

POVERTY DECONCENTRATION, HOUSING MOBILITY, AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF RECENT US HOUSING POLICY: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
OF THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Poverty Deconcentration, Housing Mobility, and the Construction of Recent US Housing Policy: A Discourse Analysis of the Policy-Making Process

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This study seeks to answer how and why poverty deconcentration and housing mobility have dominated recent housing policy discourse and produced the Moving to Opportunity demonstration program as HUD's primary housing initiative in the 1990-2000 period. Through the examination of the policy discourse imbuing MTO I attempt to elucidate power relations and the role of elites in cultivating the housing mobility discourse. In addition, I demonstrate the hegemonic processes through which the dominant discourse proliferates.

Employing a postpositivist approach to policy analysis, I examine the process of policy deliberation to expose the deliberative and discursive mechanisms through which MTO was engendered. Towards this end, the study explores the process, nature, and dynamics of policy deliberations at HUD to understand how federal policies are formed particularly with regard to embedded power dynamics and democratic processes. By illustrating the discursive practices that produced MTO, I uncover the politics, assumptions and frames through which HUD views poverty concentration, housing mobility, and voucher recipients.

By depicting the evolutionary (genealogical) stages of MTO through a frame-critical discourse analysis, this study delimits the empirical findings produced through the demonstration. To that end I employ Fischer's logic of policy evaluation and elucidate four interrelated discourses, which "extend from concrete empirical questions pertinent to a particular situation up to the abstract normative issues concerning a way of life" (1995:18). Accordingly, I produce an overall analysis of MTO, and offer suggestions on how the demonstration could have been structured or delineated differently, and what alternative assumptions or frames might have led to different analytical results.

Preface

My research interests in poverty and social inequality, as well as systems of governance developed after I immigrated to the United States from Germany at age 22. I was accustomed to a society where “big” government was apparent, and taking a prominent role in shaping various facets of political, economic, and social life. Growing up in a public housing (government subsidized) high-rise in a densely populated, post-industrial city in the Ruhr valley with my father who was a teacher and my mother who was a housewife did *not* make me feel deprived or lacking opportunity. I lived among people and had friends of different socio-economic statuses, and attended neighborhood schools that prepared me for entering University. Where I lived did *not* determine the quality of education I received.

When I moved to the United States, I confronted many challenges associated with poverty such as the search for decent, affordable housing and childcare, and securing employment that would lead to economic self-sufficiency (not merely complementing public assistance). The economic hardship I faced while working on my undergraduate education cultivated my research interests, because my direct experiences heightened my sensitivity and engendered compassion for others facing the hardship of poverty. It also amplified my awareness of the deep socioeconomic (and racial) divides in U.S. society. How could the “land of opportunity”, one of the wealthiest nations in the world, extolled as a model of a democracy, opportunity and pluralism, condone systemic inequalities along social class and racial lines via de-facto socioeconomic segregation?

Some of the answers became more apparent to me when I prepared to teach an undergraduate course entitled *The History of Ghettos and American Slums*. I got a better sense of the deeply rooted systemic problems relating to a hyper-capitalist economic system -- a system anchored in unequal resource distribution and proliferated through labor exploitation with grave social, political and economic ramifications. After teaching this course for several semesters I decided to pursue a Ph.D. to learn how I could affect policies that would address social inequalities and foster equitable solutions to systemic problems.

Coincidentally, a team of researchers at Rutgers Camden invited me to participate in research involving the MTO data set. The MTO, so I initially thought, could offer one solution to some of the problems associated with segregation (such as the lack of access to affordable, quality housing and good education), and ameliorate the dearth of policies aimed at improving the lives of poor people and their social conditions. While I began analyzing the data, testing various hypotheses on the effectiveness of this large scale housing mobility demonstration, the faculty in my Ph.D. program evoked my curiosity in critical social theory and postmodern approaches. I began to question the data, and the seed for my dissertation was planted.

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Chapter 1

A discourse analysis¹ of the policymaking process

Introduction

In 1992, Congress authorized a major randomized housing mobility experiment – the MTO demonstration program which was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The MTO was designed to test the effects of neighborhood characteristics across a range of outcomes (i.e., education, employment, and health) on 4,600 participating low-income families chosen between 1994 and 1998. The MTO adults and children selected to participate lived in public housing or private assisted housing projects in concentrated poverty neighborhoods in the five demonstration sites (Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, New York and Los Angeles), which contained the nation’s largest public housing authorities. Participants were randomly assigned to either experimental, Section 8, or control groups, and the experimental group received mobility counseling through non-profit organizations. Families from all three groups were tracked by HUD in order to measure mid- and long-term outcomes. The MTO data collected on participants included in-depth interviews, neighborhood observation, surveys, achievement testing of youth and children, social security information, food stamp data, unemployment insurance data, school data, census data, and adult and juvenile arrest and criminal disposition data (Orr et al., 2003). While the MTO was viewed by many housing policy makers and analysts as a unique opportunity

¹ Discourse analysis in general refers to the method of analyzing written and/or spoken language. In this dissertation I use discourse analysis as a method to analyze the textual record (MTO documents) to provide insights on the genesis and development of MTO.

to test the effects of low- versus high-poverty neighborhoods on public housing assistance recipients, it also meant to enhance the Section 8 program, specifically, through identifying pathways to helping voucher recipients find housing in non-poor neighborhoods. As such, the MTO signifies the federal housing policy paradigm shift from place-based to people-based housing assistance. To be sure, MTO was not full-fledged national policy, but it was a major social experiment. According to John Goering (2003:128),

MTO was not designed to be the ‘silver bullet’ to end ghetto poverty, nor was it intended to be the only choice available to public housing residents. It was but one of a set of choices that public-housing applicants and residents could and should be offered, including the right to stay in place and the option to move into nonpoor neighborhoods.

The goal of my dissertation is to deconstruct the policy process that produced the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) Demonstration program, a major federal initiative to test housing mobility policy. For more than four decades, poverty deconcentration and housing mobility have increasingly dominated the housing policy discourse, and engendered a shift from place-based to people-based assistance programs. In this dissertation I explore what motivated and enabled the shift away from place-based policies. To do so, I investigate the political discourse that led to the MTO program, the only large-scale, longitudinal, experimental public program that tests the effect of neighborhoods on the quality of life of poor families. My analysis seeks to uncover the frame through which HUD viewed poverty concentration and housing mobility. I examine the deliberative process that informed the MTO and how the limitations of that process constrained the MTO program from attaining better success on certain critical aspects of the life quality of the poor. I hope that my research inspires future

policymakers and analysts to take a more holistic approach to their discipline, one that extends beyond traditional pathways of evaluating and interpreting policy outcomes.

The present era of federal housing mobility policy dawned when Congress passed the Housing Act of 1974, which initiated the Section 8 housing voucher program. The reallocation of place-based housing assistance (public housing) to people-based housing assistance (housing vouchers) manifested a fundamental shift in federal housing policy. In theory, the voucher system was designed to promote housing mobility as it gave low-income residents the option to live in privately owned housing versus public housing. However, its mobility aspect was undermined because most Section 8 units wound up being located in lower-quality neighborhoods of inner-cities and during economic booms, shortages of decent low-cost housing tended to crop up in the metropolitan areas. Thus, despite the assistance of local Public Housing Agencies (PHA's) in identifying Section 8 housing, low-income renters remained concentrated in inner-cities, and undesirable patterns of racial residential segregation continued.

The first large-scale federal housing mobility/desegregation initiative was the Gautreaux Program (1976-1998). This program originated as a result of a lawsuit filed by a low-income tenant against racial residential segregation and enabled thousands of Section 8 voucher holders to move into primarily white neighborhoods. This precipitated many other residential segregation lawsuits over the next several decades, prompting the Federal government to amend the Section 8 voucher system in 1986 to allow voucher portability across metropolitan jurisdictional lines. While originally put forward to overcome racial segregation problems, Section 8 voucher portability was billed under the guise of pushing for poverty deconcentration. Voucher portability was buttressed by

emerging social science research on the adverse effects of living in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poor households. Decades of research showed correlations between urban poverty concentration and adverse neighborhood effects on poor inner-city residents, suggesting that poverty concentration undermined assimilation into the American middle class (i.e. Glasgow, 1980; Glazer, & Moynihan, 1970; Jencks and Mayer, 1990; Kerner Report, 1968; Lewis, 1966; Massey and Denton, 1998; Wilson, 1987). This research informed and validated the Federal government's housing policy reform efforts, and anticipated and corroborated the dominant mobility discourse if it did not instigate it.

Other laws were promulgated to break up concentrated poverty, reflective of the symbiosis between policy and social science. For example, HUD's Reform Act of 1989 designated a certain number of housing vouchers for desegregation purposes in the Headquarters Reserve to facilitate Section 8 mobility to socio-economically and/or racially mixed environments to tap better resources in education, social networks, employment opportunities, and so on. While the main purpose of these policies was to end residential segregation and break up concentrated inner-city poverty, many also served as research vehicles. As discussed below, both the Gautreaux Program (designed as a quasi-experimental research experiment) and the MTO demonstration (and the data sets they produced) were used for scientific research on neighborhood effects of education, employment, and health outcomes on poor residents.

It was for this dual purpose – as housing mobility policy aimed to deconcentrate the poor *and* as a neighborhood effects research vehicle--that HUD conceived the MTO in the early 1990s. The MTO is the largest housing mobility demonstration program and

experimental study to test for neighborhood effects to date. Between 1994 and 1998, HUD chose 4,248 families to participate in the MTO demonstration at five demonstration sites and randomly assigned the families to experimental, Section 8, or control groups. In order to measure mid- and long-term outcomes, HUD tracks all participating MTO families. Analysis of MTO data has been hoped to “produce more knowledge about the social and economic effects of low-income housing policy – a long-neglected, much maligned domain of public policy-- than any work carried out in the preceding thirty or forty years” (Briggs et al., 2010: 52). Indeed, to this date, many researchers continue to statistically analyze the MTO data, contributing a large body of empirical scholarship to the neighborhood effects literature.

In fact, mainstream policy analysts have regarded MTO as a near perfect vehicle for traditional, positivist analysis and evaluation centered on hypothesis-testing, statistical analyses, and generalizability. This traditional approach was informed by utility and rational choice theories, which are main theoretical paradigms for many social sciences that rest on the assumption that individuals try to optimize their life quality and that their actions in this pursuit, and not those of larger institutions, largely determine social situations or collective behaviors (Griggs, 2007). Germane to traditional policy analysis has been Lasswell’s framework, the cycle of decision-making, which was later applied by others to the process of policy-making, serving as the normative model to analyze the ostensible linear trajectory of policy stages, beginning with agenda-setting, to policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and ending in evaluation.

Researchers use the traditional policy analysis approach to quantify changes in outcomes for families as a result of the MTO program’s intervention. They do so to

identify the direction and strength of changes in activity domains such as crime, employment, and education attendant on a voucher recipient's move to "opportunity". The array of mixed findings from the study of MTO data fails to support a clear conclusion of the sort: "let's move poor people to rich neighborhoods because they will be better off". HUD has acknowledged the limitations to the demonstration's design and implementation, i.e. many families did not use their vouchers to move to low-poverty neighborhoods, and the data analyses left many questions about the reasons for ambivalent results unanswered (Orr et al., 2003). More important for my purpose in this dissertation, to this day, no thorough analysis has yet appeared of how the concept of the MTO program became established as the central trend of federal housing policy. That is, there has been no report on its formative "policy stages cycle," which includes the critical stages of agenda-setting, problem-definition, and framing that crucially inform the later, better-known stages of MTO's design, implementation, and evaluation. This is the gap I intend to fill in this dissertation.

Consequently, my analysis of MTO is different from the traditional approach to policy analysis. I am interested in understanding the underlying processes that produced MTO as we know it today. Specifically, I explore the policy deliberation process that produced MTO in order to uncover, inasmuch as possible, the explicit and implicit assumptions of its architects with respect to poverty, poverty concentration, housing voucher recipients, and housing mobility, which ultimately framed the demonstration. On a macro level, I explore how and why the policy discourse on poverty deconcentration has come to dominate contemporary housing policy discourse. In addition, I look for "political" dynamics between policymakers, recognizing

policymaking as a political process. I suggest that the limited sphere of the discourse, while broader perhaps than HUD had ever before deployed, as well as assumptions about public housing recipients, high- and low-poverty neighborhoods, undoubtedly kept key policymakers from making fully informed decisions, which dampened MTOs full potential. Accordingly, specific research questions guide my empirical analysis of HUD documents to “unpack” the dispersal paradigm.

Research questions

To guide my research I developed four core research questions. Each of these questions helped me tease out aspects of the MTO narrative that are useful for elucidating the role of power, policy iteration, hegemonic dominance and framing practices on which this study is anchored.

First, what is the nature of the policy deliberation that produced MTO? This question is aimed at revealing the “inside track” at HUD. Of course, it will also enable a story-telling of how the MTO program was formed and an examination of the extent to which it was both inclusive and exclusive, democratically motivated or driven by elite-experts, and research or service driven. In answering this research question, I also explore the iterative nature of the shaping of the demonstration (how many times was it tweaked); how long the program’s concept took from emergence to implementation; what if any bureaucratic hurdles existed; and what deliberative/discursive mechanisms were employed.

Second, what was the (power) dynamic among the architects of the MTO? Here, I identify key agents involved in designing the demonstration. I also develop an understanding of the hierarchy within HUD. That is, I examine who had the final say, whose feedback was considered, who made recommendations to include whom and why, how conflicts were resolved, the decision-making capacity of HUD's policy researchers (staff of the Policy Development & Research division), who determined design details, and who made the final decisions. Overall, in answering this research question I attempt to elucidate power relations among and the role of elites in cultivating the housing mobility discourse.

Third, through what frames did HUD view voucher recipients, poverty concentration, housing mobility, and the purpose of MTO? In answering this question, I intend to tease out how HUD viewed the "problem" and the "solution," and identify the basic assumptions that guided and influenced the design and implementation of MTO and factored into its design specifics.

Fourth, did any alternative discourses exist at HUD? Gauging, first, the salience of the housing mobility discourse at HUD, I also explore if alternative discourses were mentioned in any of the HUD documents. If so, I examine how they were treated by the policymakers, and look for potential frame-conflicts. If a frame-conflict arises, I examine how it was resolved.

Plan of analysis

I will place my work within the context of the extant literature on housing policy since the 1960s. Moreover, I summarize and synthesize original empirical research of HUD's MTO documents. I analyze this research in the context of HUD's normative assumptions by employing a *postpositivist* approach to policy analysis. The insights gained through my analysis of the policy deliberation process, contextualized within a larger poverty deconcentration discourse, have implications for the interpretations of MTO empirical research results specifically, and policy analysis in general. It is my hope that the lessons learned from my research serve the policy community -- policymakers and analysts, scholars, students, and researchers -- to recognize that policymaking does not happen in a social or political vacuum and that a more nuanced, holistic approach can help us better understand, organize, and improve our social world.

Postpositive analysis

The postpositive approach to policy analysis departs from Lasswell's (1951) traditional *decision-making cycle framework* approach, which engendered the blueprint for policy analysis today. Although Lasswell's approach is the "most widely applied framework to organize and systemize the research on public policy" (Jann and Wegrich, 2007:45), this study moves beyond the prescriptive/normative model and centers on the problem-definition and framing stages in the policymaking process. Thus, instead of analyzing the linear stages of MTO, such as agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation, and evaluation, a deliberative/interpretive framework is used to depict policymaking as a political process situated in a complex, pluralistic social world.

Marking a turn in traditional policy analysis, *framing* in contemporary policy analysis is defined as “a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading, and acting” and as “a perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined, problematic situation can be made sense of and acted on” (Rein and Schön, 1993:146). Argumentation and deliberation in policy analysis, according to Fischer (2007), responds to the limitations of positivist / empiricist analysis. To that end, the deliberative framework connects facts to values, integrates empirical and normative inquiry, and appreciates local knowledge of the social context for which policies are to be prescribed. A central component of the policy argument is *power*, which manifests itself through the inclusion and exclusion of concerns, and through particular political strategies of problem framing, rhetoric and narrative. This study considers how policy arguments are affected by *frames* and *power* relations.

The argumentative turn in general rejects positivism and critical rationalism, as well as objectivist moral philosophy because there are no general laws of society upon which policy interventions could be based. Policy goals are typically unclear and controversial because of the multitude of values. Because policymaking is a political act, it is hard to draw positivist causal laws and generalizations. According to Dryzek (1993:219), “policy should be open to criticism from all quarters, policy experts and ordinary citizens alike, in order to take into account the decentralization of relevant knowledge and the multiplicity of social values.” As will be seen, MTO has failed to produce causal laws on the effects of dispersing poor people, and, as I suggest in my analysis, this was due in part because of a lack of account for the normative concerns of

voucher recipients regarding, for example, safety concerns, lack of affordable housing, or the failing education system.

My research identifies how the dominant “dispersal” discourse was reflected in the MTO policy deliberations, specifically, as Rein and Schön (1993:145) put it, the discourse whereby “interactions of individuals, interest groups, social movements, and institutions through which problematic situations are converted to policy problems, agendas are set, decisions are made, and actions are taken.” My approach is informed by Fischer (2003) who, in *Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, argues that a discourse approach is needed to understand how policymakers frame reality to understand how normative assumptions factor into and guide empirical analysis. An empirically driven approach (e.g. MTO statistical analyses) explicitly neglects normative realities (researchers are supposed to take on an objective perspective toward their subject matter) and, instead, focuses on “how things are” without considering if the underlying processes are democratic or socially just, and whether different values or social meanings are considered. My deliberative approach values the contextual setting of a socio-political construct, and considers value frames that shape our understanding of problems, as well as normative and qualitative perspectives. In my final analysis, I acknowledge that there is value in the traditional empiricist/rationalistic/technocratic approach (i.e. MTO data analyses have illuminated the institutional barriers to housing mobility), but the alternative approach that emphasizes discourse and argumentation (discursive, interpretive, narrative) can uncover important normative concerns, and entail participatory democracy, a desirable goal for a democratic country.

Employing Fischer's (1995) approach to policy analysis, a framework of practical deliberation, this study deconstructs the process of policy deliberation and, coupled with the empirical MTO research findings, disentangles the ideological interrelated discourses of social choice, societal vindication, situational validation, and technical verification. I adopt Fischer's (2003) discourse approach to this analysis because of its meta-theoretical emphasis on language and power, which stresses the renewed role of ideas and beliefs to political and policy argumentation, leaning on Habermas's theory of communicative rationality (rationality is located in structures of communication versus in the cosmos or the knowing subject) and Foucault's post-structural theory of discursive power (power is exercised in relationships through discourse between individuals). As I demonstrate, power and politics are part and parcel of a discursive understanding of the policy process. Policy experts, according to Fischer (2003:37), often have "a strong motivation to conceal or downplay important information including relevant normative perspectives" that influence policy deliberations in order to benefit themselves or their employers, a moral hazard that typically crops up due to a principal-agent problem. My discursive approach, on the other hand, considers inquiry to be a part of the medium that it studies, including political motivations of the discourse itself.

An integral part of discourse analysis as employed in this study is narrative analysis. Fischer distinguishes between scientific versus narrative analysis, where the latter considers social intentions and motivations. Policy "metanarratives" reflect problem uncertainty, socio-complexity, and political polarization, and there is an apparent relationship between language (i.e. policymakers use rhetoric to persuasively communicate their preferred solution) and the social construction of the problem via

politics, where the “problem definition generally involves an effort to portray a social situation in a way that favors one’s own argument and course of action as being in the public interest” (ibid.170). In the case of MTO, the dominant mobility discourse dominated all phases of policy development, from framing to implementation.

The postpositivist method of inquiry makes this study an important contribution to the field of policy study and analysis by adding to the narrow body of empirical work that uncovers norms and values and that connects power and policy discourse in policymaking. Rather than employing a traditional positivist model that tests for differences in outcomes of the MTO demonstration program, this study elucidates the dynamics that precipitated the program itself and *then* couches existing “scientific” outcomes within that apparent normative context. It thus moves beyond the limitations of traditional positivist policy analysis, and re-contextualizes empirical results by re-examining them based on the starting assumptions that governed the way that the demonstration was designed and implemented. Consequently, this study demonstrates that positivist policy analysis is situated within a power struggle, and used as a political tool to achieve a particular political end.

A brief history of social policy formation

My study is framed in the context of the historical background (the “story”) of U.S. social policy formation, which Alice O’Connor (2002) delineates in *Poverty Knowledge*.

Typically, policies are formed by administrative agencies such as HUD, before getting “fine-tuned” and passed by Congress. Social policies aimed at addressing poverty and social inequalities are vulnerable to political, economic, and social contexts of current

government administrations. As such they are influenced by a host of actors and agencies who provide information. Drawing attention to the politics, institutions, ideologies, and social science influencing how the poverty “problem” has been addressed, O’Connor elucidates how research was transformed over time from a reform-minded inquiry to a technocratic, positivist analysis of behavior characteristics of the poor.

During the Progressive Era, private philanthropic organizations investigated social and economic conditions of the poor, affecting social research and contributing to interdisciplinary behavioral research at such places as university-based research centers. A brief period of community action research during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations had some influence on social policy, such as demonstration projects, but lacked the scientific rigor to meet long-range political demands. Together these efforts, according to O’Connor (2002:140/1), resulted “in a process of political, social scientific, and interagency negotiation (whereby) administration economists incorporated the notion of a *culture of poverty* and a set of remedies for it (i.e. community action) within the blueprint for the War on Poverty in 1964,” stimulating a new political economy of poverty.

The political-economy research model became the central theoretical framework for new poverty knowledge whereby professional economists-- informed by academic theories and methods--shaped policies and fostered the development of concepts like *social* and *cultural capital*. This approach claimed scientific rigor focused on testable hypotheses to ascertain causes and consequences of poverty. As such, it was favored by federal policy makers over the community-based, action-oriented sociological research

model. Community action was co-opted to some degree via task forces that evaluated community demonstrations and reported findings to cabinet-level committees on poverty. But social scientists and their science molded the social policy paradigm, for instance playing a central role in the War on Poverty legislation.

The process of policy formation has been historically very political. The existence of agencies like the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) or HUD's division for Research, Programming, Planning and Evaluation (RPP&E) show how rational, top-down planning facilitated through government and foundations tended to be politically preferred over bottom-up, grass roots research such as the Community Action Program (CAP). O'Connor suggests that, "...by the late 1960s the ethnographic, community-studies tradition that had given shape to the culture of poverty and its variants was rapidly being eclipsed by a more quantitative, technocratic model-building impulse in the social sciences more generally" (ibid.210). Especially in the federal arena, quantitative "evidence" informs how tax dollars towards social reform are spent. By the 1980s, foundations mobilized a network of institutions including think tanks, like the Urban Institute and Abt Associates; research organizations; academics; and graduate students to test Wilson's (1987) theories of the underclass. The Rockefeller Foundation, for example, initiated the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Program for Research on the Urban Underclass. This program was directed by well-known poverty researchers with student assistance and included marginalized people (minorities) in the data gathering process. These approaches differ in that the first was more expert-driven, whereas the latter was more inclusive and participatory.

In general, the poverty “knowledge” business reflects societal bias and social inequalities. It routinely excludes the most vulnerable groups in the population from *scientific objectivity* such as minorities, women, and the less-educated working class. For instance, the more inclusive action research approach (i.e. bottom-up approach) has not been able to truly compete with the ivory tower university research, so, perhaps the time is ripe to better educate our future policy-makers/analysts on the importance of *inclusive* theory, methods and practical know-how to better adapt to our demographically changing environment. O’Connor asserts that poverty research “has been filtered, not just through the experiences and cultural biases of the privileged, but through the social position of ‘the professors’ in relation to ‘the poor’” (ibid.11). She also suggests that poverty experts adapted a notion that “the poor should simply strive to be more like us” (ibid.12). That is, the experts believe the poor should get a good education to participate in the new labor economy, attain education and skill to do so, and to be self-sufficient, productive members of the new postindustrial society. As such, the notion of *difference* as a product of racial, ethnic and/or cultural background has not significantly changed *how* we educate and employ our growing multi-cultural society.

According to O’Connor (ibid.12), poverty research is an “inescapable political act: It is an exercise of power,...an instance of an educated elite to categorize, stigmatize, but above all to neutralize the poor and disadvantaged through analysis that obscures the political nature of social and economic inequality.” Efforts to reform the welfare system through diagnoses and interventions (i.e. residential mobility programs) indicate that reformers focused on the behavior of poor people. Thus, social policy has been “categorized” towards “material consequences to the poor, whether those categories

have to do with determining the particulars of who is eligible (or ‘deserving’) of public assistance or with establishing the broader parameters of the welfare state” (ibid.12).

These sentiments reflect how poverty research has been the means, especially over recent decades, to achieve politically conservative ends reflecting conservative or traditional norms and values.

Alternative frameworks for studying the policy process and analyzing public policy

A main task of the present study is to substantially employ alternative approaches to policy analysis as further discussed in the subsequent analysis section. This section reflects several strands of postpositivist policy analysis tools and juxtaposes them with traditional positivist methods to highlight reasons for my approach. While rational choice theory has informed policy analysis for decades, it has recently fallen under the scrutiny of many policy scholars because it cannot offer the “neutral toolkit” it claims to bear against the theories it tests. Specifically, rational choice theory does not offer a “neutral body of data that can be constructed through the use of impartial tools and against which we can test theories” (Griggs, 2007:183). Grin and Loeber (2007) echo this sentiment contending that theories of policy learning initially focused on presumably linear stages of the policy process, encompassing the positivist paradigm of hypothesis testing, but that recently policy learning has increasingly focused on social construction of knowledge and meaning that permeate the different stages, particularly affecting the early stages of problem and solution framing. Simply put, traditional positivist analysis seeks to answer whether a policy intervention “works” given its focus on the instrumental rationality of particular targets, regardless of policy goals. By contrast, the alternative approach does not seek attainment of a priori value to policy but rather a solution that

derives from the type of contextualized analysis I provide in this study (starting with questioning frames that underlie policy goals). That is not to say that positivist analysis has no value, but rather that positivist and postpositivist methods complement each other and when used symbiotically lead to a more comprehensive analysis.

Problem-definition and agenda-setting in policy analysis

Recent scholarship draws attention to the role of political processes during the problem-definition and agenda-setting stages – a central goal of this research, whereby “political attention is attached to a subset of all possibly relevant policy problems” (Jann and Wegrich, 2007:45). That politics factor into agenda-setting can also be seen when examining how a dominant discourse at the top of the political spectrum (the president) filters down to other federal offices and aspects of policy. For example, I discovered that the elite-experts responsible for creating the MTO were influenced by new federal Administrations in the setting of a policy agenda, and identifying the pertinent problems and issues. Such policy agendas, according to Birkland (2007:63) consist of “a collection of problems, understanding of causes, symbols, solutions, and other elements of public problems that come to the attention of members of the public and their government officials.” In this sense, ghetto poverty was understood as problematic especially given its concentration levels in the inner cities across the nation, raising the awareness of government planners who conceived of dispersal as the solution. This implies that an agenda reflects a set of beliefs about the problems and how they can best be ameliorated by various agents such as the government, the private sector, nonprofit organizations, or through joint action by some or all of these institutions. Consequently, issues considered

in an agenda are biased by a political system, and “the social construction of a problem is linked to the existing social, political, and ideological structures at the time” (ibid.71).

Framing in policy analysis

What is framing and why is it an important tool in contemporary policy analysis and a method I employ for my analysis? Rein and Schön (1993) describe framing as an integral part of personal, scholarly, and political practice whereby interpretations are constructed, problems dissected, and evaluations conducted. Although framing captures different world views and leads to multiple policy realities, not all possible frames can have equal validity, and frames require an implicit standard for judging their adequacy (i.e., avoiding the “relativist trap”). However, it is important for policy analysis to reveal normative assumptions (frames) underlying policy decisions to invite critical reflection.

