in the lives of two children – Lafayette and his younger brother Pharoah – as they grew up in Chicago's Henry Horner Homes in the late 1980s. Kotlowitz explains how Lafayette and Pharoah were deprived of opportunities for a successful future because they were exposed to violence, gangs, and substandard living conditions – all of which are described as features of the Henry Horner Homes. Kotlowitz's title suggests that all children growing up in America's public housing may have experiences similar to those of Lafayette and Pharoah, and that those experiences are somehow isolated, disconnected, or unique from the experiences of people not living

in public housing. By generalizing beyond his observations, and without comparisons to low-income communities residing in private rental housing, Kotlowitz runs the risk of stigmatizing public housing as the foundation of what he refers to as the “other America.” Similarly, assisted housing may be stigmatized when scholars generalize their findings using tropes like the “modern ghetto” (Venkatesh 2000) or “second ghetto” (Hirsch 1983).

I take two steps to avoid the issues described above and to draw clearer inferences about the effects of assisted housing on its residents. First, each chapter presents an analysis of assisted housing that contains at least one comparison group. These comparison groups are useful for understanding the conditions in which assisted renters would have been living had they been living in market-rate rental housing. The one exception is the chapter on resource brokers. The chapter on resource brokers is not comparative because it is intended to explain how a nonprofit organization distributes resources and opportunities to its residents. The second step I take to avoid the problems I identified with prior research is to only generalize to populations for which I have samples. In each chapter, I discuss the limitations of my data for drawing broader conclusions about assisted housing.

SOURCES OF DATA

In the subsequent chapters I primarily draw on three sources of data. The first is the *American Housing Survey* (AHS), a nationally representative dataset of housing in the U.S. The AHS has played an important role in testing theories of residential mobility

because it contains information about the quality of residents' homes and neighborhoods. The 2013 wave of the AHS is unique because it uses administrative data from HUD to identify respondents with housing assistance. Surveys often rely on respondents to self-report receipt of housing assistance, which can lead to inaccuracies in the data because respondents may not realize that they live in an assisted housing complex or they may not know what kind of housing assistance they receive. The 2013 wave of the AHS may more accurately identify assisted households, providing a unique opportunity to compare the mobility patterns of assisted renters with those of unassisted renters.

The second source of data is the *New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey* (NYCHVS). The NYCHVS is a representative survey of all housing in New York City that contains very detailed information about the physical qualities of respondents' homes and neighborhoods, including information about whether a given respondent receives housing assistance. The 2002 wave of the NYCHVS survey is unique because it includes a question about social norms: respondents were asked whether they trust their neighbors. As I explain in greater detail in Chapter 4, trust is an important social norm that may help us understand residential interaction and the quality of social life at assisted housing complexes. The data describing social norms, the built environment, and housing assistance make the NYCHVS a suitable dataset for testing theories about the social effects of the build environment.

The third source of data is one that I created by surveying residents living in private assisted housing in City Heights, San Diego. I refer to this dataset as the *San Diego Assisted Housing Survey* (SDAHS). It contains information on residential mobility,

interactions among neighbors, and residents' perceptions of assisted housing. This dataset also contains a comparison group of waitlisted residents, or residents who had applied to live in assisted housing but who had not yet moved into an assisted apartment. In addition to the survey, I conducted follow-up interviews that asked respondents to describe their experiences living at their current home and searching for new homes. In the process of administering the survey and conducting interviews, I spent long periods of time with residents at the assisted housing complexes. My observations at the housing complexes informed my conclusions about social norms, exchanges of social support, and how assisted housing shapes access to resources and opportunities.

In the sections below, I explain each component of the data collection process in greater detail. I begin by explaining why the City of San Diego is an important place to study assisted housing, and I provide an overview of the various forms of housing assistance that the city offers its residents. I then describe the type of assisted housing I focused on, the neighborhood where I collected the data, and the organization I worked with to collect that data.

DATA COLLECTION

City Selection

The City of San Diego is a suitable place to study assisted housing for at least three reasons. First, San Diego's housing authority has followed nationwide trends in the provision of housing assistance by reducing its stock of public housing, increasing its use of housing choice vouchers, and relying more heavily on privatized forms of housing

assistance. Second, San Diego has the eighth largest population of all cities in the U.S., and large cities are where both poverty and assisted housing tend to be concentrated (Schwartz 2015). Third, there are few studies of project-based assisted housing in large West Coast cities even though it may be different from assisted housing elsewhere in the country in terms of funding, administration, and design. For these reasons, data describing assisted housing in San Diego may be useful for understanding variation in the effects of housing assistance.

The City of San Diego is emblematic of the shift away from public housing that is unfolding throughout the country. San Diego was one of the first large cities in the U.S. to opt out of the federal public housing program. The city's housing authority, the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC), began the process of exiting the public housing program in 2006 due to concerns that federal subsidies for operations and maintenance could not meet the city's needs (San Diego Housing Commission 2012, 2017). To exit the program, the SDHC bought all 1,366 units of public housing from HUD for \$1 per unit; the total market value of these properties exceeded \$124 million (San Diego Housing Commission 2017). The SDHC leveraged the equity from the public housing it purchased to create 810 more units of assisted housing (San Diego Housing Commission 2017). Former public housing residents in San Diego were given housing choice vouchers and the option of staying in their apartments or moving out and taking the vouchers with them. As residents moved out, the SDHC rented the former public housing units to higher income families (Schwartz 2015).

The public housing conversion changed the SDHC's housing portfolio. Today, the SDHC provides vouchers to over 15,000 households and owns or manages approximately 3,500 units of project-based assisted housing. Households in San Diego earning no more than 80 percent of the area median income (adjusted for family size and the cost of living) are considered low-income and may be eligible to receive some form of housing assistance. To put this in perspective, in 2018, the area median income (AMI) in the San Diego metropolitan area was \$81,800, meaning that a family of three with an income of \$70,100 could be eligible for an assisted apartment. This family would pay \$1,753 per month to rent a two-bedroom apartment from the SDHC (San Diego Housing Commission 2018b). To be sure, 80 percent of the AMI is the upper bound of what is considered to be low-income. Some assisted housing complexes are intended for very low-income families or extremely low-income families, and in these cases a family of three would pay much less than \$1,753 for rent each month.

The SDHC is not the only organization that provides assisted housing in the City of San Diego. As in most cities throughout the country, for-profit and nonprofit housing developers are playing larger roles in the provision of project-based assisted housing. According to the information provided in the SDHC's (2018a) "Affordable Housing Resource Guide," I calculate that, in 2017, there were over 16,400 units of privately owned assisted apartments spread out over 171 different developments in the city (San Diego Housing Commission 2018a). The smallest of these developments contains 6 units and the largest contains 452 units. The average development has 99 units and the median development has 72 units.

Private organizations use combinations of federal and state subsidies to create assisted housing, either by building new units or by purchasing existing buildings. They also use federal and state subsidies to fund building maintenance and capital improvements. The subsidies come from multiple sources such as the HOME Investment Partnership program, Section 8 project-based vouchers, the Community Development Block Grant Program, trust funds, foundations, and tax breaks. The program that has contributed to the creation of the greatest number of assisted units during the last three decades is the LIHTC.

The LIHTC is administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Each year, the IRS allocates tax credits to each state's housing finance agency on a per capita basis. The housing finance agency releases a qualified allocation plan or a statement describing the state's housing needs. Developers submit project proposals to their state housing finance agency, the proposals are scored, and the proposals receiving the highest scores are awarded tax credits. The developers receiving tax credits must then turn the credits into capital that can be used to create assisted housing. Tax credits are turned into capital by selling them to a corporation, syndicator, or investor for cash. A corporation will use the tax credits to reduce its federal tax liability, and the developers will use the cash to build, acquire, or maintain assisted housing. Because the tax credits allow developers to create and maintain assisted housing at a reduced cost, the savings can be passed on to low-income households in the form of reduced rents. Any building receiving tax credits must abide by HUD-determined rent

limits for at least 15 years. This method of creating project-based assisted housing has been politically popular but is less efficient than direct expenditures (Schwartz 2015).

Scholars have written much about public housing, vouchers, and more recently about mixed-income developments. However, few have studied the effects of living in private assisted housing funded by LIHTCs. This is a critical oversight because the composition of assisted housing in the U.S. is changing and the LIHTC is increasingly popular. The City of San Diego is therefore a suitable case because much of the private assisted housing is funded by the LIHTC.

Neighborhood Selection

One neighborhood in the City of San Diego with a large supply of private assisted housing is City Heights. City Heights is a high poverty neighborhood that consists of multiple census tracts nested inside a zip code with an estimated poverty rate exceeding 28 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). Some census tracts within that zip code have poverty rates that exceed 40 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). By both measures, City Heights is a high poverty context relative to other zip codes and census tracts in the city. In 2015, approximately 40 percent of residents living in City Heights were born outside of the U.S., and 55 percent of residents identified as Hispanic, 18 percent as Asian, 14 percent as black, and 12 percent as white (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). Like many low-income neighborhoods throughout the country, City Heights has a large number of assisted housing complexes that are funded by the LIHTC.

City Heights was not always a low-income neighborhood. When it was annexed by the City of San Diego in 1923 it was an important commercial center and remained so until the 1960s; retail businesses in City Heights started to decline when new shopping centers were built such as Fashion Valley and Mission Valley (City Heights Town Council 2019). Until it was rezoned in 1965, City Heights was primarily a middle class neighborhood comprised of homeowners (Bliesner and Bussell 2013). The 1965 Mid-City Redevelopment Plan allowed developers to purchase single-family homes, raze them, and construct multifamily rental housing in their place (Bliesner and Bussell 2013). The neighborhood's declining economy and changing housing stock increased its density and brought more low-income renters into the neighborhood. It was during this transition that City Heights became a destination for immigrants arriving to San Diego. City Heights continues to serve as a destination for immigrants from Latin America, East Africa, and Southeast Asia (Bliesner and Bussell 2013).

In the 1990s and 2000s, City Heights received multiple philanthropic investments in local parks, schools, shopping centers, and housing complexes yet poverty and crime rates have experienced little improvement (Burks 2014). It was also during this time that LIHTCs were starting to be used to increase their neighborhood's supply of assisted housing. One nonprofit that has long provided assisted housing to the residents of City Heights is an organization I refer to as *Housing the Heights*.⁸ *Housing the Heights* is a nonprofit that has been operating in City Heights since the 1980s, and it has a mission that aims not only to house the neighborhood's low-income residents but also to lead

⁸ *Housing the Heights* is a pseudonym.

neighborhood improvement projects and promote economic self-sufficiency. *Housing the Heights* owns or co-owns nearly 350 assisted apartments in City Heights. The assisted housing complexes vary in size ranging from 6 to 120 apartments, all have income restrictions set at 50-60 percent of the HUD-established AMI, and they are located in census tracts with poverty rates ranging from 23 to 44 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). In addition to providing residents with homes, *Housing the Heights* provides its residents with numerous services and programs that I describe in detail in Chapter 6.

The San Diego Assisted Housing Survey

Housing the Heights allowed me solicit participation from residents living in 10 of their buildings for a survey. They also allowed me to solicit participation from residents on the waitlists for apartments at the same 10 assisted housing complexes. As explained by Massey et al. (2013), the utility of comparing assisted and waitlisted residents is that the two groups are likely similar in most respects except for the homes they are currently living in. Rather than take a sample of assisted and waitlisted households, I attempted to survey one adult in each household from both populations. To increase the survey response rate, I offered all respondents ten dollars in cash for their participation.

I solicited participation from one adult living in each of the 318 apartments at the 10 assisted housing complexes. Respondents were solicited through door-to-door visits at varying times of the morning, afternoon, and early evening until one adult in the household was contacted. A total of six attempts were made to contact an adult in each

household who could consent to participating in the survey. Between June and October 2015, a total of 184 assisted renters participated in the survey. Following the American Association for Public Opinion Research's method for calculating response rates, the SDAHS has a 59.4 percent response rate for assisted renters.⁹ A total of 184 interviews were completed, 73 individuals from different households refused to take the survey, 23 households could not be contacted after 6 attempts, and 30 households were unable to consent to participating in the survey. Most households unable to consent could not do so due to language barriers; the survey was administered in English and Spanish, only.

I also attempted to solicit participation from households who were waitlisted for apartments at the assisted housing complexes. There were a total of 3 waitlists for all 10 housing complexes. Participation was solicited from one adult in each waitlisted household. Individuals who applied for an apartment at any of the 10 assisted housing complexes were sent a letter requesting their participation in the survey. However, because the waitlists were constantly changing and some were infrequently updated, the actual number of households waiting for an apartment at any of the housing complexes at any given time was unknown. I mailed over 600 letters to waitlisted households, and more than 100 were returned by the post office because the household no longer lived at

⁹ The response rate is calculated as follows: 184 completed interviews / (184 completed interviews + 73 refusals + 23 no contacts + 30 households unable to consent). Of the 318 apartments at the assisted housing complexes, 8 were vacant or being prepared for new tenants at the time of the survey and so they were removed from the denominator when calculating the response rate.

the location where the letter was sent.¹⁰ In total, 35 waitlisted households participated in the survey between January and August of 2016.

The survey questionnaire contained four sections. The first section queried respondents about their current housing arrangement. These questions asked about housing tenure, characteristics of the household, perceived safety at home, and about perceptions of the surrounding neighborhood. This section of the questionnaire also asked respondents about the type of dwelling they lived in prior to moving into their current home and whether they had been homeowners. The second section of the questionnaire asked about support networks and the relationships respondents may have had with their neighbors. Specifically, I asked respondents how many neighbors they considered to be close friends, whether they exchanged support with their neighbors (i.e. goods, services, or information), how frequently acts of reciprocity occurred, how often respondents visited their neighbors' homes, and how often they hosted neighbors in their own homes. The third section of the questionnaire asked respondents about opportunities they might be able to access from the people living around them or from their landlord, such as help finding a job or help finding educational opportunities. The final section of the survey asked respondents' about their socioeconomic status, demographic characteristics, and participation in public assistance programs.

¹⁰ The large number of returned letters may be evidence that waitlisted residents move often.

Follow-Up Interviews

The survey is useful for measuring variation that might exist between assisted and waitlisted residents with regard to mobility patterns and access to resources and opportunities. However, it is less useful for explaining why those variations might exist. I therefore relied on Small's (2009a) sequential interviewing technique to identify the mechanisms through which assisted housing might shape residential mobility and access to resources and opportunities. Sequential interviewing considers each interview to be a unique case rather than a sample of a broader population. The purpose of the interviews was to uncover as many mechanisms as possible that explain the effects of assisted housing on residents wellbeing and life chances. Each interview served the purpose of answering a set of questions and generating a new set of questions for subsequent interviews. To solicit respondents for these interviews, I asked all residents who completed a survey if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. In total, I conducted 35 follow-up interviews.

The starting interview guide asked respondents about their interactions with neighbors, their involvement in services and programs provided by *Housing the Heights*, and their interactions with their landlords. The interview questions additionally asked respondents about the frequency and intensity of their interactions with neighbors. For respondents who had relationships with their neighbors, I asked follow-up questions about how these relationships formed and whether they have shaped their access to resources or opportunities of any kind. For respondents who lacked relationships with their neighbors, I asked follow-up questions about why they thought they did not built

more relationships. Finally, in order to better understand differences between assisted and waitlisted residents, I asked respondents to explain how their current home is different from previous places they have lived.

Observations

In the process of administering the survey, I spent many days with residents at the assisted housing complexes. Many residents spoke to me beyond the survey and interview questions about their experiences searching for new homes and living in assisted housing. These conversations improved my understanding of the problems residents face in the housing market as well as the successes and failures of assisted housing to address those problems. I was also able to observe daily life at the housing complexes, and my observations were inconsistent with those of other researchers. The buildings I saw were well maintained, unlike those described by Rainwater (1970) and Kotlowitz (1991). I did not observe ubiquitous signs of physical disorder (cf. Moore 1969). I did not observe any evidence of gangs, crimes, or fear of violence (cf. Rainwater 1970; Popkin et al. 2000b; Venkatesh 2000). Nor did I find evidence that residents were alienated from their neighbors (cf. Rainwater 1966). In other words, much of what I observed was rather mundane residential life at apartment complexes. These observations are important because they diverge from the observations commonly reported by scholars, journalists, and others who write about assisted housing.

Key Respondents

To learn more about the resources and opportunities available to residents living in the assisted housing complexes, I interviewed the resident services coordinators. Each housing complex owned by *Housing the Heights* has a resident services coordinator whose job it is to provide services, information, and resources to the residents and their children. The resident services coordinators organized job preparation programs, a bimonthly food distribution program, and an emergency food pantry. They spent long periods of time with the residents' children, helping them with homework, running after-school activities, taking the children on fieldtrips, and sometimes updating the parents on the children's progress at school. The coordinators brought problems occurring at the housing complexes to the attention of the executives at *Housing the Heights*, and sometimes they settled conflicts between residents and property managers over rent, repairs, and rules at the housing complex. The resident services coordinators also mediated occasional conflicts between residents, usually informally but occasionally through a formal mediation process. Finally, the resident services coordinators help residents access resources and opportunities from other organizations throughout San Diego.

CONCLUSION

In the chapters that follow, I draw primarily on the sources of data described above. In some chapters I rely on the *Decennial Census* and the *American Community Survey* to describe the social, economic, and demographic conditions in U.S. cities and

neighborhoods. Similarly, in one chapter I draw on the *Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Database* to describe the distribution of assisted housing funded by the LIHTC in San Diego's neighborhoods. The combination of datasets allows me to answer multiple questions about residential mobility and assisted housing.

In the next chapter, I use the AHS to compare the mobility patterns of renters living in assisted housing with those of unassisted renters. This allows me to make inferences about how assisted housing shapes the pace at which low-income renters make residential moves. I then use data from the SDAHS to determine if there is an association between residential mobility and norms of reciprocity. Reciprocal exchange or social support has long been identified as an important social norm through which low-income residents access resources, and scholars have long debated whether assisted housing increases or decreases social support among neighbors. While most scholars have provided answers to this question by analyzing social support in public housing, I consider exchanges of support among residents living in private assisted housing.

CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL SUPPORT IN PRIVATE ASSISTED HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have long argued that low-income residents rely on their social ties to access goods, services, and information (Stack 1974). Over extended periods of time, acts of giving and receiving support can build trust between individuals and produce support networks that serve as safety nets against financial crises. However, beginning in the 1970s, the increasing concentration of poverty in U.S. urban neighborhoods isolated low-income residents from resource-rich individuals and institutions (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987). Research on social isolation demonstrates that concentrated poverty reduces the size of one's support networks, limiting the number of contacts who might be able to provide resources in a time of need (Hogan, Eggebeen, and Clogg 1993; Rankin and Quane 2000; Tigges, Browne, Green 1998). Of all residents living amid concentrated poverty, assisted renters might be the most likely to experience resource deprivation because, in addition to being isolated from the middle class, they might also be isolated from their neighbors (Rainwater 1966).

Yet some researchers who study residential interaction in assisted housing find evidence that neighbors exchange a variety of resources including childcare, food, money, medical supplies, and information about job opportunities and schools (Gaumer, Jacobowitz, Brooks-Gunn 2014; Raudenbush 2016; Venkatesh 2000). Assisted residents also coordinate with their neighbors to carry out community building projects, to demand that landlords make improvements to their housing complexes, and to resist displacement from urban redevelopment (Arena 2012; Feldman and Stall 2004; Howard 2014).

Accounts of social support and tenant activism are surprising because project-based assisted housing tends to be located in high-poverty neighborhoods (Hirsch 1983; Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993)—the very places where social isolation and anonymity are thought to be most intense—and because crime rates and mistrust in assisted housing tend to be high (Griffiths and Tita 2009; Moore 1969; Newman 1973; Popkin et al. 2000b; Rainwater 1966). If isolation, crime, and mistrust are common in assisted housing, how do residents manage to exchange support?

One possible explanation is that assisted housing provides low-income renters with more time to find neighbors who are willing to engage in some form of reciprocated exchange. Neighborhoods where residents live in their homes for long periods of time, or neighborhoods with high residential stability, exhibit higher rates of reciprocated exchange than neighborhoods where the population is in flux (Sampson and Groves 1989; Sampson et al. 1999; Schieman 2005). Living in proximity to a fixed group of residents may increase the chance that neighbors meet one another, build relationships, and exchange resources. Low-income renters may have fewer opportunities to establish neighborhood-based support networks because they move more frequently than any other group of residents (Mateyka 2015; Rossi 1980), often due to housing dissatisfaction, financial insecurity, and eviction (Desmond 2012; Desmond et al. 2015; Speare 1974). However, when low-income renters live in assisted housing their rents are subsidized, which might make them less likely to experience a forced move and might provide them with more opportunities to build support networks.

This chapter tests the hypothesis that project-based assisted housing promotes residential stability, which in turn facilitates exchange among neighbors. My strategy for evaluating this hypothesis is twofold. First, I use the 2011 wave of the AHS to compare the pace of mobility of assisted renters against that of unassisted renters. Second, I rely on the SDAHS to determine whether renters living in privately owned assisted housing are more likely to interact with their neighbors the longer they live in their homes. I argue that assisted housing can slow the pace of residential mobility for assisted renters by subsidizing the cost of rent, and that a consequence of living in the same place for an extended period of time is increased interaction with one's neighbors, including exchanges of support.

SOCIAL SUPPORT IN ASSISTED HOUSING

Privately owned assisted housing has become a larger share of all project-based assisted housing since the 1990s, when the stock of public housing started to decline and new mechanisms for funding private assisted housing, such as the LIHTC, were widely adopted. Despite the growth of private assisted housing, much of the literature has focused on studying the effects of public housing and its role in concentrating neighborhood poverty during the second half of the 20th century. Within this literature, scholars offer two broad hypotheses to explain the effect of assisted housing on social support. The first suggests that assisted housing increases social isolation by segregating low-income residents in high-poverty neighborhoods (Massey and Denton 1993; Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993), where there may be few individuals and institutions that can

offer resources for finding jobs or mitigating material hardships (Fernandez and Harris 1992; Hogan et al. 1993; Rankin and Quane 2000; Tigges et al. 1998; Wilson 1987). There is evidence that concentrated poverty also increases mistrust (Smith 2010), which may prevent residents from exchanging material goods or job referrals even when they have the means to do so (Smith 2007; Stack 1974).

In addition to social isolation and mistrust, residents living in assisted housing may experience residential isolation or alienation from their neighbors. For example, in Yancey's (1971) study of St. Louis's Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex, he found that residents feared for their safety when passing through their building's elevators, hallways, and stairwells but that they found safety inside their apartments. As a result, residents adjusted their daily routines to avoid their neighbors. Remarking on these routines, Rainwater (1966:30) writes, "Whereas in St. Louis, the laundry rooms seem unsafe places, tenants tend to prefer to do their laundry in their homes, sacrificing the possibility of neighborly interactions to gain a greater sense of security of person and property." Scholars explain this ostensible lack of interaction as the result of architectural designs that inhibit social control (Newman 1973), as the result of overcrowding and anonymity (McCarthy and Saegert 1978; Newman and Franck 1982), and a consequence of strict rules of tenancy that foster mistrust (Suttles 1968).

A second view in the literature suggests that living in high-poverty contexts increases the likelihood that residents will turn to their neighbors to access resources and opportunities. For example, in a study of personal neighbor networks in Nashville, Campbell and Lee (1992:1093) find that low-income residents "rely more heavily on

neighbors for friendship and support” than residents with higher incomes and more education. In Edin and Lein's (1997) study of low-wage work and public assistance, they find that low-income mothers—the majority of whom live in assisted housing—depend on a combination of friends and family to reduce material hardships. Observers of residential interaction in assisted housing reach similar conclusions. For example, in Venkatesh's (2000) study of the Robert Taylor Homes, he finds that residents compensate for a lack of resources and poor quality housing by exchanging childcare services, cooking for one another, and sharing hallway and elevator maintenance responsibilities. At a privately owned assisted housing complex in New York City, Gaumer et al. (2014:65) find that even though residents do not consider their relationships with their neighbors to be particularly strong, they nonetheless exchange informational and instrumental support that might help them “both get by and get ahead.” And in Raudenbush's (2016) study of Chicago's “Jackson Homes,” she finds that residents who lack formal healthcare depend on their neighbors to obtain medicine and other medical supplies.