Framing thus matters because frame-critical or frame-reflective policy analysis scrutinizes the underlying assumptions upon which policies rest. Rein and Schön (1993:152) contend that policy change means adapting to ever-shifting situations but that many adaptations may imply a shift of the paradigm in the way we conceive of and act on policy issues. With regard to MTO, for example, the label of the particular policy frame may be *housing mobility* or *poverty deconcentration*. The label selected shifts the focus to a particular aspect of a policy terrain while it neglects others such as community development, sound public housing, or systemic problems. The framing of policy issues depends on shifts in the larger context of a policy, but it can also enable such shifts.

Fischer (2003) refers to frames in interpretive social science as an organizing principle governing the meaning we assign to social events-- an effort to connect the dots

into a story. To that end, frames determine which parts of the story are meaningful and should be included, and which parts are not meaningful and should be omitted. He suggests that policy frames can be identified by talking with the involved parties about the policy situation. In the development of the MTO program, this happened to a small extent through select interviews and general questionnaires where voucher recipients identified normative concerns of inner-city life, such as high crime, lack of safety, lack of decent affordable housing, but certainly not to the extent that it diminished the dominant discourse or presented a strong alternative discourse that could have presented a frame conflict. The dominant frame suffused all aspects of the demonstration.

Such frame dominance is not uncommon in the policymaking arena, particularly at higher levels of governance. Although a variety of frames such as welfare economics, public choice, social structure, information processing, and political philosophy are used as reference points (Bobrow and Dryzek, 1987), Dryzek (1993) suggests that more often than not, one clearly dominates. Overall, framing serves as a tool for policy or planning analysis that either draws on frames to construct arguments or tests frames from which arguments are based. In my analysis, I show that MTO did both. HUD drew from the housing mobility frame and the success of Gautreaux to normatively argue that moving poor people is a successful strategy towards integration into the middle class, and to test the success of housing mobility itself.

Complexities of the policy process

My analysis of MTO suggests that framing and hegemonic dominance are inextricably linked, and that the policymaking process in general can be described as a political act.

This is echoed by Rosenthal (1984), who examined the process by which the design for HUD's neighborhood strategy area (NSA) program (1978) was formulated and the steps which led up to implementation. He found that, while NSA was conceptualized during the Ford Administration, which advocated housing mobility, the final program design reflected the dominant frame under the Carter Administration, which emphasized urban revitalization and the involvement of housing and community development agents. Accordingly, the focus of the program shifted with the change in Administrations, and was altered between its initial formulation and final implementation. Indeed, Carter's interest in neighborhood revitalization infiltrated HUD's mission towards central-city rehabilitation.

However, the transition between formulation and implementation of the NSA program, which Rosenthal calls a process of *conversion*, was not easy: it "involved a gradual modification of some of the original intentions of the program design" (ibid.343). Changes were made based on conflicts arising across the intergovernmental system, and the program took off once the phases of pre-selection, review, selection, and post-selection were completed. According to Rosenthal, the NSA showed "how complex the concept of policy formulation must be to reflect reality" (ibid.351), perhaps making formulation a continuous process responding to changes in administrative or political personnel circumstances. The more actors involved, the more cumbersome and slower the process necessarily becomes. The leadership at HUD felt that including many participants in the program design process would be politically beneficial. Unfortunately, it also meant that there were more disagreements, especially at the local level with regard to disputes over details that needed to be negotiated with HUD. The HUD leadership that

birthed the MTO, on the other hand, did not take such an inclusive approach, but this tack caused HUD problems at the local level during MTO's implementation in Baltimore, as I discuss in Chapter 6.

The 1973 HUD review of its subsidized housing policy is another example that demonstrates the complexities of the policy process. In *The Culture of Policy Deliberations*, Robert Bell (1985) scrutinizes HUD's report *Housing in the Seventies*, which evaluates the performances of housing subsidy programs. Bell's data – mostly interviews with HUD officials but also the review of published and unpublished government records and publications relating to housing policy -- shows how unclear HUD's Section 8 housing allowance program was, and how its initial purpose changed through the differing views of key supporters, making program details and philosophy impossible to define.

His findings indicate that housing policy deliberations by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and HUD were informed by public finance theory, and the choice of goals reflected the professional outlook of economists. OMB in their analysis of housing programs altered goals and techniques with the changed political climate based on public finance theory (that prevailed at that time) to fill “the void left by a lack of political guidance and for responding to the felt need to build a policy from fundamental principles” (ibid.68). The general consensus was that housing was basically an income problem, reflecting how economic thinking and analysis contributed to policy formulation, for example by encouraging economic incentives, whereas politicians foster altruistic motivations, such as “socially desirable forms of economic activity” (ibid.86).

Bell's research reveals that public policy discourse has "limited rationality" compared to direct effects substantiated by numerical goals and standards to demonstrate that policy works (even though policymakers are aware that quantifiable results are often irrational). Though statistical evidence is preferred, participation in deliberations is encouraged, albeit limited to elite experts. Particularly the HUD Secretary, a key person involved in shaping subsidized housing policy, assures that organizations are involved in such discourse. He also heads the organization "that implements whatever recommendations emerge from the deliberations he oversees" (ibid.179). The President has comparable leverage over the housing policy debate, and may include the advice of White House task forces. These findings align with my findings in that even when the process includes experts, policymaking remains a largely top-down, politically motivated process.

Complexities of implementation

"Implementation...is a struggle over the realization of ideas" (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984:180). Majone (1989) suggests that the essence of implementation is the iterative process of discovering constraints and modifying goals or strategies accordingly whereby short-run factors can become constraints in the long run. Similarly, Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) view it as a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieving them. In their analysis of the implementation of a federally funded Economic Development Administration's (EDA) employment program in Oakland, California in late 1968, Pressman and Wildavsky demonstrate the difficulties of the implementation of a large-scale federal project. The progress and failures of this

program show that implementation process is complicated, iterative and in constant need of alteration and revision.

Part of the problem with the implementation process is the role of semantics, that is, the questions being asked and the interpretation of tasks, which makes it difficult to quantify goals and to translate concepts into practices. For example, terms like “sufficient demand” and “efficient capacity” are difficult to quantify, at least a priori. Another problem is that some key actors have minimal influence over important decisions.

For example, Oakland’s mayor and its black leaders, who favored EDA’s employment program, wound up having peripheral involvement in the program due to a lack of resources. Designed as a simple program, it became complicated as a result of the diverse perspectives of participants, who agreed on the goal of creating jobs but who also had major opinion differences on tactics of how to get employers to come to terms with authorities with respect to programmatic details. This research demonstrates that the completion of a fairly democratic program can depend on a high probability of agreement by most participants on each decision point. Thus the fragmentation of power in America and independence of participants depresses the probability of the program’s success, a well-known outcome in game theory.

Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) suggest that one important lesson from the EDA program is that implementation should not be divorced from policy. As such, implementation difficulties need to be included in the initial formulation of policy and should not be viewed as an isolated process independent of the program’s design. To

achieve this, the designers of policy should consider more direct means for accomplishing their desired ends, and focus on organizational aspects of the program in addition to launching it. Additionally, focus should be on adapting to unforeseen circumstances as the actual implementation process will always be less structured than expected. The authors view policy implementation as “hypothesis-testing” and “exploration,” whereby the implementer assumes an integral role in the policy process. Similarly, the complexities of MTO implementation at the Baltimore site shows how HUD adapted to the unforeseen circumstances posed by community resistance.

Literature on postpositivist policy analysis

My analytical approach has been informed by, and is a contribution to the extant literature on alternative or *postpositivist* policy analysis. Several scholars such as Fischer, Dryzek, Majone, Hajer, Kaplan, and Roe have written extensively about this approach. Since it is applicable to my mode of analysis, I will briefly overview this scholarship as it relates to my study below.

Fischer argues that the “normative dimensions of policy questions cannot be dealt with through the empirical analysis – that is, by converting them into variables to be operationalized.” He recommends instead to “begin from the normative perspective and fit the empirical in” (ibid.227). Conventional social science, according to Fischer, “attempts to build in qualitative data about norms and values to an empirical model through quantification” – this occurred, for example, when Abt Associates constructed the variables used for the surveys that ultimately produced the MTO data -- whereas “the communications model reverses the task by fitting the quantitative data into the

normative worldview” (ibid.227), which could have been achieved had HUD involved MTO participants in the demonstration’s design. In policy argumentation, on the other hand, the researcher situates the data in the interpretive framework that gives them meaning. Post-empiricist scholars such as Fischer, Forester, Gottweis, and Hajer concur that policy making must be contextualized, and to be effective cannot take place in an economic, political, social, or cultural vacuum.

Dryzek posits that “the defensibility of policy analysis and planning depends on the conditions in which arguments are made, received, and acted upon” (ibid.214). The author refers to Lindblom and Wildavsky as scholars emphasizing the important role of political interaction in policy determination. Thus, depending on different values, different dependent variables are pertinent which demonstrates that science is a political process, as is the application of moral philosophy to public policy. These concepts resonate in my final analytical synthesis provided in Chapter 8 whereby I reveal that HUD pushed the dominant dispersal discourse onto the design of MTO, for instance, by selecting outcome variables they felt fostered the assimilation/integration goal they set for voucher recipients.

Majone’s (1989) central tenet in *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process* is the discovery of main implications of a dialectic conception of policy analysis and the process of argument. He asserts that policy deliberation by analysts and researchers rests on argumentation and rhetoric to persuade where public deliberation and policy-making define the norms that determine the policy problem at hand. First, a problem situation is identified (in this case it is poverty concentration), then it is translated into an actual policy problem (i.e. barriers to housing mobility), then the goals

to be achieved are stated (dispersal of poor people, assimilation, integration, etc.), and a strategy for accomplishing them is identified (housing mobility). Detailed information is important at the stage of problem setting, whereas rigor and technical skills are more important at the analysis stage. The way questions are framed during the stage of problem setting depends upon how the problem is conceived. To that end, Chapters 4 and 5 illuminate that HUD thoroughly collected detailed information on barriers to housing mobility, including tapping the community of experts for input.

Moreover, Majone (1989) posits that the policy community of “experts” (academics, professionals, analysts, etc.) debates and develops policies tied to their respective beliefs and values (agendas, perspectives) and/or economic and political interests, and new proposals are judged based on how they might contribute to the ongoing debate. So, too, did the elite experts debate the MTO and its various design components in numerous meetings, manifesting their ideas about poor people, poverty, and deconcentration. Sometimes, ideas change during debate and argument within a policy community because of varying professional, intellectual, and ideological commitments as we saw above in the case of NSA development spanning two administrations. As a result, formulations of the underlying issues change, revealing new meanings and interpretations. According to Majone (1989), part of the process of policy development is debating which criteria of evaluation and standards of accountability should be established. As I show in this study, the policymakers in connection with the experts determined the roles that PHAs and NPOs were to play by specifically setting standards of accountability for them, while Abt Associates proposed the criteria for MTO evaluation through an iterative process of consultation with the top HUD policymakers.

The synthesis of my research presented in Chapter 8 suggests how the empirical MTO data analyses and my empirical analysis of the deliberation process fit together. I was inspired by Fischer (2003), who argues that empirical observation and measurement cannot account for the socially constructed nature of social worlds: thus policy inquiry must include subjectively oriented goals, motives and intentions of policy actors and be grounded in interpretive analysis. He states that, “empirical research itself has to be embedded in an interpretive-oriented discursive perspective” (ibid.69), which I do in this study. He suggests that policy research needs to consider the socio-historical context, social meanings, and value judgments built into scientific practice, and that the analyst functions as an interpretive mediator between the analytical framework of social science and competing local perspectives, and moves between theoretical and local knowledge. Accordingly, I suggest to the policy community how MTO could have been structured differently, specifically that a more inclusionary, participatory planning practice would have done more than simply enforce our democratic ideals and principles. (I elaborate on an alternative policymaking approach in Chapter 8).

Both Kaplan (1993) and Roe (2003) stress the importance of narrative in policy analysis, where hermeneutics facilitates the interpretation of arguments in a specific context. Kaplan, for example, proposes that the narrative structure is helpful in hermeneutic policy analysis where good “stories” can provide planners and policy analysts with useful and defensible arguments. These stories typically revolve around positions or events which engender a certain outcome, often predicting what will happen in the future if the events or positions pan out. In the MTO occasion, a lot of the narrative in the demonstration’s design is a continuation of the Gautreaux success

storyline. As such, the MTO story is infused with strong beliefs in positive outcomes for families who relocate. Even if the underlying assumptions are contentious, a policy narrative offers some explanatory or descriptive power, and can manifest the underlying assumptions about a “problem” even if they are complex or uncertain. In fact, a policy narrative can persist and succeed in making sense of a solution to a problem, even if it is representationally inaccurate or empirically objectionable. In this study I uncover how HUD’s policy narrative (dominant discourse) extolled housing mobility as the solution to poverty concentration and the barriers to housing mobility. The alternative story or discourse could have centered on improving educational and economic opportunities, decent low-income housing, safety, and other resources in disenfranchised inner-cities. My research elucidates that unequal power relations influence which policy narrative dominates, whereby the elite narrative overshadows the narrative of the less powerful.

I use the MTO as an example to elucidate how a policy discourse such as poverty deconcentration gains dominance. Policymaking institutions take an active role in promulgating such discourse, producing story lines on specific problems and providing the necessary conceptual context. To that end, the process of policy deliberation as analyzed in this research is a lesson to planners, policy analysts, and the public in raising awareness to the power dynamics embedded in such a process with regards to hegemonic dominance. Mindfulness of the tension between inclusion and exclusion is the first step in recognizing that policymaking in and of itself is not an objective process, and that a more inclusive approach may yield a better outcome.

Data sources, method of collection and analysis

Broadly defined as an extensive document review based on archival research, this study uses several types of primary and secondary data sources. Primary data consist of original documents related to MTO which are stored in several “boxes,” and which I have scanned during several visits at the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Washington, DC. Specifically, these boxes contain memos, letters, notes, minutes of meetings, unpublished policy briefs and position papers related to the beginning stages of MTO roughly collected within the time frame of 1990 to 1997².

Secondary data items include official HUD publications such as notices of funding availability, policy briefs, press reports, newspaper articles, scholarly journal articles, and opinion pieces. For the chapter on MTO quantitative findings (Chapter 3), I have conducted an extensive review of published and unpublished research papers that utilize the MTO data set. Moreover, I perused the HUD-user website at <http://www.huduser.org> to get additional information on MTO publications, the status of the demonstration, as well as the organizational structure within HUD. Additionally, I reviewed The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER)’s website specific to MTO at <http://www.nber.org/mtopublic/> to supplement my review of existing quantitative research, MTO history, survey instruments, and media coverage. Finally, I reviewed two recent books germane to MTO research in great detail -- *Choosing a Better Life: Evaluating the Moving to Opportunity Demonstration* by John Goering and Judith

² I chose 1997 as the endpoint of my empirical analysis based on the chronological order of documents contained in the MTO boxes. Although this time-frame partially covers the time after the actual inception and implementation (1994 to 1998) of MTO, the emphasis of my analysis is on the policy-making process leading up to it. Of course it would be interesting to examine subsequent material pertaining to MTO and other deconcentration efforts, as well as place-based reform strategies to ascertain if and/or how HUD’s thinking shifted to address urban poverty. However, it is beyond the purview of this research.

Feins (2003) and *Moving to Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment to Fight Ghetto Poverty* (2010) by Xavier de Souza Briggs, Susan Popkin, and John Goering.

First, I summarize and synthesize my empirical findings of HUD's MTO documents and, second, I contextualize my findings with HUD's normative assumptions by employing a *postpositivist* approach to policy analysis. To clarify, the postpositivist mode of inquiry considers that reality cannot be known with certainty, and that theories which inform observations are shaped by certain world views, experiences, perceptions, and assumptions to name a few. As such, it is relative to different perspectives based on different experiences and cultural backgrounds, for example. Postpositivism addresses the multidimensional complexity of social reality, and turns to a contextually oriented discursive understanding of social inquiry that situates knowledge in the context of time and local circumstances. According to Fischer (2003), the approach offers a better description of what social scientists actually do in practice.

Positivism, on the other hand, is based on three central tenets: (1) there is one scientific method--a logic of inquiry--that can be applied across all sciences, both natural and social, (2) science should be as value neutral as possible, and (3) scientific knowledge must be confirmed using human senses (research is proven by means of the logic of confirmation), that is argumentations/conjectures alone are insufficient to advance science (our body of knowledge). I chose to employ a postpositivist approach to identify HUD's particular perspectives (version of reality) with regard to recipients of public housing assistance, their original high-poverty neighborhoods, and their moves to low-poverty neighborhoods. I chose this approach to elucidate and analyze the discourse at HUD to uncover HUD's assumptions, how that influenced the design of MTO, and

how it disregarded the alternative discourse which would illuminate the perspective of housing voucher recipients.

For my analysis I use Fischer's (1995) model of the four-level framework to deliberate and evaluate practical discourse (such as context bound value judgments implied in ordinary language) Fischer's model of practical deliberation challenges the positivist contention that normative argumentation is irrational but rather demonstrates that it can be warranted by the informal logic of practical reasoning. Fischer's model distinguished between four interrelated discourses, namely the technical-analytic and contextual discourses at the first level, and the systems and ideological discourses at the second level. My primary approach, practical deliberation, is tested through this framework of policy inquiry whereby I deliberate, evaluate, and synthesize the discourses I identified. As such, the four levels of interrelated discourses provide the organizational framework for my inquiry. To that end, my discursive analysis leads to an identification of elements at each of the four-levels. The technical-analytic and contextual discourses tie together HUD's objective for the MTO, its relevance to the problem and solutions identified by HUD, as well as an alternative discourse reflective of problems and solutions framed by housing voucher recipients residing in high-poverty neighborhoods. The systems and ideological discourses highlight the contributive value of MTO for housing policy such as housing choices and mobility, and lead me to discuss the ideological principles framing the "move vs. right-to-stay-put" controversy. I show that the aim to test the effect of poor and non-poor neighborhoods on housing voucher recipients exemplified through the MTO hinged on the macro-level policy goal to drive housing mobility and poverty deconcentration which rested on the normative assumptions

about the ideal society where poor people are not concentrated in a specific geographic location but would have real options to live dispersed throughout the regions.

Overall, the deliberative approach used in this research serves to “illuminate the basic discursive components of a full or complete evaluation, one which incorporates the full range of both the empirical and normative concerns that can be brought to bear on an evaluation” (ibid.18). The integration of MTO quantitative findings and my discourse analysis therefore leads to a meta-analysis of the MTO.

The insights gained through my analysis of the policy deliberation process within the larger context of a poverty deconcentration discourse, have implications for the interpretations of MTO empirical research results specifically, and policy analysis in general. It is my hope that the lessons learned from my research serve the policy community -- policymakers and analysts, scholars, students, and researchers--to recognize that policymaking does not happen in a social, political, or economic vacuum and that a more nuanced, holistic approach can help us better understand, organize, and improve our social world.

Table 1.1 Fischer’s model

Fischer’ model “The Logic of Policy Evaluation”
Level: First-order Evaluation
Technical-Analytic Discourse: Program Verification (Outcomes)
Organizing Question: Does the program empirically fulfill its stated objective(s)?
Contextual Discourse: Situational Validation (Objectives)
Organizing Question: Is the program objective(s) relevant to the problem situation?
Level: Second-order Evaluation
Systems Discourse: Societal Vindication (Goals)

Organizing Question: Does the policy goal have instrumental or contributive value for the society as a whole?

Ideological Discourse: Social Choice (Values)

Organizing Question: Do the fundamental ideals (or ideology) that organize the accepted social order provide a basis for a legitimate resolution of conflicting judgments?

(Source: Frank Fischer, *Evaluating Public Policy*, 1995:18).

Organization of dissertation chapters

This study characterizes how and why housing mobility has emerged and become manifested as the dominant discourse in housing policy. Through interpretive/discursive policy analysis this study uncovers how embedded frames and politics have shaped the discourse which precipitated, engendered and suffused the MTO demonstration.

Chapter 2 offers a review of literatures pertaining to poverty, poverty concentration and deconcentration which provides a historical overview of the development of housing policy, particularly characterizing the shift from place-based to people-based housing assistance. It also gives an overview of the neighborhood effects literature, as well as findings from housing mobility studies. Additionally, it summarizes scholarship on the emergence and manifestation of the dominant housing policy discourse, as well as situates the inception of MTO in this broader context. The MTO demonstration, referred by many (positivist) scholars as the greatest vehicle to test neighborhood effects, is the central subject discussed in Chapter 3. Specifically, this chapter offers results from the early quantitative MTO research at the five demonstration sites, as well as findings from the MTO interim data collection. The quantitative research described in this chapter was the driving motivation behind the MTO demonstration, and

the MTO data set produced through the design of the demonstration was intended to serve statistical analysis testing for neighborhood effects.

Chapters 4 through 7 contain the qualitative analyses of my document review at HUD. For these analyses, I organized the roughly 200 HUD documents (scanned as PDFs) by timeline and themes as follows. Chapter 4 describes the deliberation process that precipitated MTO between March 1990 and March 1993. This chapter depicts the salience of the housing mobility discourse, as well as introduces the main agents involved in the crafting of MTO.

In Chapter 5, I analyzed the HUD documents produced between June 1993 and September 1997, and chronicle the evolution of MTO during that time period, as well as elucidate the role of experts in that process. The discourse between experts is central to this research, and reveals the elitist, “top-down,” and iterative nature of the policy deliberation process. The emergent theme of inclusion and exclusion (one aspect of this theme is the power dynamic between HUD policymakers and “receiving” communities at demonstration sites) is the central theme of Chapter 6 which describes how HUD, local politicians, and residents of Baltimore framed the demonstration prior to its implementation in 1994. To tease out these different frames, I analyze HUD documents and extensive news media coverage regarding the MTO implementation at the Baltimore demonstration site. Chapter 7 elucidates how the themes of poverty deconcentration and housing mobility dominated the housing policy discourse during this period.

Chapter 8 delivers the MTO overall analysis following Fischer’s (1995) model of the policy evaluation process. As the depiction of four interrelated discourses facilitates

the “open and flexible exploration of the kinds of concerns raised in the various discursive phases of the probe” (ibid.19), this chapter provides an overall analysis of MTO demonstration discourses delineated by (program) verification, situational validation, societal vindication, and social choice. Some of the questions addressed include: How did the policy process that created MTO produce a data set and an analytical experiment that allows some kinds of questions to be asked but limits (or eliminates) the possibility of asking different or other kinds of questions? How useful is the resulting data set in providing answers to questions about effects and in what ways is that usefulness (or lack thereof) attributable to the way the project was structured from the outset? Chapter 9 provides a synthesis of the results from the existing MTO quantitative research and my qualitative research, and offers conclusions. In addition, it suggests implications of this research, as well as limitations and future (research) directions.

This research contributes to the emerging literature in the field of *postpositivist* policy analysis by elucidating the significance of *framing*, *deliberation*, and *narrative* in policy analysis. My hope is that it will encourage policymakers to consider taking a holistic, inclusive approach to policymaking, specifically, to consider the frames and normative realities of the targeted population. Such an involvement would lead to better policy outcomes and, on an idealistic level, to a better democracy. Policy analysts could find my research inspiring, and as a result consider adding critical dimensions that I suggest in their future research. Specifically, they could consider evaluating a program by couching research design, implementation, and empirical analyses in the context of a power struggle, recognizing that (policymaking) elites make normative assumptions

about the subjects planned for, which may do little to address their actual needs and realities. As such, all involved in the policy arena could benefit from an alternative approach to their discipline beyond traditional pathways of generating and interpreting policy.

Chapter 2

Current thinking on poverty, poverty concentration and deconcentration (a literature review)

Introduction

As an attempt to evaluate neighborhood effects on poor families, the MTO is a phenomenon of the public policy milieu of the late 20th century. Poverty concentration has long been viewed as a leading problem associated with urban areas in the United States with adverse effects spanning a variety of social, economic, and political outcomes for residents trapped in high poverty neighborhoods. Agents of social policy reform have been concerned with the proliferation of these neighborhoods throughout past decades. For example, in 1990 there were nearly 3,000 high-poverty neighborhoods, commonly classified as neighborhoods where at least 40% of the population lives below the federal poverty line, in the U.S. with about 8.5 million residents. Most common are ghettos (neighborhoods both segregated and poor) accounting for almost half of all high-poverty neighborhoods. In terms of age structure, children are more likely to live in ghettos and barrios than are adults. Poor people became increasingly concentrated in high-poverty neighborhoods between 1970 and 1990, which more than doubled in number during that time (however, it is important to note that most poor people do not reside in high-poverty neighborhoods). Most poverty concentration that took place between 1970 and 1990

was in central cities, but some occurred in inner-ring suburbs (Jargowsky, 1997). Poverty concentration continues to be regarded as a problem mostly associated with central cities.

Whether a phenomenon of central cities or inner-ring suburbs, concentrated poverty is viewed by many as regrettable. Statistics suggest that such areas are characterized by high rates of crime, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, school failure, and joblessness, and many analysts believe that at least in part the norms and culture of high poverty neighborhoods promote these problems (Lewis, 1998; Wilson, 1987). Consequently, many policy makers believe that high poverty neighborhoods endanger their inhabitants' successful integration into the economic and social milieu of middle-class America, and that poverty deconcentration is the solution to the problem.

Social scientists contend that socio-economically and/or racially mixed environments provide low-income families with access to resources such as education and networks that facilitate positive educational and employment trajectories (Leventhal, Brooks-Gunn, & Kamerman, 1997; Wilson, 1987). This kind of thinking has made housing mobility programs such as the MTO popular as a strategy through which to facilitate the integration of the poor into mainstream, middle-class America through poverty deconcentration. Other strategies include housing vouchers (Section 8 subsidies for existing housing), and urban revitalization with the hopes that middle class families will move into high poverty neighborhoods (i.e. Hope VI). Overall, these programs and initiatives reflect how poverty concentration has been viewed as a problem to be addressed during recent decades.

This popular notion is at least part of what propelled a paradigm shift in housing policy from place-based to people-based reform policies. Of course there are a host of other political and economic reasons for this shift, including ramifications of the historical failures of public housing in urban areas, the devolution of the federal government's responsibility to provide adequate housing for the poor, and the potential of housing mobility to stimulate private housing markets, to name a few. However, it is noteworthy that the shift from place-based to people-based reform policies was not that clear-cut. A host of policies continued to be place-based, such as the Section 8 New Construction, Section 8 Substantial Rehabilitation, Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, and a collection of remedial assistance (i.e. extra policing in targeted neighborhoods) and family support programs (i.e. education and training, child care) (Grigsby & Bourassa, 2004). These policies were designed to facilitate low-income families' "right to stay put", part of the welfare reform federal safety-net program enhancement, but also in response to suburban exclusionary zoning/rejection of new subsidized housing construction in suburbs. The rationale supporting MTO, on the other hand, was to revise the Section 8 system to make it more cost-effective, to break up concentrated poverty, and counter re-concentration.