How can social support be common in assisted housing if poverty, mistrust, and anonymity are also common? There is some evidence that social support is sustainable because the tenant population remains stable over time. For example, in Feldman and Stall's (2004:358) study of Chicago's Wentworth Gardens, the authors describe the efforts of longtime residents – who had lived in their homes for an average of over 30 years – to lead younger cohorts of residents in a variety of projects aimed at improving local services and creating a sense of community. Similarly, in Raudenbush's (2016:17) study

of the “Jackson Homes,” she finds that residents who grew up in the same neighborhood and became neighbors as adults were better able to assess each other's trustworthiness and thus more likely to exchange support. The findings in these ethnographic studies are consistent with quantitative research on social support and residential stability. For instance, in Sampson et al.'s (1999) study of social organization in Chicago, the authors find that residential stability is more strongly correlated with reciprocated exchange than neighborhood poverty, neighborhood racial/ethnic composition, or the socioeconomic characteristics of a neighborhood's residents. And in Schieman's (2005) study of support networks among elderly adults living in Maryland and Washington DC, he finds a positive association between neighborhood disadvantage and social support but only in neighborhoods with a stable population.

RESIDENTIAL STABILITY IN ASSISTED HOUSING

If residential stability is crucial for the creation of support networks, then exchanges of support among assisted renters might be sustainable because project-based assisted housing creates pockets of stability in high-poverty neighborhoods. The pace of residential mobility is influenced by a combination of residents' preferences for particular types of homes and neighborhoods, and constraints on where they are able to move. Residents seek to move when they become dissatisfied with their home or when the needs of their households change (Rossi 1980; Speare 1974). Residents may also seek to move when they become dissatisfied with the physical qualities of their housing units or with the status, services, and amenities in their neighborhoods. When searching for a new

place to live, residents leverage their human and economic capital to secure homes in the highest quality neighborhood possible (Massey and Mullan 1984). However, not all residents have equal access to neighborhoods with high-quality residential amenities. Black and Hispanic residents experience various forms of discrimination in the housing market (Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Charles 2000, 2003; Galster and Godfrey 2005), which may increase the costs of moving into high-quality neighborhoods (Logan and Alba 1993). Minority residents are therefore more likely to move within high-poverty neighborhoods (South and Crowder 1997), and may be less likely to move at all if they live in highly segregated housing markets (South and Deane 1993).

Although a combination of preferences and constraints guide most residential moves, scholars have long recognized that not all mobility is voluntary. For instance, in a study of Philadelphia from the 1950s, Rossi (1980:185) estimated that 23 percent of all moves in his sample were caused by eviction, income loss, or because a home was destroyed. In recent years, scholars have reexamined the possibility that a significant portion of all moves is forced. They find evidence that low-income households are the most likely to experience a forced move, and that residents who experience a forced move are more likely to be dissatisfied with their new home and thus more likely to make subsequent moves (Desmond et al. 2015). Forced mobility is a process that can also be induced by neighborhood change. Residents may be displaced when their neighborhoods experience urban renewal, gentrification, and when public housing is razed for redevelopment (Gans 1962; Goetz 2003, 2013; Freeman 2005; Martin and Beck 2016).

Despite the many forces that keep low-income renters moving frequently, assisted housing might slow the pace of residential mobility in at least three ways.

First, assisted housing might decrease the costs of housing related expenses such as rent and utilities, and thereby decrease the financial insecurity that makes renters susceptible to a forced move. In public housing, residents are typically charged rents that do not exceed 30 percent of their family income. Rents are more variable in private assisted housing, ranging from 30 percent of a renter's income for those living in deeply subsidized housing (e.g., Section 8) to 30 percent of 50 to 60 percent of the area median income for those living in shallowly subsidized housing complexes, such as those funded by the LIHTC (O'Regan and Horn 2012). Despite programmatic differences, all assisted renters are likely to be less burdened with housing related expenses than otherwise similar but unassisted renters. If the average low-income family in the United States spends at least half of its income on housing related expenses (Desmond 2015), and if assisted housing mitigates this rent burden, then these families may be more likely to remain in their homes over a long period of time if they live in assisted housing than if they live in market-rate housing.

Second, assisted housing might increase housing satisfaction if it provides residents with access to neighborhoods containing high-quality amenities and services. For much of the 20th century, project-based assisted housing was sited in low-income and segregated neighborhoods (Hirsch 1983; Massey and Denton 1993; Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993). However, there is evidence to suggest that this trend is changing. In 1992, HUD began funding the demolition of distressed public housing complexes and

replacing some of the razed units with mixed-income housing. Assisted renters who were able to return to their neighborhoods after redevelopment, and those who were never displaced, might have greater access to high-quality services and amenities than before redevelopment (Chaskin and Joseph 2015). In addition, there is evidence that new units of privately owned assisted housing are being developed in suburban neighborhoods that have long excluded low-income renters (e.g., see Massey et al. 2013). Assisted renters who have access to redeveloped urban neighborhoods or resource-rich suburbs might be less likely to move out of their homes.

Third, residents in assisted housing might be insulated from the displacement pressures associated with gentrification. If gentrification causes the displacement of low-income renters through the mechanism of rising housing costs, then assisted renters living in gentrifying neighborhoods might be less likely than similar but unassisted renters to be displaced because their housing expenses are not necessarily tied to changes in the local housing market. Wyly et al. (2010) show that, in 2008, as much as two-thirds of New York City's renter households might have had some protection from displacement pressures because they lived in rent controlled or rent stabilized housing. Similarly, Freeman (2006) finds that some longtime residents living in New York City's gentrifying Harlem and Clinton Hill neighborhoods are protected from displacement because they live in rent regulated or subsidized apartments. Some of these residents derive satisfaction from greater neighborhood safety, increased access to stores, and the improved physical appearance of their neighborhoods. To be sure, much of the country's assisted housing continues to be located in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Schwartz

2010:132). Moreover, hundreds of assisted housing complexes have been razed through programs such as HOPE VI, which have resulted in large-scale displacements (Arena 2012; Goetz 2003, 2013). However, to the extent that assisted renters are able to live in neighborhoods where local amenities are improving, increased satisfaction with one's neighborhood might provide an impetus to stay put.

DATA AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

American Housing Survey

Does assisted housing increase residential stability? To answer this question, I draw on the 2011 release of the AHS. The AHS is a biennial survey of U.S. housing that has been administered by the U.S. Census Bureau since 1973. It is one of the most relied upon sources of information about the country's housing stock. The 2011 release consists of a national sample in addition to samples taken from 29 metropolitan areas. I use the combined sample and limit observations to heads of household who are renters living in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs).¹¹ The 2011 release also contains an oversample of renters living in private assisted housing, public housing, and in voucher-holding households. Respondents for the oversample were selected using HUD administrative data. In previous waves of the AHS, respondents self-reported assisted housing tenure, which led to inaccuracies in the data because distinctions between assisted housing programs are not necessarily clear to residents (Econometrica Inc. 2015:479–80). Therefore, assisted housing tenure is indicated in the following analysis

¹¹ I run the models without sampling weights.

using HUD administrative data. All respondents who self-reported receiving federal, state, or local rent subsidies but who were not part of the HUD sample are placed in a separate category of renters called “Other Subsidized Renters.”

The response variable is length of time in residence measured in months, and the explanatory variables of interest indicate assisted housing tenure. The models control for three theoretically influential predictors of residential mobility. The first is the householder's position in the life course and family composition. These predictors of mobility are operationalized by gender, race, ethnicity, age, marital status, education, presence of children in the household, family income, and receipt of public assistance. The second is residency in a particular housing market, represented by the SMSA. And the third is neighborhood and housing satisfaction. Neighborhood and housing satisfaction are measured by respondents' ratings of the quality of their neighborhoods and housing units; these variables range on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). To assess why assisted housing might affect residential stability, the models include two variables that might account for an association between assisted housing tenure and length of time in residence: the ratio of persons per bedroom (a measure of crowding) and monthly housing costs (rent plus utilities).

I model time in residence using zero-truncated negative binomial regression. I test whether renters living in assisted housing exhibit a significantly longer average length of tenure than unassisted renters when controlling for the individual characteristics of householders, the composition of their families, the local housing market (i.e. the SMSA), neighborhood satisfaction, and housing satisfaction. I expect assisted housing

tenure to be positively associated with time in residence net of these controls. However, I expect the association between assisted housing tenure and time in residence to attenuate after controlling for monthly housing costs.

San Diego Assisted Housing Survey

Does residential stability facilitate social support among neighbors? To answer this question, I rely on data from the SDAHS. The SDAHS is a dataset I compiled by administering a survey to residents living at 10 privately owned assisted housing complexes located in a low-income neighborhood in the City of San Diego. The SDAHS also contains data on households appearing on the waitlists for apartments at the 10 assisted housing complexes.

I draw on the SDAHS to model the relationship between residential stability and interaction among neighbors. The first three response variables indicate whether a respondent reported having a neighbor who she considers to be a close friend, whether a respondent visited a neighbor's home during the 12 months prior to the survey, and whether the respondent hosted a neighbor in her home during the 12 months prior to the survey. A neighbor was defined as anybody living within the respondent's housing complex. The fourth response variable is an index of social support. The index is constructed by counting whether respondents made attempts to acquire five resources from any neighbor: (1) childcare, (2) help finding a job, (3) a ride somewhere, (4) advice of any kind, and (5) a monetary loan. Respondents were assigned a 1 for every item they had requested from a neighbor for a score ranging from 0 to 5. The same procedure was

used to assign respondents a score representing how many items their neighbors had requested from them. These two scores were then aggregated to assign each respondent a score on the support index ranging from 0 to 10. One limitation of this index is that respondents who exchanged a broader range of items scored higher than those who exchanged only one type of item but may have exchanged that item frequently.

The models of residential interaction control for gender, race, ethnicity, age, marital status, employment status, educational attainment, whether the respondent was born outside of the United States, whether the respondent has children, household income, receipt of public assistance, the cost of rent, and assisted housing tenure. The explanatory variable of interest is time in residence measured in years. I fit logistic regressions to the SDAHS data to estimate the association between time in residence and the binary measures of residential interaction. I estimate the models of the support index using negative binomial regression. I expect residents who have lived in their homes for comparatively longer periods of time to be more likely to report having a neighbor who is a close friend, to have visited a neighbor in the past year, to have hosted a neighbor in the past year, and to score higher on the support index.

RESULTS FROM THE AHS

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for renters in the AHS sample. On average, assisted renters tend to live in their homes for longer periods of time than unassisted renters. The average length of tenure for unassisted renters is 47 months whereas the average length of tenure is 87 months in privately owned assisted housing and 83 months

in public housing. Assisted renters are also more likely to have lower monthly housing costs. On average, renters in private assisted housing pay \$387 for rent and utilities each month, public housing renters pay \$405, and voucher-holders pay \$666. This is substantially less than the \$1,121 paid by the average unassisted renter. The descriptive statistics provide evidence that assisted renters move less often and pay less for housing than unassisted renters.¹²

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics: American Housing Survey

	Unassisted Renters	Privately Owned Assisted Housing	Public Housing	Voucher	Other Subsidized Renters	Rent Control / Stabilization
Time in Residence (months)	47.62 (68.45)	87.55 (85.18)	83.51 (93.22)	63.11 (69.21)	61.30 (75.78)	113.95 (128.84)
Female	0.50 (0.50)	0.73 (0.44)	0.81 (0.40)	0.80 (0.40)	0.64 (0.48)	0.49 (0.50)
Black	0.17 (0.38)	0.36 (0.48)	0.57 (0.50)	0.51 (0.50)	0.35 (0.48)	0.10 (0.30)
Asian	0.07 (0.26)	0.07 (0.26)	0.03 (0.17)	0.05 (0.22)	0.06 (0.23)	0.14 (0.34)
Hispanic	0.21 (0.41)	0.15 (0.36)	0.19 (0.40)	0.15 (0.36)	0.19 (0.39)	0.23 (0.42)
White	0.52 (0.50)	0.40 (0.49)	0.19 (0.39)	0.26 (0.44)	0.37 (0.48)	0.50 (0.50)
Other	0.02 (0.15)	0.02 (0.13)	0.02 (0.15)	0.03 (0.17)	0.04 (0.19)	0.03 (0.18)
Age	41.57 (15.69)	59.94 (20.72)	46.97 (18.16)	47.51 (16.28)	48.07 (18.99)	45.63 (16.55)
Married	0.34 (0.47)	0.12 (0.33)	0.12 (0.32)	0.14 (0.35)	0.20 (0.40)	0.29 (0.45)
Divorced/Separated	0.23 (0.42)	0.30 (0.46)	0.28 (0.45)	0.29 (0.45)	0.28 (0.45)	0.16 (0.37)
Widowed	0.05 (0.22)	0.25 (0.43)	0.11 (0.32)	0.10 (0.30)	0.13 (0.34)	0.06 (0.23)
Never Married	0.38 (0.49)	0.33 (0.47)	0.48 (0.50)	0.46 (0.50)	0.39 (0.49)	0.49 (0.50)

¹² Assisted residents may have monthly housing costs that exceed the cap for their respective housing assistance programs (e.g., 30 percent of family income in public housing) if utilities expenses are not included in the price of rent and if utilities allowances are smaller than the actual utilities that residents tend to consume.

Table 1. Continued.

Did Not Graduate High School	0.15 (0.36)	0.36 (0.48)	0.40 (0.49)	0.30 (0.46)	0.27 (0.45)	0.15 (0.36)
High School Graduate	0.24 (0.43)	0.30 (0.46)	0.29 (0.46)	0.32 (0.47)	0.30 (0.46)	0.14 (0.35)
Post High School Education	0.32 (0.47)	0.25 (0.43)	0.26 (0.44)	0.31 (0.46)	0.31 (0.46)	0.21 (0.41)
Bachelor's Degree or More	0.29 (0.45)	0.09 (0.28)	0.04 (0.20)	0.07 (0.25)	0.12 (0.32)	0.50 (0.50)
Number of Children	0.60 (1.03)	0.37 (0.87)	0.95 (1.29)	0.96 (1.36)	0.72 (1.18)	0.32 (0.78)
Family Income	\$43,265 (\$51,112)	\$12,019 (\$11,507)	\$13,073 (\$15,577)	\$16,151 (\$16,374)	\$19,625 (\$23,753)	\$52,819 (\$54,774)
Public Assistance	0.02 (0.15)	0.09 (0.29)	0.16 (0.37)	0.12 (0.33)	0.13 (0.33)	0.03 (0.16)
Neighborhood Rating (1-10)	7.67 (1.99)	7.49 (2.53)	6.53 (2.78)	7.40 (2.37)	7.23 (2.47)	7.69 (1.90)
Housing Rating (1-10)	7.74 (1.79)	8.07 (2.09)	7.68 (2.22)	7.75 (2.13)	7.69 (2.12)	7.67 (1.75)
Persons per Room	0.55 (0.32)	0.46 (0.22)	0.55 (0.27)	0.53 (0.27)	0.55 (0.31)	0.60 (0.42)
Monthly Housing Costs	\$1,121 (\$708)	\$387 (\$290)	\$405 (\$367)	\$666 (\$460)	\$653 (\$454)	\$1,384 (\$1,005)
<i>N</i>	32,167	2,908	1,535	2,016	1,353	1,183

The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Table 2 displays results from the regression models. The results in Model 1 are largely consistent with the findings in the residential mobility literature. As expected, older renters and households with children live in the same home for longer periods of time than younger residents and households without children. This finding is consistent with studies showing that having children is positively associated with time in residence (South and Deane 1993). Model 1 also shows that highly educated renters move more often than those with less education, which is likely the result of young college-educated renters moving for job opportunities at early stages in their careers. Renters who receive public assistance move more often than those who do not receive public assistance, which is consistent with the theory that financial insecurity increases the likelihood of

experiencing a forced move. And renters who recently moved into their homes are more likely than longtime residents to assign higher ratings to both their neighborhood and housing unit. Net of these controls, the coefficients for privately owned assisted housing, public housing, and vouchers are all significantly greater than zero, providing evidence to support the hypothesis that assisted housing slows the pace of residential mobility.

Table 2. Assisted Housing and Time in Residence: Results of Zero-Truncated Negative Binomial Regression Models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Privately Owned Assisted Housing	.058** (.020)	.056** (.020)	-.026 (.021)	-.030 (.021)
Public Housing	.316** (.027)	.315** (.027)	.239** (.027)	.235** (.027)
Voucher	.077** (.023)	.074** (.023)	.030 (.023)	.024 (.023)
Other Subsidized Renters	.041 (.027)	.040 (.027)	-.011 (.027)	-.013 (.027)
Rent Control/Stabilization	.379** (.032)	.380** (.032)	.339** (.032)	.340** (.032)
Female	.016 (.010)	.017 (.010)	.019 (.010)	.020* (.010)
Black	.016 (.014)	.017 (.014)	.010 (.014)	.011 (.014)
Asian	-.123** (.020)	-.117** (.020)	-.139** (.020)	-.131** (.020)
Hispanic	.023 (.015)	.030* (.015)	.003 (.015)	.013 (.015)
Other	-.020 (.032)	-.018 (.032)	-.021 (.032)	-.018 (.032)
Age	.035** (3.89E-04)	.035** (3.90E-04)	.034** (3.87E-04)	.034** (3.88E-04)
Divorced/Separated	-.105** (.014)	-.113** (.014)	-.117** (.014)	-.130** (.014)

Table 2. Continued.

Widowed	-.320** (.023)	-.329** (.023)	-.316** (.023)	-.329** (.023)
Never Married	.062** (.013)	.054** (.014)	.048** (.013)	.035* (.014)
High School Graduate	-.024 (.015)	-.026 (.015)	-.016 (.015)	-.019 (.015)
Post High School Education	-.101** (.015)	-.105** (.015)	-.084** (.015)	-.091** (.015)
Bachelor's Degree or More	-.209** (.017)	-.215** (.017)	-.176** (.017)	-.185** (.017)
Number of Children	.023** (.005)	.032** (.006)	.033** (.005)	.046** (.006)
Family Income	7.04E-08 (7.04E-08)	5.60E-08 (1.21E-07)	7.88E-07** (1.34E-07)	7.70E-07** (1.34E-07)
Public Assistance	-.075** (.025)	-.075** (.025)	-.084** (.025)	-.084** (.025)
Neighborhood Rating	-.009** (.003)	-.009** (.003)	-.006* (.003)	-.006* (.003)
Housing Rating	-.006* (.003)	-.007* (.003)	-.004 (.003)	-.005 (.003)
Persons per Room		-.058** (.021)		-.091** (.021)
Monthly Housing Costs			-1.88E-04** (7.81E-06)	-1.91E-04** (7.82E-06)
Constant	2.638** (.156)	2.680** (.157)	2.752** (.156)	2.821** (.156)
Pseudo R ²	.04	.04	.04	.04
N	41,162	41,162	41,162	41,162

Notes: All models control for SMSAs.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

How much longer does the average assisted renter live in her home compared to a similar but unassisted renter? In this sample, the average renter in private assisted housing is a 60-year-old white woman that has never been married, has not graduated

from high school, has no children, has an income of \$12,019, and does not receive public assistance. Using the coefficients in Model 1 to calculate the marginal effect of living in private assisted housing, I estimate that this renter would remain in her home for 10 additional months if she were living in privately owned assisted housing instead of a market-rate apartment. If we next assumed that this same renter moved into public housing, the marginal effect on her length of tenure would be 64 months. And if she instead received a housing voucher to rent an apartment in the private market the marginal effect on her length of tenure would be 14 months.

Assisted housing might slow the pace at which low-income renters move for two reasons. First, it might alleviate overcrowding. Low-income renters might have greater ability to afford apartments that accommodate the size of their families if they rent at assisted housing complexes. In Model 2, I test whether controlling for persons per room, a common metric of crowding, moderates the coefficients for assisted housing tenure. Consistent with the literature on residential mobility, the coefficient for persons per room is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that renters who live in less crowded apartments tend to remain in their homes for longer periods of time. However, there is virtually no attenuation in the association between assisted housing tenure and time in residence. Therefore, Model 2 provides little evidence to support the hypothesis that assisted housing increases residential stability by mitigating overcrowding.

A second possible explanation for the relatively long tenures in assisted housing is that rent subsidies provide residents with greater financial security. In Model 3, I test whether controlling for monthly housing costs moderates the association between assisted

housing tenure and time in residence. The coefficient for monthly housing costs is small in magnitude, negatively signed, and statistically significant. The control for monthly housing costs mediates the association between private assisted housing and time in residence. It also mediates the statistical effect of vouchers. Model 3 provides evidence to support the hypothesis that the reduced cost of rent and utilities in assisted housing slows the pace of residential mobility.

Model 4 includes all controls. The coefficient for public housing tenure remains positively signed and significant, suggesting that, net of all controls, renters in public housing are still more likely to live in their homes for longer periods of time than unassisted renters. Therefore, in addition to reduced housing costs, other mechanisms not specified in the model likely influence the pace of mobility for public housing residents. For example, residents in public housing might be more likely to experience housing discrimination when attempting to rent an apartment in the private market, or the location of public housing might provide renters with access to services, amenities, or jobs that make them less likely to seek housing elsewhere. More research is needed to understand why public housing might have an exceptionally strong impact on mobility. Nonetheless, the evidence in Table 2 suggests that, on average, assisted renters move less often than similar but unassisted renters, and that low monthly housing costs are associated with the mobility patterns of residents in assisted housing.

RESULTS FROM THE SDAHS

If assisted housing is associated with greater residential stability for low-income renters then what are the effects of increased stability on residential interaction? On the one hand, if assisted housing facilitates isolation then residents might avoid their neighbors altogether, regardless of how long they have lived in their homes. On the other hand, if increased stability creates more opportunities for interaction then longtime residents should report more contact with their neighbors than residents who more recently moved into their homes. In this section, I determine whether the residential isolation hypothesis or the social support hypothesis is more strongly supported by data from the SDAHS.

Table 3 provides descriptive statistics for 128 assisted residents and 25 waitlisted residents in the SDAHS. Both groups of residents are approximately equally likely to be female, employed, born outside of the United States, and to receive public assistance; they also share a similar average age. However, waitlisted residents are more likely to identify as black and less likely to identify as Hispanic. They also pay an average of \$117 more for rent each month and live in the same home for an average of 2.42 fewer years than assisted residents. In terms of residential interaction, assisted residents are more likely to have at least one close friend among their neighbors, to have visited a neighbor's home during the past year, to have hosted a neighbor at their own home during the past year, and to score higher on the support index. The descriptive statistics provide evidence that assisted residents pay lower rents, move less often, and are more likely to interact with their neighbors than waitlisted residents.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics: San Diego Assisted Housing Survey

	Assisted Residents		Waitlisted Residents	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Neighbor as Close Friend	0.62	0.49	0.40	0.50
Visited Neighbor's Home	0.55	0.50	0.48	0.51
Hosted Neighbor	0.60	0.49	0.52	0.51
Support Index	2.48	2.56	2.12	1.92
Time In Residence (years)	5.34	4.13	2.92	3.33
Female	0.66	0.47	0.64	0.49
Black	0.48	0.50	0.64	0.49
Hispanic	0.43	0.50	0.20	0.41
White	0.04	0.19	0.16	0.37
Asian	0.04	0.19	0.00	0.00
Other	0.01	0.09	0.00	0.00
Age	37.21	12.41	40.28	10.78
Married	0.33	0.47	0.20	0.41
Employed	0.62	0.49	0.60	0.50
No High School Diploma	0.15	0.36	0.36	0.49
High School Diploma	0.41	0.49	0.20	0.41
Post High School Education	0.44	0.50	0.44	0.51
Immigrant	0.66	0.47	0.72	0.46
Children	0.73	0.44	0.84	0.37
Household Income	\$21,758	\$14,263	\$22,696	\$29,578
Public Assistance	0.47	0.50	0.52	0.51
Rent	\$807	\$270	\$924	\$290
<i>N</i>	128		25	

Table 4 displays the results from the regression models. In the first two models, the response variable indicates whether a resident reported having at least one neighbor who is a close friend. In these models, residents who immigrated to the United States are significantly more likely than residents born in the United States to have at least one close friend among their neighbors. This might be the result of immigrants living in close proximity to the social contacts who helped them find housing (Carrillo et al. 2016). In Model 1, the coefficient for assisted housing is not statistically significant, providing no

evidence to suggest that assisted residents are more likely to befriend their neighbors than waitlisted residents. Model 2 controls for time in residence, the coefficient of which is positive and significant. Although there is no evidence in the first two models that assisted residents are more likely than waitlisted residents to have a friend among their neighbors, the positive and significant coefficient for time in residence supports the hypothesis that residential stability increases the likelihood that all residents befriend their neighbors.

Table 4. Residential Interaction and Time in Residence: Results from Logistic and Negative Binomial Regression Models

	Logit						Negative Binomial	
	Close Friend		Visited Neighbor		Hosted Neighbor		Support Index	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Female	.573 (.420)	.498 (.442)	.292 (.414)	.238 (.421)	.830 (.437)	.877 (.458)	.232 (.209)	.141 (.202)
Black	-.130 (.379)	.167 (.407)	.612 (.367)	.854* (.391)	.012 (.382)	.294 (.407)	.392* (.183)	.581** (.185)
Age	-.019 (.015)	-.023 (.017)	-.022 (.015)	-.024 (.016)	-.038* (.016)	-.042* (.017)	-.009 (.008)	-.007 (.007)
Married	.791 (.482)	.788 (.500)	-.121 (.455)	-.156 (.463)	.100 (.482)	.086 (.491)	.153 (.232)	.079 (.223)
Employed	-.327 (.412)	-.197 (.436)	-.392 (.405)	-.281 (.416)	-.721 (.429)	-.633 (.445)	-.058 (.203)	-.039 (.195)
Post H.S. Education	.379 (.415)	.318 (.437)	.154 (.403)	.094 (.414)	.436 (.428)	.463 (.449)	.148 (.208)	.071 (.200)
Immigrant	.894* (.431)	.936* (.461)	1.115** (.427)	1.144** (.440)	1.401** (.445)	1.569** (.479)	.526* (.225)	.532* (.217)
Children	-.084 (.486)	.329 (.534)	-.594 (.484)	-.391 (.506)	-1.182* (.527)	-1.026 (.563)	-.147 (.248)	.082 (.248)
Household Income	-3.10E-05* (1.51E-05)	-3.93E-05* (1.76E-05)	-9.14E-06 (1.30E-05)	-1.04E-05 (1.37E-05)	6.20E-06 (1.32E-05)	6.58E-06 (1.38E-05)	-5.21E-06 (6.46E-06)	-5.06E-06 (6.26E-06)
Public Assistance	-.665 (.411)	-.780 (.442)	.017 (.396)	.032 (.408)	.413 (.410)	.473 (.428)	-.043 (.197)	-.024 (.190)

Table 4. Continued.

Public Assistance	-.665 (.411)	-.780 (.442)	.017 (.396)	.032 (.408)	.413 (.410)	.473 (.428)	-.043 (.197)	-.024 (.190)
Rent	.001 (.001)	4.25E-04 (.001)	-2.00E-04 (.001)	-3.93E-04 (.001)	2.67E-04 (.001)	3.37E-05 (.001)	3.07E-04 (3.61E-04)	2.21E-04 (3.49E-04)
Assisted Housing	.893 (.504)	.561 (.537)	.318 (.489)	.098 (.508)	.289 (.493)	-.078 (.516)	.214 (.255)	.094 (.248)
Time in Residence		.205** (.059)		.121* (.050)		.172** (.058)		.077** (.023)
Constant	-.226 (1.138)	-.890 (1.245)	.487 (1.145)	.062 (1.192)	.677 (1.181)	.063 (1.249)	.195 (.605)	-.309 (.604)
Pseudo R2	.12	.19	.10	.13	.15	.19	.03	.05
N	153	153	153	153	153	153	153	153

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

In the third and fourth models, the response variable indicates whether a respondent reported visiting a neighbor's home during the past year. In these models, immigrants are significantly more likely to visit their neighbors' homes than residents born in the United States. In Model 3, the coefficient for assisted housing is not statistically significant, providing no evidence to suggest that assisted residents are more likely to visit a neighbor's home than waitlisted residents. Model 4 includes a control for time in residence, which is positive and statistically significant. The results in Model 4 support the hypothesis that residential stability increases the likelihood that assisted and waitlisted residents visit their neighbors. In the fifth and sixth models, I repeat the same tests but substitute the response variable for a measure indicating whether a respondent hosted a neighbor at least once during the past year. Here I draw the same conclusions as in the previous models: There is no evidence for a statistically significant association between assisted housing tenure and interaction among neighbors, but there is evidence

to support the hypothesis that residential stability increases the likelihood that all residents host their neighbors, regardless of housing tenure.

In the final two models, the response variable is the index of social support. The results provide evidence that residents who are immigrants and residents who identify as black are significantly more likely to exchange support with their neighbors than residents in the respective reference categories. In Model 7, the coefficient for assisted housing tenure is not statistically different from zero, providing no evidence that assisted residents are more likely than waitlisted residents to exchange support with their neighbors. In Model 8, the coefficient for time in residence is positive and significant, supporting the hypothesis that residential stability facilitates exchange among neighbors. The results in Table 4 demonstrate that residential stability is positively associated with interaction among neighbors. The SDAHS data provide no evidence to support the residential isolation hypothesis.

HETEROGENEOUS OUTCOMES IN ASSISTED HOUSING

The findings suggest that residential stability is more common in assisted housing, and that residential stability is positively associated with interaction among neighbors, including exchanges of support. These findings stand in contrast to previous arguments suggesting that assisted residents may be isolated from their neighbors (McCarthy and Saegert 1978; Newman 1973; Newman and Franck 1982; Rainwater 1966; Suttles 1968; Yancey 1971). Although I find no evidence to support the residential isolation

hypothesis, there are at least three reasons why assisted housing is unlikely to increase residential stability and foster social support in all places.

First, if large numbers of residents informally live in assisted housing for short periods of time—doubling up with friends or family—then residential stability could be effectively diminished. A high rate of turnover of temporary residents could increase perceptions of disorder and weaken social cohesion, hindering efforts to build trust and support networks. Hunt (2009) proposes a similar hypothesis to account for the social disorder observed at Chicago's public housing high-rises. He argues that buildings such as the Robert Taylor Homes were designed to house large families, which increased the child-to-adult ratio and weakened the ability of adults to create and enforce social norms. Similarly, densely populated housing complexes have been found to be more anonymous than those with fewer residents (Gillis 1974; McCarthy and Saegert 1978), and they tend to have higher crime rates (Gillis and Hagan 1982; Newman 1973). It is unclear, however, whether it is the child-to-adult ratio, the density of tenants, the pace of turnover, or a combination these factors that drives anonymity and disorder in large high-rises.

Second, if the rules of tenancy at assisted housing complexes create dissatisfaction then they might motivate residents to move out. For instance, in the early-to-mid 1960s, Suttles (1968) observed rapid turnover at Chicago's "Jane Addams Projects," and he argued that the housing authority's strict rules prevented residents from adapting their homes to suit their needs and tastes, creating discontent and instability. Tenants could not host friends and family who needed a place to stay for extended periods of time; they could not run businesses out of their homes, accumulate luxury

items that signified wealth (e.g., TVs and telephones), or have loud gatherings inside their apartments. These rules also had the effect of weakening trust among residents who were suspicious that their neighbors might report them to the housing authority for committing an infraction. Similarly, at Pruitt-Igoe, Rainwater (1970) found that some residents reported their neighbors to the housing authority for committing a violation in order to settle ongoing disputes. To the extent that the rules of tenancy create dissatisfaction and conflict among neighbors, they may increase residents' desire to move out and diminish residential stability.

Third, if assisted housing fails to mitigate financial insecurity then there may be little reason for residents to remain in their homes for extended periods of time. This is most likely to occur in private assisted housing where rent ceilings are set by HUD as a percentage of the AMI rather than as a percentage of family income. Burge's (2011) work on the LIHTC provides a useful illustration. Burge uses hedonic pricing models to determine the rent savings accrued to renters living in LIHTC-funded apartments. Using 2002 data on apartment complexes located in the Tallahassee Metropolitan Statistical Area, he estimates that assisted renters save between \$20 and \$117 on their monthly rent. He explains that as these LIHTC units age, the HUD-established rent ceilings determining what landlords can charge are less likely to be binding because they are not adjusted for apartment depreciation; rent limits are a function of the area median income and apartment size (number of bedrooms) but they are not adjusted for the value an apartment would command on the open market. Over time, the rent savings provided by aging LIHTC apartments can significantly decline and may even approach zero.

Therefore, if privately owned assisted housing complexes fail to alleviate rent burdens then they might do little to increase residential stability.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the AHS provide evidence that assisted renters remain in their homes for longer periods of time than otherwise similar but unassisted renters. One mechanism that might be driving comparatively longer tenures in assisted housing is the reduced costs of rent and utilities. As a result, living in assisted housing might reduce the likelihood that low-income residents experience a forced move stemming from financial insecurity. The findings from the SDAHS suggest that residential stability increases the likelihood that renters living in private assisted housing exchange support with their neighbors. These findings address an impasse in the assisted housing literature: On the one hand, theories of social and residential isolation expect assisted renters to have few ties to individuals who could provide resources for mitigating material hardships. On the other hand, observations of social interaction in assisted housing suggest that support networks are common if not crucial ways in which assisted renters make ends meet. The findings presented in this chapter suggest that support networks might be common in assisted housing complexes with a stable tenant population.

The findings are further relevant to assisted housing policy. Private assisted housing is, in most cities, replacing public housing as the primary form of project-based assisted housing. In the 1990s, theories of concentrated poverty and social isolation were used to justify HOPE VI-funded plans to demolish large-scale public housing structures

that were thought to exacerbate social problems (Arena 2012). For example, Bennett and Reed (1999) explain that the Near North Redevelopment Initiative in Chicago proposed razing the Cabrini-Green high-rises and creating a mixed-income neighborhood, in part, to alleviate the isolation from the broader community as well as the anonymity among neighbors that contributed to social disorganization. However, the authors found that the residents at Cabrini-Green had a number of robust tenant organizations and active support networks despite the presence of poverty and crime. Bennett and Reed argued against the idea that rebuilding Cabrini Green as a mixed-income neighborhood would dramatically change the quality of residential interactions. Much as the authors predicted, the most recent evidence from newly built mixed-income developments in Chicago suggests that income-mixing and New Urbanist designs have little effect on interaction among neighbors (Chaskin and Joseph 2015).

The findings in this chapter provide an alternative explanation for the observed level of residential interaction in assisted housing. In contrast to others who have explained residential interaction in assisted housing as an effect of the built environment or the income-mix of the tenant population, I suggest that the stability of the tenant population shapes the quality of local social life. One limitation of this chapter is that it does not address the possibility that interactions in assisted housing are largely shaped by the built environment. Prior research emphasizes the role of architectural design and the physical qualities of buildings in shaping social norms such as trust and reciprocity. Indeed, some have argued that the physical features of assisted housing complexes break down social norms. In the next chapter, I test this hypothesis using data from the

NYCHVS. The NYCHVS is uniquely suited to analyze the social effects of the built environment because it contains very detailed information about the physical characteristics of housing throughout an entire city; the SDAHS does not contain similarly detailed information. I now turn to the NYCHVS and ask whether the physical features of housing shape trust among neighbors.

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CHAPTER 4: TRUST AND PUBLIC HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Public housing has been an important site for studying the effects of concentrated poverty, such as social isolation and social organization. Scholars have found evidence that public housing may deepen social isolation by segregating low-income residents in high poverty neighborhoods, potentially cutting them off from middle class social networks (Massey and Denton 1993; Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993). They have also found evidence that public housing may inhibit social organization or the ability of residents to develop social norms, realize collective goals, and maintain social control (Moore 1969; Rainwater 1966, 1970; Suttles 1968). However, the existing evidence concerning how, and to what extent, public housing affects social norms is mixed. Although there are numerous mechanisms through which public housing might affect social norms, in this chapter I ask how the physical features of the built environment shape the norm of trust.

Trust plays a central role in the social organization of a neighborhood (Sampson 2012). In places where trust is common, residents may be more likely to build relationships with their neighbors that involve reciprocal exchange of material goods, information, or childcare (Sampson et al. 1999). As a result of frequent exchanges over time, ties among neighbors may strengthen (Stack 1974). When residents trust those living around them, they may be more likely to get involved in local efforts to solve community problems and to intervene on a neighbor's behalf when they see trouble (Sampson 2012; Sampson et al. 1997). Although there is substantial evidence that trust

enhances social organization, few have considered whether the built environment mediates trust among neighbors.

Public housing is a useful site for advancing our understanding of the relationship between trust and the built environment because it has been scrutinized for being a uniquely disorganized place (e.g., Kotlowitz 1991; National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing 1992). Explanations of this disorganization often emphasize the physical features of public housing complexes with a modernist design, a large number of apartments, and structural deterioration. However, much of this evidence is descriptive and lacks comparisons to other housing contexts that may exhibit similar features, such as private rental housing. It remains unclear whether public housing is any more disorganized than other housing contexts, and if so, whether this disorganization results from differences in the built environment.

Despite these shortcomings in the scholarly literature, policymakers have linked the physical decay found at some public housing complexes to breakdowns of social order among the tenants (Manzo, Kleit, and Couch 2008). For example, in 1992, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) attempted to improve the living conditions of tenants residing in severely deteriorated public housing through a program known as Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere VI (HOPE VI). HOPE VI provided funds to municipal housing authorities for razing public housing that showed visible signs of deterioration. Between 1993 and 2010, HOPE VI funded the demolition of 98,592 units of public housing of which only 57 percent were replaced with units receiving equivalent subsidies (Gress, Cho, and Joseph 2016). These demolitions

significantly reduced the country's stock of public housing and transformed entire communities.

To improve our understanding of social organization and its relationship to the built environment, I analyze trust among residents living in public and private rental housing. I test the hypotheses that large building size and visible building disorder are associated with mistrust among neighbors. I also assess whether differences in the built environment account for differences in trust across public and private rental housing. To test the hypotheses, I draw on data from the 2002 wave of NYCHVS. The NYCHVS provides data on respondents' reported trust in their neighbors and on the condition of the city's housing stock. New York City is a useful location for testing the hypotheses because it is home to more units of public housing than any other city in the country. In 2017, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA 2017) reported 176,066 units of public housing in service. These units comprise 8.1 percent of the city's rental apartments, provide homes to 4.6 percent of the city's population, and make NYCHA one of the country's largest landlords.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN PUBLIC HOUSING

In the 1930s, the first public housing complexes were built in the United States. Early public housing consisted of segregated low-rise apartment buildings intended to house middle class residents experiencing short-term financial troubles (Friedman 1966). After World War II, public housing became a tool of urban renewal. Seeking to alleviate housing shortages and urban decay, Congress passed the Housing Act of 1949, which

authorized funding for 810,000 new units of public housing and increased the pace of slum clearance (von Hoffman 2000). In the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty forced public housing authorities to integrate tenant bodies and open their doors to the nation's poorest residents. With declining revenues from rents and insufficient federal funding, many housing authorities were unable to properly maintain buildings and invest in structural repairs.

By 1970, scholars had taken note of the physical deterioration in large public housing complexes, drawing connections between the structural decay and the social disorganization that seemed to follow (Moore 1969; Rainwater 1966, 1970; Yancey 1971). Some argued that dilapidated high-rises broke down social ties among neighbors and weakened informal social control through several social and psychological mechanisms (Amick and Kviz 1975; Gillis 1974; Newman 1973; Newman and Franck 1982; Rainwater 1966; Yancey 1971). The thrust of these arguments—what Weatherburn, Lind, and Ku (1999) refer to as the “design hypothesis”—is that the built environment has the potential to weaken social organization. Contemporary researchers continue to find evidence to support the design hypothesis. For instance, it is offered as a partial explanation for the high rates of violence found within some public housing complexes (Griffiths and Tita 2009).

At the same time, however, there is evidence that residents living in large and deteriorating public housing complexes are socially organized. Some scholars find that public housing communities have been bound together by support networks, a broad array of local organizations, and common interests that anchor collective action. For

example, in the 1960s and 1970s, residents at Chicago's Stateway Gardens founded a variety of recreational programs for youths, created laundry co-ops, formed tenant patrols to keep their homes safe, and reached out to parks district programs, churches, and universities for resources and services (Hunt 2009). Similarly, from the late 1980s through the 1990s, tenant organizations at Chicago's Cabrini Green Homes had participants numbering in the hundreds (Bennett and Reed 1999). Even in places and at times when housing authorities lacked sufficient funding to maintain buildings and provide adequate services, public housing residents often stepped in to fill the void (Feldman and Stall 2004; Venkatesh 2000). Descriptions of tenant organizations and tenant activism suggest that public housing residents do not become alienated from their neighbors as their housing complexes fall into disrepair

SOCIAL MIXING AND PUBLIC HOUSING POLICY

Although debates over the social organization of public housing communities continued into the twenty-first century, housing policy in the United States moved forward with the goal of eliminating concentrated poverty through a campaign of social mixing. Social mixing is the process of bringing middle class residents into low-income neighborhoods with the intention of changing the neighborhood's social dynamics (Lees 2008; Lees and Ley 2008). Scholars have compared social mixing with gentrification because both processes target low-income neighborhoods and may result in the displacement of longtime residents (Lees 2008). Social mixing as a housing policy has been pursued through state-led efforts to rebuild public housing (Davidson and Lees

2010; Lees and Ley 2008). For example, policies to transform public housing in the United States, such as HOPE VI, have focused on razing traditional public housing complexes—especially high-rises—and building mixed-income developments in their place.

Mixed-income housing is a combination of public units, subsidized rental units, and market-rate units integrated in a single development and often built on the sites of razed public housing. It is built according to New Urbanist principles and at lower densities to promote residential interaction and reduce overcrowding.¹³ Since the 1990s, housing authorities in many large U.S. cities have shifted away from traditional public housing and toward this mixed-income model. This shift was rationalized by the theory that increasing the physical proximity between public housing residents and the middle class would eliminate the effects of concentrated poverty while simultaneously spurring redevelopment of valuable urban lands (Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007). Social mixing was specifically thought to be useful for promoting middle class norms, increasing social control in neighborhoods that long suffered from high rates of crime, and for building social networks that cut across classes (Chaskin and Joseph 2015).

Scholars have studied mixed-income developments to understand whether they deliver on the promise to mitigate social isolation and promote socially organized communities. Their studies reveal little evidence of social integration (Chaskin 2013;

¹³ New Urbanism is a movement that developed in the late twentieth century in response to the post-World War II focus on suburbanization, car culture, and modernist architecture. New Urbanists build apartment complexes on small scales, or what they refer to as human scales. They build mixed-use residential areas, streets that prioritize pedestrian traffic, and they attempt to increase the use of public spaces.

Kleit 2005; Kleit and Carnegie 2011). Furthermore, they suggest that the stigma attached to traditional public housing is reproduced even in this new setting (McCormick, Joseph, and Chaskin 2012). For example, in a study of three mixed-income developments in Chicago, Chaskin and Joseph (2015) find little evidence to suggest that public housing residents build social ties with their new neighbors or arrive at a consensus on the norms that should prevail at their housing complexes. Instead, the authors argue that public housing residents experience “incorporated exclusion” whereby their physical proximity to the middle class has increased but their social distance has remained the same. Similarly, in a study of mixed-income housing in Boston, Tach (2009) finds that little interaction occurs between longtime residents living in publicly owned units and wealthier newcomers to the housing complex. She finds that the longtime residents are more likely to build ties to their neighbors, engage in behaviors that prevent crime, and participate in resident organizations than the wealthier newcomers.

The scholarship on social organization, extending from mid-twentieth century research on public housing high-rises to contemporary studies of mixed-income developments, offers several specific hypotheses about how the built environment might shape trust among public housing residents. I describe these hypotheses and the relevant studies on trust in the following section.

HYPOTHESES

The predisposition to trust is referred to as generalized trust, the belief that a stranger’s word, promise, or statement is reliable (Rotter 1980). Generalized trust is not

natural – it is learned from one’s early childhood experiences and is fairly stable over time (Erikson 1963; Uslaner 2002). Individuals who grow up among others who are trusters and trustworthy learn to expect strangers they encounter to be trustworthy as well. In surveys of the U.S. population, the respondents who are most often found to be generalized trusters tend to be white, highly educated, and older (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Putnam 2000; Smith 1997; Uslaner 2002). Racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to be generalized trusters because they disproportionately experience economic inequalities, discrimination, and are more likely to have lived in neighborhoods with concentrated disadvantage (Smith 2010).¹⁴ Compared with residents living in private rental housing, public housing residents might be less likely to trust their neighbors because they tend to have lower educational attainment and are more likely to be racial and ethnic minorities. Therefore, variation in trust across public and private housing could result from a selection effect. Thus, the null hypothesis is as follows:

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no difference in the likelihood that residents in living in different housing contexts report trust in their neighbors after controlling for variables that are correlated with residential sorting.

¹⁴ Concentrated disadvantage refers to a place that has high rates of poverty, racial segregation, receipt of public assistance, unemployment, and sometimes other characteristics that are associated with neighborhood poverty.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF BUILDING DISORDER

The predisposition to trust strangers can be weakened through psychological mechanisms such as disorder. In studies of neighborhood effects, observed disorder and perceived disorder are found to break down norms and amplify mistrust (Ross, Mirowsky, and Pribesh 2001; Sampson and Raudenbush 2004). Ross et al. (2001) explain that residents who live in neighborhoods where disorder is ubiquitous are more likely to believe that interactions with strangers are dangerous. Observable cues of disorder such as buildings in disrepair, graffiti, and vandalism signal that social control is weak and may induce fear of victimization and a sense of powerlessness. In this context, distrusting strangers serves as a defensive mechanism against subjective threats such as fear of crime. Although there is evidence that disorder operates at the neighborhood level to amplify mistrust, it is unclear whether it has a similar effect within public housing. Physical disorder is not unique to public housing (e.g. see Desmond 2016), but numerous accounts suggest that disorder may be extensive in that context (e.g. Kotlowitz 1991; Newman 1973; Popkin et al. 2000b; Rainwater 1966; Yancey 1971).

If disorder increases fear and diminishes trust, then there might be little interaction among public housing residents in places where disorder is common. For example, Lee Rainwater (1966) described reclusive behavior and widespread fear of interaction among residents living in St. Louis's Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex. He argued that residents found their apartments to be "havens" in an otherwise threatening environment, and he posited that threats including pests, poisons, fire, plumbing problems, dangerous electrical wiring, and unprotected heights contributed to residents'

decisions to avoid their building's common spaces (Rainwater 1966:27). Similarly, Yancey (1971) found that residents at Pruitt-Igoe feared encounters with others in the elevators and stairwells because they were damaged, dark, and smelled of urine. And at "Blackmoor," a pseudonym for a public housing complex not unlike Pruitt-Igoe, Moore (1969:20) noted that, "[landings and stairwells] are completely enclosed and frequently are without any artificial illumination—day or night. They provide optimal conditions for robbery, assault, and rape, and many such crimes have taken place there." Such studies linking physical disorder to fear of interaction motivate the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Residents living in buildings with more observable disorder are less likely to report trust in their neighbors than residents living in buildings with less disorder.

SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF BUILDING SIZE

Some scholars argue that social control is weak in public housing complexes that lack defensible spaces, the absence of which prevent residents from establishing and enforcing social norms (Gillis and Hagan 1982; Newman 1973; Newman and Franck 1982). Defensible spaces are housing designs that increase residents' sense of territoriality over common areas such as corridors, lobbies, stairways, elevators, and exterior grounds (Newman 1973). Such designs may include a small wall or fence that serves to separate public spaces from semiprivate spaces. Defensible spaces further enhance social control by increasing residents' ability to monitor semiprivate spaces. For

example, low-rise buildings with many windows allow residents to monitor the grounds surrounding their apartment and intervene when they see trouble. Public housing high-rises may have fewer defensible spaces, and higher crime rates as a result (Newman 1973).

Scholars further argue that social control is weak in high-rise public housing due to the high density of residents. An excess of residents may increase anonymity, making it difficult to develop shared expectations for behavior (Gillis 1974; McCarthy and Saegert 1978). Studies supporting this hypothesis find that robberies are more common in high-rises than in low-rises (Newman 1973), and that high unit density is associated with juvenile delinquency (Gillis and Hagan 1982). Although high rates of crime might indicate low levels of trust, what might have even greater bearing on trust is how living in high-rises affects *subjective* fears of victimization. In this regard, scholars have found that residents are more likely to have a heightened fear of crime if they live in larger public housing complexes (Newman and Franck 1982). The evidence linking large building size to fear and weak social control motivates the second and third hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Residents living in high-rise buildings are less likely to report trust in their neighbors than residents living in low-rises.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Residents living in buildings with more units are less likely to report trust in their neighbors than residents living in buildings with fewer units.

STRATEGIC INTERACTION IN PUBLIC HOUSING

In contrast to studies that describe public housing as an alienating environment, some scholars find that public housing residents engage in reciprocal exchanges, build support networks, and develop tenant organizations with their neighbors. This body of literature provides evidence to suggest that trust in public housing is strong. If this is true, then one mechanism that might facilitate trust among neighbors is repeated interactions aimed at achieving shared goals. In contrast to generalized trust—an individual's disposition to believe in the reliability of strangers—repeated interactions may build strategic trust or a knowledge-based trust that exists in particular relationships (Coleman 1988; Smith 2010). Strategic trust is the belief that a social tie will behave in a way that is congruent with one's interests in a given context (Harden 2002). Strategic trust can emerge over time from a succession of reciprocal exchanges (Stack 1974), which may then be the basis for broader collective action (Blau 1964).

There is substantial evidence that collective action is common in public housing. As previously described, residents have established organizations for children, coordinated services with local institutions (e.g., churches and universities), and cooperated with their neighbors to mitigate crime. These forms of collective action may increase when public housing authorities fail to deliver services or maintain building infrastructure. For example, in the 1980s, residents at the St. Thomas Development in New Orleans organized sit-ins at their housing authority to demand roofs that did not leak and floors without missing tiles (Arena 2012). In cases where demands for repairs and more resources were unmet, public housing residents worked collectively to maintain

their buildings, provide security, and improve the reputation of their homes. For example, residents at Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes developed conflict mediation programs to prevent violence, committees to regulate elevator use, and clubs to manage janitorial and security duties (Venkatesh 2000). Similarly, at Chicago's Wentworth Gardens, residents attempted to restore the reputation of their housing complex by appropriating underutilized building spaces where they created a community center and store (Feldman and Stall 2004). These findings provide evidence that public housing residents respond to disrepair in the built environment by organizing, rather than withdrawing from interaction with their neighbors (cf. Rainwater 1966, 1970).

Residents who live in the same public housing complex for long periods of time tend to be the most active in tenant affairs. This might be because public housing increases residential stability (Manzo et al. 2008), which provides tenants with more time to build strong attachments to their communities (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Keene and Geronimus 2011). It could also be that older cohorts of residents formed perceptions of their housing complex during periods of time when public housing in their city was held in higher regard (Small 2004). For instance, at Wentworth Gardens, women who had lived in their homes for an average of over 30 years founded a community center and community store in an effort to rebuild the reputation of their housing complex as a desirable place to live (Feldman and Stall 2004). Higher levels of engagement among longtime residents could also be the result of how they perceive disorder. For example, Tach (2009) finds that newer cohorts of residents arriving to a mixed-income development are more likely to perceive danger and disorder in the environment – and

are thus less likely to interact with their neighbors – than longtime public housing residents who tend to perceive less disorder.

Because longtime public housing residents may be more likely to work with their neighbors to improve the physical qualities of their homes, and because trust might be built through collective actions aimed at this shared goal, I test a fourth hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Residents living in public housing over long periods of time are more likely to report trust in their neighbors than residents living in public housing for shorter periods of time.

DATA AND METHOD

Public Housing in New York City

NYCHA is the largest provider of public housing in the United States. Although other housing authorities have demolished or privatized much of their public housing, transformed former public housing complexes into mixed-income developments, or disinvested from public housing entirely, NYCHA has maintained a traditional public housing system. Between 1990 and 2007, as Chicago, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and other large cities were downsizing their stocks of public housing, less than 1 percent of New York's public housing was taken out of service (Goetz 2011). Today, however, NYCHA is facing a financial crisis. It cannot afford to fix leaky roofs, broken elevators, old heating systems, and the crumbling infrastructure that comes with aging buildings, some of which are more than 70 years old (NYCHA 2017). By NYCHA's (2015) own

estimates, it lacks more than \$17 billion for needed structural repairs. Current levels of federal funding are inadequate, and NYCHA's unmet needs are unlikely to be fulfilled by state subsidies or revenue from rents. Although the financial challenges facing NYCHA are many, and its future is uncertain, New York's public housing remains a crucial source of affordable rental housing. Nearly 400,000 New Yorkers formally rent an apartment from NYCHA, and there are likely many more who informally live in the city's public housing complexes.

New York's lack of affordable housing is the result of stagnating wages and housing shortages. For over four decades, vacancy rates have hovered below 5 percent (Fields 2015), which has kept the cost of rental housing high. Gentrification has become a major force throughout the city, increasing the cost of living and overburdening low-income renters and the middle class (Lees 2003; Newman and Wyly 2006). Market interventions may insulate some residents from displacement pressures but many of these interventions are disappearing (Wyly et al. 2010). For instance, in the mid-2000s, the purchase of roughly 10 percent of the city's rent-stabilized housing by private equity funds resulted in widespread displacements of tenants paying affordable rents (Fields 2015). Similarly, some of the city's longtime middle class residents living in rent-regulated apartments, in places like Stuyvesant Town, are finding themselves priced out by cohorts of younger and more affluent newcomers (Woldoff, Morrison, and Glass 2016). As rising inequality has exacerbated New York's affordable housing crisis (Florida 2017), more of the city's low-income renters may be threatened with displacement, and more New Yorkers may witness changes to the cultural and

demographic composition of their neighborhoods. Amid these changes, public housing continues to be one of the city's largest sources of affordable housing.

Site Selection

New York's public housing provides a suitable case for testing hypotheses about the social effects of the built environment. This is because it exhibits substantial variation in its physical features, which is useful when drawing comparisons to the city's private rental housing. Unlike most other cities in the United States, New York continues to have a diversity of public housing structures with respect to size, age, and height. For instance, the city has smaller public housing complexes containing approximately 100 apartments and larger ones with over 2,000 apartments. The age of the city's public housing similarly varies. Some of the newer buildings are less than 30 years old while others were built more than 70 years ago (NYCHA 2017). The age of the buildings is important because older structures that have been in use for longer periods of time may be more likely to show physical signs of deterioration. In terms of height, New York was an early adopter of high-rise public housing. In the mid-twentieth century, the city's planners viewed high-rise public housing as a promising alternative to the overcrowded tenements that lacked access to air and sunlight—buildings that provided much of the city's low-income housing in the prior century. New York has sustained its public housing high-rises even as most other cities in the U.S. have torn theirs down.

NYCHVS

To test the hypotheses, I draw on data from the 2002 NYCHVS. The U.S. Census Bureau has been conducting the NYCHVS every three years since 1965 to update rent control and rent stabilization policies in New York City. The NYCHVS is a representative survey of all housing in the city's five boroughs. In 2002, the survey sampled 18,000 housing units, and reported on the characteristics of New York City's population and the condition of its housing stock. The 2002 wave of this survey is unique because it includes data on respondents' reported trust in their neighbors. Earlier and later waves of the survey do not include questions about trust and therefore make it impossible to use the survey for longitudinal analyses. The 2002 survey asked respondents whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: "People in this neighborhood can be trusted" (U.S. Census Bureau 2002). I use this question to construct a binary dependent variable. Responses of "strongly agree" and "agree" are collapsed to indicate trust in neighbors (trust = 1), and responses of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" are collapsed to indicate an absence of trust (trust = 0).¹⁵ I draw on data from the NYCHVS to estimate a logistic regression of residents' reported trust in their neighbors.

I limit the analysis to renters, and separate renters into three discrete categories: renters living in public housing, renters with section 8 vouchers or certificates, and all other renters who live in privately owned buildings. Separating the survey respondents

¹⁵ I also ran the analysis with an ordinal measure of trust. Results from the ordinal logistic regressions are qualitatively the same as the results produced with a binary measure of trust. However, some of the ordinal logistic regressions violated the proportional odds assumption. I therefore use the binary dependent variable and report results from logistic regressions.

into these categories sharpens the comparisons. For example, voucher-holders may be similar to public housing residents because the requirements to receive a voucher and to live in public housing are similar, yet voucher-holders live in privately owned buildings. If the built environment in public housing had an effect on trust then I would expect to observe different levels of trust between voucher-holders and public housing residents even after controlling for the observed characteristics of residents that are likely correlated with residential sorting.

Table 5 provides descriptive statistics for the heads of all renter households. It shows that fewer residents in public housing report trust in their neighbors (41.2%) compared to residents with vouchers (44.2%) and all other residents living in private rental housing (67.2%). Although public housing residents and voucher-holders share similar socioeconomic backgrounds, public housing residents differ from all other residents living in private rental housing in several ways. Public housing residents are disproportionately racial and ethnic minorities, they are less likely to be employed, less likely to be married, and tend to have a lower level of educational attainment. These descriptive statistics suggest that not all of New York City's residents are equally likely to select into public housing. Although residential sorting cannot be controlled for directly, I control for the observed characteristics of residents that are likely correlated with selection into public housing including gender, age, employment, education, race, ethnicity, household income, receipt of public assistance, children, marital status, and years in current residence. Household income and years in residence are continuous variables and all other individual-level variables are dichotomous. I expect age,

education, race, and ethnicity to be significant predictors of trust (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Brehm and Rahn 1997; Marschall and Stolle 2004; Putnam 2000; Smith 2010; Smith 1997; Uslaner 2002).

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics: NYCHVS

	Renters in Private Housing	Renters in Public Housing	Renters with Vouchers	All Renters
<i>Percent</i>				
Trust	67.2%	41.2%	44.2%	63.5%
Female	53.0%	75.9%	79.8%	56.7%
Employed	68.5%	40.1%	42.8%	64.4%
Black	22.4%	46.4%	32.0%	25.1%
White	39.1%	6.7%	14.3%	34.7%
Hispanic	28.6%	43.4%	51.5%	31.4%
Asian	9.2%	3.3%	1.8%	8.2%
Other	0.7%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%
Children	21.1%	25.7%	36.5%	22.5%
Married	34.2%	14.8%	15.1%	31.3%
Public Assistance	2.2%	7.7%	10.4%	3.2%
<i>Median</i>				
Education	Some College	HS Diploma	HS Diploma	HS Diploma
Household Income	\$35,600	\$12,600	\$11,000	\$31,000
Years in Residence	6	13	8	6
Stories	5	16	8	5
Units	35	75	35	35
<i>Mean/SD</i>				
Age	44.95 (16.08)	52.48 (16.42)	48.73 (16.53)	45.86 (16.29)
Perceived Disorder	2.18 (0.75)	2.57 (0.76)	2.51 (0.74)	2.24 (0.76)
Observed Disorder	0.14 (0.35)	0.13 (0.34)	0.17 (0.37)	0.14 (0.35)
Building Disorder	0.17 (0.59)	0.06 (0.32)	0.19 (0.55)	0.16 (0.57)
<i>Total</i>				
Heads of Household	6,661	701	491	7,853

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

At the neighborhood level, disorder has been shown to reduce trust (Ross et al. 2001). To control for perceived neighborhood disorder, I include a variable indicating respondents' ratings of the condition of the structures in their neighborhoods as poor, fair, good, or excellent. To control for observed neighborhood disorder, I include a dichotomous variable that indicates any observation of boarded up windows on the same block as a respondent's housing unit. Table 1 shows that although public housing residents tend to perceive more disorder in their neighborhoods, the average level of observed disorder is nearly the same across all groups. In addition to specific controls for neighborhood disorder, I include a control for sub-borough fixed effects. Sub-boroughs are the smallest geographic units for which a measure of neighborhoods can be constructed using the NYCHVS. The survey divides New York City into 55 sub-boroughs each containing at least 100,000 residents.

The independent variables of interest indicate housing tenure and provide measures of the physical features of respondents' homes. First, I include two dichotomous variables indicating participation in housing assistance programs—one for public housing and the other for federal housing vouchers. Second, I construct a measure of observed building disorder to determine if visible deterioration inside buildings is associated with lower levels of trust. Building disorder is a count of instances where windows, stairways, and floors were observed in a state of disrepair when the survey-interviewer entered the building containing the housing unit being sampled. The measure of building disorder is a count variable ranging from 0 to 6. I expect building disorder to be negatively associated with trust. Third, I rely on two sets of independent variables to

evaluate the relationship between building size and trust. Building size is measured in the first instance as the number of stories per building and in the second instance as the number of units per building. Both measures of building size are represented by ordered categorical variables. I expect building size to be negatively associated with trust (Gillis and Hagan 1982; Newman 1973; Newman and Franck 1982).

Finally, I include an interaction term to determine whether the association between trust and residency in public housing is modified by length of tenure. Based on the findings from the literature on tenant organizing and activism (e.g., Arena 2012; Feldman and Stall 2004; Venkatesh 2000), I expect longtime residency in public housing to be positively associated with trust in one's neighbors.

The analysis is limited insofar as the cross-sectional nature of the data precludes a temporal ordering of events. This is an important limitation because the relationship between trust and the built environment might be reciprocal (e.g., Markowitz et al. 2001). In other words, it is possible that if trust among public housing residents were low, it might indirectly contribute to more building disorder in a recursive fashion. Although the NYCHVS data cannot be used to sort out the causal directions of these processes, the data are useful for understanding variation in trust across New York City's rental housing.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINANTS OF TRUST

Table 6 contains the results from the logistic regressions. In Model 1, the coefficients for public housing tenure and voucher-receipt are negative and significant,

providing evidence that public housing residents and voucher-holders are less likely to trust their neighbors than all other renters. Does the association between housing assistance and trust attenuate after controlling for the observed characteristics of residents that are likely correlated with residential sorting? Model 2 answers this question.

Table 6. Trust Among Neighbors: Results of Logistic Regression Models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Public Housing	-1.074** (.081)	-.509** (.104)	-.430** (.113)	-.728** (.162)
Voucher	-.952** (.095)	-.166 (.115)	-.168 (.115)	-.276 (.175)
Female		-.199** (.060)	-.203** (.060)	-.198** (.060)
Employed		-.025 (.071)	-.024 (.071)	-.026 (.071)
Some High School		-.118 (.106)	-.129 (.106)	-.122 (.106)
High School Diploma		.004 (.100)	.009 (.101)	.019 (.101)
Post High School		-.258* (.109)	-.257* (.110)	-.252* (.110)
Bachelor's or More		.148 (.114)	.151 (.115)	.152 (.115)
Black		-.541** (.097)	-.540** (.097)	-.544** (.097)
Hispanic		-.613** (.089)	-.607** (.089)	-.608** (.089)
Asian		-.059 (.121)	-.083 (.122)	-.092 (.122)
Other		-.675 (.346)	-.673 (.347)	-.696* (.346)
Age		.010** (.002)	.010** (.002)	.011** (.003)
Log of Household Income		.061 (.036)	.058 (.036)	.055 (.037)
Public Assistance		-.310 (.161)	-.287 (.161)	-.265 (.162)

Table 6. Continued.

Children		-1.08 (.075)	-1.08 (.075)	-1.02 (.075)
Married		.028 (.070)	.031 (.071)	.028 (.071)
Years in Residence		-.003 (.003)	-.003 (.003)	-.006 (.003)
Perceived Neighborhood Disorder		-.972** (.043)	-.955** (.043)	-.958** (.043)
Observed Neighborhood Disorder		-.296** (.083)	-.322** (.084)	-.318** (.084)
Building Disorder			-.119* (.049)	-.118* (.049)
6-10 Stories			.199* (.092)	.201* (.092)
11-20 Stories			-.051 (.155)	-.052 (.155)
21+ Stories			-.081 (.193)	-.087 (.193)
20-49 Units			-.381** (.088)	-.379** (.088)
50-99 Units			-.566** (.114)	-.564** (.114)
100+ Units			-.250 (.141)	-.252 (.141)
Public Housing x Years in Residence				.019* (.007)
Voucher x Years in Residence				.010 (.013)
Constant	.719** (.026)	1.557** (.455)	1.776** (.458)	1.832** (.459)
Pseudo R ²	.03	.22	.22	.22
N observations	7,853	7,853	7,853	7,853

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

* p<.05, ** p<.01 (two tailed tests)

All models control for sub-boroughs except for Model 1.

In Model 2, I include individual and neighborhood-level controls. Coefficients for gender, educational attainment, race, ethnicity, and age are significant, as would be expected by studies of generalized trust (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Smith 2010; Smith 1997; Uslaner 2002). The coefficients for perceived and observed neighborhood disorder are both significantly less than zero, as would be expected by studies of neighborhood disorder (Ross et al. 2001; Sampson and Raudenbush 2004). After including these controls in the model, the coefficient for public housing tenure remains negative and significant, but the coefficient for voucher-receipt is no longer significantly different from zero. Therefore, even though residents in public housing might be similar to voucher-holders with respect to their socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds, the evidence in Model 2 suggests that the conditions under which public housing residents build trust with their neighbors are different from those under which voucher-holders do so.

In Model 3, I introduce several housing-related covariates to test my hypotheses. The first is building disorder, measured as observations of broken windows, stairways, and floors. The coefficient for this variable is negative and significant, providing support for the first hypothesis—residents who live in buildings with visible structural deterioration are less likely to report trust in their neighbors than otherwise similar residents living in buildings with less deterioration. This finding is consistent with the theory that physical cues of disorder may signal that social control is weak and thereby induce fear of interacting with others (Ross et al. 2001).

Also included in Model 3 are measures of stories and units per building, which provide evidence to determine whether trust is weaker in large buildings, as would be predicted by studies of social control in public housing (Gillis and Hagan 1982; McCarthy and Saegert 1978; Newman 1973; Newman and Franck 1982). The coefficient for buildings six to ten stories high is positive and significant, suggesting that trust among neighbors is more common in mid-rises than in low-rises when controlling for the number of units per building. Therefore, Model 3 provides no evidence to support the hypothesis that trust is significantly lower in the city's tallest buildings.

The coefficient for buildings with a relatively large numbers of units, ranging from 20 to 99, is negative and significant, but the coefficient for buildings with 100 units or more is not significant. These coefficients provide some evidence to support the third hypothesis, that trust is less common in buildings with more apartments. After controlling for building disorder and building size, the coefficient for public housing tenure remains negatively signed, significant, and only partially attenuated.

Although the findings thus far indicate that the average level of trust in public housing is comparatively low, the literature on tenant activism suggests that the effect of public housing on trust might depend on the length of time that residents have lived in their homes (Arena 2012; Feldman and Stall 2004; Venkatesh 2000). In other words, trust might be especially strong among longtime residents and weaker among newcomers to public housing. In Model 4, I test this hypothesis by introducing an interaction term to determine whether the relationship between trust and public housing tenure is modified by length of time in residence. The interaction term is positive, small in magnitude, and

statistically significant. It provides evidence to support the fourth hypothesis—longtime public housing residents are more likely to report trust in their neighbors than residents who more recently moved into public housing.

I illustrate the interaction effect in Figure 1 with four overlapping logistic curves. Figure 1 provides estimates that an average public housing resident reports trust in her neighbors assuming she lived in four different homes over increasing periods of time. The average public housing resident in the NYCHVS is a 52-year-old black woman with a high school diploma who is currently unemployed, does not receive public assistance, and reports \$12,600 of annual income. She is not married, does not have any children, and lives on a city block with no observed disorder.

In Figure 1, the two ascending curves display the predicted probabilities that this resident reports trust in her neighbors given that she lived in public housing. The solid ascending curve displays the probabilities that this resident reports trust in her neighbors given that she lived in a public housing complex of average size. The average public housing complex is 16 stories high, contains 75 units, and has no visible building disorder. In this scenario, the resident has a 16.4 percent estimated chance of reporting trust in her neighbors assuming she lived in her home for less than one year, and this estimate increases to 33.9 percent after 72 years or nearly a lifetime of living in public housing.

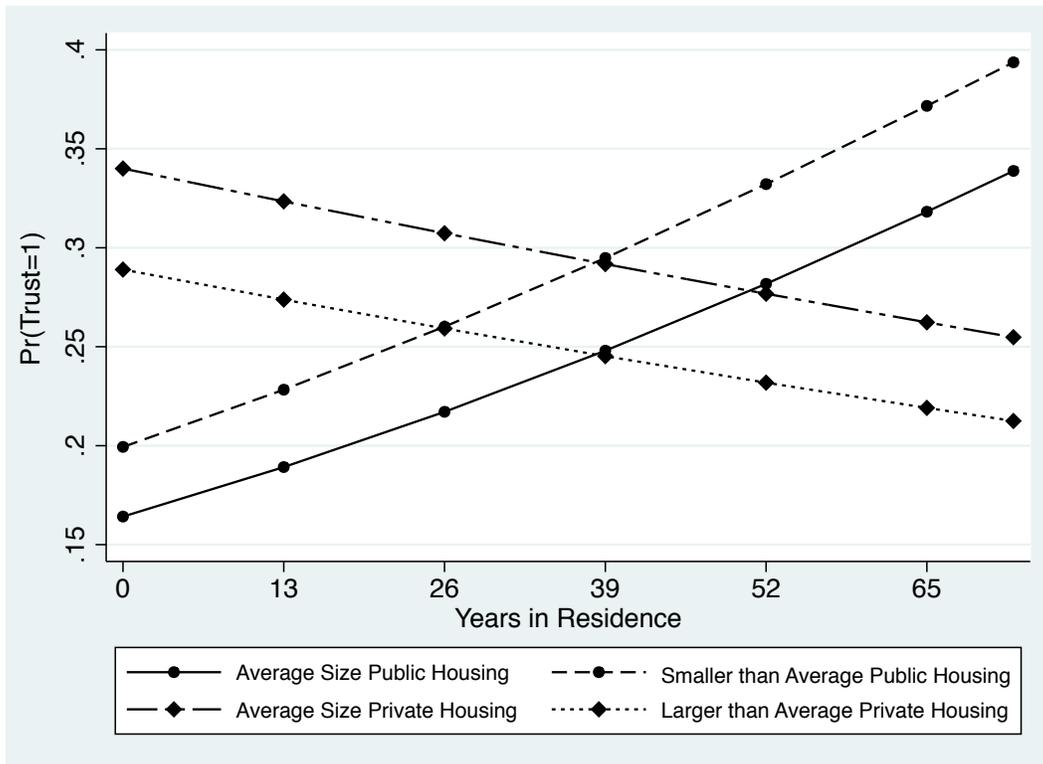


Figure 1. Predicted Probabilities of Reporting Trust in Neighbors.

Note: This figure provides estimates of trust for an average public housing resident. The housing conditions considered include building size and building disorder.

The likelihood that this resident reports trust in her neighborhoods would increase if she moved to a smaller public housing complex. These estimates are displayed by the dashed ascending curve in Figure 1. The dashed ascending curve provides estimates of trust assuming that the resident lived in a public housing complex that was the same size as the average privately owned apartment building. In other words, if she moved to a public housing complex that was only five stories tall, contained only 35 units, and showed no visible disorder, the likelihood that she reports trust in her neighbors would be anywhere from 3.5 to 5.5 percentage points higher, depending on the length of time she

lived in that home.¹⁶ Because the level of building disorder is the same in both scenarios, the gap between the two ascending curves represents the variation in trust accounted for by differences in building size.