As such, a strong factor in the shift from place-based to people-based (or project-based to tenant-based) housing assistance, rests on the assumption that concentrated poverty is a problem, breaking up concentrated poverty is the solution, and the dispersal of the poor is a good idea. However, the notion that social problems can be ameliorated through spatial solutions is nothing new. For example, an early example dating back to the late 19th century of a "spatial fix" to social problems was Ebenezer Howard's *Garden*

City concept (Hall, 1996). These “cities” (i.e. Letchworth and Welwyn in the U.K., Radburn and Sunny Side, Queens) constituted new suburban towns that were limited in size, surrounded by greenbelts to control their growth, and engendered a peaceful, “utopian”, community alternative to the Victorian slum city. A social visionary, Howard saw the Garden City as a perfect blend between town and country, free from slums, independently run by its citizens, and commonly owned land. His ideas inspired the ensuing company towns and even the New Urbanist communities. However, as wonderful as these communities may sound, there have been longstanding debates in planning and social science circles regarding whether such a spatial fix can present a workable solution to solving social problems. In fact, many Garden City inspired communities have been exclusionary, expensive, and not conducive to social reform.

To confirm that neighborhood context matters, the federal government initiated a large-scale housing mobility demonstration, the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration. A successor of the Gautreaux program, a court-ordered housing mobility program geared towards racial integration, the MTO is the nation’s largest and most ambitious housing mobility program. In social science and policy circles it is extolled as the best vehicle yet to test the hypothesis that housing mobility is an effective policy tool to rescue poor people trapped in high-poverty neighborhoods. A central feature of the MTO is random assignment of participating families to low poverty neighborhoods. These new neighborhoods are expected to provide a more opportunity- rich environment for adults and children than the old neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.

However, findings from the interim evaluation of the MTO demonstration are very mixed. The evidence does not strongly support the conclusion that the dispersal of

poor people from high- to low-poverty neighborhoods consistently produces beneficial change in key indicators such as education, problem behavior and employment. Might this mean that the housing mobility approach is not the panacea for poverty or poverty concentration? This chapter first examines the history and development of housing policy, drawing attention to the shift from place-based to people-based housing assistance programs. Specifically, it elucidates factors that have contributed to the end of federally funded public housing units, and characteristics of the subsequent housing voucher policy. Second, it provides an overview of the literature on poverty concentration and neighborhood effects, which offers an introduction to the sociological dynamics precipitating this shift, while introducing the dominant discourse at HUD that justified housing mobility programs that followed. Lastly, this chapter reviews empirical findings from a variety of housing mobility programs, which provide the context for the MTO – the largest housing mobility program to date. Specifically, I describe the Gautreaux program, which presents the catalyst for the MTO (based on its positive results), the Yonkers Scattered Site demonstration program, a different HUD approach to breaking up concentrated poverty (not viewed as having yielded positive results), and the MTO program and its interim findings (which offered some initial hopeful results).

The history and development of housing policy – a move towards mobility

The literature on housing policy, particularly the history and evolution of housing policy over the past decades, provides a crucial context for this dissertation. This policy evaluation illuminates factors that have contributed to the paradigm shift in housing policy from place-based to people-based housing programs and, ultimately, to housing mobility as a preferred solution to urban poverty concentration. The concept of housing

mobility has gained increasing support of policy makers over recent decades and produced the “ultimate test” of neighborhood effects – the MTO demonstration program. The following review of U.S. housing policy history reveals a variety of factors leading up to the MTO.

Public housing. A critical factor contributing to the shift from project-based to tenant-based housing assistance was the failure of public housing programs in the United States, which at least partially engendered urban poverty concentration. As a result, housing mobility has been seen as a palatable “solution” to breaking up concentrated poverty in urban areas and housing the poor. Originating in the 1937 Housing Act, public housing is the most widely known form of subsidized low-income housing in the United States (Goetz, 1993; O’Connor, 1999; Schwartz, 2006). The central goal of public housing was to provide “a decent home in a decent living environment for every American” (Baumain, Biles, & Szylvian, 2000). This Act also created the United States Housing Authority and authorized the establishment of Local Housing Authorities at the local municipal level (Radford, 2000).

The nation’s oldest low-income housing program, public housing launched at the tail end of the New Deal legislation. Following the Housing Act of 1949, a massive amount of low-income housing units was constructed in urban areas. This ironically coincided with the “urban renewal” program, itself intended to demolish urban slums and replace them with decent public housing (Goetz, 1993; Schwartz, 2006; Venkatesh, 2000; Von Hoffman, 2000). Through supply-side/project-based subsidies, the federal government facilitated the creation of 1,034,282 units between 1949 and 1979. However,

only 203,205 units were created between 1979 and 1993 (Schwartz, 2006), which reflects the change from place-based to people-based housing policy.

Public housing is often viewed as the most durable of the nation's low-income housing programs (Hays, 1995). Its public ownership (exclusively until the late 1990s) guarantees housing for low-income residents indefinitely compared to other subsidized housing, which often expires within 15 years. Public housing, however, does have some fundamental flaws. Many researchers assert that some of the most problematic aspects of public housing were rooted in the design of the program in the original legislation of 1937 (i.e. Von Hoffman, 1996). For example, public housing projects were built in areas where land values were lowest. Also, only the poorest residents could live in the projects, which contributed to "ghettoization" and associated stigmatization of residents. These problems were emphasized by the poor design of the buildings and the lack of proper management and maintenance (Schwartz, 2006). The salient, over-arching flaw, which contributed to a shift towards tenant-based policy first, and a paradigm shift towards housing mobility later, is that the siting of public housing in the U.S. has contributed to urban poverty concentration.

Vouchers. The major shift from a project-based to a tenant-based approach to housing policy culminated in the Housing Act of 1974, giving birth to the first national voucher program (Goetz, 1993; Hays, 1995; Schwartz, 2006). Originally known as the Section 8 Existing Housing Program, the intent of vouchers was to enable low-income households to search for housing that already exists in the market. Another reason is that vouchers are believed to provide access to a wider range of neighborhoods and housing for low-income households. Providing access to neighborhoods that have traditionally

been inaccessible to low-income households is a central goal of the mobility approach in general, and the MTO program specifically.

A voucher system would seem a necessary tool to facilitate residential mobility and to provide low-income and minority families with the ability to move from distressed communities to better neighborhoods. At least in theory, recipients who use Section 8 vouchers to access housing in the suburbs should fare better than in distressed urban areas, by entering safer surroundings, better schools and services, and better access to employment opportunities (McClure in Schwartz, 2006). However, some researchers contend that the Section 8 program has not achieved its full potential for promoting housing mobility and choice for minority families and children (Turner, Popkin, & Cunningham, 1999). In fact, some support the notion that the voucher program has not contributed to racial integration, which was a component of the Gautreaux Program, but instead created new all-black communities (Husock, 2003).

Some assert that the existing housing voucher program is among the most successful HUD programs particularly for families with children, helping to stabilize the lives of families receiving public assistance, and providing upward mobility through increased earnings and employment opportunities (i.e. Khadduri, 2003). However, much of the control of policy instruments such as housing vouchers, housing block grants, and low-income housing tax credits is left up to the states (Orlebeke, 2000) and, depending on their respective political economic contexts, may be susceptible to local biases. In other words, states have more control over the implementation of these instruments than the federal government.

Revitalization of urban neighborhoods. While there has been a shift in policy from project-based to tenant-based assistance, the public housing program has not been fully abandoned but transformed through new initiatives. With only 5 percent of the current public housing stock built after 1985, the current focus of the program is on replacing and transforming the most distressed units with smaller, mixed-income units (Schwartz, 2006). Central to the transformation of public housing is the Hope VI program, which was launched by Congress in 1993. The initial goal of this program was to demolish and redevelop distressed public housing. Larger goals included poverty deconcentration, economic integration, ‘new urbanism’, and inner-city revitalization (Popkin, Levy, Harris, Comey, & Cunningham, 2004; Schwartz, 2006).

While the Hope VI program is believed to have dramatically improved the distressed public housing it replaced, it has created significantly fewer rental units (Schwartz, 2006). Its low density and mixed-income design drastically cuts down housing opportunities for all original low-income public housing residents. For example, many residents who are not eligible to reside in the new housing receive vouchers, but some do not receive relocation assistance or new subsidies (Biles, 2000). Thus, displacement is a major problem in the redevelopment approach to public housing. In consequence, some fear that the negative trajectory of public housing in terms of a decline in units and increasing access restrictions will make it less available for those residents who need it most (Schwartz, 2006).

Generally, there are two rationales for a mixed-income development strategy: address urban poverty by combating racial and socioeconomic segregation and urban revitalization, though some argue that “mixed-income development is less about poverty

alleviation and much more about an approach to inner-city redevelopment that is economically lucrative and politically viable” (Joseph, 2006; Joseph, Chaskin, & Webber, 2007: 370). However, an examination of the theoretical foundations central to the mixed-income development strategy – social networks, social control, culture and behavior, political economy of place – failed to produce evidence that social interaction, network building, and role modeling have a positive effect on socioeconomic outcomes for low-income residents (*ibid.*).

In addition to shrinking the low-income housing stock, another concern with Hope VI is the difficulty of dispersing former residents without creating problems in their new neighborhoods (Biles, 2000). For example, stable middle-class neighborhoods were not receptive to former residents of the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago who were displaced through Hope VI transformation (*ibid.*). It is also unclear whether Hope VI projects are able to attract a mix of households (Husock, 2003). Some argue that the program perpetuates the negative perception of public housing in cities and that privately owned, unsubsidized housing should help the tax ratables for cities (*ibid.*).

Both tenant-based (Section 8) and project-based (Hope VI) policy instruments reflect reform movements, each bearing respective complexities associated with dispersal strategies and poverty de-concentration to facilitate income and/or racial integration. Scholarship on both approaches suggests that efforts to transform environments for low-income residents are cumbersome and potentially lead to re-segregation, displacement, and a continuation of the perpetual low-income housing shortage. Housing mobility, designed to de-concentrate poverty, has been tested and tried through numerous efforts in past decades. It has emerged as a product of popular assumptions about poverty

concentration and its effects on neighborhoods, topics that are discussed in the following literature review.

Poverty concentration and neighborhood effects

To better understand the implicit and explicit assumptions of social policy based on the relocation of poor people necessitates looking at the “problem”. A large body of literature discusses the effects of the “problem” of poverty concentration in urban areas. Much of the research suggests that the geographic concentration of low-income residents in central cities has adverse effects on a variety of social, economic, and political outcomes. One social effect, according to Lewis (1998), Wilson (1987), and others, is that poor people living in environments with high-poverty concentration develop a value system that differs from that of mainstream Americans. This leads to a “culture of poverty” or counter-culture, which contributes to the persistence of the underclass status of poor residents. According to this argument, poor residents develop “ghetto-specific behaviors” (Wilson, 1987) that are passed down to succeeding generations. Examples of such behavior include engaging in the underground economy and dependency on public assistance. These behaviors or “social pathologies” are said to prevent residents from successfully entering the American economy and as a result lead to a “cycle of poverty.” This cycle, it is argued, is difficult to break, and often leads to adverse outcomes for subsequent generations. However, the “culture of poverty” concept is contested by some researchers who find little evidence that there is a different value system between poor and non-poor individuals (Jones & Luo, 1999). It is also argued that the underlying assumptions about the individual behaviors of poor people precipitated deconcentration as a spatial fix that hides complex social, economic, and political problems such as

economic restructuring, suburban exclusionism, urban disinvestment, and other structural problems (Crump, 2002; Goetz, 2000). In the end, the discourse on poverty --images of poor people and moral panic -- seemingly shifted the policy focus from the causes of concentrated poverty towards the behavior of poor people.

Some studies show the adverse effects of poverty concentration on behavioral, health, educational, employment, and a host of other outcomes. For example, residents of high-poverty neighborhoods (neighborhoods in which 40 percent or more residents fall below the federal poverty line) face increased risk of dependence on public assistance and having a low sense of efficacy (Rosenbaum, Reynolds, & DeLuca, 2002), as well as higher rates of teenage pregnancies, obesity and other health related problems, dropping out of school, and engaging in criminal behavior.

Many researchers believe that compounding the problem of spatial concentration of poor people is the minority status of many inner-city residents. Massey and Denton (1998), Wilson (1987), O'Connor (2001) and others discuss the effects of the intersection between race and class in terms of spatial segregation. The result, they argue, is that poor minorities are even further isolated from mainstream America, so that minorities are viewed as "other" or foreign, bearing different or "un-American" values and ethics. This isolation and perceived difference may contribute to stereotyping, including, for example, the notions that poor people are poor because they are lazy, or that they "drain the system." Many argue that the economic and racial divide in the country is deepening and that isolation is increasingly contributing to separate societies (Dreier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2004; Massey, 2007).

By contrast, other scholars argue that high-poverty neighborhoods are relatively heterogeneous, and that residents are not as isolated from the American mainstream economy and values as the researchers cited above argue. Jargowsky (1997), for example, refutes the simplistic notion that there are neighborhood characteristics that create a neighborhood “culture,” but rather that there are certain characteristics attributable to poor people or minority groups regardless of geographic location. He suggests that neighborhood effects (“social pathologies”) cannot be demonstrated by looking at people’s behavior, and that further research (i.e., a longitudinal study that controls for selection bias) is necessary to prove that geographic location has an effect on resident’s behavior. Jargowsky (1997) also rejects the notion that residents of high poverty neighborhoods have a higher risk of becoming “welfare dependent” given that these payments contribute little to the total income in these neighborhoods, or that youth are more likely to drop out of school than their counterparts in low-poverty neighborhoods. He and others argue that general social and economic trends affect poor people the most, regardless of the neighborhoods they live in.

However, many contend that there *are* neighborhood effects of concentrated poverty, engendered by structural forces that disproportionately affect residents of high-poverty neighborhoods (Leventhal, Brooks-Gunn, & Kamerman, 1997). The poverty concentration effects are partially attributable, they argue, to certain key characteristics of poor neighborhoods that are detrimental to residents. One characteristic according to the “spatial mismatch” theory is that employment opportunities for low-income inner-city residents are scarce, and people are spatially removed from jobs. Wilson and others argue that a change in the overall opportunity structure is a key reason for poverty

concentration, which is amplified by the lack of access to suitable jobs. In addition, the physical environment, which is often characterized by abandoned buildings, poor quality housing, and vacant lots is not conducive to community and social control. Social control, a regulatory mechanism to instill societal values and norms, is not imparted to children and adolescents who can wander about without being noticed by the watchful eyes of their neighbors (Wilson, 1987).

Some scholars assert that there are methodological problems with the literature on neighborhood effects (Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Small & Newman, 2001). The contention is that most studies lack causal links and that the use of census tracts as proxies for neighborhoods is potentially inadequate. In terms of culture, a few recent approaches applied in urban poverty research include the “boundary work” approach attending to the relationship among race, culture, urban poverty, etc. Some argue that many recent studies in urban poverty are based on outmoded ideas of the 1960s and 1970s or that they are empirically weak or under-conceptualized, yet many also appear provocative and promising (Small & Newman, 2001).

Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley (2002) echo some of these concerns. Their research discusses the results of neighborhood studies that analyze linkages between social and institutional processes on the one hand and behavioral problems in young people on the other. With respect to effects of poverty concentration, the authors assert that little existing research measures causes of key social processes (i.e. collective efficacy and institutional capacity) or whether they are responsive to neighborhood interventions. They argue that problems with studies that measure neighborhood effects include the definition of neighborhood in terms of geographic boundaries, the dearth of

longitudinal studies of neighborhood temporal dynamics, and the individual selection bias of participants.

By contrast, the MTO demonstration project is viewed by many as the most promising study that measures neighborhood of poverty concentration effects, and the effectiveness of poverty deconcentration with regard to individual-level outcomes (Galster, 2002). A prevalent reason for this belief is the uniqueness of its research design involving large-scale implementation and genuine random assignment. Although results of an interim impacts evaluation have been mixed (Goetz, 2002), the MTO data are viewed as a suitable vehicle for empirical analyses, producing significant scholarly contributions to the housing mobility/neighborhood effects literature. In sum, housing mobility is believed to have positive long-term effects on poor people such as preparation to participate in the current labor economy, access to jobs, a positive social environment that helps especially young people adapt mainstream American values, and so on.

Findings from housing mobility studies

Studies of neighborhood effects are typically rooted in various sociological theories of neighborhood effects such as the contagion, the epidemic, the relative deprivation theories, and so on, which inform the studies' analytical models. A central theory that frames the MTO is the *collective socialization model*, where socially positive behavior is assumed to spread due to the interaction of individuals with role models or community networks (Dietz, 2002). In other words, poor people (movers) are expected to benefit from the existing social and community capital in wealthier neighborhoods. It is not clear, however, whether moving people has produced the desired "spill-over" effects.

Three housing mobility programs have been used to assess neighborhood effects on employment, education, and problem behavior outcomes of movers. These studies are the *Gautreaux Program*, the *Yonkers Program*, and the *Moving to Opportunity (MTO)* program. Particular emphasis is on the MTO program, which is the focus of this dissertation.

The Gautreaux program. The Gautreaux program preceded the MTO demonstration, and in fact, was the catalyst for the latter. The goal of Gautreaux was to provide residential mobility to socio-economically disadvantaged residents. This program resulted from a 1976 US Supreme Court decision that determined that the Chicago Public Housing Authority and HUD deliberately located public housing within African American neighborhoods with a high level of poverty (Rosenbaum & DeLuca, 2000). Between 1976 and 1998, public housing residents of Chicago (and those on the waiting list) were provided with Section 8 housing certificates or vouchers. They had the option to use the vouchers and locate in racially integrated neighborhoods. This gave them the opportunity to find affordable, market-rate housing, often located in the suburbs with the assistance of placement counselors. Over half of the 7000 participating families moved to mostly white suburbs of Chicago during the program. Participating families came from similar low-income black city neighborhoods and were assigned to city or suburb locations in a quasi-random manner. With counseling by the nonprofit Chicago Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, families were put on waiting lists for apartments, and placed as soon as an apartment became available, regardless of their locational preference. Survey results indicate that both groups (participants who remained in the city and those who moved to predominantly white suburbs) ended up

nearly identical in terms of age, education, marital status, and AFDC status (Rosenbaum, Reynolds, & DeLuca, 2002; Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000).

Social science researchers were able to compare the outcomes of those residents who moved to white middle-income suburbs with families moving to low-income black city neighborhoods. As all participants originated in the same low-income black city neighborhoods and met the same selection criteria, outcome for the suburban movers can be compared to those of city movers (Rosenbaum, 1995). Surveys and detailed interviews of randomly selected samples of adults and children were used for multivariate analyses (Rosenbaum, 1991; 1995).

Findings from the Gautreaux Program suggested that open housing opportunities worked well for those residents who decided to move to the suburbs. In particular, those who moved had improved educational and economic outcomes (Cashin, 2004; Rosenbaum, 1993). Several studies indicate that there were significant positive effects for participating households on job holding, educational attainment, and children's educational achievement (Rosenbaum, 1991, 1995; Rosenbaum & Popkin, 1991). Children and youth who moved to the suburbs had a higher likelihood of staying in school, experienced increases in high school graduation (5 percent drop-out versus 20 percent drop-out) and college enrollment rates (54 percent versus 21 percent) as compared to city movers (Rosenbaum, 1993; Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000). Their move into racially integrated communities and exposure to less segregated neighborhoods over a period of seven to ten years resulted in improved educational performance (Popkin et al., 2000). Adult movers were 14 percent more likely to retain employment than their city comparisons (Rosenbaum, 1995; Rosenbaum, 1991), though wages earned were

comparable with their city counterparts (Popkin, Buron, Levy, & Cunningham, 2000). These findings support the argument that there is indeed a “geography of opportunity” and that where individuals live affects their opportunities and life outcomes (Keels, Duncan, Deluca, Mendenhall, & Rosenbaum, 2005; Rosenbaum, 1995).

While Gautreaux made a significant contribution to the housing mobility research in terms of measuring the individual effects of neighborhood context, it has some limitations. The program was relatively small-scale, and the quasi-experimental nature of the research design, as typical, makes it difficult to confirm causality. Another weakness is that racial composition of the neighborhood, not socio-economic composition determined receiving neighborhoods. In addition, the lack of true random assignment to neighborhoods, and placement of some participants in particular neighborhoods or communities limits the generalizability of the study. That is, individuals had to be willing to move to the neighborhoods assigned. Finally, the sample of enrolled families used for many of the analyses is often small, which limits representation and statistical power.

The Yonkers program. This program, also called the Yonkers scattered-site public housing initiative, resulted from a 1985 court case finding of deliberate racial segregation linking the siting of public housing to the attendance areas of public schools. As a result of this case, 200 units of public housing were constructed scattered across seven sites of mostly-white communities with varying degrees of density, and populated by minority residents (Briggs & Aidala, 1999; Johnson, Ladd, & Ludwig, 2002). The Yonkers Municipal Housing Authority chose tenants of the scattered-site public housing evenly from a pool of current public housing residents and from the waiting list for public

housing. Families that met income, family composition, payment record, and housekeeping requirements were chosen by a lottery, and moved to neighborhoods that were much more advantaged than the ones from which they originated. Their new homes were publicly funded townhouse developments in eight middle class, primarily White neighborhoods. The receiving neighborhoods had much lower poverty and youth unemployment rates, for example (Briggs & Aidala, 1999). The “stayer” group consists of families who entered the lottery and were not selected to move and families who did not enter the lottery and did not move (Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2005).

Subsequent research analyzed the effects of this mobility program on its participants. Many of these analyses are based on survey data focusing on a range of outcomes measured approximately two years following relocation, as well as structured interviews with household heads and youth. A demographically similar group of families that remained in the original locations was interviewed for comparison. Multiple regression analyses were performed to examine various outcomes for different youth cohorts from experimental and control groups. Results from the (early) analyses of the Yonkers program showed mixed outcomes for the different youth cohorts analyzed. Effects of moving to middle-income neighborhoods were positive for 8-18-year-old youth, in that they experienced less victimization, disorder, and access to illegal substances compared to their high-poverty neighborhood counterparts. The move from high to low-poverty neighborhoods resulted in less behavior and family relationship problems for youth ages 8-9 than their city matches. A similar effect was reported for delinquent behavior. For 16-18 year olds, however, the effect was opposite, whereas

movers had more problems than stayers. The 10-15-year-old cohort experienced only marginal effects, in terms of the aforementioned outcomes (Fauth et al., 2005).

Little evidence suggests that movers had significant interaction with their new neighbors, gained access to social capital, or experienced socioeconomic benefits (Briggs, 1997). This is most likely due to the geographical proximity within which movers and stayers were located. Most movers continued to attend the same schools and churches as their counterparts, thus lack of geographic distance between groups factors into the study results (Briggs, 1998).

This study has contributed to the housing mobility research, in that it presents a multi-year effort to understand the range of social and economic effects of the Yonkers court order as a housing mobility intervention. However, the study has a number of limitations worth noting. The lack of baseline data and non-randomized nature of the stayer sample leaves room for bias in the interpretation of the results. In addition, the sample may not be representative of the public housing resident population, which undermines the generalizability of the findings, as does the small sample size.

The MTO demonstration program. HUD articulated the MTO objective as follows:

The Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration [seeks to measure] benefits [that] can be achieved by improving the neighborhoods of poor families... to understand the impact these moves have had on housing, health, employment, education, mobility, welfare receipt, and delinquency.³

The Moving to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration was inspired by the Gautreaux experiment, which it expanded on in two ways: a) it was a large-scale implementation

³ MTO Interim Impacts Evaluation, by Orr, Feins, Jacob, Beecroft, Sanbonmatsu, Katz, Liebman, and Kling, 2003

(involving multiple cities), and b) it employed genuine random assignment (it is the first random assignment experiment to test a half a century's worth of theory on the effects of neighborhoods on children and families). For these reasons, the MTO study eclipses all prior research in terms of its importance. It bears enormous theoretical importance, and the data drawn from this study provide new insight on the interaction between environment (neighborhood) and individual outcomes.

The MTO demonstration is a unique random assignment research study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 1992/93 Congress contributed \$70 million in Section 8 rental assistance to the program. In addition, housing authorities and nonprofit counseling agencies contributed housing vouchers to the program. Conducted in five demonstration sites (Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York) 4,608 families participated in the study between 1994 and 1998. The housing authorities of these cities and local nonprofit counseling organizations recruited very low-income families to take part in this demonstration. One condition of participation was that the families had to live in public housing or private assisted housing in areas of cities with poverty rates of at least 40 percent. Another condition was that they had very low income as well as children below age eighteen.

The participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: the experimental group, the Section 8 group, and the control group. In terms of racial composition, two-thirds of the sample is African American, and one-third is Hispanic. Those families participating in the experimental group received housing vouchers for neighborhoods where less than 10 percent of the residents were poor. Local counseling agencies helped families in the experimental group to find and lease apartments in these neighborhoods.

Participants assigned to the Section 8 group were permitted to use their vouchers for housing in locations they chose themselves. Participants assigned to the control group remained in public housing or received housing assistance to live in projects.

One benefit of the MTO research design is that the data collected over the duration of the project can be analyzed to measure changes in the families' circumstances based on the MTO intervention. Data for the statistically comparable cohorts can be tested to analyze whether moving to low-poverty neighborhoods leads to positive changes in the families' lives. There are some weaknesses of the MTO research design. Most studies are based upon unique designs and are specific to a particular site of the program. For instance, there were differences in breadth, depth, and intensity of counseling services across the sites (Feins, McInnis, and Popkin, 1997), which may have affected the program outcome (i.e., lease-up rate, adjustment into the new neighborhood, etc.). Thus sample sizes are usually small (and specific to a particular site), which limits generalizability of findings. In addition, if differences were observed between groups, it is not clear *why* and *how* changes took place. More information about neighborhood processes that directly or indirectly influence outcomes is needed to assess mediating effects and causality.

An interim impacts evaluation published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in September 2003 (Orr et al., 2003) assessed MTO's effects with regard to mobility, housing, and neighborhood quality; adult and child physical and mental health, child educational achievement; youth delinquency and risky behavior; adult and youth employment and earnings; household income and public assistance receipt. The following are results from the interim report with regard to the MTO effects

in mobility, housing and neighborhood, as well as effects on children (including health, education, and behavior).

Prior to summarizing the results of the interim analysis, several points should be considered. First, it is important to note that the poverty level of the neighborhood is the most fundamental mediating factor in the MTO interim study. Second, the interim report centers on the experiences of sample individual family members, not entire family units. Third, the MTO intervention had different outcomes on the sample group of children between the ages of 5 and 19. Fourth, the data collected for the interim report are qualitative and quantitative, measuring outcomes and mediating factors.

With regard to geographic mobility, the interim report suggests that the MTO had positive effects on families in the experimental and Section 8 groups. Relative to the control group families, these families were able to live in lower poverty neighborhoods with their housing vouchers. These neighborhoods, for example, had higher shares of educated and employed adults, as well as two-parent families and homeowners. The Section 8 group experienced about half of the gains in these neighborhood attributes, while control group members had the least change in geographic mobility. Most of its members remained or relocated into high poverty neighborhoods.

In terms of housing, neighborhood, and safety, the experimental and the Section 8 groups experienced positive program effects due to the MTO intervention. However, results show that the experimental group experienced adverse effects in the areas of paying utility bills and housing discrimination when compared to the control group. One area of particular interest is the outcome of health of MTO participants. The interim

evaluation shows that moving from high poverty to low poverty neighborhoods had beneficial outcomes for sample adults. Not surprisingly, the reduction of crime and stress associated with criminal activity in the neighborhoods has positive effects on families. These include a reduction in obesity, hypertension, and anxiety. Surprisingly, for children, program outcomes were not startlingly positive. The interim report shows that children did not experience an overall reduction in asthma or physical injury after moving to a low poverty neighborhood. However, there appeared to be a variation in impact between boys and girls, which is described below.

Impacts of the MTO intervention on participating adults (mostly black and Hispanic females) were mixed as well. One study (Kling, Liebman, Katz, & Sanbonmatsu, 2004) shows that the MTO intervention has had no significant overall effects on adult employment, earnings, or public assistance receipt. However, the MTO intervention did have significant mental health benefits, as well as some physical health benefits (reduction in obesity) but not on other aspects of physical health (i.e. asthma, hypertension).