The two descending curves in Figure 1 provide estimates of trust given that the average public housing resident lived in an apartment complex that was privately – rather than publicly – owned. The dotted descending curve provides estimates that assume this resident lived in a privately owned building that was the same size as the average public housing complex in New York City. Therefore, the only difference in the estimates on this curve and those on the solid ascending curve is private versus public ownership; the physical qualities of the buildings are the same in each case. Comparing these curves highlights the difference in trust across public and private rental housing that cannot be accounted for by the physical features of buildings considered here. For example, if the average public housing resident has a 16.4 percent estimated chance of reporting trust in her neighbors after living in an average public housing complex for less than one year (solid ascending curve), this number would increase to 28.9 percent if she lived for the same length of time in a privately owned building of the same size (dotted descending curve). This finding suggests that there is a substantial gap in trust between across public and private rental housing that is not explained by the features of the built environment considered here, including building disorder and building size.

¹⁶ Note that the average level of building disorder tends to be the same in both publicly and privately owned buildings. This finding is consistent with Bloom's (2008) argument that New York City's public housing has been exceptionally well maintained.

CONCLUSION

I find that trust tends to be less common among New York City's public housing residents than it is among residents living in private rental housing. This gap in trust persists even after accounting for many of the observed characteristics of residents that are likely correlated with selection into public housing. It also persists after accounting for features of the built environment that may be linked to trust, including building size and disorder. Large buildings and physical disorder have long been hypothesized to break down social organization, and I find some evidence to corroborate these hypotheses. On one hand, I find that residents living in buildings with more disorder are less likely to report trust their neighbors. This may be because physical signs of disorder signal that social control is weak and heighten perceptions of fear and danger (Ross et al. 2001). I also find evidence that trust is weaker in buildings containing more residential units, which may be the result of indefensible spaces, overcrowding, or excessive anonymity (Amick and Kviz 1975; McCarthy and Saegert 1978; Newman 1973; Newman and Franck 1982). On the other hand, even after accounting for building size and disorder, the gap in trust across public and private housing remains. There are several possible explanations for this gap.

One possibility is that public housing management creates mistrust among neighbors. Public housing authorities have been criticized for overly paternalistic management styles and tenant selection procedures that fail to remove residents who might not make for trustworthy neighbors. Their ability to effectively manage large buildings has, in many cities, been hindered by understaffing and a lack of funding.

However, these are unlikely explanations for low levels of trust in New York City's public housing because NYCHA's tenant screening procedures have been more rigorous and its agency better staffed than those of other large cities (Bloom 2008). Housing authorities have been further criticized for lacking the capacity to monitor the population living in the buildings under their care. NYCHA (2017) counts 396,581 residents named on a lease for one of its apartments but the true number of people residing in the city's public housing is thought to be much higher. Overcrowding in public housing might increase anonymity and hinder attempts to build shared norms of interaction. However, this is also an unlikely explanation for the gap in trust across public and private rental housing because overcrowding is a citywide phenomenon in New York.

Rather than problems with management, a more likely explanation is that the social stigma attached to public housing and, in effect, to the residents who live there, shapes trust among neighbors. Residents living in high poverty places may attempt to escape stigma by withdrawing from local interaction, which may reduce interpersonal trust and weaken social organization (Wacquant 1993). For example, public housing residents may refuse to identify with their neighbors and may choose not to associate with any broader community of public housing tenants in fear that doing so would signal a personal shortcoming to themselves and others (Blokland 2008). This connection between public housing and social stigma may not be present in all places and at all times. Nonetheless, at the turn of the twenty-first century, many public housing complexes were highly stigmatized places, and if stigma negatively affects trust, then

variation in trust across public and private rental housing might be driven, in part, by public housing's stigmatized status in the U.S. society.

The findings in this chapter also provide evidence that trust in public housing varies by length of tenure: longtime tenants are more likely to trust their neighbors than those who more recently moved into public housing. This finding is consistent with studies demonstrating that residential stability increases social cohesion (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Keene and Geronimus 2011; Tach 2009). Longtime public housing residents may be more likely to engage in many of the practices that enhance social organization: building social networks, exchanging support, and working cooperatively to improve the quality of their homes (Arena 2012; Bennett and Reed 1999; Feldman and Stall 2004; Hunt 2009; Tach 2009; Venkatesh 2000). Although I cannot identify the mechanisms underpinning the association between longtime residency in public housing and trust among neighbors, the evidence is consistent with the hypothesis that residents build trust with their neighbors in the process of collectively solving problems. These problems may manifest in the forms of physical disorder or broken down infrastructure, which may motivate residents to respond collectively, whether by petitioning their housing authorities for repairs, or by fulfilling the housing authority's responsibilities for maintenance themselves.

The findings in this chapter advance our understanding of social organization. They suggest that trust varies by housing tenure, which means that average levels of trust might also vary from one residential building or housing complex to the next. In other words, public housing may create a set of relationships that is different from those that

exist in the broader neighborhood. If this is true, then social organization may not only vary by neighborhood, as proposed in the neighborhood effects literature, but also within neighborhoods. This might explain why residents living in the same neighborhood can have different opportunity structures, challenges, and life chances (cf. Sharkey and Faber 2014; Small and Feldman 2012).

Finally, this chapter addresses an issue of public concern. Theories describing how the built environment shapes social norms continue to influence housing policy. In recent decades, they have been used to justify public housing demolitions and to support mixed-income redevelopment through HOPE VI (Goetz 2011). Mixed-income housing was expected to increase social control and community capacity while also providing low-income residents with greater access to high-quality networks (Chaskin and Joseph 2015). The keys to achieving these social outcomes included New Urbanist architectural designs, greater access to amenities, and physical integration with wealthier neighbors. The design alterations specifically entailed reducing the size of the buildings where public housing residents lived and constructing higher quality homes than those that were demolished. Although there is no reason to believe that high-quality homes in mixed-income developments negatively affect social norms, the findings in this chapter should give pause to the notion that public housing can only be socially viable on smaller scales in mixed-income developments. As demonstrated, building size and disorder only account for a small portion of the variation in trust across different housing contexts. Therefore, the prevailing ideas about how to construct socially integrated communities may overemphasize the social effects of the built environment.

In the prior chapter, I provided evidence to support the argument that assisted housing slows the pace of residential mobility, and that assisted renters who stay put for comparatively long periods of time are more likely to exchange support with their neighbors. In this chapter, I provided evidence that assisted renters who remain in the same homes for long periods of time are more likely to trust their neighbors, and that scholars likely overstate the social effects of the built environment when explaining social norms in assisted housing. Thus far, the evidence suggests that assisted housing can increase residential stability without isolating residents from the people living around them. It is still not entirely clear, however, why low-income renters stay put in assisted housing over long periods of time and whether they perceive benefits in staying put. It is possible that they do not actually find stability in assisted housing but are instead stuck there, which limits their access to resources and opportunities. In the next chapter, I draw on data from the SDAHS and follow-up interviews with survey participants to explain why low-income renters move into assisted housing and why they may stay put over long periods of time.

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CHAPTER 5: STABILITY AND OPPORTUNITY AT ASSISTED HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Researchers studying residential mobility programs have been puzzled over the finding that renters with housing assistance sometimes remain in high poverty neighborhoods over long periods of time. Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity demonstration and evaluations of the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program suggest that many low-income households tend to remain in, or return to, high poverty contexts even after obtaining vouchers that subsidize their rent (Briggs et al. 2010; Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2012).¹⁷ Scholars provide numerous explanations for this finding. For instance, there is evidence that the design and implementation of voucher programs fail to enable mobility to higher income neighborhoods (DeLuca et al. 2013; Rosen 2014). Scholars have also demonstrated that pervasive racial discrimination prevents racial and ethnic minorities from leaving disadvantaged contexts (Logan and Alba 1993; Sharkey 2013), and that residents often rely on strong social ties to find new homes, which may circumscribe their housing searches to high poverty neighborhoods (Carrillo et al. 2016). The existing literature highlights multiple sources of contextual immobility – the inability to access homes in more affluent neighborhoods (Rosen 2017). However, it is unclear whether, or under what conditions, renters with housing assistance might voluntarily stay put in a home located in a high poverty context.

¹⁷ The Moving to Opportunity demonstration and the Housing Choice Voucher Program were both designed to help low-income households move out of high poverty neighborhoods through the use of tenant-based housing assistance (i.e. vouchers).

The possibility that residents might express a preference for living in a high poverty context is rarely considered because it conflicts with the dominant paradigm of residential mobility. Explanations of residential mobility tend to build on the spatial assimilation model, which expects residents to convert their human, economic, and social capital into locational advantage (Massey and Mullan 1984). In other words, residents are expected to move towards higher income neighborhoods because it is there that social and economic resources tend to be concentrated (Logan and Alba 1993; Massey and Mullan 1984; South and Crowder 1997). The resources available in neighborhoods – from housing to schools, services, organizations, and social contacts – may affect the likelihood that children receive a high quality education and that adults find employment (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993; Massey and Denton 1993; Rankin and Quane 2000; Small 2006; Wilson 1987). A neighborhood may further affect one’s life chances by mediating exposure to violent crime and shaping one’s access to social support (Sampson et al. 1997; Sampson et al. 1999). Under the spatial assimilation model, where mobility is shaped by resource differentials across neighborhoods, there is little reason to expect residents to prefer living in a comparatively resource-poor context.

Nonetheless, renters with housing assistance frequently stay put in high poverty neighborhoods over long periods of time (Phinney 2013; Wood, Turnham, and Mills 2008; Skobba, Bruin, and Yust 2013). While many researchers find that assisted renters are stuck in dangerous housing complexes located in low-opportunity neighborhoods (e.g. Briggs et al. 2010; Edin, DeLuca, and Owens 2012), a few find evidence that assisted renters are satisfied with their homes. For example, in a study of residential

mobility among women receiving cash assistance, Phinney (2013) finds that women who also receive housing assistance are more likely to be “satisfied stayers,” suggesting that their long tenures may be, to some extent, voluntary. If our predominant theories of residential mobility expect residents to be eager to leave high poverty contexts, under what conditions might they choose to stay put? Why might some assisted renters be satisfied with homes located in high poverty neighborhoods?

To improve our understanding of assisted renters’ mobility decisions, I draw on the SDAHS and interview data that I collected in City Heights, San Diego. I show that low-income renters seek out homes in assisted housing not only for the reduced cost of rent but also because they perceive assisted housing to be a solution to a broad set of problems that induce housing insecurity such as overcrowding and a lack of safety. Furthermore, I find evidence that some residents remain in assisted housing because they perceive their access to opportunities to be contingent on staying put rather than moving to a more affluent neighborhood. The findings suggest that contextual immobility may result from efforts to find and maintain a stable home, and from the ways in which assisted residents perceive the geography of opportunity in their city.

A PATHWAY TO STABILITY

Many low-income renters struggle to find a living arrangement that is affordable, safe, and accommodates the needs of their households. As a result, some renters tend to engage in churning, or repeated short-distanced moves within high poverty contexts. Others remain in the same home over long periods of time. One group that stays put for

long periods of time are renters with housing assistance. Recent studies suggest that some assisted renters are satisfied with their homes and might not perceive themselves as being stuck in place (Phinney 2013; Wood et al. 2008; Skobba et al. 2013). This housing satisfaction could be derived from the rental subsidies, if the subsidies increase access to high quality and affordable homes. Housing satisfaction could further result from particular landlord practices that promote stability, as unscrupulous landlords account for much of the observed instability in high poverty neighborhoods. Landlords create instability by renting homes in poor condition, failing to maintain apartments, increasing rent burdens, and evicting tenants (Briggs et al. 2010; Desmond 2016; Desmond et al. 2015). Although scholars are amassing substantial evidence of landlord practices that generate unstable and dissatisfying living conditions, little is known about landlord practices that produce stable living environments in high poverty contexts.

One type of landlord that may promote stability is the community-based nonprofit organization. Since the 1960s, nonprofit organizations, such as community development corporations, have participated in federal programs designed to provide housing assistance to low-income renters (O'Regan and Quigley 2000). These nonprofits comprise a growing share of landlords in high poverty contexts because the primary mechanisms for financing project-based assisted housing, such as the LIHTC and the HOME Investment Partnership Program, require each state to reserve 10 percent of these funds for nonprofit housing providers (Schwartz 2010). This financing is directed toward nonprofits because they may be more likely than for-profit housing providers to serve very low-income residents, to use their knowledge of the neighborhood to provide

tailored housing solutions, and to attend to social and political issues facing community members (O'Regan and Quigley 2000). For example, nonprofit housing providers may work to keep housing costs low, provide social services, and lead neighborhood projects for economic development (Bratt 2012). To the extent that neighborhood nonprofits seek to accomplish these goals, renters who live in assisted housing owned by a neighborhood nonprofit may be more satisfied with their homes and less likely to move out.

WHY STAY PUT IN ASSISTED HOUSING?

Renters may choose to stay put in assisted housing over long periods of time for at least three reasons. First, they might stay put in order to remain close to their support networks from which they may access loans, medical supplies, and other material resources (Edin and Lien 1997; Raudenbush 2016). To ensure that access to these resources remains available, residents may have to reciprocate the assistance they receive, and the ability to reciprocate might require residents to live near their social ties (Gans 1962; Stack 1974). Even if most networks are less provincial today as a result of faster and less expensive telecommunication and transportation technologies (Wellman 1979), recent studies demonstrate that mobility decisions continue to be shaped by desires to live near family, friends, and other social contacts (Carrillo et al. 2016; Spring et al. 2017). Therefore, assisted housing may help low-income renters maintain access to their sources of material, informational, or emotional support.

Second, assisted renters might forego opportunities to move out if they perceive greater access to resources and opportunities in their current neighborhood than in

wealthier ones. Although traditional theories of urban poverty suggest that poor neighborhoods contain fewer organizations and networks where residents might gain access to opportunities that can advance their socioeconomic standing (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987), more recent work provides evidence that there is substantial variation in the organizational resources available in high poverty neighborhoods (Small 2006; Small et al. 2008) and the resources that flow through local social networks (Desmond and An 2015). A nonprofit housing provider could supply its residents with any number of resources beyond affordable rent such as nutritional assistance, employment services, or youth services. Residents might stay put in assisted housing complexes that are owned or managed by a neighborhood nonprofit organization if it provides – or brokers access to – valuable resources.

Third, residents may stay put if they perceive the opportunity costs of moving to be high. Assisted housing is a limited resource, often with long waitlists that residents must endure before moving in. After gaining access to assisted housing, residents might not readily move out if they understand that the wait to move back in can last weeks, months, or years. Residents may also be hesitant to move out if they do not perceive higher quality homes to be available elsewhere in their housing market. If a neighborhood nonprofit provides housing that is affordable, spacious, and safe then residents may perceive few advantages in moving to higher status neighborhoods with lower poverty rates if doing so puts them at risk of losing an affordable and high-quality apartment.

In the sections that follow, I describe how low-income renters facing unsustainable living arrangements find stability in assisted housing complexes owned by

Housing the Heights. I then show that many residents living in these housing complexes are not stuck in place, but are instead largely satisfied with the stability they acquired in assisted housing. Finally, I provide evidence that some residents may decide to stay put in assisted housing – even sometimes when they have opportunities to move out – because they perceive stability to be a more valuable resource than access to affluent neighborhoods in their efforts to make ends meet and get ahead.

SEARCHING FOR STABILITY

In the City of San Diego, assisted housing funded by the LIHTC is concentrated in neighborhoods with higher than average poverty rates. Figure 2 displays the location of assisted housing complexes funded by the LIHTC as of 2015. It also displays census tract poverty rates for the same year. The average poverty rate of census tracts containing at least one LIHTC-funded development was 27.9 percent whereas the city’s poverty rate was 15.4 percent. In other words, LIHTC developments tend to be located in neighborhoods where the poverty rate is almost double that of the city. The assisted housing complexes owned by *Housing the Heights* are similarly located in high poverty contexts, and many low-income renters apply for apartments at these housing complexes because they face unstable living conditions at their current home. After applying, most residents are put on a waitlist for a period of time before moving in.

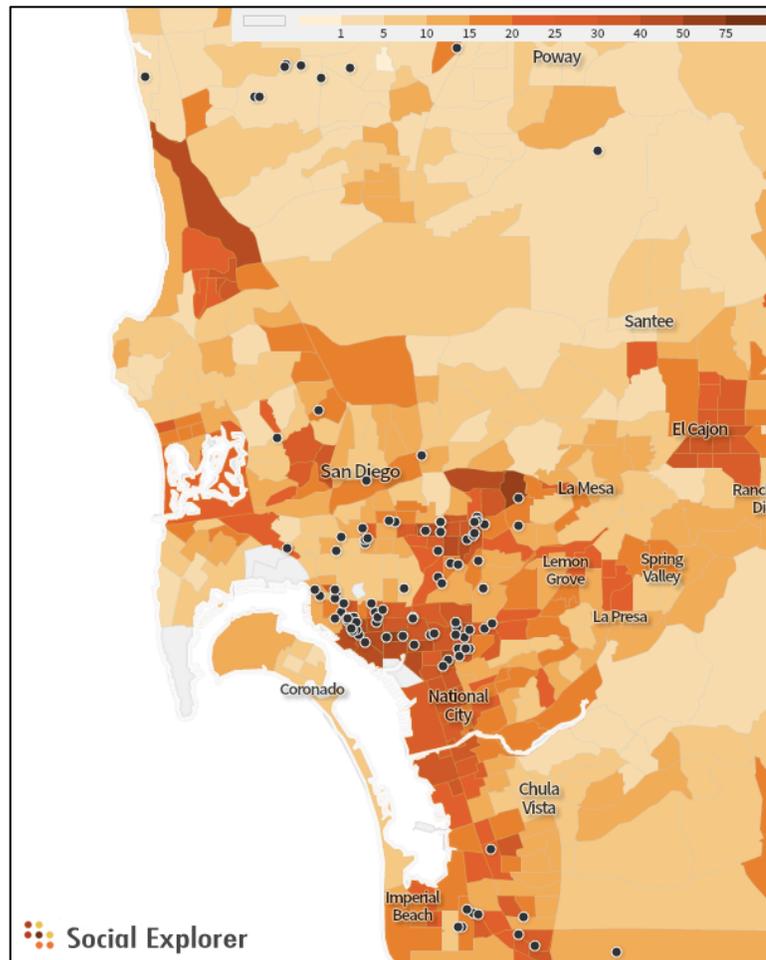


Figure 2. LIHTC Developments and Census Tract Poverty Rates in San Diego.
 Note: Map created by author. Data on poverty rates come from the 2015 ACS 5-year estimates, provided by *Social Explorer*. Data on the location of tax credit projects are drawn from the 2017 LIHTC Database.

Residents who are waitlisted for apartments tend to face a variety of pressures to move out of their current homes. Table 7 displays responses to an open-ended question from the SDAHS asking why they want to move into assisted housing. Waitlisted residents primarily apply to live in assisted housing in order to obtain a more affordable apartment, more space, or more safety. These reasons for moving are similar to those documented in other studies of residential mobility insofar as they are precipitated by

financial and personal insecurity (Desmond et al. 2015; Rosen 2017), and that they are generally aimed at attaining higher quality housing units rather than residency in a more affluent neighborhoods (Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2012; Wood 2014).

Table 7. Reasons for Applying for Assisted Housing

Reason	Mentions
Affordability	20
Overcrowding	6
Safety	5
Being Forced Out by Landlord	3
Cleanliness of Apartment	3
Living in Temporary Housing	2
Proximity to Child's School	2
Proximity to Social Contacts	2
Wants to Move to San Diego	2
Apartment Quality	1
Proximity to Freeway	1
Proximity to Job	1
Proximity to Public Transit	1
Familiarity with Neighborhood	1

Notes: N=35. Waitlisted Residents could mention multiple reasons for wanting to move into assisted housing.

Waitlisted residents are often forced to weigh housing costs against their other needs such safety and an apartment that's large enough to accommodate their household. For example, consider Susana, a 46 year-old woman who lives with her husband and six children, and who is currently on the waitlist for an apartment at Paradise Hills, an assisted housing complex owned by *Housing the Heights*. Susana's family was living in a single-family home in what she described as a nice neighborhood in San Diego when the 2008 financial crisis hit. Several years into the crisis, Susana lost her home and her

family had no choice but to move into a one-bedroom house in a neighborhood in Southeast San Diego. Susana now pays \$1,200 for rent each month and describes her house as far too small for herself, her husband, and their six children. She says she has not felt safe in her neighborhood ever since her home was robbed, and does not feel safe around her landlord. Susana believes that Paradise Hills is one of the only places that will solve her family's problems with overcrowding because other homes in San Diego that she can afford are either too small for her family or located in places that are just as dangerous as her current neighborhood.

Financial problems that waitlisted residents face are not reducible to unaffordable rent. For example, Jenna, a 33-year-old woman on the waitlist, is having trouble finding a suitable home for her family despite having a housing choice voucher that will significantly subsidize her rent. Jenna has been living with her four children in a three-bedroom apartment in Southeast San Diego for the past year. With her voucher, she pays \$475 for rent each month, and although her voucher makes rent affordable, her apartment is small. With less than 800 square feet of floor space, Jenna says that her home is too crowded and fails to accommodate one of her sons who needs his own room due to a disability. Moreover, Jenna says that the area around her apartment is unsafe: "It is dirty; [there's] glass on the ground; the streets are crooked; you have a hard time walking because the rocks are in the sidewalk and you can stumble and fall. There's a homeless man who stands out there every single day. My next-door neighbor shoots at his cans... There's violence and the police don't do anything about it."

Jenna believes that the Center City Apartments, an assisted housing complex owned by *Housing the Heights*, is the only solution to her current housing problems. She says that the Center City Apartments are safe because they are surrounded by a gate that locks, and she can afford to pay the \$500 security deposit required to move in. Most of the unassisted apartments that are big enough to accommodate Jenna's family require security deposits of \$1,000 or more, which Jenna cannot afford. Jenna says, "I'm just trying to struggle and get some more space. Because I have a voucher for \$1,900, and then I try to work with that to get a four bedroom [apartment], but I can't do that either because the deposits are \$1,000 or more." Jenna has tried to use her housing choice voucher to rent apartments in the unassisted market but has been unsuccessful because the security deposits are unaffordable, and she is currently unemployed so she cannot save \$1,000 for a security deposit. Unaffordable security deposits have prevented Jenna from accessing a home that meets her family's needs. Her case illustrates that it is not just heavy rent burdens that limit residential stability but unaffordable security deposits as well.

Problems finding an affordable place to live may be exacerbated if waitlisted residents run businesses out of their homes. Some residents use their homes to make money by cutting hair, babysitting children, or cooking food to sell in their neighborhood. These residents require a home that can double as a place of business, which can complicate their ability to find a suitable place to live. For example, consider Victoria, a 57-year-old woman who uses her home to run a daycare center. Victoria had been renting a house where she lived and ran her business when her landlord informed her that he was

going to sell the house; Victoria and her children would have to move out. As Victoria started looking for a new place to live, she could not find a landlord willing to rent her a place that she could use to run her daycare business. Victoria had no choice but to move in with her sister. Victoria now pays her sister \$900 for rent each month. In return, she gets two bedrooms and half of the living room for her family to live in and to use for her daycare services. Recently, Victoria learned that she will have to move again – sometime within the next three months – because her sister’s landlord is planning to sell the house. Now Victoria is on the waitlist for an apartment at Paradise Hills. Victoria believes that assisted housing would solve her problems because the apartments are affordable and the property managers will allow her to run her daycare business with very few restrictions. Victoria’s situation demonstrates that the task of finding a stable home can be complicated by the restrictions landlords place on how rental units may be used.