The impacts on delinquency and risky behavior among youth are particularly interesting. The interim report shows that the experimental and Section 8 groups experienced a slight improvement in outcome based on the new environment. What is interesting about these findings is that there is a substantial difference between boys and girls in delinquent and risky behavior associated with the move to a low poverty neighborhood. This suggests a possible interaction between neighborhood change and gender--for instance the increase in behavior problems and property crime arrests for

boys in the experimental group, but not for girls. These findings are notable, as there are large social costs associated with such behavior that affect the larger social environment.

MTO impacts on children's educational achievement at the time of the interim evaluation were not significant. The authors suggest that four years after the inception of the program may have been too soon to observe meaningful, positive consequences. Positive consequences on children's educational attainment may take much longer to develop. The MTO impacts on employment and earnings were also insignificant at the time of the interim evaluation. These results deserve further analyses. While some of the interim results are statistically significant, they do not provide a solid foundation for policy change. The final MTO report, nine to twelve years after random assignment, will show whether a change in neighborhood significantly affects the well-being of children.

The authors suggest that through MTO intervention female youth in the experimental group have had positive effects on delinquent behavior, but mixed effects on the behavior of male youth. Differences in arrest rates have been modest in the Section 8 group, which correlates with the fact that the Section 8 treatment produces more modest changes in neighborhood characteristics. Aside from the difference in reaction to discrimination, boys and girls might differ in adaptation to new environments in general (Kling, Ludwig, & Katz, 2005).

Social capital and the weaknesses of the MTO. As I have described in earlier sections, the underlying assumption of the MTO is that poor neighborhoods lack the intellectual, cultural, and social capital to assure successful attachment of low income youth and adults to middle-class society. Moving poor people to affluent neighborhoods,

advocates hope, allows poor people to absorb some of the values of their middle class neighbors. Such an assumption itself rests upon two unexamined propositions: 1) that poor people give up little in the move from their poor neighborhoods, and 2) that they will gain ready access to social capital in their new neighborhoods.

With regard to racial diversity, many researchers in the social sciences (Costa & Kahn, 2003; Hero, 2004; Putnam, 2000) assert that racial diversity may make it more difficult to accumulate social capital. This is because people of different racial backgrounds may not bind to engage in collective, civic activities, or share norms of behavior, trust, and cooperation. Much of the social capital literature suggests that there is an inverse and substantial relationship between social capital and racial diversity in the U.S. Alesina and Ferrara (2000), for instance, found that people's tendency to self-segregate prevents the building of social capital between different racial groups. On the other hand, some research suggests that social capital *can* be accumulated in diverse group settings, and that the accumulation of social capital depends on the size of the individual groups or level of racial fragmentation. For example, if various groups are large enough to form their own interest groups then they can have high levels of civic participation (a main contribution to social capital) within a racially fragmented area (Costa & Kahn, 2003).

In terms of economic diversity, some researchers posit that trust, an indicator that measures social capital, is in part linked to economic status, whereby the level of economic inequality is a strong predictor of trust (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). They find that higher levels of socioeconomic inequality lead to less trust. Research on MTO effects on academic achievement indicates that the MTO did not

significantly improve academic achievements for those children in the experimental and Section 8 groups (Sanbonmatsu, Kling, Duncan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006). These findings align with previous research concerning the “relative deprivation” models, which suggest that poor families do better in low-income neighborhoods because they do not experience the level of discrimination and resentment they would in low-poverty neighborhoods. These examples might help explain why MTO results have been mixed and lead to the stipulations that both racial diversity and poverty level of the “new” neighborhoods mediate the adaptation of poor people into lower poverty neighborhoods.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has provided a critical context for this dissertation, in terms of providing the history of the shift from place-based to people-based housing assistance, as well as the social science research that has shown an increase in poverty concentration into high-poverty neighborhoods and its detrimental effects on the well-being and opportunities of its residents. It is precisely the combination of these factors that gave rise to mobility programs such as Gautreaux and the MTO. In addition, this chapter illuminates how the elite experts (HUD and social scientists) have increasingly framed the problem as one of concentration and the solution of dispersal, while suppressing alternatives such as place-based reform initiatives. Several housing mobility programs preceded the MTO with some promising results for poor families who moved to better neighborhoods, however, research on these programs did not fully reflect the positivist science model. This is where the MTO was believed to overcome such shortcomings by offering a more scientific research design, whereby HUD hoped to overcome such scientific shortcomings. However, the MTO interim results did not offer hard-fast

evidence of the influence of neighborhoods on participants' outcomes. Prior to investigating the process of policy deliberation that has produced the MTO -- the key empirical contribution of this dissertation -- the following chapter elucidates just how focused HUD and the social science world was on producing positivist, technocratic research evidence with the MTO data. To that end, I review a plethora of quantitative studies conducted at the MTO sites, in a variety of domains.

Chapter 3

The MTO demonstration – a vehicle for empirical analyses

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the MTO research design including the data it produced, followed by a review of existing empirical MTO research. As such, it serves to illuminate that the MTO data indeed served one of its central, explicit purposes, and furthered research on neighborhood effects based on the assumption that MTO's randomized research design would enable researchers to look at the outcomes of this study and attribute changes in the families' circumstances to the MTO intervention. Because the three groups of participating families were statistically "the same" at entry into the study, researchers would be able to test whether moving to low-poverty neighborhoods led to positive changes in the families' lives. To this date, many researchers have statistically analyzed the MTO data, contributing a large body of empirical scholarship to the neighborhood effects literature which, as I discuss in the following chapters, was a central purpose of the demonstration.

HUD was focused on producing positivist, technocratic research evidence and proof that neighborhood effects buttresses housing mobility policy. However, the following review of the MTO research design and the subsequent MTO data analysis suggests that across all domains the findings were ambivalent, and researchers were prompted to consider and speculate the normative concerns of MTO families. Thus, MTO's design and subsequent studies is indicative of HUD's normative assumptions

about low-income voucher recipients, for example that experimental families would successfully relocate into non-poor neighborhoods, assimilate into their new environments, and would form new social networks. The effects of participants' normative realities, such as disruption of social networks, adjustment difficulties such as feelings of alienation and isolation, as well as difficulties imposed by locational restraints had not been considered. To that end, this chapter serves to offer the fruits of MTO and its ambiguous results as a catalyst for the subsequent analysis of the process of policy deliberation.

Description of the MTO research design

Participants Time 1. Between 1994 and 1998, 4,248 families were chosen to participate in the MTO demonstration. Included in the families were 3,537 youth between the ages of 12-19 and 3,146 children between the ages of 5-11. The five demonstration sites -- Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, New York and Los Angeles -- contained five of the nation's largest public housing authorities. The families selected to participate in the experiment had to meet certain criteria. First, they had to live in public housing or private assisted housing projects in concentrated poverty neighborhoods within these cities. Concentrated poverty means that at least 40 percent of the residents fall below the federal poverty line. Second, they had to have very low incomes. Finally, they had to have children under the age of 18.⁴ Families were randomly assigned to

⁴ According to the MTO participant baseline survey, most participants were African American (62.6 %) or Hispanic (30.4%) and 91.6 percent of the families had female heads of households. Participating families had three children, on average; an average annual total household income of \$9314; and 61.6 percent relied on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as the primary source of income. With regard to education, 83.8 percent of heads of households were not in school at the start of the experiment, 40.6 percent held a high school diploma as their highest level of education, and 39.7 percent had neither high school diploma nor GED. In terms of employment, 72.2 percent of heads of households were not working,

either experimental, Section 8, or control groups. They were then asked to complete a survey revealing their reasons for joining the experiment. Most participants reported that they joined the MTO to escape drugs, gangs, and crime victimization in their neighborhoods. Other reasons included improved schooling for their dependants, as well as improved housing conditions.

Participants Time 2. In order to measure mid- and long-term outcomes, HUD tracked all participating MTO families. Public and private automated databases, mailings to families, and two surveys conducted in 1997 and 2000 tracked families (Feins & Shroder, 2005). The attrition of families at the time of the interim evaluation caused the count of families to drop to 3,675 families from the 4, 248 baseline.

Measures. Qualitative data collected on participants included in-depth interviews with adults and youth, as well as neighborhood observations. Quantitative survey data included surveys of households, youth, and children, as well as achievement testing of youth and children. Administrative data included social security information, food stamp data, unemployment insurance data, school data, census data, and adult and juvenile arrest and criminal disposition data (Orr et al., 2003). The data collected for participants varied according to participant age. Adults were interviewed for approximately 65 minutes on topics including housing and neighborhood characteristics, education and training, employment and earnings, income and public assistance, outlook and social networks, health, household composition, child education, child health, child behavior

16.1 percent were employed full-time, and 11.6 percent were employed part-time (Feins and Shroder, 2005).

problems, child time use, and MTO experience. Interviewers directly measured the adult's blood pressure. No educational testing was performed.

Youth between the ages of 12 and 19 were interviewed for approximately 30 minutes on topics including attitudes towards school, ties to neighborhood, involvement in afterschool and community activities, health and risky behavior. Youth were asked to complete an educational achievement test (Woodcock-Johnson Revised Battery).

Children ages 8-11 were interviewed for approximately 15-20 minutes. They were asked questions pertaining to school, health, the neighborhood, and family support.

Interviewers recorded direct measurements for the entire group of 5-11 year olds, recording their height and weight. This group, as well, was asked to complete aforementioned achievement tests (Orr et al., 2003).

MTO quantitative research

Beginning in 1998, researchers used the MTO data to test neighborhood effects in a variety of domains. Most studies used MTO baseline data, follow-up phone surveys, government administrative data on public information in areas such as crime, education, and health, local, and state administrative records on MTO participants, census data on neighborhood quality, local crime statistics, etc. Early efforts to quantify results from the demonstration perhaps reflect the tremendous level of anticipation to produce quantifiable and scientific "evidence" of neighborhood effects. A central, overarching question of the research described below is whether MTO made a difference in these domains (with implicit hopes for MTO effects, that is, that movers were better off than stayers). Later studies were based on the MTO Interim Impacts Evaluation (Orr et al.,

2003), in addition to baseline survey data and administrative data to examine the effects of the MTO intervention at midpoint of the demonstration. The results of early MTO and interim MTO data research are described below (organized by substantive domains).

Crime and delinquent behavior

Early studies of some MTO sites suggest that families who relocated reported lower crime and murder rates after their move (Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit, 1998; Pettit, McLanahan, and Hanratty, 1999). Ludwig, Duncan, and Hirschfield (2001) found that the juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes dropped significantly for MTO movers compared to the control group, but the arrest rate for juvenile property crimes may have increased. These findings, however, are not generalizable as the MTO participants are a self-selected group of public housing residents, but researchers are hopeful that deconcentration policies can influence the overall volume of violent crime. While in some instances the rates of violent juvenile crime for MTO movers dropped (Goering, Feins, and Richardson, 2002; Ludwig, Duncan, and Ladd, 2003), adolescent movers, compared to the controls, were arrested for property crimes at a higher rate than those in the control group.

Research by Kling, Ludwig, and Katz (2005) suggests that the experimental group who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods had different outcomes for female and male youth with regard to criminal behavior than those who remained in high-poverty neighborhoods. Specifically, they found “neighborhood effects” for male youth who experienced more property crime arrests than their control counterparts. Explanations offered are that minority males suffer to a greater extent from racial discrimination than

females, and adapt differently to change than females. Another explanation offered by the authors is that male youth are more likely to exploit property crime opportunities in wealthier neighborhoods than are females (economic theory). The authors note that

standard models of neighborhood effects emphasizing the contagion effects of social interactions or the beneficial effects of neighborhood institutions and adult role models in more affluent areas do not explain why problem behavior and property crime should increase for experimental- group males relative to controls over the medium-term. For these outcomes, the mechanisms appear to be more complex than postulated in such models (ibid.117).

Research by Ludwig and Kling (2007) attempts to (empirically) test the contagion theory to explain the criminal behavior of individuals, for example contextual effect or attributes of neighborhood residents such as SES (Wilson, 1987), local order or “collective efficacy” (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997), and correlated effects imposed by local institutions (i.e. Jencks and Mayer, 1990). This research does not support the contagion hypothesis. Instead, it suggests that across-neighborhood variation in arrests for violent crimes in the MTO sample is mostly explained by neighborhood racial segregation, presumably because drug market activity is more common in high-minority neighborhoods.

Welfare receipt, employment and earnings

While some studies indicate a positive economic effect on MTO movers such as increased work hours and earnings (Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit, 1998), as well as a higher neighborhood employment rate (Pettit, McLanahan, and Hanratty, 1999), others found that, neither experimental nor Section 8 groups showed a systematic impact on welfare receipt or employment (Katz, Kling, and Liebman, 2000). Rosenbaum and Harris (2000, 2001) hypothesize that the lack of economic success for MTO movers was

due to the general economic downturn rather than just human capital and family arrangement factors. But, MTO research at a different site (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2001) suggests that employment had increased for all MTO groups, but increases in employment for movers were more profound. Similarly, welfare receipts dropped for all three groups, but mostly for movers, and family income improved for all three groups (likely due to improvements in the economy). A summary of the early, single-site research (Goering, Feins, and Richardson, 2002), however, indicates no evidence of early effects on wages and employment. But, Ludwig, Duncan, and Ladd (2003) suggest that MTO adults were less likely to be on welfare than controls.

Thus, while some studies showed moderate improvements for voucher groups on their economic circumstances such as an increased chance of exiting and remaining off welfare (Clampet-Lundquist and Massey, 2008; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Ludwig, Duncan, and Pinkston, 2005), most did not indicate significant program effects on adult employment, household income, or per-person income (employment status, employment with health insurance, weekly earnings above poverty and at main job, etc.) (ibid.; Kling, Liebman, and Katz, 2007; Turney, Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, and Duncan, 2006). Moreover, no significant differences in employment levels between experimental and control groups were found.

Explanations offered for the lack of discernable program effects include that MTO participants self-selected and as such were not representative of most public housing residents, and that respondents' relationship to the labor market was different for experimental and control groups. As such, the "human capital" barriers that existed prior to experimental group moves into low-poverty neighborhoods constitute one explanation

for their lack of employment or earning gains. Another factor was that most jobs across groups were in retail or health care, and the informal networks that many rely on for these types of jobs did not exist in the low-poverty neighborhoods (differences between their own human capital and the education and skills of their new neighbors). Moreover, the experimental group did not have the same access to public transit as the control group which may have affected employment and earnings of these families.⁵ Finally, many concur that the ambiguous short-term MTO effects on employment was that moving might disrupt important existing social networks that provided residents with employment leads and connections that would take a long time to re-establish elsewhere (Katz, Kling, and Liebman, 2001; Turney, Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, & Duncan, 2006). This refutes Kain's spatial mismatch theory, which would have implied that poor residents would fare better in low-poverty neighborhoods after an average of five years since random assignment.

Education

The MTO results on education were similarly mixed. Some studies suggest that there were positive outcomes on experimental children and youth, for example improved graduation rates (Pettit, McLanahan, and Hanratty, 1999), a slower rate of relative decline in children's educational performance than the control group, increased grade retention for teens (Ludwig, Ladd, and Duncan, 2001a, 2001b), higher educational test scores (Goering, Feins, and Richardson, 2002), higher test scores for young children (Ludwig, Duncan, and Ladd, 2003), and on female but not male youth educational

⁵ Many experimental MTO adults sampled in this study were employed in the health care sector primarily located in urban centers they left. In addition, infrequent suburban bus schedules made it more difficult for adults who did not own a car to seek employment further away.

performance (Kling, Liebman, and Katz, 2007). Other studies indicate that there were no meaningful differences between the groups, for example with regard to older children's reading test scores (Ludwig, Ladd, and Duncan, 2001a, 2001b), and test scores for any group of children ages 6 to 20, about four to seven years after randomization (Sanbonmatsu, Kling, Duncan, and Brooks-Gunn, 2006).

Negative findings include relatively large increases in the proportion of suspensions or school expulsions compared to the control group (Ludwig, Ladd, and Duncan, 2001a, 2001b) indicating that the MTO effect on educational outcomes was more evident for young children than for teens. Based on the mixed results on educational outcomes of MTO participants across age groups, the authors recommend that policymakers could improve the academic outcomes of poor children in high-poverty urban neighborhoods without relocating them to lower-poverty areas. However, they also suggest that there could be reasons beyond improving educational outcomes for children to relocate poor families. They propose that policies aimed at integrating poor children across schools is an alternative to relocating entire families, if peer interactions explain MTO program impacts. A potential concern remained that costs and benefits of large-scale mobility programs on families in low-income and middle class neighborhoods were unknown. Sanbonmatsu, Kling, Duncan, and Brooks-Gunn (2006) who found that children's reading and math scores did not improve, nor did their behavior or school problems, school success or engagement⁶ suggests that interventions focused exclusively on neighborhoods rather than on factors directly related to the child, family, and school are unable to solve the myriad problems of children growing up in poverty. In spite of

⁶ The study included 5,000 children aged six to 20, and consistent with the child educational literature, modest gains were observed for elementary school children who are more impressionable.

developmental theory, which posits that younger versus older children have a more rapid cognitive development and greater ability to adapt to new social environments, the authors were particularly surprised by the lack of MTO impact on younger children.

One research team offers the following explanation for the mixed educational results: “given the social distance that likely separates the mover children with their new teachers and classmates -- especially in the case of the MTO children -- it is perhaps not entirely surprising that such problems might arise in the short term” (Rosenbaum and Harris, 2000:23). Another research team infers that changing schools and peer networks, in addition to changing neighborhoods may be especially stressful for the MTO experimental adolescents (Leventhal, Fauth, and Brooks-Gunn, 2005). They also suspect that research showing positive associations between educational outcomes and middle-class neighborhood residency (neighborhood effect) may be influenced by unmeasured school-level characteristics (i.e. quality, norms, composition), and that these may outweigh “neighborhood effects”.

Safety

Several MTO studies analyze the outcome on safety, one of the primary reasons for families to participate in the MTO. Most studies indicate that MTO and Section 8 families both reported improvements in perceived neighborhood safety after their move (Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit, 1998; Katz, Kling, and Liebman, 2000; Rosenbaum and Harris, 2000; Rosenbaum, Harris, and Denton, 1999). As such, these studies report a range of positive effects on families who moved to new neighborhoods, including declines in fear, less social disorder, greater personal safety, and greater social

organization -- measured by safety, crime and violence (Rosenbaum, 2001). Rosenbaum (2001) claims that, “although the long-term evaluations of MTO will help us to better understand the presence and nature of neighborhood effects on many other social and economic outcomes, it is clear that, in the short term, the MTO program has helped families gain access to neighborhoods that can possibly enhance family well-being and the future life chances of youth” (ibid.19). Kling, Liebman, and Katz (2001) suggest that fear of random violence and the safety of children were significant factors for MTO participants in Boston. They found that voucher recipients spent less time monitoring their children, leading the researchers to hypothesize that needing to monitor children for safety reasons and out of fear of crime in their original neighborhoods had a negative impact on children’s development and economic self-sufficiency of the parents. A different study (Rosenbaum, Harris, and Denton, 1999) explains that families who moved into areas of less concentrated poverty were more at ease in their new neighborhoods, had reduced their apprehension, and could relinquish previously adopted defensive behavior patterns. This research suggests that more children in the voucher group were left unsupervised after school when compared to the control group, which may be a function of parents being less afraid to leave their child unattended or, alternatively of their inability to have access to childcare.

Health

Most studies indicate that the MTO intervention has had positive effects on health related issues. Findings include reduced emergency hospital care for both mover groups after the move (Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit, 1998), health improvement for household heads of both mover families compared to the control group (Goering, Feins, and Richardson,

2002; Katz, Kling, and Liebman, 2000), positive impacts on children of the experimental group in terms of the frequency of injuries and asthma attacks (Katz, Kling, and Liebman, 2001), an increase in tranquility and better health for household heads as compared to their control counterparts (*ibid*). Other studies suggest positive effects on children and adult mental health, for example less depression and anxiety (Katz, Kling, and Liebman, 2000; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2001, 2003). Some research suggests mixed results, for example, indicating some improvements of one or the other groups of voucher boys' health, but no significant program effects on girls within either voucher group (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2003), and no discernable effects on adult physical health four to seven years after the MTO intervention, but improved mental health for adults and physical health in female youth, yet adverse effects for male youth (Kling, Liebman, and Katz, 2007).

Behavior problems

MTO results regarding youth behavior problems were mixed. Katz, Kling, and Liebman (2000, 2001) found that the experimental and Section 8 group boys had fewer behavior problems compared to girls. Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2001) found that youth problem behavior such as hitting someone or destroying someone's property did not decrease with the move into new neighborhoods. Possible explanations, according to the researchers, are that youth maintain strong ties to the old neighborhoods and peers (deviant peers, less community control), and/or the possibility that youth may gravitate towards deviant peer groups in the new neighborhoods. A different study indicates that MTO showed short-run improvements of voucher boys' behavior, but no significant program effects on girls within either voucher group, and the largest effects related to

behavior problems, benefiting boys and children between 8 and 13 years of age (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Housing mobility

Several studies analyzed aspects of housing mobility, such as housing mobility processes for MTO experimental and Section 8 families. Some studies suggest that experimental families relied heavily on support services for moving into low poverty neighborhoods, and that families admitted they probably would not have moved into these environments had it not been required (Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit, 1998; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2001). In fact, Some studies (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Shroder, 2002) showed that MTO locational constraint (low-poverty neighborhood for Experimental group members) significantly depressed lease-up (despite effective counseling), inferring that those who leased-up were probably more motivated by the impact of the demonstration on ultimate outcomes such as education, employment, health, etc. A different study, on the other hand, suggests that most families who received vouchers were able to find suitable housing and leased-up (moved to non-poor neighborhoods), but that the non-profit organization's performance was inconsistent (Matulef and Pastor, 1999). In addition, MTO experimental families experienced some level of anxiety relating to their move into the new neighborhoods, particularly with regard to the low-poverty factor of the new neighborhoods, the search and the moving cost. These researchers posit that MTO may not be well aligned with HUD programs that encourage geographic stability. In other words, housing mobility programs run counter to current place-based reform initiatives such as Hope VI. Snell and Duncan (2006) posit that the presence of children posed a hindrance to families trying to move through housing

voucher programs, but that there were no significant differences in lease-up rates between Section 8 and experimental group families, despite counseling services for the latter group.

A different study (Rosenbaum, Harris, and Denton, 1999) found that MTO experimental families were able to find better quality housing than the Section 8 group. Though the Section 8 families preferred mixed settings and to navigate the private rental market on their own, they disproportionately moved to mostly black neighborhoods. The authors suggest that this could be due to a lack of Section 8 rental opportunities for poor and minority households in “better” neighborhoods. On the other hand, Katz, Kling, and Liebman (2001) found that, in terms of mobility, a greater share of Section 8 group participants than members of the experimental group moved out of high-poverty neighborhoods, but those in the experimental group that did make such moves were more likely to integrate to low-poverty suburban communities.

While Feins (2003) found that the MTO experimental group families lived in “better” neighborhoods than the other groups with respect to concentrated poverty and opportunity structures, Clampet-Lundquist and Massey (2008) note that many experimental families did not stay in the low-poverty neighborhoods long enough to reap the benefits of social and economic outcomes. They claim that most MTO compliers moved to segregated rather than integrated neighborhoods – an important proxy for political, social, and economic resources. The emphasis solely on class and not on race in neighborhood was built into the design of MTO. In fact, a third of MTO compliers lived

in poor, segregated neighborhoods four years after randomization, which diluted program effects on individual outcomes. They suspect that,

the degree of racial integration in the baseline neighborhood might make an individual more or less comfortable about choosing to move to an integrated neighborhood. Motivations for mobility (measured at baseline) might also predict different outcomes. If, for example, a person is mainly moving to escape the drugs in the neighborhood, she may be satisfied with moving to a neighborhood that is still within the same urban school district, but less drug-ridden (ibid.122).

Thus, they claim that the MTO was not useful for the detection of strong neighborhood effects because families who were assigned vouchers moved to racially segregated neighborhoods, or decided not to use them, and movers only had to stay for one year in the non-poor neighborhoods, after which substantial outmigration occurred. They recommend that keeping vouchers geographically specific would have the greatest benefits for low-income families.

Ludwig et al. (2008), on the other hand, condone the actual MTO program design's feature that allowed MTO experimental families to move again after complying with living in low-poverty neighborhoods for one year based on adjustment difficulties these movers would likely face, for example by giving up their social networks and/or difficulties integrating into low-poverty communities. They state that, "the actual MTO program design is likely to be at least as intensive as any mobility program that could actually be implemented given current political (and ethical) constraints" (ibid.154), and further, that the difference between noncompliers and compliers was probably not accidental. Moreover, they posit that there was not enough knowledge about place-based interventions over people-based interventions, justifying the latter policy approach.

If policy makers focus on changing the wrong set of neighborhood attributes, the impacts of a place-based intervention could be less beneficial than what we see in

MTO...for some families, existing social ties may hinder rather than help their economic and other outcomes, and so the net effect of leaving these networks unchanged will depend in part on the distribution of positive and negative network connections (ibid.182).

Social capital, adjustment, assimilation

Outcomes in the social capital domain were mixed – there was no difference between treatment and control groups in terms of their involvement in their children’s school activities or in terms of memberships in other organizations (Hanratty, McLanahan, and Pettit, 1998). Treatment groups did not have as many family and friends in their new neighborhoods compared to the Experimental group and also decreased their church attendance and membership. Children in the sample were able to adjust well into the new neighborhoods in terms of social contacts, as were their parents in terms of contact with other parents. In fact, both MTO experimental and Section 8 groups connected better to their new neighborhoods than the researchers expected, even though the new neighborhoods were less poor and less racially diverse. This contradicted that the movers would have less social capital than the control group, “since moving almost always breaks old social ties and since it takes time to develop new ties” (ibid.17). Pettit, McLanahan, and Hanratty (1999) also indicate that MTO families experienced no reduction in social capital (connection with other parents and teachers) and established connections with neighbors and local institutions.

On the other hand, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2001) suggests that control group parents were actually more involved in school/community activities compared to experimental group parents. In theory this may be due to the groups’ discomfort in the new, more affluent neighborhoods, a lack of acceptance by the new school staff and other

parents, or the lack of time to participate due to increases in commuting time to and from work. The same research team (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2005) also found that experimental parents were actually harsher towards their children, particularly their daughters. They hypothesize that this was due to the disruption of social networks used for support and assistance which was not mitigated by the enhanced safety and resources in the new, low-poverty environment (ibid.640). The authors note their surprise at these findings, as they based their hypotheses on an extensive ethnographic literature about parenting youth in high-risk settings (stricter), and their assumption that low-poverty neighborhoods would lead to less strict parenting. They state, “an underlying assumption of our original hypothesis regarding Harshness was that any disruptive effects associated with moving would be offset by the potential benefits of low-poverty neighborhoods (e.g., safety, resources)” (ibid.641). According to these authors, poor families face many challenges regardless of the type of neighborhood they live in, positing that more families would benefit from policies that improve communities where they would not have to sacrifice social networks, and could benefit from local economic, social, and educational opportunities which could help improve family and neighborhood poverty, and related problems in the long run.

According to some studies, a variety of adjustment issue resulted from moving. For example, Rosenbaum and Harris (2000) found that experimental mothers had some reservations about their children’s interactions with teachers and/or classmates, and state that “given the social distance that likely separates the mover children with their new teachers and classmates -- especially in the case of the MTO children -- it is perhaps not entirely surprising that such problems might arise in the short term” (ibid.23). These

researchers also noted that experimental families reported not having enough access to and a sufficient supply of public transportation, and suggest that it would likely take many years before the true benefits of moving into a low-poverty neighborhood could be assessed (Rosenbaum and Harris, 2000, 2001). Another example of an adjustment issue relates to youth in the experimental group. Kling, Ludwig, and Katz (2005) found that experimental girls assimilated more easily into their new neighborhoods, in terms of their activity patterns (i.e. ties with peers at school), compared to experimental boys, whose routines drew more negative attention. They state,

Cultural conflict, though, was surely evident for boys in the experimental group, whose main forms of leisure – congregating on street corners or playing sports in unsupervised settings – drew the attention of neighbors or the police far more than the leisure activities of any other program group. Girls, who stayed close to home, visited friends or relatives in their homes, talked on the phone to school friends on weeknights, and visited the mall or the downtown as leisure destinations did not invite this attention, as these practices were in less conflict with the new neighborhood norms (ibid.38).

General findings

Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) posit that neighborhood poverty level rather than racial/ethnic heterogeneity or residential stability has had a stronger effect across all outcomes in the demonstration. Their article examines neighborhood effect literature in general, including key methodological issues, linkages between neighborhood characteristics and child outcomes, and pathways through which neighborhoods might influence development. Their research suggests that, in general, national samples have given rise to more consistent neighborhood effects compared to city- and region- based studies. Most studies indicate that the salient motivation for parents to move has been

their children's safety, not employment and children's schooling which is what many programs stress.

In terms of approach, the authors point to several pitfalls of neighborhood effects research. For example, omitted variable problems typically arise in statistical analysis, and can result in the signs and magnitude of effects to come out in unexpected ways. In measuring dimensions of neighborhoods, social networks in particular are unlikely to be well measured, which would create such bias. On the other hand, systematic qualitative social observation can get at such aspects of neighborhoods, but then their distinct effects cannot be readily culled. The issues under investigation, data availability, cost, and sample size determine what neighborhood dimensions to include in a study. Endogeneity or the omission of important individual-level variables poses another potential problem facet of neighborhoods effects research in that families choose to live in a neighborhood based on a range of difficult to measure factors. For example, "parents who stay in poor neighborhoods may do so to reduce their commuting time so that they have more time to spend with their children, or they may stay because rents are cheaper and the additional funds can be used to pay for private schools or other activities for their children" (331). The authors point out that studies with longitudinal experimental designs (such as MTO) are better for identifying neighborhood effects.

In terms of the program overall, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2003) conclude that randomized experimental studies such as MTO yield larger neighborhood effects than do non-experimental studies. They assert that MTO has demonstrated that special assistance helped people move out of poor neighborhoods. However, they worry about the general effect on families that remain in high-poverty neighborhoods after the most motivated

residents leave. They state that, “if the most advantaged poor families move out of poor neighborhoods, what remains are concentrations of poor families, and possibly of those with the most mental and physical health problems, poor coping skills, and low literacy—all barriers to economic self-sufficiency” (ibid.31).⁷

Prior to the MTO Interim Impacts Evaluation, Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham (2002) of the Urban Institute prepared a final report on “Families in Transition: A Qualitative Analysis of the MTO Experience” for HUD’s PD&R. It gave personal accounts of MTO families across sites, illuminating neighborhood effects on families, informing the survey design for the ensuing quantitative evaluation, and assisting “in the interpretation of the quantitative findings from the analysis of the survey and administrative data” (ii). A series of in-depth interviews-- not a sufficient yield to analyze program effects -- primarily provided MTO researchers with facts for developing hypotheses that could be tested to explain critical findings. These interviews also elucidate the *dispersal controversy*, which will be discussed extensively in Chapter 8.

Summary

The conclusions that can be drawn from reviewing MTO quantitative analyses are that there really are no conclusions that provide hard evidence that a) MTO has produced consistent evidence for the existence of neighborhood effects and b) housing mobility through geographically restricted (economic) voucher provision is the justified

⁷ They propose that attracting the middle-class back into high-poverty neighborhoods, i.e. gentrification, is an alternative strategy to moving poor people out, that would reduce poverty concentration and segregation. This, they claim, can help engender services, education and employment trajectories in those neighborhoods, but may also lead to displacement of some poor families.

hegemonic approach to providing real opportunities to poor families. The inconsistent results with regard to neighborhood effects suggest that the positivist approach to measure neighborhood effects remains ambiguous, and possibly constitutes a futile endeavor. The assumption that a large-scale, nationally representative, experimental study can provide a universal, independent truth that would attest that such effects exist discounts the normative social, political, and economic aspects related to different geographies. For example, neighborhoods can be viewed as living organisms that change depending on in- and out-migration, political leadership, and larger economic trends. These societal- and neighborhood-level changes along with the individual characteristics of MTO participants that cannot be measured (i.e., how well families assimilate amidst a new and changing environment given the disruption of their known social networks) undermine the detection of universal neighborhood effects. The inconsistent, mixed, and in many cases opposing MTO findings as described in this chapter confirm that the social world in its ever changing, flux nature, is dependent on a vast universe of variables and explanations specific to environment and individual. As a result, many researchers were led to speculative reasoning in an attempt to explain their ambivalent results and the underlying human behavior.

With regard to serving as a research vehicle to confirm and justify the dominant housing mobility and poverty deconcentration approach, the MTO studies described in this chapter undermine HUD's goal. Most studies reviewed show that the normative issues that frame participating families supercede HUD's prescriptive and ideological assumptions. For example, youth that moved to lower poverty neighborhoods and in some instances attended better schools, did not make connections with their teachers or

peers because of social distance, or they were disproportionately placed into special education classes which adversely affected their feeling of self-worth. So, while their new neighborhood felt safer, a new set of problems emerged. Another example relates to employment opportunities -- MTO families who moved to middle-class neighborhoods where residents model good behavior by working full-time did not “solve” their problem of finding full-time, decent paying jobs, as their social networks that provided them with job leads were disrupted, and they lacked public transportation. Conceivably, mobility counseling could have assuaged such adjustment issues, but ostensibly there was great variation in the extent and depth of counseling service provision across the MTO sites. In sum, the review of MTO studies on a variety of outcome domains has elucidated that they are inter-related or inter-dependent, and simply moving poor people to better neighborhoods does little to affect the myriad of normative concerns such families experience (or worse, may create new ones). The following chapter seeks to contextualize the aforementioned empirical results by delimiting the policy assumptions and framing practices that account for these findings.

Chapter 4

The deliberation process that precipitated MTO: a discourse on housing mobility

(March 1990 through March 1993)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the different stages of MTO that preceded its final version, through uncovering the relevant discourse at HUD. This is the beginning of the MTO story told through the documents I accessed during my visits to the HUD archives. I arranged the documents in chronological order and according to different stages in the development of the discourse that precipitated MTO. Specifically, I arranged the documents by versions of MTO to demonstrate how the process of deliberation affected elements of MTO's final version. I used the data (HUD documents) to employ a frame reflective/ discursive analysis, and use the interpretive method / hermeneutics that considers that an objective reality does not exist "out there" – but there are multiple interpretations of the social world (Johnson, 1995). To be sure, the interpretations, in turn, are also shaped by the prior experiences of the interpreter (me), as well as the material that is interpreted (HUD documents). As the interpreter/policy analyst, I explore how HUD moved through the charge as a federal agency to engender workable solutions to poverty concentration and barriers to housing mobility, and how it developed and researched housing policy that would have contributive value to society. Thus, much of the discourse analysis I perform in this and in subsequent chapters is based on interpreting and analyzing ("teasing-out") the discourse that precipitated the MTO.

Through such discourse analysis the MTO story unfolds, encompassing different influences such as key agents, their assertions about social reality, and the power relations. To that end, I explore the impetus for the MTO demonstration, the policy deliberation process that moved housing policy towards poverty deconcentration and housing mobility, and why it moved in this direction. I examine HUD documents to identify the key agents involved in precipitating MTO, and to clarify the assumptions that they brought to the process. Through this investigation, I seek to uncover the power dynamics between planners and the planned for during this stage of the demonstration.

Background

By the late 1980s public housing conditions had declined immensely, concentrating mostly poor minorities in urban areas. Public policy makers seemed indifferent in light of a host of failed social programs attempting to remedy the inner-city public housing issue. HUD staff, responsible for funding and regulating public housing through local agencies, “looked on rather helplessly” (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010: 46). In fact, “local politics and market forces often seemed to favor ghettoization over any proposal that would integrate public housing, let alone give large numbers of very poor minorities the chance to live in safe and secure communities of opportunity” (ibid.47).

Nevertheless, one driving force behind the move towards deconcentrating the poor in inner cities over the decades was the nation-wide proliferation of class-action lawsuits against racial residential segregation filed by minorities in urban areas. The first successful public housing desegregation lawsuit instigated the Gautreaux program in 1966, which led to the U.S. Supreme Court upholding a lower court’s order to provide

“desegregative” housing opportunities to Chicago public housing residents in 1976 (Polikoff, 2006). By the mid 1980s, lawyers in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Kansas City, New York, and other U.S. metropolitan areas filed suits on behalf of mostly minority public housing residents protesting against [racial] residential segregation and substandard public housing quality. Thus, the seed for desegregation of public housing had been planted at the Federal level as HUD faced the legal imperative to revise its existing practice of “warehousing” poor minorities in inner-city ghettos.

MTO – promoting regional housing mobility through expanded public housing desegregation

Beginning in 1966, the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, Chicago’s leading organization for promoting housing choice for inner-city poor since Gautreaux, pushed for regional integration of Chicago’s public housing residents by using HUD’s new housing vouchers (Section 8) to relocate inner-city minority families to racially integrated communities. The Leadership Council repeatedly provided HUD with depositions for a model demonstration of vouchers, in combination with counseling and landlord recruitment, to deconcentrate the poor. But lacking external political support to replicate the Gautreaux program, it was not until Northwestern University Professor James Rosenbaum and colleagues provided credible, independent evidence of the effectiveness of counseling and the benefits of desegregation for participating families, that HUD became hopeful that assisted housing mobility was a solution to solve inner-city public housing crisis (Briggs et al., 2010: 48/49). HUD’s response to the Gautreaux research “evidence” indicates the positivist/technocratic paradigm it adopted, which to this day dominates public housing policy discourse. For example, the data derived from

the Gautreaux program served numerous quantitative studies, many of which indicated positive effects on the intervention on participants' outcomes. As such, the Gautreaux research "validates" its empirical and normative claims. The positivist paradigm was informed by David Hume's theory of the nature of reality and René Descartes's theory of knowledge. It asserts that real events can be observed empirically and explained with logical analysis. In general, positivist methodology employs the scientific method (i.e., empirical observation, testing theories, experimental study, etc.) to implement and evaluate policies, and make prescriptions that are generally oriented towards treating the symptoms rather than the root causes of problems.

While the quantifiable success of Gautreaux inspired the discourse of (socially engineered) housing mobility at HUD, a key agent in engendering MTO was Gautreaux's primary advocate Alex Polikoff, lead plaintiff's attorney in the Gautreaux case and [public housing desegregation/mobility] policy entrepreneur . It was he who suggested HUD replicate Gautreaux on a larger scale, an idea that would influence and eventually lead to MTO. But, he had few allies in HUD's PD&R unit "with little funding to invest and limited connections to the program staff that managed the public housing and voucher programs [whose funding and regulatory backing would be crucial to any large-scale housing mobility demonstration]" (ibid.50). However, he did have inroads with some HUD officials who helped pitch his ideas, as "personal ties among veteran staff members made the difference, as they often do in large bureaucracies" (ibid.50). His ties and his tenacity to meet with HUD staff paid off, and eventually resulted in a meeting in

DC in 1989 (Polikoff, 2006)⁸. His initiative coupled with Rosenbaum's empirical Gautreaux research convinced HUD that MTO was a worthwhile idea, and eventually built Senate support for MTO.

In March 1990, Rosenbaum sent a letter⁹ to John Goering, Supervisory Analyst, Division of Program Evaluation, Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, attached to a study of Gautreaux mothers¹⁰. The letter emphasized the encouraging results of Gautreaux on suburban mover's employment compared to results for city movers. They were better than those of Project Self-Sufficiency (PSS)¹¹ (a 1985 HUD-sponsored demonstration program targeted at low-income single parents, whose reward for attending a 10-week preparatory seminar was acceptance into the program and receipt of a Section 8 housing voucher, was designed to help participants achieve economic independence), possibly due to the Gautreaux-type housing counseling which PSS did not provide. In response, Goering sent a letter¹² to Polikoff (copied on Rosenbaum's letter) to suggest a May meeting, enclosed with information on the budget and program of Operation Bootstrap¹³ (a 1989 HUD-sponsored community-based initiative designed to coordinate housing assistance with employment and training services to help low-income families to ultimately achieve

⁸ For a detailed account on the process leading up to the meeting between Polikoff and HUD staff, see Chapter ? in *Waiting for Gautreaux*, Polikoff's 2006 book on the Gautreaux experience and its ramifications on housing policy in the U.S.

⁹ Letter from Rosenbaum to Goering, March 29, 1990. [doc 44]

¹⁰ Report "Economic and Social Impacts of Housing Integration" by Rosenbaum and Popkin

¹¹ For more information on PSS, please visit the following HUD website:

<http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/HUD%20-%205773.pdf>, retrieved on June 27, 2011

¹² Letter Goering to Polikoff, April 10, 1990. [doc 44]

¹³ For additional information on Operation Bootstrap, please visit:

<http://www.huduser.org/portal/publications/pubasst/bootstrap.html>, retrieved on June 27, 2011.

economic independence), and the relation between social services and housing assistance payments. He stated:

...the objective is to see how either changes in existing regulations (not the statute) or in program funding rules can open up opportunities for desegregative counseling efforts. It may well turn out that there is the need for a demonstration of different forms of counseling under different market conditions but these are issues you may want to think about.

He also expressed interest in meeting the Gautreaux counseling group in Chicago and that he was looking forward to a discussion of these matters in greater detail.

In subsequent letter to Rosenbaum¹⁴, Goering referred to enclosed copies of material linking social services and housing assistance, the “umbrella funding scheme called HOPE” and “parts built on Project Self-Sufficiency”. The letter also invited Rosenbaum to a meeting at HUD to discuss a national research agenda – a possible HUD research project -- for the following fiscal year. He suggested:

It is not clear at this point how much research my office will do on the issues of race and dispersal but there is the prospect that one project next fiscal year will focus on the desegregative impacts or effects of vouchers and certificates. This project could be simply descriptive: how much racial deconcentration/movement is the result of Section 8 or it could also focus on specific examples of housing counseling as it affects mobility.

This correspondence reveals that the seed for poverty deconcentration programs was planted. It also shows that in its preliminary stage, no clear decision on the direction of such a program had been made. Still, it is obvious that HUD had a strong interest in promoting racial desegregation and in gaining a better understanding of the effectiveness of Section 8 vouchers and the extent to which counseling enables effective

¹⁴ Letter Goering to Rosenbaum, April 10, 1990. [doc 44]

deconcentration. In addition, the above letters illuminate a top-down approach applied by HUD, involving “experts” and building on existing research that demonstrates Gautreaux’s deconcentration successes.

In June 1990, Goering sent a memo to John C. Weicher¹⁵, HUD’s Assistant Secretary for PD&R, providing him with information requested on several Gautreaux “experts” invited to HUD for meetings and a seminar later that month to discuss a study of the effectiveness of the mobility programs that many PHA’s that administer Section 8 vouchers have established across the country. [The consultation with experts was an important step in the development of HUD policies during this era. This is a topic explored in greater detail in the following chapter.] One “expert” invited to the HUD seminar was Rosenbaum because he had conducted extensive research on Gautreaux families (a *New York Times* article¹⁶ describing some of his work was attached to Goering’s memo). Another “expert” was Polikoff, Executive Director of Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, a Chicago public interest law center. He was the plaintiff’s attorney for the Gautreaux case and an advisor to the American Bar Association on housing integration issues. Polikoff had also authored *Housing the Poor*¹⁷ and other articles on civil rights. Another “expert” was Kale Williams, Executive Director of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, a 20-year-old civil rights and low-income housing advocacy organization in Chicago.

In view of these exchanges among HUD officials, the deconcentration discourse dominated and was characterized by a discursive political space. The policy deliberation

¹⁵ Memo Goering to Weicher, June 12, 1990. [doc 45]

¹⁶ Move to Suburbs Spurs the Poor To Seek Work by Dirk Johnson, NYT Tuesday, May 1, 1990, Sec A9

¹⁷ *Housing the Poor: The Case for Heroism* (Ballinger, 1977)

was limited among top HUD officials and the few outside experts who had provided HUD with a post positivist frame to incept the first version of deconcentration policy. I examine this next.

The first version of MTO: a demonstration to improve access to metropolitan-wide housing and employment opportunities

In June 1990, Frank Keating, General Counsel of HUD, sent a memo¹⁸ to Weicher proposing that HUD conduct a study (via demonstration) of the effectiveness of existing housing mobility programs administered by Public Housing Authorities (PHA's) nationwide. He suggested the study would advance fair housing enforcement and defend civil rights suits against HUD, while also being of general sociological interest.

Questions he hoped could be answered included:

- which programs have provided voucher recipients additional mobility
- what program aspects have fostered or hindered participants' mobility
- what (if any) were the effects of mobility on social and/or racial integration and economic empowerment of Section 8 families in those communities

Such questions were targeted at honing in on the quality of life, education and employment opportunities in traditional inner-city versus nontraditional suburban Section 8 neighborhoods of the community and determining whether participants did or did not take advantage of those opportunities and why.

The purpose of the proposed study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the mobility process, and how the process would benefit HUD and participants in the

¹⁸ Memo Keating to Weicher, June 21, 1990. [doc49]

program. Such evaluation was hoped to be able to assist HUD in ascertaining the level of programmatic and financial emphasis it should place on supporting and enhancing mobility programs. As a consequence, HUD would also be able to “explore the wisdom of basing future Section 8 existing housing program funding allocations upon efforts of PHAs to provide effective mobility program”. Keating suggested that Gautreaux could be the blue-print for developing the new study.

The proposed project (demonstration) entitled, “Integrating Jobs and Housing for Families in Assisted Housing”¹⁹ was to promote “State or regional strategies to expand affordable housing and employment opportunities for families with children (including the homeless) to help them achieve economic independence”. Additional goals included a) the expansion of fair housing to all income disadvantaged (housing outside of racial concentration); b) the creation of area databases listing housing opportunities; c) utilizing the Section 8 portability to forge linkages between housing and job opportunities; d) aligning housing, economic development, employment services, and human resource agencies; and e) providing counseling and follow-up assistance to relocate families closer to jobs. The project was to run from December 1990 to December 1993, include six states across the nation chosen through competitive selection, and cost \$100,000 per year per participating state to cover project administration, special landlord outreach, data collection, monitoring, and reporting. The program was envisioned to be buttressed by matching funds/grants and to be further assisted by funding from the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Ultimately, the proposed demonstration and successful techniques used to facilitate the above stated

¹⁹ PD&R Project Planning Sheet prepared on July 26, 1990, revised on October 4, 1990

goals would aid as a blue-print for state and local housing, civil rights, human resource and employment service agencies.

HUD's thinking about the perceived problems and solutions is reflected in the discourse dominating housing policy where mobility is the explicit value consensus during this key policy period framing MTO. Community development, neighborhood improvement in general, and improving the quality of affordable housing in urban areas was not talked about. The assumption was that people in poor neighborhoods mostly needed to disburse. The target population, however, was not involved but excluded from the deliberations process. Hence, the preferences of the poor were not considered. Therefore, many alternative policy directions were not considered. In particular, alternatives could have been to better develop housing markets near where the poor already lived, and/or focusing on economic development and education reform in disenfranchised urban areas where much inexpensive housing was located.

The documents show that HUD concluded that people should be moved closer to opportunities believed to be inherent in lower-poverty neighborhoods. The language of proposed demonstration reflects the stigmatization of the poor as "helpless", and the paternal power relation between policy makers and program recipients. The HUD document outlining the demonstration can be summarized as follows.

In October 1990, Thomas Humbert, Deputy Assistant Secretary for HUD's policy development, sent a memo to Weicher²⁰ regarding this proposed fiscal year (FY) 1991 demonstration. He stated that the proposed multi-site demonstration would improve

²⁰ Memo Humbert to Weicher October 24, 1990. [doc 51]

Section 8 families' access to metropolitanwide housing and employment opportunities, and "would build on lessons on housing choice and mobility from the Freestanding Housing Voucher Demonstration and on the employment and support service delivery from Operation Bootstrap and Project Self-Sufficiency".

Organizations hired by HUD would help design local programs at each chosen site, collect baseline data, provide families with relocation counseling, and recruit landlords. Policy Demonstration Division (PDD) staff conceptualized the project with input from other HUD officials, notably Bob Gray and John Goering of PD&R. Once the demonstration was approved, PDD would collaborate with the Office of Housing, Community Planning and Development, and the General Counsel to develop the demonstration design. The PD&R unit would independently evaluate the demonstration. Attached to Humbert's letter was a four-page description of the demonstration entitled "A Demonstration to Improve Access to Metropolitan-Wide Housing and Employment Opportunities"²¹, indicative of the initial concept/idea driving MTO, as well as the preliminary design stages.

The problem statement for the demonstration indicates that three issues drove the proposed intervention. First, Section 8 families were having difficulty finding suitable housing, particularly near employment opportunities (housing markets were tight in 1989). Second, landlords appeared to discriminate against Section 8 families. Third, poor Section 8 families often lived in neighborhoods with few jobs or lacked job skills for available jobs.

²¹ HUD document: *A Demonstration to Improve Access to Metropolitan-Wide Housing and Employment Opportunities*, October 1990. [doc 51]

A closer look at the language embedded in the problem statement reveals the power dynamic between the planners (i.e. HUD officials) and those planned for (housing certificate or voucher recipients), and the officials “top-down” nature of the process of policy deliberation. It is evident that HUD held certain normative assumptions regarding poor people’s lives, especially regarding the mobility of poor people to fend for themselves (“such families often lack the resources and support network necessary to fully access these opportunities”). Additionally, HUD seemed to buy into the negative stigma afflicting families receiving housing assistance in general, noticing that “without appropriate and timely intervention, these families could become the next wave of long-term dependents on government assistance programs.”

The purpose of the proposed three-year-demonstration was to establish innovative local programs linking housing, employment, and other support services within the metropolitan region. It also set out to enhance the quality of life for Section 8 recipients and to spur economic development. In addition, it was hoped to broaden housing and employment opportunities for low-income families within metropolitan regions. The demonstration would test whether the housing and employment search could be more effective and geographically broadened through modest levels of assistance. It would allow HUD to examine whether certificate and voucher success rates and other measures of performance in housing and employment programs could be improved through short-term support for locating suitable housing and employment.

Other demonstration design elements were geared towards identifying and addressing regional barriers to housing and employment opportunities, as well as exploring the effectiveness of local strategies and technical assistance. Finally, HUD

hoped the study would advance the department's larger goal of racial deconcentrating, as it claimed that, "to the extent that minority families find housing outside areas of racial concentration, the demonstration will further HUD's goal to expand fair housing opportunities."

The HUD document *A Demonstration to Improve Access to Metropolitan-Wide Housing and Employment Opportunities*²² described the proposed demonstration as follows. States or consortia of local governments would apply jointly with PHAs, describe the nature of their joint agreement, and identify the area in which the project would operate. Excluded from participation would be states, localities, and PHAs currently operating court-ordered anti-discrimination housing mobility programs. Demonstration sites would a) use part of their current allocation of Section 8 assistance for the implementation of the demonstration regionally, b) complement employment and support service assistance by implementing a formal program of housing counseling and landlord outreach, c) offer such assistance to families throughout the housing search process and beyond, d) develop the program through state/local partnerships including PHA representatives, local private sector and employers, the low-income population to be served, state and local government chief executive officers, and agency administrators, and e) coordinate housing, economic development, employment, education, and human resource agencies services to assist families to move to employment and independence.

Starting in the new FY 1991, six to eight demonstration sites would be chosen through competition to achieve the conceptual goals of the demonstration, including

²² HUD document: *A Demonstration to Improve Access to Metropolitan-Wide Housing and Employment Opportunities*, October 1990. [doc 51]

using the portability feature of the Section 8 program to coordinate housing search with job location, expand landlord outreach and recruitment, extend counseling and training services to families, and monitor and report on local programs through the implementation of a data collection system. Beginning in FY 1993, PD&R would conduct the independent evaluation of the process and impacts of the demonstration. HUD asserted that, “central to the evaluation will be the outcomes achieved by families in their quality of life and employment status”, in addition to gaining an overall sense of mobility programs in terms of cost-benefit relationships such as cost and cost savings at federal, state, and local levels. The expectation was that the Section 8 Existing Housing programs would be improved through results from the demonstration, and that state and local housing, human resources, and employment service agencies would benefit from documentation of the evaluation results.

The second version of MTO: *Metropolitan Opportunities Demonstration Program (MODP)*

Discussions at HUD continued to lead to a second, more concretized version by April 1991 when Gordon Mansfield, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, wrote a memo²³ to all regional and field office Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) directors regarding desegregation rental certificates and vouchers for FY 1991. During that time-frame, Mansfield wrote a memo to all regional and field Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) directors, stating that 375 rental certificates/vouchers were available for desegregation purposes based on the HUD Reform Act of 1989 where designated housing desegregation efforts would be included

²³ Memo Mansfield to FHEO directors, April 17, 1991. [doc 54]

in the Headquarters Reserve²⁴ – a congressionally approved funding allocation administered by HUD towards Section 8 rental vouchers, typically divided among 2,600 PHA’s that administer the voucher program. Emphasizing regional housing opportunities, the proposed initiative aimed to “promote more racially or ethnically inclusive patterns of occupancy”; and stated that “rental certificates or vouchers will serve as an additional means of correcting past discriminatory actions” and are a “critical component in an intensified desegregation program.”

While HUD officials were enthusiastic about the demonstration, there were elements that needed to be refined, and disagreements that needed to be resolved. To that end, a memo exchanged between HUD officials in April of 1991 that reflects the discursive nature of policy deliberation, that is, the memo exchange refers to several discussions that had previously taken place between the HUD staff to discuss general and specific elements of the proposed program. Specifically, Paul Gatons, Deputy Assistant Secretary of PD&R, and Goering sent a memo²⁵ to Mark Shroder and Jill Khadduri (both PD&R staff) regarding MODP indicating their thinking on housing mobility and the shift to people based assistance programs. Gatons and Goering questioned the geographical constraints set forth in the design of MODP, notably, why eligible sites would be limited to “doughnut-shaped” metropolitan areas (high-poverty inner cities surrounded by affluent suburbs), that is, why not let participants move into high income areas within urban centers. In other words, why mandate a move to the suburbs when there were sections within cities that were affluent and sections in suburbs that were poor. In

²⁴ For additional information on the HUD Federal Reserve, please visit: <http://www.namhpac.org/PDFs/section8reserves.pdf>, retrieved on June 27, 2011.

²⁵ Memo Gatons, Goering to Shroder, Khadduri, April 20, 1991. [doc 48]

addition, they also felt that there should be a clear distinction between race-based programs and this income-based demonstration. In fact, Gatons and Goering suggested:

HUD should avoid at all cost drawing any connection between court ordered racial desegregation remedies and this economic equalization demo. Jurisdictions know of the Yonkers-like debacles which potentially lies behind court-ordered efforts and we should make every effort on paper to distance ourselves from that tortured legacy.