Waitlisted residents further report needing to move because they are being forced out of their homes. Landlords who are increasing the cost of rent, refusing to make repairs to the apartment, or overcharging for utilities are pushing some renters to seek out homes in assisted housing. For example, consider Martina, a middle aged woman who has been living with her husband and three children in a two-bedroom apartment in City Heights. Martina says that her kitchen is falling apart – the cabinets are falling off the walls and have become virtually useless. Martina explains that her landlord refuses to fix the kitchen unless her family moves out for two months and agrees to a \$200 rent increase when they move back in. The landlord did not offer to help Martina find a temporary home while the kitchen was being repaired, nor did he offer to pay for

temporary accommodations. Martina knew that she could not easily find a place to stay for two months and that she would not be able to afford the \$200 rent hike when she moved back in. She had no choice but to start looking for a new place to live so she applied for an apartment at Paradise Hills. Martina is one of many waitlisted residents who feel as though their landlords create instability by being unresponsive to their needs and by increasing the cost of rent.

Waitlisted residents face further instability when the composition of their household changes; for example, when a new person joins the household or when a member of the household moves out. Changes in household composition may change what a household needs from a home. For example, consider Janice, a single mother with a five-year old son. Janice is largely satisfied with her home. She describes it as a big one-bedroom apartment that is safe for her son, and she does not feel that she is being overcharged for rent. However, Janice wants to move because her son is getting older and will need his own bedroom and more space to play. Janice says that the concrete courtyard at her current apartment complex would be an ideal place for her son to play because it is safe. However, her landlord does not want to be liable if Janice's son trips, falls, and hurts himself on the concrete. Janice says she will have no choice but to find an apartment with two bedrooms somewhere that is more accommodating of her son. Her search for a new home is complicated by several factors: Janice is struggling with credit card debt so she cannot afford to increase her housing expenditures, she does not want to move too far from her babysitter because her babysitter is one of the few that she can afford, and she needs to remain within the city limits in order to be able to commute to

work. Janice believes that moving to an apartment at Paradise Hills could solve all of these problems at once.

The survey of waitlisted residents suggests that housing costs are the central problems prompting moves into assisted housing. However, the interviews demonstrate that unaffordable rent oversimplifies the broader problem of housing instability. Waitlisted residents are not just rent burdened. Instead, they are seeking out new homes that simultaneously solve problems related to overcrowding, safety, unaffordable security deposits, access to employment, and unresponsive landlords. Many perceive assisted housing to be one of the only solutions to these multiple sources of housing insecurity.

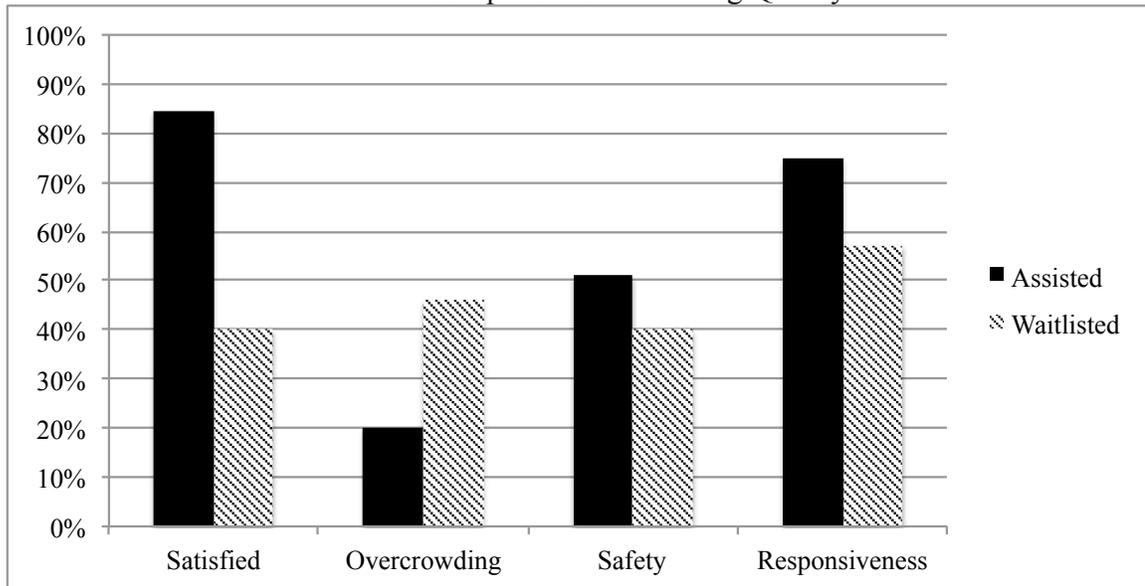
STABILITY IN ASSISTED HOUSING

After entering assisted housing, residents tend to stay put for long periods of time. On average, assisted residents live in the same home for approximately 6 years whereas waitlisted residents live in their homes for nearly 3 years. On the one hand, the comparatively long tenures in assisted housing could be evidence that assisted residents are stuck in their apartments despite wanting to move out. On the other hand, the long tenures in assisted housing could be evidence that residents have found a place to live that suits their needs. To adjudicate between these hypotheses, I consider residents' reported satisfaction with their homes.

Housing satisfaction has long been used as an indicator of the desire to move (Speare 1974; South and Deane 1993). If residents in assisted housing felt as though they were stuck in their homes, then we would expect a low rate of housing satisfaction,

perhaps similar to that of waitlisted residents who are actively searching for a new place to live. A high rate of housing satisfaction would indicate that residents living in apartments owned by *Housing the Heights* do not necessarily perceive themselves as being stuck in place. Table 8 displays the rate of housing satisfaction for assisted and waitlisted residents. It shows that 85 percent of assisted residents report being satisfied with their homes whereas only 40 percent of waitlisted residents report being satisfied. The comparatively high rate of satisfaction in assisted housing suggests that most assisted residents are not stuck in place but that their homes adequately meet the needs of their households.

Table 8. Comparisons of Housing Quality



Note: Responsiveness refers to whether respondents believe their landlord is responsive to requests to have something in the apartment repaired after it breaks.

Much of the stability in assisted housing results from the affordable cost of rent, the safe living environment, the lack of overcrowding, and landlord practices that

promote stability. Starting with affordability, Table 9 displays the average rent paid by residents living in apartments owned by *Housing the Heights* as well as the average rents paid by residents in City Heights and in the City of San Diego. It shows that, on average, assisted renters pay less than renters in City Heights living in a similar size apartment, saving anywhere from \$222 to \$558 per month. Their savings are greater still when compared to the average rents citywide. The cost of rent is closely related to the size of an apartment, and in follow-up interviews residents living in assisted housing tend to report that they can access larger apartments at the assisted housing complexes owned by *Housing the Heights*. Similarly, they are less likely to live in overcrowded conditions than waitlisted residents. Overcrowding can be defined as an apartment with more than two persons per bedroom (see Blake, Kellerson, and Simic 2007). Table 8 shows that roughly 20 percent of assisted residents live in overcrowded apartments whereas nearly 46 percent of waitlisted residents experience overcrowding.

Table 9: Median Rent by Number of Bedrooms

Bedrooms	Assisted Households	City Heights	City of San Diego
0	N/A	\$771	\$913
1	\$600	\$840	\$1,083
2	\$858	\$1,080	\$1,473
3	\$950	\$1,359	\$1,853
4	\$1,025	\$1,583	\$2,220

Note: Data on average rent paid by assisted households come from the survey respondents (N=177). Data on the average rent in City Heights and in the City of San Diego come from the 2015 ACS 5-year estimates, provided by *Social Explorer*.

In addition to larger and more affordable homes, residents in assisted housing report greater safety. As displayed in Table 8, more than 50 percent of assisted residents report feeling safe walking down their street at night whereas only 40 percent of waitlisted residents report feeling safe on their streets. In follow-up interviews, assisted residents typically report feeling safer inside their housing complexes than on the surrounding streets. For instance, consider Solomon, a middle-aged man who migrated from Ethiopia to the U.S. and who lives with his two sons in the Center City Apartments. Solomon drew a clear distinction between the safety inside his housing complex – which is surround by a fence that locks – and the danger on the street just outside the fence. “I think this [Center City Apartments] is safer than the places where I stayed in the past... This is safe. Why? The playground is inside here and all the kids, they can go out, they meet there and play together [in the courtyard]. It’s almost similar [to], like African communities. That makes it different from the other places, I think.” When I asked Solomon whether he thought it was safe on the street just outside of the housing complex he responded, “Not safe. The surrounding is not safe. I’m just telling you it is safe within the compound. Outside is a little bit not good.” The safety that Solomon and other assisted residents perceive inside their housing complexes provides another source of stability that many low-income renters lack.

Residents suggest that their long tenures in assisted housing also result from actions taken by their landlord to reduce instability. On average, assisted residents perceive their landlords to be more responsive to their needs than do waitlisted residents. As displayed in Table 8, approximately 75 percent of assisted residents believe that their

landlord quickly repairs their apartment when something breaks. Only 57 percent of waitlisted residents believe that their landlords are responsive to their needs. During interviews, assisted residents explain that they are less likely to be displaced by the property managers that work for *Housing the Heights* than by other landlords. Many assisted residents have had experiences with past landlords forcing them to move out of their homes so that the apartment could be remodeled or upgraded. In assisted housing, however, they are not forced out when their apartments are remodeled. Just before I began collecting data, eight of the ten assisted housing complexes owned by *Housing the Heights* were renovated. Old carpets and tiles were removed, wood floors were put down, sewer lines were inspected, and solar water heaters were installed among various other improvements tailored to specific apartments. These renovations were occurring on a wide scale, affecting over 100 apartments and costing millions of dollars. The remodeling made some residents nervous because they had been displaced under similar circumstances at previous homes. For instance, Sophia, a 27-year-old woman who lives with her mother and father at an assisted housing complex called the 10th Street Apartments, describes her reaction to the most recent remodeling done by *Housing the Heights*:

And then this last time that happened too, they did [the remodeling and] I was so scared—it's just me and my dad, and we take care of my mom, she's disabled. So it's so hard, and we were like, oh my god, what's gonna happen? But they were like, don't worry, we're gonna remodel it and we're gonna

place you in a hotel. So that's one of the things I've liked with the concept of, they do try and help.

Housing the Heights paid for Sophia's family to live in a hotel during the remodeling, and Sofia's family was able to move back into their apartment after the construction was completed. Sofia is satisfied with the results of the remodeling. "We used to have carpet and they put [in wood] floors and they made the bathroom a little bit bigger for my mom. They made my room smaller, but to tell you the truth, I don't really care, because I'm mostly with my mom. So it's fine; I just use it as a closet and for my bed." Sofia says that after the remodeling their rent decreased slightly. Other assisted residents also described a slight dip in the cost of rent shortly after the remodeling.¹⁸

Residents in assisted housing suggest that *Housing the Heights* provides them with a measure of stability because it does not pressure them to move out when their family grows. For example, consider Ariana, a mother who for the last seven years has been living with her three children at the Bayside Homes assisted housing complex. Ariana decided to move into the Bayside Homes because her previous landlord got upset when he found out that she was going to have her second child. Ariana's previous landlord told her that he rented her a one-bedroom apartment with the understanding that it would be for her and her one child; he did not want Ariana living in the apartment with two children. Ariana refused to move out so the landlord increased the rent, effectively

¹⁸ The rent at private assisted housing complexes can decrease if the property owners receive additional low-income housing tax credits. This happened shortly after the last remodeling occurred.

forcing Ariana and her children to leave. Now that Ariana lives in the Bayside Homes she no longer worries about being kicked out of her apartment. Ariana explains,

When I moved here [to the Bayside Homes] I had two [children] and then I had another one and I just put them on the [lease] because we [recertify our lease] every year. And they will never say, you had two [children] when we rented out to you and now you have another one, what happened, or get upset or something, or, your rent is going up, or, you need [to move to] a two-bedroom. They never say anything.

Assisted residents may be able to switch to a larger apartment if their family grows and more people are added to the lease. However, they will not be kicked out for having more children.

Residents living in assisted housing are able to remain in their apartments for long periods of time because the cost of rent is relative low, their apartments are large, the housing complexes tend to be safe, and residents do not confront some of the landlord practices that can result in displacement.

STAYING FOR RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Some residents seek to remain in assisted housing over long periods of time to pursue goals that are enabled by stability. In interviews, residents mentioned four reasons why they would prefer to stay in assisted housing even if they had an opportunity to

move out. First, some residents describe the stability provided by assisted housing as crucial to helping their children succeed in school. Second, some residents believe that staying in assisted housing helps them stay close to their support networks or the people and organizations they rely on to make ends meet. Third, some senior residents believe that assisted housing helps them retain their independence in old age. Fourth, staying in assisted housing can help residents earn a living if they are self-employed. I describe each in greater detail below.

Educational Opportunities

Parents with children may decide to stay in assisted housing if they believe that it advances their children's educational opportunities. Some parents take advantage of educational opportunities that are uniquely tailored to families who have no intention of leaving City Heights. For instance, consider Alisha, a single mother who lives with three children in the Garden Homes assisted housing complex.

Alisha moved with her three children into the Garden Homes from Mountain View, a neighborhood in southeast San Diego about four miles from City Heights. At the time, Alisha wanted an apartment that was safe, clean, and affordable on a low-income. Alisha had become concerned that Mountain View was not a safe place for her children – she would not let her kids walk down the street by themselves and did not have neighbors she could trust. There was not a particularly traumatic event that catalyzed Alisha's move but rather a general feeling of insecurity. When Alisha first visited the Garden Homes, she liked that it was located near a police station, a park, and several stores. After moving

her family into their new apartment, Alisha felt reassured that the Garden Homes would be a safe place to live: “The neighbors introduced themselves right away and stuff like that so it was a feeling of a sense of security and I actually liked it because [the Garden Homes] is really comprised of families so it fit right with what I needed.”

Alisha is committed to staying in the Garden Homes and in City Heights until her children finish high school. Alisha explains her reasons for wanting to stay put:

Alisha: Number one, I can afford it. Number two, I love the relationship I have with my neighbors. It’s comfortable for me. Number three, my kids, I’m not looking to relocate them because especially of the schooling. My older two kids are in high school. Both are Compact students.

Kevin: What does that mean?

Alisha: Compact means that since they started in the 9th grade at Hoover [High School], if they go on 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th, four years at Hoover High School and they maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average, they’re guaranteed admission into SDSU.

Kevin: Into where?

Alisha: SDSU, San Diego State University, and then they’re also Upward Bound program students, which is through UCSD (University of California-San Diego). They have that for themselves so I’m not looking to move them from the high school that they’re in. Because of the way that the district thing is, when you move to a certain location, your kids no longer qualify for that school so—

Kevin: Does the program promise any financial benefits or scholarships for the kids?

Alisha: It's guaranteed admission into SDSU but by the same token, with the Compact Program they also assist with the PSATs so you can practice and then they actually pay for you to be able to retake the test one time. Because [an SAT review course is] very expensive, it's like, I think, \$600 or something like that and so they actually pay for that so the kids can get that practice in. They also host things for the parents to come down and learn things. The kids get to—like the UCSD Upward Bound program, they give them a package to help them with their PSATs, what they could practice on to get good scores and stuff like that. And then both programs teach them about financial scholarships and they assist them in attaining those scholarships. So it does have its perks. Basically they can get guaranteed admission but on the same token they're also teaching the kids to be independent and how to also do their share, you know what I mean? Because it wouldn't be if it was like where you can get in, you're gonna get all paid expenses, so then it's kind of like not teaching the kids how to go and get something if they want it. So to me it's like a fair balance.

Kevin: Would you lose these resources if you moved?

Alisha: I would if I moved out of the district.

Alisha is committed to staying in the Garden Homes, in part, because she believes it will guarantee her children access to San Diego State University. If she were to take her family out of City Heights then her children would lose the guaranteed admission.

Moreover, the Compact Program provides Alisha with information about college, prepares her children for the SAT exam, and helps them apply for financial scholarships.

Alisha does not believe that her children would have similar opportunities at other schools in San Diego. Even if given the opportunity, Alisha says that she would not be interested in relocating to an assisted housing complex in a more affluent neighborhood in San Diego, such as La Jolla.

Kevin: What if I said you could live in the same exact apartment [and] pay the same amount for rent but it would be in La Jolla, would you move?

Alisha: No.

Kevin: Could you tell me why not?

Alisha: Because of the schools where my kids go to, so I wouldn't move. Right now I'm laser focused on my kids and their schooling and they're so close because my daughter has two more years. Both my kids are 4.0 students...There is a lot of things going on at Hoover that other kids wouldn't be able to get from other schools so from an educational point of view, my kids are doing great there. I'm not gonna move them from there.

Although Alisha is aware that La Jolla has some of the highest performing schools in the city, she believes that her children would be better served by staying in the Compact Program at Hoover High School. She does not believe that moving to a new neighborhood is the only way to increase her children's access to educational

opportunities; rather, she believes that staying put in the Garden Homes can accomplish the same goal. Alisha says that she would only consider moving out of the Garden Homes if it were no longer a safe place for her children to live. Although existing theories of residential mobility would expect Alisha to be eager to move to an affluent neighborhood with high achieving schools (Logan and Alba 1993; Massey and Mullan 1984; South and Crowder 1997), her desire to stay put in the Garden Homes suggests that moving may not be necessary for increasing her children's access to educational opportunities.

Support Networks

Staying in assisted housing may help residents maintain their support networks. For instance, consider Mary, a woman in her late 60s who for the last 19 years has been living alone in the Lemon Tree Apartments, an assisted housing complex owned by *Housing the Heights*. Mary says that she has no intention of moving out because she has access to the things she needs to make ends meet. After paying rent each month, Mary only has a few hundred dollars left so she regularly picks up food from local food pantries, and she recycles bottles and cans at the local park for extra cash. Mary has a friend named Carol, a woman who is about the same age and lives next door. Mary and Carol check up on each other several times each day, Carol brings Mary breakfast in the morning, and Mary recently watched over Carol after a minor surgery. Mary says,

Carol and I look out for each other. Like we call each other up to see how we're doing. How, like if one morning I wake up and I'm not sounding too

well then I call her up to let her know I got a head cold...But we would still call each other up to see where we're going and about when we'd be back. Like today, she has to go and have surgery done on her teeth. And so when she comes home she'll need someone to help look after her when she's back upstairs.

Carol is an important source of emotional support for Mary, and sometimes a source of material support as well. Mary does not want to lose her relationship with Carol and worries that moving out of the Lemon Tree Apartments would put the relationship in jeopardy. She also worries that Carol might leave the Lemon Tree Apartments because, after 13 years of waiting, Carol finally received a housing choice voucher that she can use to subsidize her rent in another neighborhood.

Mary's relationship with Carol is not the only reason she wants to stay put. Mary also wants to stay in the Lemon Tree Apartments because she has access to a health clinic in walking distance from her apartment where she receives free services. When I asked Mary if, hypothetically, she would be interested in moving to an assisted housing complex in La Jolla, she explained that moving to La Jolla would not provide her with any advantages.

Kevin: So what if I said you could live in the same apartment and pay the same rent, but it was in La Jolla. Would you wanna move?

Mary: Boy, I don't think so because that's too far.

Kevin: And too far from what?

Mary: Well, the Mid-City Clinic. And having to go there [to the clinic] and not pay anything.

The medical clinic is in walking distance of the Lemon Tree Apartments, and because Mary does not drive, living in La Jolla would only make it more difficult for her to get to appointments. Mary explained that moving would be an inconvenience because it would take her farther from the people and organizations she relies on. Mary's comments suggest that support networks may anchor some residents to their neighborhoods, especially residents who walk or rely on public transportation to get around.

Independence in Old Age

Senior residents may decide to stay in assisted housing because they want to retain their independence as they age. For example, consider Mary's friend Carol, a woman in her late 60s who has been living alone in the Lemon Tree Apartments for the last seven years. Like Mary, Carol also wants to stay in the Lemon Tree Apartments to maintain access to her support network, but unlike Mary, Carol has the option to live elsewhere. Although Carol relies on Mary for companionship, her local church for emotional support, and a combination of disability, social security, and housing assistance to make ends meet, she is not forced to live in City Heights or the Lemon Tree Apartments.

Carol has a housing choice voucher that she could use to move to another

apartment in City Heights or to another neighborhood in San Diego. She has considered moving to Southeast San Diego, and even put her name on waitlists at several housing complexes, but she has no intention of actually moving because she believes that leaving City Heights would isolate her from the people and organizations she relies on. Carol also has a standing offer to move in with her son who lives in a rural community out-of-state. Carol says that she does not want to move in with her son because she would lose her independence:

My son wants me to move to where he is, because he has a Christian church up there. And I go, “There’s no sidewalks up there. There’s one bus that goes from one little town to the next.” If I wanna go somewhere I have to get on a Grey Hound bus. “You know, and we’ll drive you mom.” And I go, “I don’t wanna be dependent on other people.” I like to have my own independence. Here in City Heights I can go down the street and get on a bus and get anywhere I need to go on my own.

By receiving support from a variety of neighborhood organizations and local residents, Carol can be more selective in choosing when and where she moves. She can avoid moving in with her son where she believes she would lose her independence, and she can avoid places like southeast San Diego where she believes she would be isolated from her support network.

Earning a Living

Residents who are self-employed may choose to stay in assisted housing if it helps them generate income. This is how Regina, a woman in her 30s who has been living in the Garden Homes for over five years, describes her reasons for wanting to stay put. Regina graduated from culinary school shortly after moving into the Garden Homes and then put together a business plan that would allow her to cook for a living. Regina recently put her business plan into action. She sells premade food in her neighborhood and was contracted by a local organization to give cooking classes to children and adults living in and around her neighborhood. Regina says that living in the Garden Homes helps her get her cooking businesses started.

Regina: First of all, it's hard to find affordable housing out here and I want to keep my business in City Heights, period. There's no reason to move out of [the Garden Homes] if I'm going to look for another affordable housing, if I'm keeping my business in City Heights...

Kevin: Do you think living in [the Garden Homes] helps you get your business started?

Regina: Yeah, of course. If I lived anywhere else, my rent would be much higher. San Diego's expensive, period. You know, my rent would be much, much higher if I lived anywhere else. You know, it help me get my business started, it help me save, you know, it helps all that in the long run.

Living in the Garden Homes allows Regina to save on rent and live close to work. If

Regina were to move to another neighborhood it would increase her commute time. Even if presented with an opportunity to move to a more affluent neighborhood such as La Jolla, Regina says that it would bring her no closer to achieving her goals.

Kevin: What if I said you could live in the same apartment, pay the same amount for rent, but the apartment would be in La Jolla, would you move?

Regina: The way things are going, the way that things are going right now, I probably wouldn't.

Kevin: Could you tell me why?

Regina: Because good things are starting to happen for me. Lot of our businesses are starting to go up and its crazy if I move to La Jolla, I have to come way down here [to City Heights].

Kevin: Right, right. Your business is located....

Regina: Down here [in City Heights]. You know, so I wouldn't if, to be truthful, if I have money saved, and there was a house available down here I would buy it.

Regina explained that living in City Heights provides her with several advantages. First, she can live close to work, which is useful because she relies on buses, car-sharing services, and rides from friends to get to places that are not within walking distance of her apartment. Second, Regina has contacts in City Heights that helped her get her business started. She has contacts at three local high schools who posted advertisements about her cooking classes and contacts who helped her find a kitchen in City Heights

where she gives her classes with low overhead costs. These are resources that Regina believes she would lose if she were to live in another neighborhood or try to open a similar business in another neighborhood.

Regina's reasons for staying put suggest that assisted residents may not equate access to more affluent neighborhoods with more opportunities to earn a living (cf. Massey and Mullan 1984). Regina believes that her ability to earn a living is contingent on remaining close to her social contacts in City Heights. Regina does not perceive any clear benefits in moving to La Jolla because she has no ties to the people or organizations there. Regina's reasons for wanting to stay in the Garden Homes suggest that theories of residential mobility may incorrectly assume that residents perceive benefits in living in close proximity to more affluent households.

CONCLUSION

The findings have shown that low-income renters living in high poverty contexts are able to find stability in assisted housing owned by a neighborhood nonprofit organization. This is not to say that all neighborhood nonprofit housing providers have similar effects on residential stability or that the quality of the housing provided by all nonprofits is the same. However, this chapter demonstrates how nonprofits with missions to improve the welfare of local residents may engage in practices that foster stability. Nonprofits may lower the barriers that prevent low-income residents from accessing homes that satisfy their needs, such as unaffordable security deposits and rents. They may

also engage in practices that promote stability; for example, by providing temporary accommodations when apartments are remodeled.

The findings further demonstrate that residents in assisted housing are not all stuck in place. Most assisted residents are satisfied with their homes and find advantages in staying put. In interviews, residents report several reasons for staying in assisted housing: some residents describe the stability provided by assisted housing as the key to helping their children pursue educational opportunities, others stay put to live close to their support networks, elderly residents may stay put to retain independence as they age, and residents who are self-employed may stay put if they believe it will help them increase their earnings.

The findings have two implications for our understanding of contextual immobility or why it is that low-income residents rarely leave high poverty neighborhoods. First, the findings suggest that resources and opportunities may be decoupled from neighborhood attainment. In other words, residents may decide to remain in assisted housing over extended periods of time if they perceive stability to be a more valuable resource than access to more affluent neighborhoods in their efforts to make ends meet and get ahead. Although the literature on residential mobility and neighborhood attainment suggests that residents seek out opportunities by moving to more affluent or higher status neighborhoods, this process may not hold for residents with a measure of stability in assisted housing. Second, the findings suggest that voluntary efforts to stay put in assisted housing might contribute to contextual immobility. This is because privately owned assisted housing complexes, such as those that receive funding

from the LIHTC, are disproportionately located in neighborhoods with higher than average poverty rates. Although assisted housing funded by the LIHTC is not exclusively sited in high poverty neighborhoods, it is also not evenly distributed throughout urban neighborhoods. This is partly by design. The LIHTC program incentivizes developers to create assisted housing in qualified census tracts where 50 percent of households have incomes below 60 percent of the AMI, or where the poverty rate is 25 percent or higher (HUD 2019). The incentives to build assisted housing in qualified census tracts ensure that some LIHTC developments will be built in high poverty contexts.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that residents are not all stuck in assisted housing and that many are satisfied with their homes. I build on this finding in the next chapter by considering the ways in which *Housing the Heights* increases residents' access to resources and opportunities that exist outside of City Heights. I make the case that some residents can access more resources and opportunities by staying in assisted housing rather than moving out.

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Chapter 5, in part, is currently being prepared for submission for publication of the material. Beck, Kevin. "Staying for Opportunity: Assisted Housing and Contextual Mobility." The dissertation author was the primary investigator and author of this material.

CHAPTER 6: RESOURCE BROKERS

INTRODUCTION

Researchers who study residential mobility tend to assume that residents attempt to move to neighborhoods where resources are concentrated, and that resources are bounded by neighborhoods. For example, Massey and Mullan (1984:837-838) write, “Opportunities and resources vary geographically. To take advantage of them, people move. In a profound way, where one lives plays a large role in determining one's life chances.” Scholars have measured neighborhood resources in fairly indirect ways. For example, they have relied on indicators such as median household income and poverty rates, which assume that more affluent neighborhoods contain more resources (e.g. Logan and Alba 1993; Wilson 1987). This may be true for certain types of resources such as the quality of public schools – property taxes are a substantial source of funding for public schools and access to public schools is often neatly bounded by administrative districts. However, not all resources are place-based and contingent on residency in a given neighborhood. Some resources flow through organizational ties.

High poverty neighborhoods are heterogeneous with regard to their organizational density – some high poverty neighborhoods lack organizations and others do not (Small 2008). Organizations may be important if they help low-income residents access resources that might not be available elsewhere in their neighborhood (Delgado 1997; Small 2006, 2009b). Such organizations can include local churches, shops, childcare centers, or nonprofits (Small 2006). The resources they provide may include material goods like food or school supplies, it might include information about job or housing

opportunities, and it could include referrals to medical or dental clinics. There is some evidence to suggest that high poverty neighborhoods are more likely to have effective resource brokers than wealthier neighborhoods. Indeed, Small et al. (2008) find that when childcare centers are located in high poverty neighborhoods they tend to have more ties to other organizations in the same city and thus a greater ability to provide resources or referrals than childcare centers located in wealthier neighborhoods.

In sum, prior research suggests that access to resources is contingent on residency in a neighborhood, as in the case of schools, or on one's organizational ties, as in the case of childcare centers. Nonprofit housing providers can serve as resource brokers much like the childcare centers described by Small et al. (2008) that connect individuals to a network of organizations and opportunities. However, access to nonprofit housing providers is place-based. It is not contingent on residency in a particular neighborhood but on residency in assisted housing. The fact that access is place-based allows nonprofits to overcome barriers of inaccessibility and mistrust that can prevent low-income renters from acquiring useful resources. In contrast with most existing theories of residential mobility, I argue that residents may stay put in assisted housing to gain access to resources and opportunities from outside their neighborhood.

WHAT RESIDENTS SERVICES COORDINATORS DO

Housing the Heights is a nonprofit housing provider and a resource broker. Residents living in assisted housing owned by *Housing the Heights* have access to a variety of services such as employment preparation programs, food pantries, computer

labs, and a learning center for children. Most of the services provided by *Housing the Heights* aim to improve residents' wellbeing, outcomes in the labor market, and the educational attainment of the residents' children. Roughly 43% of assisted residents who participated in the SDAHS have participated in a service or program at some time throughout their tenure in assisted housing. Some of the services are entirely funded by *Housing the Heights* while others require support from organizations throughout San Diego. Because *Housing the Heights* acts as a resource broker, residents living in assisted housing have access to organizations that exist beyond the boundaries of their neighborhood. The individuals responsible for providing these services are the resident services coordinators who work for *Housing the Heights*.

The resident services coordinators describe their job as helping residents in any way they can. Even if residents need help that goes beyond their own expertise, the coordinators will seek out information using their networks. The coordinators attend regular meetings with other resident service coordinators working throughout the city where they exchange solutions to problems and ideas for improving services; they build relationships with nonprofit and for-profit organizations where they access resources for their residents; and they connect residents to public assistance programs such as California's Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (CalFresh) and the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Linda, the resident services coordinator for the Center City Apartments, told me about the ties she draws on for resources:

Kevin: How do you get resources for activities and services?

Linda: I look them up. We go to different meetings, so we have like the *City Heights Partnership for Children*. I used to work in homeless services, in different shelters, so some of my resources are from when I used to work there. So not all of them apply [to residents living in assisted housing], but a lot of them do apply. So, a lot of it is going to these meetings where you're meeting other non-profit or for-profits, whatever it is. Just, individuals. And so, it's doing that networking. You know, you ask them, "What do you do?" And getting business cards. And then doing some research or even maybe taking a tour of the *Alliance for African Assistance*. Some of my residents were working with them and they do advocacy for utilities. So, because I was working with them, I thought, hey, can I set up a tour with you guys? So a lot of it is knowing what's in City Heights locally, somehow we're already linked. So, it's just doing a little more digging and also making sure you have that contact so that you can refer someone.

Kevin: Is there an established network among resident services providers in San Diego?

Linda: There is. And that's actually a really good resource. So, we have quarterly trainings in the resident services network, and some of them—they range from, like cultural awareness and competency, to autism and being on the spectrum. And then we have seniors and the aging population and how to provide support services. And then youth and mental health. Adult mental health. So, through those quarterly trainings, we're able to ask experts in the fields to come out and do the trainings. And then we're able to learn from other providers. So we'll have

like, all these providers, they either do property management and resident services or just resident services. And it's kinda cool. Because then we can learn from each other and they share resources and we share them. So that's a really good network.

Kevin: Who established the network? Or who created it?

Linda: I think it was the Housing Federation. The *San Diego Housing Federation*. And they do a lot of advocacy around different issues that have to do with affordable housing, quality-of-life types of things. So, the Housing Federation, that's the bigger part of the umbrella. And it's people who are in unique networks. So like, property managers will be able to be with other property managers. And they have trainings on, like, fair housing. And we do too. And then we'll have like a resident services network. It's a really good—so we can actually email, if we need to, like Alexa is one of the leads. So she organizes some workshops. I don't know if they are five, or—I actually don't know how many leads are. But there is a small number of leads who organize the workshops. And so, they might present the material. Conflict resolution was one of them. Or they might bring in an outside expert to do it. And then, all of our staff are eligible to enroll for it. So you'll have maybe 20-25 people at each workshop.

Linda and the other residents services coordinators at *Housing the Heights* work with each other, with other organizations in City Heights, and with other organizations in city and county to create programs and services for the residents. They use their personal

networks to develop ideas for programs that can best serve residents and to get the material resources that those programs require. For example, Linda uses the networks she has to the homeless shelters in San Diego, and Alexa, one of the other resident services coordinators at *Housing the Heights*, relies on contacts that she has from her prior job at an assisted housing complex in San Diego County. All of the resident services coordinators at *Housing the Heights* attend trainings at the *San Diego Housing Federation* where they learn about new services and expand their networks. Linda also mentions the creativity required to provide residents with the services they need. When necessary, Linda and the other services coordinators will do research to find resources that *Housing the Heights* does not provide.

SERVICES DELIVERED

The resident services coordinators create programs that target the needs of children, adults, and seniors. For example, one program called REACH is intended to give the residents' children who are in high school a variety of experiences that will prepare them for a career: They learn how to write a cover letter and resume, and how to interview with a potential employer. They make *LinkedIn* profiles and receive professional work clothes that are donated to *Housing the Heights* by an investment bank. At the end of the program, they are able to apply for a scholarship and for a paid internship with *Housing the Heights*. The internship is intended to provide basic skills while also serving as a work experience that will build their resumes. Linda told me how *Housing the Heights* gets other organizations involved in the REACH program:

Kevin: And could you tell me a little bit about the REACH Program?

Linda: Yeah, so that one is, do you know the acronym?

Kevin: I actually forget.

Linda: So, it's Rising and Empowering Adolescents in City Heights. So that program is, it has three components; one of the pillars is leadership through outdoor experiences. So, it's kinda like the rock climbing and the kayaking. Then we have the career training, career exploration job training aspect, which is that workshop that we offer, and it's about five sessions. And they focus on resume building, interviewing, mock interviews, [and] we have a career panel. A lot of panelists lived in City Heights and so they have various professions and they talked about their career path, including whether they went to college, or just how they got to where they are and what other kind of jobs they had along the way. So if they had second careers, things like that. And then, some of them went to local schools, which is kinda cool.

And then we also had money management. That one was pretty cool because we got to partner with the *Connect2Careers* program and that's under workforce partnership. And that program focused on helping youth become job ready. So basically doing these workshops but also having a case manager, someone who's working one on one with you and a coach, helping you with your resume, helping you get those jobs, apply for jobs. So, it was really fun actually, the kids really liked it.

And then the third component would be something that we're still hashing out, but it's some kind of social responsibility, something to do with youth serving the community.

The REACH program gets multiple organizations to support the youth in assisted housing. An investment bank based out of San Diego donates professional clothing, and *Connect2Careers* helps the youth build work skills, find job opportunities, and coaches them through the job application process. The REACH program also connects the youth to adults who grew up in City Heights and went on to have successful careers. These adults share their workplace experiences and give advice on how to build a career.

Similar to the REACH program, the resident services coordinators create programs for younger children living at the housing complexes. These programs and activities are generally housed in learning centers at the three largest housing complexes owned by *Housing the Heights*, but some are organized as field trips that take the children to sites throughout San Diego. The learning centers are office spaces with several computers connected to the Internet, a small kitchen, and a room with tables and chairs. After school, from 2:30pm until 6:00pm, some of the residents' children who are in elementary or middle school spend the afternoon with one of the resident services coordinators at the learning center. The learning center and the after-school program serve many functions. It's a safe space where children can work on their homework, play with the other residents' children, eat a snack, and do a variety of social and educational activities. According to Stacey, the resident services coordinator at the Garden Homes,

the learning center is especially important for helping children with homework and school projects if their parents migrated to the U.S., did not attend school in the U.S., or do not yet speak much English.

Kevin: Do you think that the children's parents find the learning center, and the activities and the field trips to be helpful?

Stacey: I think so. A lot of the field trips—parents aren't able to have the time to take their kids—because it's either too far or too pricy. So, they appreciate that. The learning center, a lot of our families have language barriers and they don't—either they didn't finish school or they're from a different country, so they don't know the academic system. So it's really good for us to help them navigate their homework. It's less stressful on the parents. I know with Alexandra's mom, she has two jobs and she doesn't speak—or read English. She speaks it, but when it comes to reading with Alexandra she gets really lost, especially reading the instructions for their homework. Alexandra is in kindergarten or first grade, so it can be difficult moving forward.

Kevin: Okay. For some of the residents, you help their kids with their homework? Maybe more than they [the parents] do, even?

Stacey: Yeah. We try to—our goal would be not to be the only person to be reliant on the homework because, sometimes when the learning center closes because we have other activities, it hurts a lot for the parents. So, we want to try to get the students to start learning how to do it on their own, so they can do it at home. That is the

goal. I don't want to be like, oh, this is how you do it, this is the answer, you know?

Kevin: Have you tried doing anything in particular to make that happen so that the parents could do the homework with the kids a little more easily at home?

Stacey: The only thing is, parents don't have time to do homework with kids. In my case, it's up to the kids to have the motivations to do it on their own. In Alexandra's case, she has been a lot better. She just needs somebody to watch her. So, if she can get a cousin or something to watch her to do it, but she has an idea of the homework patterns, then she can do it herself. With the Robinson's kids on the other hand, it's on their mood. So, if they want to do their homework, they'll do it. If they don't, I can't do anything about it and they hide their planners from me.

Stacey is very involved in the education of the children who regularly attend the learning center. In the time that I have spent at the Garden Homes, I have watched Stacey interact with the children and the their parents. Stacey knows about the children's academic successes and struggles. She knows the names of the children's teachers, what schools they go to, and which extracurricular events they participate in. In turn, the children turn to Stacey for homework help, advice, and for someone to confide in. The children's appreciation for the learning center and Stacey were evident. Twice every month the learning center would close because Stacey was occupied running a food distribution for the residents – an opportunity for all the residents to pick up one or two grocery bags of food. The children were vocal in their disappointment when they found out that the

learning center was closed. And their appreciation for Stacey's involvement in their educational experience was clear when they invited her to events at school like graduation ceremonies.

In the summertime, the resident services coordinators close the learning centers and run more comprehensive programs for the children. One of the most successful programs is called Readers in the Heights, which is designed to help students avoid what the service coordinators call the summer slide. The summer slide is a reference to the idea that students' reading levels drop – or slide – between the end of one academic year and the start of a new one, meaning that the students are not ready to learn new material when they return to school in the fall. The resident services coordinators did not discover the summer slide phenomenon; it is a well-researched finding known to produce inequality in educational attainment. Readers in the Heights was conceived as a program that would maintain reading levels during the summer, and it required support from many organizations throughout San Diego. In an interview, Stacey explained how this program worked during the prior summer:

Kevin: What are the resident services that you provide?

Stacey: The after-school [learning] center. That includes tutoring, and STEM projects, and physical outdoor activities. We try to get the kids to be involved in a little bit of what is going on in the community, so we do little field trips here and there. We try to work with other organizations to put a program together—Readers in the Heights was one of them. That's one that we did this summer in collaboration

with *United Way* and *Heaven's Window*. It was a big collaboration with other non-profits just to get our residents to have a reading program.

Kevin: Could you tell me how that worked? What [were] the day-to-day events?

Stacey: The day-to-day—kids were going to read with—I believe it was *Everyone Is a Reader*, or *Words Alive*. It could be from one-on-one reading or group reading. Most of the other kids would be outside playing outdoor activities with me or Ms. Maureen while the others read, and then we rotate. Not all kids wanted to do outdoor activities so we have an art station. They had kind of three rotations until every single kid was read to and got evaluated, or whatever they need to do with *Readers Alive*, *Everyone is a Reader*, or—I keep forgetting the name. After that they have snack, and then we do a science activity or we walk to the library. It depends on the day. Each day is different. We did a walk to the library, we had a field trip where they visited the San Diego Police Department, or they have a little concert here at the library, so they got to see that. So, it depends.

Kevin: Okay. You mention that a bunch of organizations contribute to Readers in the Heights. What did each organization contribute?

Stacey: Well, they contributed the volunteers. I don't remember, but I believe it was the *San Diego Workforce Partnership* who was the one who contributed the volunteers to us. *Everyone a Reader* and *Words Alive* were the ones who actually volunteered and read to all of the kids. *United Way* definitely organized the whole thing. So *Housing the Heights* was on site, but *United Way*, they provided any logistics that we needed like bags for books or something like that. They provided

for us the supplies for the activities. *Heaven's Window* provided snacks and whole health food for the kids. That was a big one, was the whole health food.

Stacey explained that the Readers in the Heights program was successful at maintaining the children's reading levels over the summer. The children who participated in the program had their reading levels tested before and after the program. The results showed no improvements in reading level but no evidence of a summer slide either. Readers in the Heights has become an annual program because of its success at maintaining children's reading levels.

The resident services coordinators similarly provide resources to adults living at the assisted housing complexes. All of the coordinators describe their jobs as providing resources that residents need, which often requires them to do research about where those resources can be attained. Linda describes the services she provides to the adults as very diverse, and says that she has had some success in helping residents accomplish goals such as finding employment.

Kevin: So, could you tell me a little bit about your work with *Housing the Heights*?

Linda: It's pretty diverse. So, it can be just [a resident] having a question and if I don't know the answer, I always say, I don't know the answer, I'll help you figure it out, or we'll find someone. So a lot of it can be referral. Okay, so one aspect that would be more specific I guess is the career development one, job development one. So I can help you with your resume. We work on filling out job applications.

Sometimes the computer, with everything being online now, it's getting familiar with like, creating an account, saving your password, just going through that whole process. And then, just conducting a job search and tracking all that. So that's one of the components. And then, have some mock interview questions I'll go through. It can be casual, and then the resident can also choose to, like as they feel comfortable, come more formally, and I can actually give them a more formal interview. And then, giving them job leads when I hear of anything. So that's one component. And then the other component is I read paperwork, maybe from CalFresh (SNAP), or I mean, the county for food stamps or like, CalWORKS (TANF) or anything. Or sometimes from the schools.

Kevin: Do you think you could give me a couple examples of something that's worked out when a resident came to you maybe for help finding a job? Have you had any success matching any residents up with employment?

Linda: I did help a gentleman with his cover letter recently. His resume was done. I don't think we updated it. No, we didn't. We worked on his cover letter. He wanted it simplified because he had kinda written everything he'd done on there, and we customized it more for the position. And the next day he came and was in his suit still, and was like, I got the job! So, I kind of coached him. It was kinda nice, because I feel like he left a lot more confident. He was with me for maybe an hour and a half or something. Because he really wanted to feel comfortable with his cover letter. And I remember I was like, I hope I helped him. He just left feeling a lot better. His cover letter was cleaner, his message to the employer was cleaner,

more clear. And then, also, we talked about some samples of using the keywords that the employer might use.

Kevin: So, you kinda practiced...?

Linda: Yes. Because he brought the—I asked him to bring the job description. I thought that that's so telling of what the employer needs and values and what their focus is. So, it was really good for us to go over that together for him to have that practice. So, yeah, he felt really good when he left, and the next day, he felt great, because he got the job. So that was cool. And that was pretty recent, like two weeks ago, three weeks ago.

Linda's assistance with the cover letter and her help with the mock interviews are examples of how the resident services coordinators translate their own experiences and education into services that residents can benefit from. All of the service coordinators came to *Housing the Heights* with a college degree and relevant work experience, which made them more effective resource brokers. In some cases, the coordinators do not just rely on their experiences but also their social networks to connect the residents to resources. For example, this is one way in which Linda provides residents with information about job opportunities, and it might also be one way in which middle class social networks are bridged into high poverty neighborhoods (cf. Wilson 1987).

Linda and the other resident services coordinators provide a variety of specialized services to the senior residents. Alexa, one of the lead coordinators, said that she has been able to help the senior residents access medical clinics in downtown San Diego and Chula

Vista. She says that the clinics provide the seniors with “medical, dental, physical therapy, day programs, [and] outings.” It also provides them with free door-to-door transportation. The coordinators alleviate many of the problems that senior residents face when they live alone and have few family members taking care of them. For example, they deliver groceries and premade meals to the seniors on a bimonthly basis. The meals come from a variety of organizations including *Feeding America*, *Meals on Wheels*, local supermarkets, and a culinary arts program. The delivery process is especially important because it provides the coordinators with an opportunity to visit the seniors’ apartments and identify any problems or unmet needs. The problems might include bed bugs, conflicts between neighbors, or other unsafe living conditions. Unmet needs might be identified when a resident is not eating enough or having trouble getting to medical appointments.

Resident services coordinators play important roles in improving the wellbeing and life chances of the residents, and the services they provide are intended to meet the needs of residents at different stages of the life course. For young children, their services are largely centered on education, career exploration, and exposure to places, institutions, and activities. For teens, the service coordinators focus on employment, resume building, and access to higher education. The services provided to the adults are the most varied and contingent on a resident’s age, time lived in the U.S., and family structure.

RESIDENT SERVICES AND RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY

All of the resident services coordinators I interviewed explained that their ability to provide services relies on trust. As the coordinators get to know the residents, the residents are increasingly comfortable approaching the coordinators for help. The key to building trust, the coordinators tell me, is seeing or interacting with the residents on a daily or regular basis at the housing complexes. Stacey provides a point of comparison to illustrate the role of place in building trust.

Stacey says that in addition to working with *Housing the Heights*, she also does outreach with residents who have housing choice vouchers and live in private apartment complexes throughout San Diego. Stacey has had difficulty building trust with voucher-households because she only sees them during scheduled appointments – there are no unplanned interactions and there is not frequent contact. In contrast, Stacey is very close to many of the households living at the Garden Homes. She sees them when entering the complex, at the learning center, at the property manager’s office, during food distributions, and when services and events are offered onsite. The trust that coordinators build with the residents, coupled with the services they provide, may keep residents living in assisted housing over long periods of time. Linda explains:

Kevin: Would you say that [the resources] provide an incentive for some residents to stay put [in assisted housing]?

Linda: I think so. I think that residents feel supported, and they feel—like, some of them don’t use other food pantries, even though I give them the list. And I think if they

had a need, they would. Like, if they were like, oh I have no more food, and I need to—like they would actually go do that. But I think, with what we offer, they're comfortable and it's also very convenient. And then I think there's also trust. So, you're not going through different staff members, you're not going through different paperwork. Paperwork can be a little daunting, like whoa, what am I signing? And then doing the process. Like, okay, I'm giving you an hour of my time to do this, and then how much am I getting out of it? So, just kind of streamlining that.

And so, you spend some time with me doing some paperwork because we have to, but then we go into your needs. And it's the same staff person, you don't have to tell me your story over and over again, which can be hard. And I already know your needs so maybe I'll be proactive and find something for you, even though you aren't coming to see me. Like, I can say, hey, you mentioned this three months ago, and I now I just found this like research that I came across. So it's kinda nice to have that kind of continuum or that consistency, what's it called? Just giving that closure, and then having the same staff member trusting them. So I do think that if residents are ready to move on, and they are financially ready, they're gonna do it, because they feel empowered. But, I do think that it gives them a sense of being supported and feeling more confident.

Kevin: And when do residents usually reach that point where they think they're ready to move out and move somewhere else?

Linda: I know that sometimes it comes—I don't know if that's even their choice, but sometimes it's because they are over-income. So there's an income cap with affordable housing and with tax credits and whatnot, so sometimes I think—so residents get a good amount of time to look for housing. But I know that they get a little nervous because they've been at the [assisted] properties for maybe x amount of years, and their children have grown up there. And so, moving on for them can feel emotionally draining, and it just feels uncertain because of how comfortable they were at the property. But it's just, I think, finding the right property for them, making sure they still have the services they need, and the supports they need.