This demonstration was going to be “a fresh start” at voucher allocation, not tied to any racial desegregation cases, but rather a new opportunity to measure the effects of housing mobility! Since people-based assistance was central to the reform, it also meant that PHA’s would have to be involved to a greater extent to ensure the appropriate oversight of individual participants. But that was not the only reason to partner with PHA’s. HUD also had a self-serving interest in keeping PHA’s involved to a certain extent, in that they would provide their certificates/vouchers for the demonstration’s control group, and HUD would gain access later to interview participants of that group. However, HUD made it clear that it wanted control of program specifications “to ensure as much standardization of the demonstration design as possible”. Therefore, HUD wanted to remain control over the demonstration’s design and implementation as they envisioned MTO as a unique vehicle for mobility research for years to follow – a notion implicit in the documents reviewed.

The third version of MTO: *Moving to Opportunity Program - MODEM*

Aligned with HUD Secretary Jack Kemp’s focus on economic empowerment, Tom Humbert, Deputy Assistant Secretary of PD&R, pitched the initial Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program as a “proposed initiative providing opportunities for families to move from areas of poverty concentration”, or as providing assisted families

the choice of moving from economically depressed areas to areas of high job potential, an idea which won support by Kemp's staff. In Humbert's memo²⁶ to Jack Kemp proposing MTO, he suggested that it was a "possible new program that would be part of our multi-faceted war on poverty", providing opportunities for families to move from areas of poverty concentration that was modeled after the Gautreaux program. He pointed out that among different strategies to fight poverty, some were "place-based" and some were "people-based".

Humbert explained that "tenant-based vouchers and certificates are quintessential people-based programs, since they not only provide choices among housing units and neighborhoods, but also are portable across jurisdictional lines", similar to the school voucher system. While Project Self-Sufficiency was a hybrid between a place- and people-based program as vouchers and certificates in particular jurisdictions were connected to job training, child care, education, and other welfare-to-work services, MTO was to be an approach to move families to better, less poor neighborhoods and provide them with mobility counseling that had a metropolitan-wide focus. He suggested that, "the program might be combined with employment and training services under certain circumstances", but that the basic thrust was to move poor people to low-poverty neighborhoods.

A noteworthy consideration in the MTO proposal contained in Humbert's memo to Kemp²⁷ under the heading *The neighbors left behind* was that poor communities could be weakened by residents who leave. It was considered that "this program could be seen

²⁶ Memo Humbert to Kemp FY 1991. [doc 57]

²⁷ Ibid.

as removing yet another layer of the stronger, less fundamentally dependent citizens from those neighborhoods”, yet that by “thinning out the populations of underclass neighborhoods, a program encouraging mobility would make the problems of those neighborhoods more tractable and more amenable to complementary place-based strategies such as enterprise zones”. It was also considered that those who leave poor neighborhoods, and “make it” in low-poverty neighborhoods would demonstrate to those left behind that such things are possible. Such narrative indicates the assumptions HUD made about poor people in poor neighborhoods, for example, that those enrolling in MTO were less dependent and stronger than those who would not. The normative assumption was that everyone would want to leave their “bad” neighborhoods, but only the “fittest” could. The federal government would then be able to claim (usurp public space) more space (power) in urban areas to initiate economic revitalization and impose their dominant agenda of breaking up concentrated poverty.

The 9-page program outline of a program that “might be called ‘Moving to Opportunity’” contains several sections. First, it notes that families would enroll on a voluntary basis to be considered to move to “very different kinds of neighborhoods” and receive counseling with a metropolitan-wide focus, such as finding housing in opportunity neighborhoods, helping to persuade landlords to rent out these units, and counseling to help with early adjustments of the move. Counseling relating to employment and training is not as important as counseling to find housing units in “better”, low-poverty neighborhoods. In a subsequent section of the program outline, entitled *The Question of Race*, the author reiterated that the Gautreaux program was race-

based because it was meant as a remedy for racial segregation, and based on litigation. It states,

...poor people...living in census tracts with high concentrations of other poor people are minorities, to some extent Hispanic but overwhelmingly black. By defining eligibility for the Moving to Opportunity Program on the basis of the poverty concentration of the family's current neighborhood and the neighborhood into which the family moved, the program would be solving the problem of barriers to mobility for minorities it is meant to solve, but without needing to be race-conscious. (MTO program outline – [Doc 57]:9.

But even though HUD should not/could not run a free-standing program such as MTO based on race or tied to litigation (although the reasons are not directly mentioned, this is likely due to the increasingly conservative drift of the federal courts, and the constitutional code of “colorblindness”, rejecting any use of race in official decisionmaking), MTO would address the question of racial segregation through special counseling and housing search which would mitigate racial barriers to entering white neighborhoods. The section containing the actual program criteria simply contains a list which is summarized below.

Table 4.1 MTO initial program criteria

MTO initial program criteria:

- On-going, annual set-aside of 1000-2000 vouchers per year specified in current appropriations bill if MTO to start in FY 1992
- Competitive NOFA to capable private non-profits through which vouchers would

be awarded

- Current voucher/certificates waiting list used to identify eligible families in high poverty census tracts (reference made to Jargowsky/Bane research²⁸ on poverty concentration which identifies ghetto poverty as 40 percent or higher)
- Families on waiting lists can volunteer for MTO with the goal to move to low-poverty neighborhoods (reference made to Rosenbaum's Gautreaux research²⁹ on the positive effect of moving to "radically different neighborhoods"). Program administrators (non-profits) should determine that families who enroll in MTO have "a real interest in moving"
- Families selected from waiting lists that opt out of enrollment in MTO would continue with normal housing voucher search. No requirement to move or not to move, MTO strictly voluntary.
- Voucher start-up administrative fee granted to organizations administering MTO (similar to Gautreaux program)
- On-going administrative tasks performed by PHAs in jurisdictions into which MTO families move – these would also receive the on-going fees

Summarized from HUD's initial MTO Program, 1990 [doc 57]

The November 1991 MTO meeting at HUD – initial planning phase

The MTO process was described as follows. Eligible participants were families with children who resided in high-poverty neighborhoods, and were placed on central city PHA Section 8 waiting lists. Once identified, the locally contracted NPO would contact

²⁸ Jargowsky (1997) Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios, and the American City

²⁹ Rosenbaum on Gautreaux

these families to see if they were interested in participating in the program. Next, the interested families would be randomly assigned to two groups: a control and an experimental group. Then, the NPO would perform credit and housekeeping checks, and if families passed but decide not to participate they would be informed that they would receive Section 8 assistance “in the normal course of events”. Those families who did pass and were assigned to receive MTO relocation assistance would receive their housing certificate directly from MTO if they found suitable housing in a low-poverty neighborhood.

In November of 1991, Mark Shroder, a member of the PD&R staff, sent a memo³⁰ to a number of HUD officials inviting them to a meeting to discuss MTO, specifically to discuss the issue paper he wrote, entitled *Gautreaux Replications: An Issue Paper*. The paper can be summarized as follows. With regard to proposed MTO Demonstration “which (he) will call MODEM until a better acronym is presented” the consensus was that voucher families despite portability did not often move to affluent areas, even though they frequently expressed a desire to do so. The initial “research issue to be resolved” was whether Gautreaux-like programs would “pay off” in the long run in terms of adult employment and children’s educational attainment, despite their “focus on search costs and short-term adjustment problems” – [Goering crossed this out and wrote on his copy “not necessary”].

The paper further states that he excluded several eligible metropolitan areas (Boston, Cleveland, and Chicago) because they had existing desegregation programs. He posits that court-ordered programs result from dissatisfaction with central city PHA’s

³⁰ Memo Shroder to Allen, Bradley, Gatons, Goering, Khadduri, and Nelson, Oct 31, 1991. [doc 50]

[Goering wrote “no”], and asks whether HUD should require or give points for sites where there is some negative record of PHA performance relating to the previous performance of the central city PHA in the voucher program, or, if HUD should require or give points for the past experience of the NPO in terms of cooperation with the PHA. [Goering wrote “no” and disagreed that points should be given for past experience of nonprofit organizations in cooperative endeavors with PHA’s, so he clearly did not support the idea that previous PHA’s records should have any bearing on MTO].

This correspondence furthermore reveals how and why the 10% threshold below federal poverty level was picked for the classification of low-poverty neighborhoods, as “10 is a nice round number” and a book on 1970 census data indicated the 40% / 10% thresholds for neighborhood poverty levels. With regard to nonprofit organizations, Shroder recommended that eligible organizations should have demonstrated some prior and current experience in the field. He also suggested that HUD was interested in “ensuring that [the] startup period is as short and smooth as possible”. With regard to minimum program characteristics, he lists a) NPO controls the certificate until tenant moved into suitable housing, b) credit and housekeeping screening is performed by NPO, and c) NPO interacts with potential and actual landlords. Furthermore, Shroder states

We do not know what else the Gautreaux program and clones actually do. ‘Handholding’ is a word without content for purposes of defining a program. We are in agreement that an intensive debriefing of the people who do the work in those programs is essential, if we are to identify other critical components.

This suggests that MTO was to be defined differently from other mobility programs, however, that these programs would to some extent inform the design of MTO.

As standardization would be crucial for evaluation purposes, Shroder posits harnessing financial support from the Ford or Rockefeller foundations to find a single financial source to fund the services such as mobility counseling, data collection, process analysis, and evaluation in all MTO sites, especially since they would have a background in funding multiple site demonstrations. This was important for the long-term evaluation. He proposed a treatment group and comparison group, as well as four treatment subgroups consisting of a) tenants who would find a place through MTO, b) tenants who would get help from MTO but in the end would decide not to reside in low-poverty neighborhoods, c) tenants who would ask for MTO but would not pass the screening and resided in Section 8 on their own, and d) tenants who would not respond to the MTO offer helping them find a place, but would find a place on their own. The comparison group was going to be comprised of tenants who were never offered MTO but found Section 8 housing on their own. Shroder assumed that agencies that would be applying “will probably not understand evaluation”, that “we will have to tell them how we want the treatment group to be chosen...[and the] procedures to follow in choosing names off the waiting list”.

He recommended a process analysis to understand what PHA’s did at that time to foster mobility, and to ascertain what nonprofit organization would actually do once they controlled the certificates. He stated that “program evaluations often find that nothing works...because [programs] are never really implemented or not implemented as designed”. He reiterated that the observation of service delivery process was going to be crucial to understanding treatment results.

In November 1991, after the initial MTO meeting had taken place, Khadduri sent to her colleagues at PD&R the proposal³¹ Shroder had written for the implementation of the MTO program, asking her colleagues to “please comment on Mark’s paper” before she submitted it to Tom [Humbert] for his approval as the basis for PD&R PIH discussions on writing the NOFA.³² Goering’s notes on the document are useful in elucidating his thinking, assumptions, and ideas.

Goering commented on a paragraph in the Shroder’s proposal which stated that despite the portability of vouchers/certificates, and the “frequently expressed desire of many poor families to get out of the more depressed central-city neighborhoods, little actual mobility to suburbs and more affluent communities observed”, as follows: “it is believed, one of the premises, that affordable housing is available”. In other words, a big part of the perceived problem (minimal housing mobility) was a dearth of affordable housing in better neighborhoods.

The following paragraph addresses the issue to be “resolved”: whether MTO-type programs which focused on overcoming search costs and short-term adjustment problems of low-income tenants would pay off in the long run in education and employment. Goering inserted that another objective of MTO should include achieving successful placements in higher income neighborhoods on a metropolitan-wide basis. He disagreed on excluding certain cities because they already had race-based programs in place, as it would “confuse” issues, but felt that since MTO was not race-based, but poverty-based those cities should not be excluded.

³¹ PD&R proposal for the implementation of the Moving to Opportunities Program. [doc 55]

³² Ibid.

Shroder's proposal recommends that eligible cities should be doughnut development areas, where inner cities declined sharply while suburban affluence proliferated, but Goering disagreed because there were pockets of affluence in inner cities and pockets of poverty in suburbs. He thought that all should be eligible, and that it should be based on tract poverty level. The following section of the proposal labeled "Eligibility of Tracts" discusses what families are eligible to participate in the program (i.e., voucher families residing in high-poverty areas with over 40 percent poverty, in the central city, and, families attempting to move to low-poverty areas with under 10 percent poverty level. But, if this study was to be a randomized experiment with a control and an experimental group (the initial proposal called for random assignment to two groups: treatment and control group which would remain in high poverty), Goering thought that selecting families to move to better neighborhoods while requiring others to stay put would leave the latter at a disadvantage. To be sure, he thought it was important to tell families that were not chosen for the experimental group but assigned to the control group that they would receive additional financial assistance to the "normal" Section 8 assistance for participating in MTO. Similarly, he thought that those families that were assigned to the treatment group but who failed to pass the background (credit and housekeeping) checks should also receive moderate financial compensation for participating. Alternatively, those families who passed the background check would receive assistance to move if they chose to, if not, they would go through the "normal" course of Section 8 procedures (without the added MTO counseling).

In November of 1991, Shroder sent a memo to Goering attaching the proposal "On putting theory first in the MODEM evaluation", and commented that "Jill didn't like

this proposal...if you don't either we can forget it".³³ In his proposal, Shroder suggested incorporating theory in MODEM. He recommended creating a task force to delve into the existing housing mobility literature to generate a large-scale, cross disciplinary literature review to ascertain what barriers Section 8 families in the region faced on "non-financial barriers to intra-metropolitan residential mobility by low-income families". The goals of this study would be to identify the most frequently cited barriers to mobility (housing discrimination, transit, language, etc.), to weigh the relative importance of these barriers if feasible, and to provide the best available data so PD&R could rank metropolitan areas according to these barriers. Findings of this paper would be factored into the competition under the MTO NOFA and applicants would have to address how they intended to overcome these barriers, and also the metropolitan areas would be weighted according to the barriers. However, Shroder's proposal was declined by Jill and Mark in the end.

The evolution of MTO is further reflected in documents, such as a memo sent in December of 1991 by Humbert and Stimpson to Weicher which included recommendations for the demonstration, and the PD&R proposal for the implementation and evaluation of MTO. Here, HUD officials asked Weicher to make decisions on some immediate key points, notably permission to a) contact foundations for financial support of the demonstration, b) invite a broad list of foundations to attend an exploratory meeting, c) prepare a press release announcing the meeting, and d) include a process analysis (defining scope and objectives of study, document status quo and performance

³³ Memo Shroder to Goering, November 19, 1991. [doc 56]

measures, assessment and performance evaluation, develop recommendations) in FY 1993.³⁴

This correspondence reflects one of the goals of MTO, which was to analyze whether certain short-term services effectively encouraged Section 8 families to locate to low-poverty neighborhoods, and to see if those services yielded long-term benefits in employment and education. MTO would replicate court-ordered, race-based housing assistance programs such as Gautreaux, but on the basis of low income. But since Congress only appropriated funds for certificates not services, HUD needed to solicit external financial support for the provision of services. The program even though it was small was hoped to serve as the basis for researching the effects of mobility assistance on the lives of poor people. In this memo, Humber and Stimpson also state that, “PD&R should place the highest possible priority on implementing MTO in a form that will enable policy makers to have available to them high quality evaluation results”.

In May 1992, James Stimpson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research sent a memo to Jon Gauthier, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Frederick Eggers, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, asking for feedback on the précis for competitive procurement for implementation assistance and evaluation of MTO.³⁵ The précis indicated MTO’s implementation and assessment activities. The memo also announced that the MTO NOFA would be posted in the near future by the Office of Public and Assisted Housing requesting applications for the MTO set-aside Section 8 rental certificates. Eligible NPO’s and PHA’s were expected to

³⁴ Memo Humbert, Stimpson to Weicher, December 13, 1991. [doc 111]

³⁵ Memo Stimpson to Gauthier, Eggers, May 7, 1992. [doc 110]

compete for these, 5 MTO sites would be selected, and PD&R would assist with the implementation and evaluation of the demonstration. The précis indicated what was expected of the contracted organization which was to provide training and assistance to the 5 MTO site PHA's and NPO's, to find ways to select families, to assist with the implementation of MTO, to evaluate the short-term implementation and the effects of local services, and to produce a short-term MTO evaluation report.

After MTO was authorized in Section 152 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992, Gatons sent a memo³⁶ to Weicher requesting that MTO funding would be increased by an additional 50 percent of the original allocation towards the provision of technical assistance and evaluation services for MTO. This request was the outcome of his discussions with Policy Development and PIH staff who said the procurement would require completion of these additional tasks: detail program manual preparation, nonprofit staff training, ensuring standardization in initial program design and implementation through extensive on site supervision, that client participation be carefully monitored in its early stages, and process evaluation in each site. He claimed that the "original cost did not anticipate the need for intensive training and monitoring which are required to effectively implement this demonstration in all five sites", and that it was critical to "assist in designing an effective, carefully controlled demonstration and in reaching clear, persuasive conclusions about the impact of the MTO program".

In March 1993, PD&R staff member Robert Gray sent a memo³⁷ to Shroder, Goering, Khadduri, Gatons and Neary regarding phone calls he received about "Moving

³⁶ Memo Gatons to Weicher, June 19, 1992. [doc 109]

³⁷ Memo Gray to Shroder, Goering, Khadduri, Gatons and Neary, March 25, 1993. [doc 106]

to Opportunity II: Legal Assault”. He stated that Bob Embry and Alex Polikoff were concerned about the direction MTO was moving in, based on the pending NOFA which stated that half of the MTO Section 8 certificates would be given to the control group, thus “cutting in half the purpose of this legislation”. They also argued that, “simply giving certificates to applicants in the hope that, with additional counseling beyond the norm, they will move to lower poverty areas, does not depart much from the regular existing program”. In addition, they were concerned about the language in the NOFA with regard to what constituted a low-poverty level neighborhood which they felt did not differ enough from high-poverty neighborhoods.

The other issue related to a call from Florence Roisman, a legal activist, who had spoken with Polikoff, voicing similar concerns as Embry that, the “legislation contemplates more than mere counseling, “the legislation contemplates the full 100 percent of the assistance going to those actually moving to low-poverty areas, and not one-half carved out for an arbitrarily designed control group”, as well as that the current NOFA permitted too many high-poverty neighborhoods to be treated as low-poverty neighborhoods. Roisman strongly encouraged an open forum discussion on these matters, to which Gray replied that top policymakers (experts) considered all the issues she was raising, to which she replied that she would pursue litigation if the true Congressional intent were not followed.

Summary

In this chapter, I have shown how the initial idea for MTO unfolded, the discourse that moved MTO through its different stages of evolution, from the “seed” that planted it in

1990 to its authorization in Section 152 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992, as well as subsequent considerations regarding the MTO preliminary NOFA in early 1993. The early genealogy of MTO enabled me to identify key agents engaged in the evolving demonstration, and, what is more, I learned how social, political, and economic factors framed the discourse on housing mobility policy in general, and MTO specifically. As such, the dominant discourse of housing mobility that produced MTO did not occur in a vacuum, but was a product of the intertwined social, political, and economic factors of that time.

A main social factor that influenced MTO was HUD's interest in racial integration. Undoubtedly, the numerous fair housing lawsuits based on the continuing pattern of racial residential segregation influenced the move towards mobility policy as HUD sought a protective mechanism against future racial residential segregation lawsuits. Thus, the promotion of racial desegregation was a covert goal of housing mobility, while socio-economic integration (or, put differently, integrating poor people into middle-class environments) was the overt goal. For example, the first version of MTO explicitly stated the expansion of fair housing to all income disadvantaged / housing outside of racial concentration. HUD officials stated that neighborhood poverty level of MTO experimental neighborhoods would solve the issue of racial concentration indirectly, as it was not politically palatable to propose race-based legislation. Studying housing mobility programs was viewed as a pathway to ascertaining racial deconcentration/movement and improving the Section 8 voucher system accordingly. As such, the language embedded in the proposals reviewed in this chapter suggests a confluence of race and socio-economic status. Another social context issue was that

landlords discriminated against Section 8 renters, which is what an element of the proposed MTO counseling would seek to address. In addition, HUD feared that impediments to poverty deconcentration (or the underutilization of vouchers) would lead to the next wave of long-term dependents on government assistance programs.

With respect to economic factors, housing mobility and mobility programs aimed at economic self-sufficiency of (many housing mobility program had employment and training components to help families attain economic independence). As this analysis indicates, the earlier version of MTO explicitly states that economic empowerment of Section 8 families was a goal. Another goal was to ascertain the cost of the mobility process and the financial emphasis that should be placed on supporting and enhancing such efforts. HUD secretary Kemp set the tone for HUD's new administration and the emphasis on economic independence.

Regarding the political context, numerous racial residential segregation class-action lawsuits filed by urban minorities suggested that, in spite of the Section 8 tenant-based assistance program, urban voucher recipients faced "barriers to mobility". Thus, HUD felt political pressure to illuminate factors perpetuating poverty concentration, especially, given the political agenda of economic empowerment and welfare reform at that time. Another political factor that transpired in the deliberation was the interest of "thinning out the populations of underclass neighborhoods to make their problems more tractable and more amenable to complementary place-based strategies such as enterprise zones", which could be interpreted as a "land-grab" strategy.

In addition, this chapter revealed some underlying assumptions about the normative spheres of low- and high-poverty neighborhoods. For example, in his issue paper, Shroder remarks that barriers to mobility must be addressed because of the “frequently expressed desire of many poor families to get out of the more depressed central-city neighborhoods”³⁸. HUD assumed that, if voucher recipients had been able to find units in the suburbs, they would have moved. HUD relied heavily on statistics in terms of lack of observed mobility and inferences about reasons to stay in areas of poverty concentration. The documents I reviewed also suggest that low-poverty neighborhoods were viewed as opportunity-rich environments for poor people, and HUD’s explicit concern with regard to the continuous pattern of urban poverty concentration illuminates their assumption that high-poverty neighborhoods would be better living environments for poor people.

In sum, this chapter made clear that MTO was very much a product of the social, political, and economic dynamic of its time which framed the dominance of the housing mobility discourse. Moreover, this chapter elucidated the beginning stages in the MTO policy deliberation process and the discursive, closed political space in which this discourse occurred. In the following chapter I turn to the next stages in the deliberation process between key people (elite experts) involved in MTO, and the sequence of events that solidified MTO’s design and implementation.

³⁸ Doc 50

Chapter 5

The demonstration is taking shape: a discourse between experts (June 1993 through March 1994)

Introduction

This chapter elucidates who was involved in shaping MTO and the role of experts in the policy deliberation process that produced the demonstration. Beginning with the first Clinton administration (1993-1997) and the appointment of HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros, there was a sense of urgency to create a new national urban policy that would address urban poverty and engender welfare reform. To that end, the newly appointed Director of PD&R, Michael Stegman, felt encouraged to move forward with the design of MTO with a focus on promulgating regional housing mobility through expanded public housing desegregation under the guise of poverty deconcentration. Poverty deconcentration and economic restructuring were central components of the new national urban policy, and providing poor families with better housing opportunities was believed to have positive impacts on their economic self-sufficiency. HUD was convinced that MTO was the major vehicle for housing mobility research that would refine and improve the portability of Section 8 vouchers, and be a major contribution to the president's new national urban policy report.

A review of HUD documents from the period provides insights into the shaping of MTO and the role of experts in the deliberation process. The goals and outcomes of a series of MTO meetings will be listed, as well as the thoughts and considerations of the

MTO experts attending these meetings and how their feedback influenced the design of the demonstration.

MTO advisory group – the experts are called – the demonstration is on its way

In June 1993, Carole Wilson, Associate General Counsel for Equal Opportunity and Administration, sent a memo to Lawrence Thompson, General Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Development and Research with regard to policy implementation and research working groups.³⁹ She suggested that an advisory group should meet twice per year with HUD researchers to discuss informally ways that they could assist in implementing an innovative HUD research agenda and in identifying specific problems in the research plan's implementation. Since this group would make or implement government decisions or policy based on the HUD research agenda, she recommended against naming it "advisory panel" or "committee", and calling it a "working group" instead. Incoming HUD Assistant Secretary Michael Stegman prepared a generic invitation to join the HUD policy implementation and research working group as he intended to "make the next four years at PD&R exciting ones" and hoped the "experts" because of their background, expertise, and insights would greatly contribute to this goal through the Working Group. MTO was identified as a new landmark demonstration. Hence, its design would be carefully considered with the input of experts to meet the implementation of HUD's research needs. Although the process of deliberation at first glance appears democratic (given the involvement of experts), it maintained in the end a HUD-centered, top-down approach.

³⁹ Memo Wilson to Thompson, June 9, 1993. [doc 165]

Stegman's letters were sent to experts who were recommended by PD&R officials. Their mailings coincided with the publication of the MTO NOFA in the Federal Register on August 16, 1993 with a response deadline set for November 15, 1993.⁴⁰ For example, in August 1993, Shroder sent a memo to Goering recommending the inclusion of "Other Hotshots" providing him with a list of eminent authorities on random assignment evaluations of social policy experiments.⁴¹ This list included experts from the Urban Institute, Mathematica, the Brookings Institute, and Abt Associates, notably Larry Orr, who later became first author of the later-published MTO Interim Report⁴². This correspondence is indicative of HUD's technocratic/positivist thinking, as experts were chosen based on their scientific merits. Washington based think tank analysts and top research academics who had produced empirical studies on housing and social change that were highly regarded in policy circles were at the forefront of the short-list of MTO experts.

In September 1993, HUD officials discussed Polikoff's recommended participants from foundations in the context of the design and implementation of MTO⁴³. Among those were several members of private foundations who he believed would be interested in MTO. Polikoff recommended some people who would be good at helping PHAs and NPOs understand and prepare proposals for MTO. He also recommended funding an advisory panel of outside researchers who could render design and evaluation advice, and who could foster foundation support for evaluation and counseling aspects. This correspondence shows the continued role of Polikoff as an active proponent of mobility,

⁴⁰ Federal Register Volume 61, Number 111 (Friday, June 7, 1996), pp. 29109-29112.

⁴¹ Memo Shroder to Goering, August 10, 1993. [doc 183]

⁴² MTO Interim Report by Orr, et al.

⁴³ Memo Goering to Stegman, September 9, 1993. [doc 166]

inspired by the Gautreaux success, as well as the critical role of developing an “outside” advisory panel.

HUD still contemplated how to justify giving half of the appropriation to establish the MTO control group, which would cut by half the efforts on the key purpose of the legislation, and that giving certificates to applicants with added counseling was not that different from the existing Section 8 program. Apparently, one PD&R official had received a phone call from a legal service activist who had asked for an open forum for interested parties to state their positions regarding cutting the MTO appropriations as proposed in the MTO NOFA in half and to discuss the poverty-level criteria outlined in MTO’s design. The official responded that “all sides of these issues were being considered by the top policymakers”. He viewed this call as a hot button, because the legal person stated that if the congressional intent was not followed she would pursue litigation. A reflection of HUD’s elitism, that is, their unwillingness to host an open forum, inclusive discussion on MTO funding details, there also appeared to be a lack of transparency in the policy making process at this particular stage.

After Henry Cisneros assumed the position as HUD Secretary in January 1993, HUD asked David Featherman, President of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), to join HUD’s senior policy making staff to formulate a new national urban policy, (at a series of round-table discussions with social scientist “experts”) on the impact of economic restructuring on poor families and their path out of welfare. HUD was willing to grant support for this new national urban policy report, but knew it needed a triple match from private organizations/foundations. In September 1993, David

Featherman of SSRC wrote a letter⁴⁴ to the Ford Foundation to solicit their support, to “build on [their] work on urban poverty, community building, and reforming government programs to make them more responsive and accountable to community interests”. Cisneros envisioned community empowerment through “commitment to community, support for families, economic lift for urban neighborhoods, balancing rights and responsibilities, reducing separation by race and income in American life”. In his letter, Featherman stressed that “HUD is affording us the rare opportunity to make our research directly relevant to the fashioning of a new generation of federal urban programs”. This correspondence reflects the thinking at the time about urban issues and an emerging national urban policy. The narrative also shows how SSRC utilized persuasive language to solicit funding, and telling members of the Ford Foundation’s Urban Poverty Program that their financial support in the policy making process was an honor and obligation to fellow Americans.

PD&R was keen to contract a research organization for MTO by June of 1993, to assess the costs associated with project and data base design, site visits, monitoring and final report. Soon after Abt Associates was contracted to assist with the design and implementation of the demonstration. Regarded as “a research contractor with extensive Section 8 program experience” Abt was charged by PD&R to assist in setting up MTO in six metropolitan sites, develop procedures for random assignment of households, collect baseline data, and design methods for tracking households over at least a decade.

When Abt submitted their revised proposal to PD&R there was a budgetary discrepancy. The design of MTO, additional training, and increased monitoring of MTO

⁴⁴ Letter Featherman to Curvin and Zeitlin at Ford, September 10, 1993. [doc 167]

sites drove up the initially estimated cost, although not claimed that the changes would “improve overall quality of both design and management of this task order”. As such, Abt revised the initial proposal from two-day to three-day training for PHAs and NGOs, a preliminary two-day reconnaissance visit, an annual data report, refined design of the random assignment system at the level of each PHA, intense monitoring of six MTO sites, as well as increasing Abt’s performance contract period from 12 to 15 months. In September of 1993, Donald Bradley, Acting Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research, Evaluation and Monitoring, sent a memo to Stegman regarding supplementary funding for the implementation and evaluation task order for MTO.⁴⁵ The initial cost for MTO had been low-balled.

PD&R officials combed through literature on neighborhood effects, specifically the approaches employed to test for neighborhood effects, to make sure MTO would be based on a scientifically sound model. The literature, however, reported some contentious evidence on neighborhood effects. For example, Shroder recommended to Goering to contact a researcher who had recently published an article⁴⁶ on peer group effects on student outcomes, in which it was hypothesized that a student’s peer group is endogenous, because their parents choose the neighborhood, thus casting doubt on neighborhood effect claims. Shroder’s memos⁴⁷ to Goering in September and October of 1993 suggested MTO experts be consulted, particularly experts on youth issues, statistical methods, youth/criminal justice, and experienced federal consumers of experimental research.

⁴⁵ Memo Bradley to Stegman, September 1993. [doc 107]

⁴⁶ Evans, W.N.; Oates, W.E.; Schwab, R.M. (1992). Measuring peer group effects: A study of teenage behavior. *Journal of Political Economy*.

⁴⁷ Memos between Shroder and Goering, September 14, and October 4, 1993. [doc 162]

Soon after, in September 1993, PD&R officials planned a meeting with the leading social science researchers and private foundations who [would] help HUD with critical advice on key long term evaluation issues and how it would affect current data collection, as well as assess foundational support for funding long term evaluation research with HUD. Such involvement, according to Margery Turner in a memo⁴⁸ to Stegman, would “lend credibility to this important social/housing experiment” and would build on ongoing research on social welfare interventions. The list of invited researchers included Rosenbaum and Polikoff, as well as other experts within the academic community, many of whom had already expressed an interest in MTO, because “of its unique ability to help address many key issues in current social welfare, neighborhood effects research” (Turner).

One consideration of involving the experts was whether it would preclude them from bidding on a Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct evaluation research on MTO at a later point. Goering sent a memo to Ken Markinson, Assistant General Counsel for Administrative Law, regarding the limitations on their use of outside experts.⁴⁹ He made the case for involving outside experts in helping with the design of MTO, and its importance for the demonstration, but wanted legal clarification as to whether those involved in helping design the demonstration could legally compete for HUD MTO research grants in the future. This shows how highly PD&R regarded the experts, not only in wanting their input, but also in carrying out the research with the MTO data at a later juncture, and the dominance of positivism/empiricism.

⁴⁸ Memo Turner to Stegman, September 16, 1993. [doc 105]

⁴⁹ Memo Goering to Markinson, September 21, 1993. [doc 168]

The outreach to experts yielded positive results. Among those interested was Susan Mayer who confirmed that she would support MTO, would serve as an MTO advisor, and would help solicit foundation support. PD&R officials called several academics to obtain new names within the academic community to be considered for the MTO panel of experts. They recommended, for instance, a leading econometrician with a strong interest in the persistence of poverty and mathematical/econometric modeling of peer-group effect background, a well-known demographer and poverty researcher, someone who co-authored a book on welfare-to-work policy experiments, and others who had conducted education research, random-assignment research, who had experience in the youth/criminal justice domains, and experimental research. This illuminates the rationales behind choosing certain researchers who had done research in poverty and/or employed specific modeling techniques that would be a good fit for the type of statistical analyses the data would engender.

Even though some of the correspondence suggests that PD&R wanted the policy deliberation to be democratic and inclusive (Turner remarked⁵⁰: “anybody who has expertise to offer will be invited to do so – advisory working group not exclusive”), it is clear that the meeting of experts was very much intended to be a meeting of leading social science researchers and private foundation officials who had a background in experimental research and social welfare policies. Nowhere in the correspondence was there a mention of involving anyone on the community level, i.e. community leaders of neighborhoods with a high concentration of poverty and housing assistance recipients. As such, this piece of the discourse reveals a long-run underlying theme of

⁵⁰ Draft Letter Goering to Markinson with Turner’s notes. [doc 160]

inclusion/exclusion, and the hegemonic relation between elites, experts, and voucher recipients (oppressed/poor).

In the process of fine-tuning the MTO NOFA, Paul Leonard of the Center on Budget and Priorities recommended that there should be a third group as part of the MTO research design, those who remain in public housing, and strongly recommended adding this third group to the revised MTO NOFA.⁵¹ He argued that this could answer questions like:

- how do Section 8 families compare to those on project-based assistance
- does the mobility of Section 8 improve the life outcomes of those in projects
- what is the difference between the locations of the Section 8 group versus the control group which remains in public housing
- how do MTO movers compare to the other groups.

Stegman was not opposed to adding a second control group; however, he made it clear that he would like to seek counsel of the MTO advisory/working group to consider this and any other major changes to the MTO design, and whether the benefits would outweigh the costs. This deliberation took place in the form of a memo⁵² exchanged in September 1993. It illuminates the initial design considerations, as well as the iterative nature of the policy making process underlying the shaping of the demonstration. It also demonstrates that the process of policy deliberation was incremental, and not one individual took the lead, but rather a rough consensus of minds was sought prior to making major changes.

⁵¹ Letter Leonard to Stegman, September 2, 1993. [doc 153]

⁵² Letter Stegman to Leonard, September 28, 1993. [doc 156]

While MTO was being fine-tuned, there were other initiatives at HUD pointed at housing mobility research (explored further in Chapter 7). Between August 1993 and February 1994, HUD officials⁵³ exchanged a series of memos with regard to the Section 153 of the Housing and Community Development Act (HCDA) of 1992 (housing mobility) / “Barriers to Fair Housing in the Cert/Voucher Program” research.⁵⁴ Congress charged HUD with preparing a detailed research report on housing mobility. The discourse was centered on the Secretary’s agenda for metropolitan-wide use of housing assistance. Congress asked HUD to consult with fair housing groups, tenants, and PHAs prior to submitting specific details on the nature of the study. In addition, Congress wanted to know about the implementation and impacts of housing mobility programs like Gautreaux, and how they differed from the regular Section 8 program. Overall, the report was to assess impediments as well as suggestions for revisions to the Section 8 program to enhance dispersion. A meeting with Polikoff was scheduled to jumpstart this process. These exchanges demonstrate the dominance of the housing mobility discourse, and HUD’s move towards a regional approach to public housing opportunities that the new administration perceived as pressing, mostly stemming from positive Gautreaux results. Clearly, there was the need for scientific evidence to better understand how housing mobility could be actualized.

In November 1993, PD&R planned an MTO “brainstorming session”.⁵⁵ Letters^{56/57} to invited experts described MTO, how it was based on positive results from

⁵³ For a HUD organizational chart see <http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/about/admguides/orgcharts/hud.pdf>

⁵⁴ Memos between HUD officials, August 1993 – February 1994 (see document for further details). [doc25]

⁵⁵ Memo Turner to Thompson, November 2, 1993. [doc 172]

⁵⁶ Letter Stegman to Rossi, November 3, 1993. [doc 161]

⁵⁷ Letter Stegman to Fischer, November 3, 1993. [doc 152]

Gautreaux, and that the evaluation of MTO was a “major priority” for PD&R. More specifically, it stated that,

we are committed to designing and carrying out an evaluation of MTO that provides definitive measures of both short-term and long-term impacts of moving from a high-poverty neighborhood to a low-poverty neighborhood

and that Abt Associates (“a research contractor with extensive Section 8 program experience”) had been contracted to assist in setting up the demo in its chosen sites, develop procedures for random assignment of households, collect baseline data, and design methods for tracking households over at least a decade.

Turner invited more than twenty social science researchers to join the MTO meeting⁵⁸ and referred to MTO as “one of the Department’s first efforts to use random assignment and careful evaluation procedures to estimate the effects of female-headed households and their children to non-poor neighborhoods.” Essentially, she asked for expert advice on “the best methods for measuring and assessing wage, employment, social-psychological and educational effects of MTO building upon ongoing research on social welfare interventions”, soliciting their input on the early stages of the MTO design. In November 1993, Stegman thanked the president of SSRC for including the MTO advisory group of social science and applied experts as a component of the overall Ford Foundation grant.⁵⁹ He stated that the academic community was very interested in the demonstration, as it addressed many key issues in social science and neighborhood effects research.⁶⁰ The MTO experts were expected to make contributions such as to

⁵⁸ Turner letter, 1993. [doc 169]

⁵⁹ Letter Stegman to Featherman, November 23, 1993. [doc 157]

⁶⁰ Stegman himself was an academic, on leave from the faculty appointment in the Department of City & Regional Planning at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.

“offer HUD advice on critical evaluation design issues and lend credibility to this important social housing experiment” and “address how best to measure and assess wage, employment, social-psychological and educational effect of MTO, building upon past and ongoing research on social welfare interventions.” As such, HUD’s focus and priority was on the design of the evaluation rather than on the design of the program itself, and also reflects their desire to produce tangible empirical results. The extent of selecting and involving social science experts during the critical MTO planning stage is indicative of the power position/elitism that HUD’s top policy-makers occupied through a top-down, exclusionary planning approach.

December 14, 1993, MTO advisory group meeting

The MTO advisory group meeting⁶¹ reflected the priorities and discussion points that were imminent to HUD, and shows the priorities and the need for expert input at that time. HUD staff, including Stegman, Turner, and Goering made introductions and set the advisory group goals, whereas Abt Associates introduced the task order goals, such as their roles in developing the design, the implementation technical assistance and monitoring, and the data systems. Specifically, they covered the key research design issues as follows

- the number and nature of control and comparison groups
- implications of recent data on Section 8 and Gautreaux program success rates
- consequences of site selection
- implications of data collection plan assumptions
- implications of the research design for demonstration management
- implications of the research design for long-term evaluation of MTO

⁶¹ MTO advisory group meeting schedule, December 14, 1993. [doc 174]

Following the above, data collection was discussed, in particular the establishment of baseline indicators, salient short term outcomes, implementation process and costs, and finally the long-term evaluation such as employment and earnings, education, and child development outcomes.

Peter Dreier, one of the leading social scientists involved in housing mobility, low-income housing, and desegregation research (and former housing policy advisor to Boston's Mayor Flynn), prepared questions and input for consideration by the panel of advisors at the MTO conference.⁶² For example, could Gautreaux participants who found employment afford to live in the suburbs? What was the current distribution of all forms of HUD assisted housing in metropolitan areas (public housing, assisted housing, certificates/vouchers)? How many poor people in the U.S. lived in central cities and in predominantly poor neighborhoods, and what would be the optimal level of deconcentration? How did the poor living in suburbs without housing assistance fare, and would living in suburbs have a positive impact on these families (better job prospects than city counterparts, better education, do they live in mixed-income areas or poor parts of suburbs)? How much would the housing voucher program cost if it were an entitlement, and how much additional rental housing would be required in suburban communities to meet realistic demand, with what impact on rent levels? Would there be any tipping or threshold effects when a certain percentage of poor or minority households moved to the suburbs?

It was hoped that the MTO demonstration would show differences and similarities across the chosen sites, and could elucidate the implications of mobility strategies based

⁶² Doc 81

on economic, demographic and other characteristics. For example, it would reveal whether the size of a metropolitan area, racial composition, political boundaries between cities and their suburbs, and other factors would make a difference in MTO outcomes. What were the relative merits of other strategies to help the poor (such as the JOBS program in terms of success rates and cost-effectiveness) compared with housing mobility strategies? How important was a job training program to a mobility program for matching poor people's skills and available jobs? Should it be part of a housing mobility strategy (poverty-level jobs not really helpful)? Would increases in jobs in cities through federal government incentives have an impact on job location and hiring of city residents? Should snob zoning and shortage of affordable rental housing in suburbs be addressed in line with a housing mobility strategy? Should states be induced to change their "local aid" formulas to encourage communities to increase their shares of subsidized housing? Were non-profit developers preferable over for-profit developers in creating affordable housing? Would that reduce political resistance? Generally, what was the relationship between cities and suburbs: was there competition for taxable property – commercial and residential – and reliance on property taxes for fiscal health; or could suburbanites be persuaded to understand that solving the problems of central cities, including the dispersal of the poor, was in their self-interest? Peter Dreier also recommended that Myron Orfield and David Rusk be added to the counsel of experts for their extensive involvement in mobility and/or regionalism research.

A Document prepared by PD&R entitled *Evaluating the Impacts of Moving to Opportunity*⁶³ elucidated the MTO evaluation design as follows: Random Assignment →

⁶³ Doc 93

Baseline Data Collection → Description of Treatments → Tracking Participating Families → Short-term Analysis → Interim Impact Evaluation → Final Impact Evaluation. The document also included a chart of the historic pattern of public housing development concentrating minorities in high poverty neighborhoods (based on HUD's Multi-family tenant characteristics system, 1993⁶⁴), and a chart showing research evidence⁶⁵ that families who moved to suburbs had increased opportunities (youth staying in school, choosing the college track, attending college, and adults finding jobs, and earning more than minimum wage). HUD used these charts to support the substantive rationale for deconcentration, and support that moving to low-poverty neighborhoods would yield positive results on Section 8 voucher recipients. The rationale for deconcentration directly influenced MTO program design and evaluation in that it was believed to show that a large-scale, longitudinal, randomized experiment (with three comparison groups) could replicate the small-scale positive results of deconcentration (such as Rosenbaum's research cited above).

Summary of the first MTO meeting

In December 1993, Turner and Stegman sent letters to the members of the MTO advisory panel who had attended the meeting, summarizing the "MTO Design and Evaluation Issues of Concern".^{66/67} Abt proposed adding a second control group to make it a three-way experimental design that would enable estimating differences between public housing residents (control group), "regular" Section 8 voucher recipients without the low-

⁶⁴ Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (1993). *Basic facts about public housing*. Washington, DC.

⁶⁵ Rosenbaum, James. (1991). Black pioneers – do their moves to the suburbs increase economic opportunity for mothers and children? *Housing Policy Debate*, 2(4).

⁶⁶ Letters Turner to MTO advisory panel, December 8, 1993; Letters Turner to MTO advisory panel, December 23, 1993. [doc 103]

⁶⁷ HUD document *MTO Design and Evaluation Issues of Concern*. [doc 182]

poverty neighborhood requirement, and Section 8 voucher recipients with the low-poverty neighborhood requirement and mobility counseling (experimental group). The addition was also believed to increase the value of data generated by the demonstration. With regard to MTO site selection, a participant suggested that it would be better to implement MTO at more sites with fewer vouchers at each site, rather than fewer sites with more vouchers. In addition, Abt recommended that MTO sites should be representative of most MSAs in the nation, but that it also would be good to identify sites where the MTO support likely would be significantly different from the regular Section 8 program. PD&R asked if there were any recommendations for cities and PHA's suitable for MTO, and expressed concerns about the tradeoff between more sites and more vouchers at fewer sites. To increase the statistical power in detecting MTO effects, it was suggested that FY 1994 Section 8 funds could be added to each site to examine variations in design and implementation, such as counseling, and other processes. HUD provided a list of baseline data collection items that were suggested by Abt, and asked for feedback. They were particularly interested in which items were critical and which were not, as well as what some covariates of success were. In addition, they solicited "papers establishing the predictive power of particular variables".

Table 5.1 MTO initial baseline dataInitial Baseline Data Items proposed by Abt Associates:

- Individual educational background; grade failure
- Employment history (types, duration, skills)
- Family support and attachment networks (embeddedness)
- Views of current neighborhood and housing
- Perceptions of their housing and employment opportunities
- Initial perceptions of the benefits of moving
- Childbearing
- Measures of self-efficacy
- Interracial contacts; perceptions of discrimination in housing, jobs, etc.
- Locus of control issues
- Parents school involvement
- Children's peer group pressures and support networks
- Security/safety factors

Source: Exhibit 4.1, MTO Baseline Data Items, prepared by Abt. Associates [doc 182]

Participants at the advisory panel meeting wondered how the survey instruments might best be administered, whether at participants' homes, PHA offices, or some neutral site. Most participants agreed that the MTO data were to be centralized. A concern voiced at the meeting was that there would be a low participation rate (as was the case with Gautreaux 20%), so PD&R asked how it might enforce participation. In particular, HUD wondered whether improved outreach and supervisor training would help. In terms of MTO participant selection, PD&R asked how it might "attract the right group of families into the PHA to start the enrollment process", and whether families should be told at the outset that enrolling in MTO could entail moving to the suburbs. Additionally, they asked for input on tracking individuals and households over the ten-year duration of MTO, and when data should be collected from participating families. They also asked

meeting participants for evidence on successful long-term strategies for tracking participants. They also hoped attendees would be interested in providing further input into MTO's design and implementation over subsequent months.

Table 5.2 Key MTO questions and issues

The key questions and issues emerging from the MTO meeting were summarized by Abt as follows:

- Consensus that MTO was not designed to test prototype national program, but maximize differences in locational outcomes between MTO and regular Section 8, so that the effects of relocating into low-poverty neighborhood could be measured in the long run
- Should design include 3 groups, and if so, that could mean potentially adding target areas for the MTO sites to include public housing projects
- Should FY94 allocation of MTO vouchers be added to existing MTO sites to increase statistical power or should allocation be made to more sites for broader sample of testing the effects of counseling/administrative variation
- Look at print out of list of initially proposed measure vs. final list, and note which variables were omitted
- Key covariates for baseline data collection— good to look at in terms of, what sort of questions were perceived to be useful for baseline data collection and why
- How should outreach be conducted and what should be the message to interested participants? “Appropriate message to attract the right group to the demonstration” -- who would be the “right group”? Also, Abt wanted to know how participants felt about when the lottery should be mentioned to participants...after eligibility?
- Should the search period for Section 8 certificates and vouchers be extended to increase success (as was done with Gautreaux)?
- Should there be an interim report, and are there important points at which data should be collected from the participants, regardless if used for final MTO report
- Better retention and less sample attrition if focus on individual long term tracking vs. just HUD's records

Source: Abt Associates, Inc. summary of MTO meeting, December 21, 1993. [doc 186]

The experts respond

Several experts who attended the December MTO meeting responded to PD&R's call for feedback on MTO design and evaluation issues. These letters indicate the iterative nature of the policy deliberation process and represent an important next step in the evolution of the MTO demonstration. In particular, they show how the experts' perceptions and assumptions were rooted in their specific experiences and areas of expertise. What is clear is that PD&R involved people who had been engaged in research, analysis, and advocacy relating to poverty, social policy, and/or housing mobility. It is notable that at this critical stage of shaping the design of the demonstration, the people who would be affected the most by MTO -- Section 8 recipients -- and those who would be directly involved in administering MTO -- PHA's and NPO's -- were excluded. Thus, the process of deliberation was not inclusive of input from everyone involved (even though it included a significant number of experts with relevant expertise), and had a clear exclusionary and elitist tilt. PD&R positioned their values driven by a technocratic (epistemic) orientation over those of housing assistance recipients which were situated in a different normative context. In other words, PD&R appeared more interested in generating data based on their vision than in generating data that reflected the perspectives of voucher recipients in designing the MTO evaluation.

Greg Duncan, Distinguished Research Scientist at the Institute for Social Research, recommended hiring a "well trained" staff rather than PHA's for baseline data collection.⁶⁸ This suggests that he did not view PHA's competent to conduct the ensuing research (possibly due to a negative stigma attached to such organizations). In addition,

⁶⁸ Letter Duncan to Turner, December 18, 1993. [doc 153]

he suggested limiting data points, because one need not have a terribly long list of questions about each individual to produce a very rich data set. He recommended baseline-generated regression controls, especially those that would predict the likelihood of a family choosing a low-poverty neighborhood. Some participants at the MTO meeting suggested using measures of existing connections to neighborhood social capital to ascertain why some families would not want to leave. He also advised to include as many process measures as possible and recommended using the “Mayer-Jencks” list of processes, which are rooted in theories of peer-induced contagion (school competition for grades and resources), social psychology theories of relative deprivation (affluent neighbors might hurt rather than help the assimilation of poor people into low-poverty neighborhoods), employment and parenting role models, neighborhood social controls, actual job connection, competition for grades, and Furstenbergs’s questionnaire on neighborhood processes taken from his Philadelphia study of families’ risk and opportunity management in dangerous neighborhoods⁶⁹.

Stressing the importance of having clean identifiers of census tracts at each interview, he also underscored the importance of neighborhood measures such as racial composition, relative poverty, and stated “I would not trust PHA’s with the task of geo-coding addresses to which respondents move.” He made an interesting final point, that the MTO analysis should look at changes in family composition based on some family members perhaps leaving the new house to return to their old neighborhoods “in order to maintain old [undesirable?] peer groups”, and acknowledged that MTO could adversely

⁶⁹ Furstenberg, Frank. 1993. How families manage risk and opportunity in dangerous neighborhoods. In W. J. Wilson (Ed.), *Sociology and the public agenda* (pp. 231-238). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

affect existing social networks (“this is an addition to the list of initially bad outcomes, since in some sense MTO has broken up the family”).⁷⁰

Peter Rossi of Evaluation Design and Analysis commented extensively on design and evaluation issues regarding what he called “competent and innovative research...being planned on a program of promise”.⁷¹ He favored two control groups to show the effect of housing search assistance in an expanded voucher program, and to estimate the value of housing counseling in the relocation process. He stressed the importance of obtaining measures to determine the selection process of movers versus non-movers, and the inclusion of measures of fate control and personal efficacy, families’ experience with and knowledge of the metro area, adverse local conditions and experiences that drive relocation, social ties that existed in old neighborhood, anticipated fears, and a close examination of the variations in services received. He suggested that some of the baseline data collection could take place after randomization had occurred, and be collected as the demonstration moved along (and that he was glad he did not have to pick the sites).

Chester Hartman of the Poverty & Race Action Research Council was interested in the possible multiplier effect produced by the use of vouchers/certificates to move to low-poverty areas.⁷² In other words, would peoples’ moves to low-poverty neighborhoods trigger other people to move, and/or lead to re-segregation or racial

⁷⁰ These concerns were indeed valid as MTO research later indicates.

⁷¹ Letter Rossi to Turner, December 19, 1993. [doc 102]

⁷² Letter Hartman to Goering and Turner, December 20, 1993. [doc 183]

tipping⁷³. He thought this would be worthwhile to examine over the duration of the demonstration.

Marty Zaslow, Senior Research Associate of Child Trends Inc., offered advice based on their experience and instruments with the JOBS program⁷⁴, and pointed out the differences and similarities between JOBS and MTO, and the value of residential mobility efforts. The JOBS (Job Opportunities Basic Skills) program (evaluated by Child Trends Inc.) was mandated by Congress through the 1988 Family Support Act. Neither JOBS nor MTO intervention programs focused directly on kids/youth, but they were similar in that both focused on individual outcomes through a change in circumstances. Child Trends researchers had a lot of expertise in developing instruments, so Zaslow noted they would be able to provide input to any MTO survey. In addition to increasing the number of MTO sites to yield better data and make the demonstration more generalizable, they also recommended expanding eligible households to increase the participation success rate. They agreed that a second control group would enhance the utility of the study, as well as allow for a critical examination of families who might be eligible to apply but might choose *not* to. This would be critical in assessing if the MTO approach would be successful in large scale.

Alex Polikoff asserted that sites that lie at the extremes in size or housing market characteristics should be considered as MTO sites, as such cities are too large a part of the problem to be left out of the demonstration.⁷⁵ He also pointed out HUD's obligation

⁷³ Neighborhood "racial tipping" refers to a change in neighborhood racial composition prompted by a shift in racial composition. For more information see Goering, John. 1978. Neighborhood tipping and racial transition: a review of social science evidence. *Japa* 44,1:68-78.

⁷⁴ Letter Zaslow to Turner, December 31, 1993. [doc 95]

⁷⁵ Letter Polikoff to Feins, December 21, 1993. [doc 185]

to administer affirmatively the Section 8 housing program, and recommended that the MTO manual should address the danger of racially tipping a low-poverty neighborhood, and how to prevent tipping and/or re-segregation.^{76, 77} He encouraged HUD to peruse the Gautreaux manual with regard to making sure families are dispersed, and to use the same language that Gautreaux used.

Polikoff pointed out that the MTO NOFA included a number of programs listing administrative activities that should be part of any affirmatively administered Section 8 program, i.e. aggressively recruit owners and managers in low-poverty areas; educate families about characteristics of tenants desirable to landlords; effective ways to present oneself, and advantages of living in low-poverty areas; teach effective housing search strategies; make home visits to moving families to discuss particulars about moving to low-poverty areas (i.e. public transit, school etiquette, public health office locations, potential employment centers); escort families to available units and negotiate rents; assist families in adjusting to new neighborhoods, for example, by identifying other families in neighborhoods who have relocated under MTO; and facilitate meetings to discuss common problems/concerns. Polikoff commented that the above should be adopted by every PHA that administers Section 8 programs. With respect to the administrative activities outlined in the MTO NOFA he asked, “shouldn’t HUD prescribe by regulation that the listed activities or their substantial equivalents be carried on by every PHA that administers a Section 8 program? An argument can be made that HUD is legally obligated to do no less.”

⁷⁶ Letter Polikoff to Feins, January 3, 1994. [doc 155]

⁷⁷ Memo Polikoff to Jacobs, October 25, 1993. [doc 155]

Bob Crane of Columbia University pointed to flaws with the proposed design of the demonstration, for example, that families who would be able to find low-poverty Section 8 housing would also likely be those who are more skillful, resourceful, and prepared to find employment. Therefore he suggested they could not really be compared to the Section 8 high-poverty residents (pointing to the fact that endogenous factors are hard to control for/measure).⁷⁸ He identified some scientific problems with the MTO design, and asserted that there was a strong need for another big study on desegregation efforts such as Project Concern⁷⁹ in Hartford, Connecticut (the only longitudinal study that examined effects of school desegregation). He added that the main focus was to compare the two Section 8 groups and that the control group (project based) was really not that much of interest since high-rise public housing probably would not ever be of interest again for major housing policy.

Paul Leonard, Senior Policy Analyst at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, advocated for the second control group. He suggested that the MTO site selection should vary and not be tied to specific markets/geographies. In his letter to Turner⁸⁰ he recommended that it should be examined if existing Section 8 in particular locations offered counseling, which would undermine MTO in testing for counseling, and stressed that it was critical that MTO provide insights into counseling services rendered. Under the current design, however, it would be hard to disentangle the effects of

⁷⁸ Letter Crane to Stegman, December 22, 1993. [doc 181]

⁷⁹ Project Concern was a long-term randomized study of the effects of racial desegregation of schools starting in 1966-1982. The study had positive effects on the black male experimental group's high school graduation rate, and that they spent more years in college, perceived less discrimination in college and other areas of adult life, had less difficulty with the police and fewer fights, that all participants had closer contact with whites as adults, were more likely to live in desegregated housing, had more friends in college, and for females they were less likely to have a child before age 18.