Linda suggests that one of the barriers residents may face in accessing resources is trust. Trust is important for several reasons. In order to receive resources, residents may be required to formalize their relationship with an organization even if *Housing the Heights* delivers the resources on behalf of the organization. Formalizing a relationship with an organization can involve divulging personal information, signing papers, and making a photo-I.D.

For example, in the time I spent at the housing complexes, I watched the bimonthly food distribution become a formal service where residents had to register to receive groceries. The purpose of having residents register for the food distribution was to collect information that could be used to improve the service and to estimate the program's benefits. It was also an attempt to organize food distributions throughout City

Heights so that once residents were registered they could visit all of the food distributions throughout the neighborhood. However, some residents have reasons for being cautious about providing confidential information to unknown organizations. The resident services coordinators are important brokers in these situations. For example, they may find ways to register residents for the food distribution that require less personal information than what is typically required. In other cases, the coordinators may help residents access resources by ensuring them that a particular organization is trustworthy.

Linda also suggests that residents are not necessarily stuck in assisted housing. Some may wish to remain in assisted housing even as their incomes exceed the limits that HUD places on housing funded by the LIHTC. Stacey similarly tells me that residents do not perceive themselves as stuck in assisted housing; instead, some want to stay put as long as it takes to achieve certain goals. I asked Stacey if she thought that residents felt as though they were stuck in assisted housing:

Kevin: Do they [the residents] ever express that feeling, of feeling stuck?

Stacey: No. I have residents who like where they are and they don't want to leave. I have those. I have residents who also want to find something better once this certain phase of their life is over, once their kids are grown so they can afford a different place. You know, three kids and you're a single mom, other places might be too pricy.

Kevin: Are those the people who generally sort of stay put?

Stacey: They stay and they wait until their kids either enter college or they're old enough—so they can feel like less responsibility.

Kevin: Why do you think they don't move while their kids are in school?

Stacey: It's unstable. Plus, this [assisted housing] is cheap for them. And the other thing is, you don't really want to mess with school grades or anything. I think the school is like—the parents, they want to make sure their kid is getting the best education, or at least doing well in school; because if they switch schools it might be too hard, or they're doing a different subject, or just something that the kid might get lost. And then residents that are in City Heights, a lot of them go to either Monroe, Clark, [or] Wilson and then they go to Hoover [High School]. So, they have a program, they stay at the school, they get automatic entrance into SDSU (San Diego State University). So, that's why they don't want to move, because they don't want to move out of the program in school.

Kevin: What that program does is, if they finish [high] school, they can go to SDSU, basically?

Stacey: Uh-huh. They have to keep a certain GPA.

Kevin: Okay. But, they're guaranteed a spot [at SDSU]?

Stacey: Uh-huh. Guaranteed a spot.

Stacey suggests that having a stable home is particularly crucial to households with children, and that having a stable home might be necessary for taking advantage of resources at local schools that help children gain entrance to college. In other words, the stability provided by assisted housing may increase access to opportunities that are

present in high poverty contexts but that residents may not be able to access if they move frequently.

CONCLUSION

On the one hand, the findings are consistent with existing theories of residential mobility. In assisted housing owned by *Housing the Heights*, residents' mobility decisions are shaped by access to resources and opportunities. The coordinators' observations and experiences suggest that residents are motivated to live in places where their access to resources and opportunities is greatest. For the residents they interact with, this means staying put in assisted housing rather than moving to a new neighborhood. Even residents whose incomes exceed the restrictions placed on assisted housing may be concerned that moving out entails a loss of resources and less access to the resident services coordinators.

On the other hand, the findings suggest that existing theories of residential mobility overlook the ways in which resources exist in a network of people and organizations that extend beyond the boundaries of a single neighborhood. For residents living in assisted housing, their access to educational programs, employment preparation services, health clinics, and material goods are not circumscribed by the boundaries of City Heights. Instead, their access to these resources is contingent on housing tenure – on renting a home from *Housing the Heights*. The resident services coordinators at *Housing the Heights* extend access to resources provided by organizations throughout San Diego such as *United Way*, *Heaven's Window*, *San Diego Workforce Partnership*, *Everyone a*

Reader, and *Words Alive*. Their effectiveness as resources brokers hinges on the trust they build with residents. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that trust may be a place-based resource that builds over the course of planned and unplanned interactions. Trust between residents and the coordinators may provide an additional reason for residents to stay in assisted housing.

One of the limitations of this chapter is that I rely heavily on the resident services coordinators to explain how the programs and activities at *Housing the Heights* operate, and what their effects on the residents might be. It is possible that the responses provided in the interviews overestimate the beneficial effects of the services. In other words, Linda, Stacey, and Alexa might be interested in promoting the benefits of their work. I tried to minimize this bias by including my own observations as evidence. I observed the resident services coordinators provide many of the services they mentioned during the interviews. However, I could not easily observe the impacts of all the services. For example, it is difficult to know how much of Linda's coaching helped the gentleman she described succeed during his job interview. It is also unclear whether residents would have sought out resources from other organizations had they not had access to the staff at *Housing the Heights*. Nonetheless, this chapter makes clear that *Housing the Heights* brokers access to resources and opportunities from outside the neighborhood.

In the next chapter, I review the findings from this dissertation and provide several conclusions. I show how my findings diverge from the existing research on residential mobility and assisted housing, and I discuss the implications. Specifically, I explain how residential stability might affect assisted renters living in cities and

neighborhoods experiencing rapid change, in particular, neighborhoods experiencing a degree of socioeconomic ascent.

CHAPTER 7: RECONSIDERING RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY AND ASSISTED HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, I provided several reasons why low-income renters may stay in assisted housing even if it is located in a high poverty context: assisted housing can provide subsidies that limit rent burdens, and a move into assisted housing can solve any number of problems that a household may be confronting such as fear of violence, an unscrupulous landlord, or a deteriorating apartment. I have also outlined three mechanisms through which assisted housing – and nonprofit housing providers in particular – may increase a household’s access to resources and opportunities: through the direct provision of material goods, information, or services; by brokering access to material goods, information, or services; and by strengthening social norms that may increase reciprocity, trust, or collective action among neighbors. Finally, I provided evidence that the effect of the built environment on social norms is likely overstated in prior research on assisted housing. In sum, these findings suggest that assisted housing can increase housing stability and slow the pace at which low-income households make residential moves.

The evidence provided in the previous chapters break from prior work on residential mobility and assisted housing in at least one crucial way. They suggest that moving out of assisted housing and into a lower poverty neighborhood may not be the only way in which assisted renters become socially mobile. For some assisted renters, stability might be more likely to facilitate social mobility than a move into a more affluent neighborhood. On the one hand, social mobility could result from the resources

and opportunities provided at assisted housing, as described in previous chapters. On the other hand, it could result from neighborhood change that assisted renters experience as they stay put in the same home over an extended period of time. Residents who live in the same home over a long period of time might experience a change in neighborhood context because neighborhoods are not static – they undergo cultural, economic, and social changes. To the extent that neighborhoods with assisted housing experience a degree of socioeconomic ascent, residents might experience a degree of social mobility without having to leave assisted housing.

In the sections below, I build on the findings from previous chapters and discuss how we should reconsider the relationship between residential mobility and social mobility. I begin with an overview of some of the most rigorous attempts to study the effects of residential mobility and housing assistance on social mobility. I then argue that assisted renters may experience a degree of social mobility when their neighborhoods experience declines in poverty or concentrated disadvantage more broadly. There are several ways in which concentrated disadvantage may attenuate in urban neighborhoods. These include increases in employment, immigration, investment, and gentrification. I describe each of these sources of neighborhood change and how they might result in greater social mobility for assisted renters. Finally, I describe the implications of this dissertation for theories of residential mobility and for assisted housing policy.

MOVING TO OPPORTUNITY

The Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program and the Moving to Opportunity demonstration were federally funded efforts to mitigate contextual poverty and, in turn, enhance labor market outcomes, improve the educational attainment of children, and limit exposure to crime and violence. Both efforts sought to help residents in assisted housing move to more advantaged neighborhoods where they would have greater access to resources and opportunities. One of the main findings from evaluations of these programs is that the effects of moving on one's life chances are heterogeneous. This is a crucial finding because it suggests that mobility is not an effective way to alleviate poverty and promote social mobility for all assisted renters. Despite the variation in outcomes, assisted housing policy remains, in large part, focused on moving low-income residents to more affluent neighborhoods. I describe these mobility programs and their outcomes below.

In 1966, the American Civil Liberties Union and Dorothy Gautreaux, a public housing tenant and activist, sued the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) in federal court for violating the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Gautreaux et al. alleged that the CHA discriminated in the process of selecting sites for public housing complexes. Between 1954 and 1966, the CHA placed all but 63 of the 10,256 public housing units it constructed in segregated black neighborhoods (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). In 1969, a federal judge ruled against the CHA, arguing that nothing other than racial discrimination could explain the disproportionate number of public housing units placed in black neighborhoods (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). This ruling prevented the

CHA from further segregating new units of public housing. Then, in 1976, Gautreaux et al. won a case in the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that HUD was liable for the CHA's discriminatory practices and was responsible for alleviating racial discrimination in Chicago's public housing program. One of the measures intended to address discrimination was the Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program.

The Gautreaux program was administered by a nonprofit organization in Chicago called the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. In the early 1980s, this nonprofit helped families in public housing – and those waitlisted for public housing – move to less-segregated and less-poor neighborhoods in Chicago and its suburbs. Families participating in the Gautreaux program were assigned to a working class or middle class suburban neighborhood that was at least 70 percent white (Rosenbaum 1995), or they were assigned to a neighborhood within Chicago that showed signs of economic development, regardless of its racial composition. Although residents were not able to choose whether they moved to a suburban or city location, 95 percent of participants agreed to move to the first apartments they were assigned (Popkin et al. 1993). To help residents move to new neighborhoods, they were provided with housing vouchers, apartments where landlords were willing to participate in the program, and counseling about the costs and benefits of moving (Rosenbaum 1995).

Initially, the impact evaluations of the Gautreaux program showed large benefits accruing to families that relocated to the suburbs. Adults who moved to the suburbs were more likely to be employed (Rosebaum 1995), and children in the suburbs were more likely to be enrolled in high school or a 4-year college; the children were also more likely

to be employed (Kaufman and Rosenbaum 1992). In more recent years, scholars questioned the initial findings from impact evaluations because not all families in the program were surveyed pre- and post- move (Popkin et al. 2000a), families were not necessarily randomly assigned to neighborhoods (they could refuse the first two offers of an apartment (Popkin et al. 1993)), 80 percent of families enrolled in the program did not ultimately move to a new apartment or “lease up” (Popkin et al. 2000a), and the Gautreaux program disqualified certain families from participation such as those with more than four children and those with a history of late rent payments (Mendenhall, DeLuca, and Duncan 2006). Any or all of these qualities of the Gautreaux program’s design could have potentially biased the findings from the evaluations. Nonetheless, subsequent efforts to address the methodological shortcomings of the initial impact evaluations continued to find benefits in moving to integrated and lower poverty neighborhoods, especially with regard to employment (Mendenhall et al. 2006) and mortality (Votruba and Kling 2009). The Gauteaux program seemed to suggest that, for black residents living in Chicago’s public housing in the 1980s, moving to an integrated neighborhood in the suburbs might be a pathway towards greater wellbeing and social mobility.

The findings from the Gautreaux program inspired a much larger study of the effects of housing assistance and residential mobility: the Moving to Opportunity demonstration (MTO). The MTO was a randomized control trial that enrolled nearly 4,600 families living in project-based assisted housing (both public and private) in New York City, Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, and Los Angeles between 1994 and 1998 (Orr et

al. 2003). These participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups. The experimental group was offered a voucher that would subsidize their rent in a neighborhood with a poverty rate below 10 percent as well as advice and counseling for finding a new home. A second group was given Section 8 vouchers but no counseling and no mandate on where the vouchers could be used. The control group was not given vouchers or counseling and remained in project-based assisted housing. Compared to Gautreaux, the MTO demonstration was different because it had a control group of non-movers and because the racial composition of destination neighborhoods was not taken into account in the program's design. One way to interpret the differences between the two programs is to view the MTO as a test of the effects of housing assistance on social mobility and the Gautreaux program as a test of neighborhood effects on social mobility.

The short-term and medium-term evaluations of the MTO demonstration revealed mixed results. Families in the experimental group that moved reported greater safety and satisfaction with their home and neighborhood, but there were no clear effects on employment, education, or economic self-sufficiency (Briggs et al. 2010; Orr et al 2003). There were improvements in adult mental health, and significant declines in risky behaviors among girls but an increase in risky behaviors among boys (Briggs et al. 2010). These findings suggested that the effects of tenant-based housing assistance (i.e. vouchers) on social mobility might be limited. There was also some evidence that the effects of moving to more affluent neighborhoods on education might vary by city, with positive effects for movers in Chicago and Baltimore – where concentrated poverty and segregation were most intense – but no significant effects observed in New York, Boston,

or Los Angeles (Sharkey 2013:147). These findings suggested that the effects of increased residential mobility on social mobility were smaller than anticipated and heterogeneous across cities.

The most recent set of evaluations that follow MTO participants over the longest period of time show that neighborhoods have a positive effect on children's future earnings and college attendance, suggesting that vouchers might help children become socially mobile. Chetty, Hendren, and Katz (2016) find that, on average, children in the experimental group who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods earned 31 percent more each year as young adults than children in the control group. The benefits of moving to a low-poverty neighborhood were only observed for children who moved before age 13. Moreover, children who spent the longest periods of time in low-poverty contexts experienced the greatest economic benefits. Children who moved after turning 13 fared worse over the long run than those in the control group who stayed in assisted housing. These results demonstrate the contingency of neighborhood effects and are consistent with previous studies of the MTO. Just as prior research showed that the effects of moving to a lower poverty neighborhood vary by gender and city, Chetty et al. (2016) show that the effects of moving to a more affluent neighborhood vary by age and length of exposure to a particular neighborhood context.

Taken together, studies of the Gautreaux program and the MTO suggest that housing assistance and residential mobility can promote social mobility in some cases but not others. In other words, they suggest that residential mobility is not always equivalent to social mobility (cf. Massey and Mullan 1984). Therefore, the relationship between

residential mobility and social mobility needs to be reexamined. One way to do this is by including a more nuanced understanding of how residential stability shapes the lives of renters in assisted housing. In the previous chapters, I argued that residents improve their wellbeing and life chances by staying in assisted housing. Assisted housing might improve the wellbeing of residents by strengthening social norms, and it might improve their life chances by providing satisfactory housing and increased access to resources and opportunities. In the sections below, I consider an additional implication of the stability provided by assisted housing: I consider how low-income renters might experience contextual mobility – or how they might gain access to a more affluent neighborhood – without moving.

CONTEXTUAL MOBILITY WITHOUT MOVING

Under what conditions might staying in assisted housing lead to contextual mobility? If assisted housing slows the pace at which low-income renters move, then it necessarily increases the length of time that they live in the same neighborhood. Scholars often conclude that when low-income renters stay in high poverty neighborhoods over long periods of time they are stuck in a context that negatively affects their wellbeing and life chances (e.g. Massey and Denton 1993; Sharkey 2013; Wilson 1986). Although project-based assisted housing is typically located in high poverty and disinvested neighborhoods, this trend may be changing and some neighborhoods with assisted housing may be experiencing reinvestment and reductions in poverty and crime. In other words, assisted renters may be able to gain access to a more structurally advantageous

neighborhood without leaving assisted housing. These changes in a neighborhood's structural qualities may increase individual earnings, opportunities for employment, and educational outcomes. There are at least four sources of neighborhood change that might allow assisted renters to experience a degree of contextual mobility without moving.

First, assisted renters might experience contextual mobility when their neighborhoods gentrify. Consider Freeman's (2006) study of gentrification in New York City's Harlem and Clinton Hill. He finds that, despite dissatisfying changes to the neighborhood's social norms, low-income and longtime residents appreciate the improvements to local services and amenities. Similarly, Dastrup and Ellen (2016) compare labor market outcomes between New York's public housing residents living in low-income neighborhoods with those living in high-income neighborhoods. They find that public housing residents living in high-income contexts are more likely to be employed, and they estimate that those in high-income contexts earn \$3,500 more each year, on average. Their qualitative evidence suggests that many public housing residents whose neighborhoods have become substantially wealthier in recent years appreciate the economic benefits but lament the cultural changes to their neighborhoods. If housing assistance insulates residents from the displacement that might accompany gentrification (Wyly et al. 2010), then assisted renters might be able to take advantage of high quality jobs, services, or amenities. Moreover, if gentrification is associated with decreases in crime and violence (Dastrup and Ellen 2016), then a safer living environment might encourage assisted renters to stay put. Indeed, a lack of safety was the single most

common reason that public housing residents volunteered to participate in the MTO demonstration (Orr et al. 2003).

Second, residents in assisted housing might experience contextual mobility when their neighborhoods become less poor or experience a measure of socioeconomic ascent. This can occur even when neighborhoods do not gentrify (Owens 2012). Sharkey (2013) analyzed the 10 percent of U.S. neighborhoods that experienced the largest declines in concentrated disadvantage in each decade between 1970 and 2000. He finds that, on average, neighborhoods where concentrated disadvantage declined most were *not* those experiencing an influx of white newcomers, as we might expect in the case of gentrification. Instead, he finds that increases in employment and influxes of *immigrants* led to decreases in concentrated disadvantage, and he estimates that declines in concentrated disadvantage resulted in increases in both family income and individual earnings. Sharkey's evidence suggests that endogenous economic development and increased ethnic diversity is an alternative means through which concentrated disadvantage declines. If this is true, then residents living in project-based assisted housing might experience a degree of social mobility when neighborhood change improves their outcomes in the labor market.

Third, assisted renters may have more opportunities that lead to social mobility when they live in neighborhoods that are not socially isolated or violent. Fewer units of assisted housing are being isolated in today's most disadvantaged neighborhoods compared with years past (see Schwartz 2015). For example, after WWII public housing in Chicago was disproportionately built in high poverty and minority neighborhoods,

which contributed to the creation of large areas of concentrated poverty (Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993). However, the public housing built in Chicago in the 2000s has been placed in mixed-income developments, resulting in less segregation and isolation. Public housing residents in these mixed-income developments report feeling safer than they did when they were living in traditional public housing complexes (Chaskin and Joseph 2015). Researchers find that feeling unsafe in one's home can result in an unplanned move (Rosen 2017), and that unplanned moves diminish performance at work and can lead to a job loss (Desmond and Gershenson 2016). Similarly, children who live in unsafe or violent neighborhoods tend to learn less at school compared with their peers living in safer neighborhoods (Burdick-Will 2016). Increases in safety that result from placing assisted housing in mixed-income developments and in less disadvantaged neighborhoods might therefore improve outcomes at work or school.

Fourth, there is evidence that neighborhood-based nonprofit organizations, such as those that administer assisted housing, may facilitate social mobility by mitigating neighborhood crime and increasing local home values. In a study of 129 counties, Diamond and McQuade (forthcoming) find that home prices appreciate in low-income neighborhoods where LIHTC developments are constructed because they are an amenity or a sign of reinvestment. The authors also find that property and violent crimes drop in low-income neighborhoods when LIHTC developments are built. Nonprofit organizations that own and manage LIHTC developments may engage in community building activities that have been shown to decrease crime. For example, Sharkey, Torrats-Espinosa, and Takyar (2017:1234) find that “the addition of 10 community

nonprofits per 100,000 residents leads to a 9 percent decline in the murder rate, a 6 percent decline in the violent crime rate, and a 4 percent decline in the property crime rate.” The authors describe these nonprofit organizations as involved in multiple activities that may address crime and build stronger communities including substance abuse prevention, job training, workforce development, neighborhood development, and social and educational activities for children. Nonprofit housing providers such as *Housing the Heights* engage in many of these activities and may be significant sources of neighborhood change.

Assisted residents might experience contextual mobility when they stay put in a neighborhood that is gentrifying, experiencing endogenous economic development, receiving an influx of immigrants, receiving investments in the form of LITHCs, or when it has nonprofit organizations engaging in a variety of community development activities. Prior research on contextual mobility suggests that moving is necessary for accessing a neighborhood that promotes social mobility. However, this is unlikely true for assisted renters because many of today’s urban neighborhoods that have long hosted assisted housing are changing. Most project-based assisted housing in the U.S. was built after WWII at a time when central city neighborhoods in U.S. cities were experiencing rises in concentrated poverty, disinvestment, and crime. In many cities these trends seem to be reversing. Concentrated poverty in central cities has been spatially redistributed to smaller pockets of the city, and, to a lesser extent, redistributed to the suburbs (Jargowsky 2013). Violent crime in most U.S. cities has dropped significantly since the early 1990s with a few exceptions (Sharkey 2018). Investment funds, high-tech industries, and

wealthy people are concentrating in some of the country's large cities (Florida 2017). These changes suggest that renters living in today's assisted housing complexes may have a much different experience than those who lived in assisted housing during the second half of the 20th century.

RECONSIDERING SPATIAL ASSIMILATION

I began this dissertation by describing the spatial assimilation model, the predominant model used to explain the relationship between residential mobility and social mobility. The spatial assimilation model suggests that social mobility is necessarily a spatial process because access to resources and opportunities are largely bounded by neighborhoods (Massey and Mullan 1984). This model has been revised numerous times to account for its shortcomings. For example, scholars have adjusted the model to account for discrimination in housing markets (Logan and Alba 1993), constraints in housing markets that are class-specific (e.g. Rosen 2017; Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2012), and to account for residents' imperfect information about neighborhoods and housing opportunities (Krysan and Crowder 2017). However, all revisions of spatial assimilation theory similarly assume that moving to more affluent neighborhoods is essential for social mobility. The evidence I have provided suggests that this assumption may not always hold, and that resources and opportunities are not necessarily bounded by neighborhoods. One reason to expect variation in the availability of resources and opportunities within neighborhoods is that they can be networked through housing.

The findings from this dissertation suggest that public policies can promote social mobility without a sole emphasis on moving residents to more affluent contexts. The alternative to mobility programs is to design public policies that focus on investing in assisted housing and community-serving nonprofits in low-income neighborhoods. Currently, the largest source of housing investment in low-income neighborhoods comes from the LIHTC. Other sources of housing investment in low-income neighborhoods, such as public housing, are declining. Between 1997 and 2012, the country's stock of public housing decreased by more than 20 percent, and as of 2010, it required \$21 billion in capital improvements that federal expenditures for public housing modernization were unable to meet (Schwartz 2015). There are few sources of investment for private assisted housing aside from the LIHTC. As of 2012, there were 1.4 million units of private assisted housing not funded by the LIHTC (Schwartz 2015). These are units that were subsidized through programs such as Section 221(d)3, Section 236, and Section 8 New Construction and Substantial Rehabilitation – none of which have contributed to the creation of new units since the 1980s (Schwartz 2015).

The funds from LIHTCs are an essential source of neighborhood reinvestment but are also temporary and inefficient. Unlike public housing, which remains subsidized in perpetuity, housing funded by LIHTC only remains subsidized for 15 years unless it receives a new round of tax credits (Schwartz 2015). LIHTCs are inefficient because they are not direct subsidies and much of the forgone tax revenues are allocated to transaction costs and investors' profits. As a result, neighborhoods receive fewer units of assisted housing and residents in housing funded by LIHTCs receive shallower subsidies than

they might otherwise receive. Perhaps a more efficient place-based strategy would be for Congress to allocate funds to state housing finance agencies that could directly subsidize assisted housing administered by neighborhood-based nonprofit organizations. By eliminating the processes that nonprofit housing developers must go through to turn tax credits into capital, less money would be lost on transaction costs and investors would be unnecessary. The savings could be used to build more units of assisted housing, to more deeply subsidize rents, or to retain the affordability of assisted housing for more than 15 years. The program might also seek to more carefully target neighborhood-based nonprofit organizations with deep roots in their communities. Targeting nonprofits that are responsive to their communities and have long histories of serving their communities would be essential for more efficiently allocating subsidies. These neighborhood-based organizations are likely some of the best ways for delivering housing assistance and promoting the wellbeing and life chances of local residents.

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