⁸⁰ Letter Leonard to Turner, January 10, 1994. [doc 154]

counseling from the neighborhood low-poverty requirement. Therefore, he recommended adding another group that would receive counseling but no location restriction to examine the “true” effects of counseling services. He suggested that the success rates of moving to and assimilating into non-poor neighborhoods needed to be understood for a larger policy perspective, whether mobility programs were successful in breaking up concentrated poverty. He asked what was more important: increasing per family money to include mobility counseling or extending mobility to more families? He was curious about the trade-off. In terms of outreach to families, he advised against informing them about a possible relocation to low-poverty neighborhoods, and that it would be preferable to just recruit by offering housing assistance to interested families.

Fred Doolittle of Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) recommended increasing the number of MTO sites to give the sample size sufficient statistical power.⁸¹ He criticized the debate around data collection, notably regarding which baseline variables versus covariate variables would be important for pre/post type of analysis of changes induced by MTO. He sensed that “people did not have much evidence about key characteristics...”. He recommended aside from variables like household composition, education and employment to also include their views of their current circumstances and reasons for their interest in MTO. He also suggested to run a pilot of the program first to get all the bugs out and to keep the wording of the introduction vague, telling them only that they *may* be eligible.

To summarize, most experts suggested that the addition of a second control group of Section 8 recipients who would not receive mobility counseling would add significant

⁸¹ Letter Doolittle to Turner, January 25, 1994. [doc 153]

value to the demonstration. With regard to the MTO data set that would be produced for analysis, the experts stressed the importance of collecting control variables/process measures that might predict moves to low-poverty neighborhoods, as well as measure differences in counseling services that would help/hinder the MTO families' moves. Some advocated that HUD should take a proactive role in identifying housing in low-poverty neighborhoods and the deliberate placement of MTO families to avoid tipping or re-segregation (as well as maximize assimilation into the dominant culture). Several experts recommended that the randomized relocation to low-poverty neighborhoods should not be advertised in the initial recruitment of MTO families. While the existing social ties in high-poverty neighborhoods was worthy of an investigation to some, the majority of MTO planners emphasized the processes that would lead to successful relocation to "better" neighborhoods and using the portability of housing vouchers and certificates.

MTO experts requested seed money from the Russel Sage Foundation to convene subsequent meetings at HUD with the intent to spur additional foundational support during subsequent months. During these meetings, PD&R and outside experts would produce a draft proposal for other foundational support, which would be critical for the development of the demonstration. In letters to the President of the Russel Sage Foundation requesting financial support for MTO, specifically seed money to support the MTO advisory group meetings, Brooks-Gunn highlighted key aspects of the demonstration's proposal.^{82/83/84} She informed the foundation that MTO had been

⁸² Memo Gunn to Goering, December 22, 1993. [doc 176]

⁸³ Letter Gunn to Wanner, December 24, 1993. [doc 176]

⁸⁴ Letter Brooks-Gunn to Wanner, December 24, 1993. [doc 180]

authorized by Congress in Section 152 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992, and provided an overview of the discussion derived from the MTO meeting on December 17th and resulting design/evaluation issues. For example, she noted that adding the second control group would give insight into why families relocate under Section 8 within cities. It would also allow researchers to a) examine moves from projects to private locations, and b) identify how moves to new schools/neighborhoods influence families in general (including their effects on quality of schools/employment opportunities for families).

The Russel Sage Foundation agreed to fund the ensuing MTO advisory group meetings, requesting that the group have a draft proposal by the second meeting, and that the group think through policy issues especially with respect to effects of suburban moves (given many calls for re-populating cities with jobs and the middle class), and the critical addition of the second control group which would help inform policy about the Section 8 program processes in general.⁸⁵

PD&R's expectations for MTO

The expectation of PD&R was that MTO would produce the following outcomes.⁸⁶

More Section 8 group than experimental group families were expected to use their Section 8 vouchers and move out of public housing in the short run, but the experimental group would use the vouchers in low-poverty tracts more than the Section 8 group.

PD&R defined the Section 8 Control group as, “families [who] can use the assistance without geographic restriction but receive no counseling beyond that routinely offered by

⁸⁵ Memo Brooks-Gunn to Mayer, Cook, Duncan, Goering, Turner, December 22, 1993. [doc 180]

⁸⁶ Doc 175

the PHA (which usually either does not recommend landlords or gives out a list of landlords volunteering for the program, who often have units in undesirable locations)’’. The expectations for medium-term outcomes were effects on employment and household income, dependence on public assistance, and mobility into and out of low-poverty tracts. Long-term outcomes included the medium-term outcomes plus homeownership, and housing subsidies receipt, as well as better educational achievement, less criminal behavior, and a lower rate of teen pregnancy.

Solidifying the design of MTO

In March 1994, Brooks-Gunn sent a letter to Turner with a draft prospectus that she authored with other scientists for review and discussion during the ensuing MTO advisory group meeting.⁸⁷ The prospectus was entitled, *Effects of Moving from Public to Private Housing upon Children and Communities: The HUD Moving to Opportunity Demonstration* by Mayer, Brooks-Gunn, Cook and Duncan. Based on a meeting among these four social scientists and Turner in January 1994, the prospectus called for changes to MTO’s design: a second control group, a different sampling frame (including all household members in sample), a study of the impact on children and adolescents in measures other than educational attainment and work experience, the addition of two follow-up interviews between the baseline year and the five-year follow-up, and a study of community responses to MTO.

In March 1994, the Ford Foundation offered to host an MTO meeting including the involved PHAs and NPOs to discuss networking among the sites to allow MTO

⁸⁷ Letter Brooks-Gunn to Turner, March 2, 1994. [doc 91]

supervisors to discuss operational procedures before they were finalized, that is, to allow NPOs and PHAs to have a voice in these decisions.⁸⁸ PD&R and Abt agreed that Ford should host a meeting including the involved PHAs and NPOs, according to a letter sent by Turner to Elliott of Ford's Urban Poverty Program Division.⁸⁹ The purpose of the meeting was to involve executive directors and site supervisors to network among the sites; to spur a discussion of policy and politics (including local problems); to resolve any issues and refine the MTO design; to allow for a discussion of operational procedures before they are finalized; and to involve NPOs and PHAs in the decision making process. Turner attached MTO's evaluation strategy to harness the Foundation's support, as well as to highlight the importance of such a meeting.

Another MTO expert meeting hosted by Abt in March 1994 was called to establish the baseline survey instrument, specifically the baseline research domains and rationales⁹⁰. HUD's goal for this meeting was to solicit the critical and creative input on the baseline instrument with the goal to make it really feasible and not excessively burdensome. To that end, the experts reviewed Abt's draft instruments to check if any important questions were missing, or if anything is expendable. Another goal was to check the wording, organization, and formatting of the questions to facilitate the assisted self-administration. This meeting solidified the MTO baseline research domains and rationales as illustrated in the following table.

⁸⁸ Memo Feins to Turner/Goering, March 15, 1994. [doc 76]

⁸⁹ Letter Turner to Elliott, March 18, 1994. [doc 75]

⁹⁰ Agenda for Moving to Opportunity Demonstration Expert Forum #2: Establishing the Baseline, March, 1994. [doc187]

Table 5.3 MTO baseline research domains and rationales**Research domains and their respective rationales included in the MTO baseline instrument**

1. Parental care for children age 5 or younger (involvement in pre-school program or other child care program, babysitting, type of childcare, who cares for child most)
Rationale: Research shows that kids who are healthy, rested, and well-nourished are better prepared for kindergarten. Poor children lag behind in such preparation, according to national statistics. Importance of early childhood education -- child care good for cognitive development.
2. Parental cognitive stimulation (do parents take child to park, church, visits, play games, read to, watch educational programs, etc.). Rationale: Environmental support and stimulation is necessary for children's wellbeing.
3. Health and disability (child's physical/emotional health, mental problems, special medicine, hard time getting to school or participate in sports). Rationale: Poverty is associated with socio-emotional well-being, chronic stress related to poverty increases the risk of mental health difficulties in children, poor children lack appropriate mental health service provisions, poor children are more prone for problem behavior, children's health relates to income, poor people lack access to health care (transport or language barriers)
4. Children ages 6-18 – school performance and related problems (school grade, special class, learning or emotional problems, ever suspended). Rationale: The relation between education and economic well-being, a skilled workforce is more productive, importance of elementary education, low-income students have a higher High School dropout rate, more problem behaviors, children in low-

income neighborhoods show more problem behavior

5. Monitoring and supervision (child's whereabouts after school, supervision? in the evenings, who supervises?). Rationale: Monitoring is important and related to peer acceptance in early school years, inadequate monitoring related to delinquent actions and more likely for multiple offenses and teenage sexual activity, substance abuse, etc.

With regard to the selection of these baseline instrument data points, Shroder, who was heavily involved in the MTO demonstration deliberation, stressed the importance of justifying the variable selection (according to the Child Trends Rationale):

When the MTO results come in around the year 2004, people might wonder why certain questions were asked and other questions were not asked in the baseline instrument. I thought it would be helpful to have a written rationale for the child development questions, to stick in the files if for no other purpose than to possibly inform other research.⁹¹

Because of MTO's design, it was important to consider the relationships among neighborhood characteristics, poverty, and child and youth outcomes. The ecological model of human development suggests the neighborhood is a context for child development, so that more affluent neighbors should provide more benefits for especially low-income children. Wilson's (1987) research was prominent in the variable selection of the instrument. He had found that neighborhood characteristics such as the absence of affluent neighbors, negatively impacts the healthy development of children.

⁹¹ Memo from Shroder to Turner, Goering, Kraft, May 15, 1996. [doc 58]

Furthermore, his underclass notion founded upon social isolation, under-preparedness, criminal behavior, etc. was considered. Adolescent development was impacted as well, as he found an association between neighborhood characteristics and adolescent drug use. He claimed that changing neighborhoods can reasonably be hypothesized to change children's development and well-being.

Gautreaux's evidence on relocation appeared generally positive, and was a further rationale for the baseline instrument, which was designed to a) create subgroups that vary in parental and child characteristics, b) assess family changes due to move, c) ensure that random assignment to treatment conditions actually occurred, d) enhance power and precision of estimates through multivariate models assessing child and family outcomes, and e) explain program participation and success.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the next phase in the MTO deliberation process with particular focus on the role of experts that HUD consulted in designing the demonstration. President Clinton's interest in a new national urban policy and agenda to revitalize urban areas and reform the welfare system trickled down to HUD, and motivated HUD to move forward with the design of the MTO as a pathway to opportunity for the urban poor. As such, newly appointed HUD Secretary Cisneros and Assistant Secretary and Director of PD&R, Michael Stegman, were compelled to drive the idea of poverty deconcentration and housing mobility forward through the MTO research vehicle. To that end, Stegman immediately called for involving social science experts who would help inform the demonstration's design. Consequently, the key HUD

officials involved in MTO recommended the initial group of experts, comprised of social scientists with a strong empirical research background related to the research that MTO was expected to produce. HUD and the experts were very interested in MTO producing empirical evidence that poor people would fare better when deconcentrated, and that housing mobility processes would be improved.

Many of the experts selected to advise HUD worked at highly regarded social science think tanks (i.e., Urban Institute, Brookings Institute). Polikoff, who continued to be involved in the MTO deliberation and design process, recommended including experts from foundations who would fund the advisory panel meetings, and who would provide expertise on aspects of MTO evaluation and counseling. Once Congress allocated funding for MTO, HUD contracted with Abt Associates, a social policy research and program implementation organization, to help design, implement, and evaluate the demonstration. HUD and Abt relied heavily on existing neighborhood effects empirical research in developing MTO and included these researchers in their panel of experts. The social scientists provided advice on data and evaluation issues, and the science community was very excited about providing input into the MTO and excited about the research the MTO data would facilitate. They gladly offered their expertise, and HUD carefully deliberated their suggestions, which is indicative of the iterative nature of the policy deliberation process. As a result of involving outside experts, aspects of the MTO design were tweaked to reflect the experts' input.

HUD's consultation with academics and policy experts suggests several underlying dynamics. On the one hand, it gave PD&R top policy makers an elite status in the shaping of MTO. Hence their narratives and actions subsequently reflect their

dominant values. On the other hand, they were receptive to expert advice, to refine the demonstration's design. While the involvement of outside experts suggests that HUD took a democratic approach, the chapter shows that final decisions were HUD-centered and top-down. For example, HUD declined the request of a legal service activist to host an open forum to discuss MTO funding allocations. This shows that HUD lacked transparency in the deliberation process and retained a closed political space. The ramifications of this lack of transparency were far-reaching as evidenced through the issues at the MTO Baltimore site, a topic to which I turn to in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

The politics of MTO, public reaction in Baltimore and governmental response: a discourse on the barriers to housing mobility and three frames of MTO (June 1994 through October 1994)

Introduction

While the previous two chapters focused on describing and analyzing the process of MTO policy deliberation, this chapter illuminates the different frames through which MTO was interpreted prior to the implementation process at the Baltimore site. To advance this goal, I examine published and unpublished HUD documents, correspondence by local and county government officials, news media coverage, local residents' reaction to MTO, and other documents to uncover processes that influenced the demonstration prior to the implementation phase, and to tease out different frames through which MTO was understood. The analysis of documents engendered by the community upheaval in Baltimore is important from the point of view that it crystallizes the power dynamic embedded in the elite-led demonstration project.

Background

In January 1993, President Clinton appointed Henry Cisneros, who enthusiastically supported MTO, as HUD Secretary, Michael Stegman as director of HUD's PD&R, and Margery Austin Turner ran HUD's PD&R evaluation portfolio. Even though housing policy discourse had centered on housing mobility and poverty deconcentration during

the preceding years, HUD had not considered how the MTO demonstration (or broader, the new “deconcentration paradigm”) would be received by local residents and government officials in communities into which the program’s families would move. As the following sections demonstrate, by not involving community members and local politicians in the policymaking process, HUD had failed to bestow legitimacy on MTO.

Community resistance in Baltimore

When residents in Baltimore County learned that MTO was about to be implemented in their neighborhoods they were outraged. Residents of Essex, a mostly white working-class neighborhood in Baltimore, were in uproar over MTO and “those people” moving in. Flyers were circulated in their community,⁹²

Shhhhhh....’Moving to Opportunity’ is being kept quiet because they don’t want to HEAR US SHOUT!!! People living in drug and crime infested Lafayette homes and Murphy’s homes could be Moving to Essex [quoting the *New York Times*: ’The Clinton Administration has embarked on the most energetic antipoverty effort in a generation, but it has deliberately done much of it so quietly that few people have noticed’].

The ‘Moving to Opportunity’ program could affect our neighborhoods, our schools, and the number of families receiving County Social Services. Police – County police have formed a RIOT SQUAD which will be called the ‘Emergency Response Team’ and are increasing the number of officers here in Essex.

But this is not a racial issue. It is a matter of safety and quality education for Essex residents.

⁹² Community flyer, 1994. [doc 135]

The magnitude of such resistance had top PD&R officials very concerned. They thought it was wise to attend a community meeting in a late attempt to assuage the upset public by adding transparency and to explain the demonstration.

In a memo⁹³ to Stegman, Turner wrote, "...residents of Essex -- which is a predominantly white, working class, close-in suburb of Baltimore -- are distressed about the possibility that large numbers of black public housing residents will be moving into their neighborhood...they have called a community meeting on the topic". The community's response in Baltimore reflected fear, racism, and general feelings that the poor were undeserving, all views reflecting a strong opposing force to MTO's (racial) residential integration and poverty deconcentration strategy.

Prior to the community meeting, PD&R officials discussed the agenda and anticipated the community questions.⁹⁴ The anticipated questions reflected underlying assumptions about the community *and* MTO families, as well as HUD's cognizance of dominant mainstream views of Section 8 recipients and of urban minorities receiving public assistance. PD&R prepared a simulation narrative of the meeting indicating what they expected of the community and the discourse that would unfold during the meeting. For example, they expected that residents would ask how many poor families would be moving under the demonstration, for how long, what guarantees HUD could give that their schools would not be affected, how many apartments would be shown to MTO families, whether the process of moving could be slowed down, and whether the residents could have any input. The anticipated questions suggest that HUD was aware that

⁹³ Memo from Turner to Stegman, June 13, 1994. [doc 135]

⁹⁴ Memo from Goering to Turner, June 16, 1994. [doc 74]

residents had fears, that racism was a factor, and that the public had been excluded from the policy process.

Other anticipated questions centered more concretely on the population that was about to move into their communities. For example, they focused on HUD's screening process for drug dealers and criminals, the amount of funding the federal government was spending on MTO, the extent to which the poor were being "dumped" in their neighborhoods without counseling, and whether federal money would be spent on helping to "educate these hard to handle children". The community was expected to be defensive of their space and, therefore, to react defensively towards this power stroke by the government. Thus, PD&R expected the community to ask why the program was kept a secret, why local government and community groups were not consulted when the demonstration was being designed, whether Baltimore City had the right to tell its residents who could live in their community, and why HUD was spending billions of taxpayers' dollars for MTO when money could be spent to help fix up existing communities in their counties.

Questions such as whether MTO was not just another way of moving poverty ghettos from cities to counties, and whether drugs and crime would be brought with "these" people anticipated the residents' fears of (ghetto residents/minorities) the "unknown" MTO families. Moreover, it is clear HUD was aware that there was a good chance that MTO might be viewed as a tangential solution to the inner-city poverty problem, where HUD would abrogate its responsibility to develop such communities.

In the meantime, community residents circulated (propaganda) flyers in opposition to MTO in eastern Baltimore County, providing information, albeit “skewed” to their narrative, on MTO and the ensuing open forum, all of which propagated the residents’ panic.

Community meeting in Baltimore – June 1994

During the open forum hosted by the Baltimore MTO site NPO -- the Community Assistance Network (CAN) -- with panelist Gary Markowski, Director of Rental and Assisted Housing, of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC), Baltimore residents were debriefed on MTO details such as the process of identifying MTO participants, demonstration design components, and responsibilities of the PHA to assist MTO families with their move to Baltimore’s low-poverty neighborhoods.⁹⁵ The PHA representative of Baltimore, who led the meeting, also explained that under the regular Section 8 program housing vouchers could be used anywhere in the United States, whereas Section 8 certificates could only be used in contiguous jurisdictions of their issuing public housing authority. He further explained that target neighborhoods (zip codes) for MTO Baltimore were already identified based on the demonstration’s low-poverty criterion. The local county government’s role in MTO was similar to the regular Section 8 voucher/certificate role, which was to administer the vouchers/certificates outside the city, to receive a service fee for inspecting units, to determine rent reasonableness, facilitate the lease review/approval, to calculate participating families’ rent contribution, to execute contract documents for the payments of subsidies to landlords, and to possibly track participants for MTO demonstration purposes.

⁹⁵ Meeting agenda, June 23, 1994. [doc 132]

A newspaper journalist who attended the community meeting in Essex sent HUD his thoughts, impressions, and observations of the meeting.⁹⁶ He described the atmosphere at the meeting as bigotry, racism, and total disregard for persons participating in the Section 8 program and for persons living in high-rise public housing and the neighborhoods that surround those developments. He suggested that a major problem was that Essex was a mostly white, low-income neighborhood (which wouldn't make it a good MTO site based on the low-poverty criterion), and most of the MTO families moving in were members of minorities. Essex residents, he asserted, were proud that there was no public housing in town. The reporter quoted some of the negative community responses, which indicated that MTO could precipitate Ku Klux Klan activity and that most of the Essex community present at the meeting was overtly discriminatory. Residents were also upset that no one had communicated with the community about MTO, and that the county executive residing in Essex was not able to stop the federal funding for MTO.

The journalist also suggested that the residents made a lot of assumptions about Section 8 recipients that were not true. For example, not all MTO families were on welfare, however, most Section 8 housing residents worked. He recommended that HUD and FHEO alert the Justice Department of the uproar in Essex, that MTO participants would likely be subjected to discrimination and possibly other harmful activity (who would want to live in that kind of environment?), but that they should be able to live anywhere without fear and intimidation. The reporter noted the heated comments by community members, including

⁹⁶ Memo from Pratt to Goering, Brooks, June 23, 1994. [doc 137]

...we can ill-afford to have those people in our neighborhood for many reasons, they are drug addicts and criminals; some of them have to be trained on how to keep house and take a bath. We have the perception that the “boogey-man” is coming to town...

...although it’s only 280 certificates, there are going to be at least 1,200 people because there are at least six children per household...nobody helps us. All those Section 8 people do is lay around and not work and get free government money...

He suggested that these issues needed to be handled with the utmost care and expediency and that open communication was critical during other meetings scheduled in the metropolitan area. These exchanges demonstrate that the conflict contained facets of racially charged fear, stereotype threat, and a profound sense of powerlessness (or lack of ability to control what occurred in the neighborhood).

HUD responded to these issues by increasing their damage control efforts. In response to the Essex meeting, HUD officials recommended they prepare an MTO fact sheet to be sent to other participating sites with the hope of anticipating and avoiding situations similar to that.⁹⁷ This would help MTO agencies prepare to respond effectively to potential community resistance. The fact sheet also stated that, “if...an MTO family chooses your neighborhood, I think you’ll find that this family has made that choice with the same hopes and aspirations you have”, in an attempt to broaden the residents’ minds and shifting in perspectives. This suggests that HUD employed certain discursive mechanisms to assuage the residents’ fear and apprehension.

In a letter to a HUD official, Polikoff shared his thoughts on anti-mobility arguments.⁹⁸ He did not understand why Baltimore had issues with the move-in of MTO families, since he had not experienced such resistance with Gautreaux. He noted that

⁹⁷ Memo from Turner to Goering, July 1, 1994. [doc 73]

⁹⁸ Letter from Polikoff to Bruce Katz at HUD, July 8, 1994. [doc 68]

“Baltimore and Chicago are on the same planet”. He included an article he wrote for the *Chicago Tribune* on mobility programs. He suggested that the main arguments put forth against mobility approaches such as Gautreaux was that the cost was too high, that it didn’t work at a larger scale, that it was bad for cities and African American neighborhoods. The last point is particularly notable, as it suggests that mobility efforts undermine community (ghetto) rebuilding efforts by stripping the neighborhoods of social capital (facilitating moves of “motivated” residents). Moreover, it implies that poor neighborhoods would lose some of their most valuable capacity to rebuild and thereby MTO weakens the political power of such neighborhoods. That is, families looking to leave their neighborhoods would be “creamed” away by the housing mobility option. But this begs the question of how one could impose on families to stay and help rebuild their community. Polikoff called the mobility debate a political one, marked by bureaucratic infighting or arcane punditry. He offered research by several notable authors/researchers who believed that moving families out of ghetto neighborhoods was the obvious pathway to help people. The mobility approach, he asserted, was a successful strategy demonstrated by the success of Gautreaux.

How local politicians framed MTO

This section examines how local, county, and state government officials framed MTO in light of its ensuing implementation in the Baltimore metropolitan area. For example, Congresswoman Bentley of Maryland wrote to HUD Secretary Cisneros regarding the MTO issue in Baltimore claiming that the federal government failed to apprise her of the

new program (MTO) and that it was a violation of her “right to know”.⁹⁹ She asserted that no one of her staff was able to secure information on MTO over the past months. Moreover, she was displeased that she only heard of the MTO community meeting at the last minute and was merely given the MTO fact sheet that HUD officials would discuss. She and community members were outraged because they were not informed of MTO in advance of its implementation. Also upset at having been excluded from the MTO policy deliberations, she argued that MTO was conducted “backwards”, as the receiving communities should have been involved and consulted at the outset of program discussions.

She also implicitly excoriated HUD as ignorant by their claim that MTO would have “no negative impact” on receiving communities, without asking the members of these communities. She also argued that counseling should be mandatory as initially proposed and not be voluntary as was said at the community meeting. She suggested that, if the families are to become self-sufficient and be assets to a community, then HUD’s initial policy directive should be enforced. However, she did encourage maintaining the low-poverty level neighborhood constraint for MTO movers as it made sense to test such effects, and she generally thought that the demonstration could bear fruit particularly if everyone bought into the idea.

Charged with writing a response to Ms. Bentley’s complaint, a HUD official drafted two responses¹⁰⁰ to the Maryland Congresswoman to be reviewed by other HUD staff. The first response drew from the MTO fact sheet, but omitted the issue of

⁹⁹ Copy of letter attached to memo from Goering to Rouse and Pearl, July 21, 1994. [doc 67]

¹⁰⁰ Draft responses by Goering, July 21, 1994. [doc 67]

involving the respective community in the local MTO issue. The second letter presented more of an initial response that allowed more time needed to “explore her concerns to draft a final answer” that would take HUD a month. The first letter suggested that all involved agencies were consulted regarding the issues she had raised and with everyone’s input she would receive a comprehensive response. The second letter was more comprehensive about the MTO program. It gave specific information on the MTO Baltimore site that 150 families with children would move to a variety of existing housing throughout the entire six county Baltimore metropolitan area, that staff would ensure that MTO families would move into the mandated low-poverty neighborhoods, and so on.

Baltimore county executive Hayden wrote in a letter to Cisneros that “both MTO members and citizens of Baltimore County would be best served by delaying the implementation”. He further suggested a delay in implementation of MTO until locals were “familiar and comfortable with” the MTO program.¹⁰¹ He asked that there be no future federal initiatives implemented in Baltimore County unless the policy implementation process was transparent, discussed with constituents in advance, and everyone was informed and aware of such initiative. Hayden also wrote to President Clinton and complained that Secretary Cisneros had not responded to a request for a meeting to discuss MTO in Baltimore County.¹⁰² He claimed that, “Mr. Cisneros has continually avoided [my] request to personally discuss our concerns with him”, and notably that “thousands of citizens” were upset about MTO and had been excluded from the MTO discourse at HUD. He asked Clinton to facilitate a meeting between himself

¹⁰¹ Letter from Hayden to Secretary Cisneros, August 25, 1994. [doc 124]

¹⁰² Letter from Hayden to President Clinton, October 17, 1994. [doc 144]

and Cisneros as soon as possible, or otherwise he would take legal action. He employed exaggerated rhetoric, and ended his letter with, on behalf of the over 700,000 citizens of Baltimore county I thank you in advance of helping us with that matter.

In summary, the local government framed the MTO destruction of neighborhoods through the lens that excluded the marginalized population. Local, county, and state officials would have preferred a more democratic process of deliberation to shape the MTO design and implementation, i.e. through participatory planning. They felt HUD imposed MTO on them through an opaque process. They assumed the worst: that HUD was purposely secretive, that their neighborhoods were under threat of being infiltrated with poor minorities who might shift their political status quo, and that the MTO families would bring with them what Wilson termed “ghetto related norms and behaviors” (culture), which could corrupt their children.

A different issue was that politicians were pressured by their constituents to take action, notably, to delay the MTO implementation. And finally, their own egos were wounded in the sense that the federal government relegated them powerless, did not show them respect of informing them of the impending implementation, especially given that it would affect their own jurisdictions.

Federal government framing of MTO

This section elucidates how HUD framed MTO in response to the public outcry in Baltimore. They produced a series of public documents to educate people about the MTO program and calm down panicked residents. For example, Assistant Secretary of

PD&R Michael Stegman clarified the purpose, intent, and scope of MTO.¹⁰³ He gave details on the design of the demonstration and emphasized that participants would be motivated, carefully screened, received assistance from NPO's and PHA's, would be monitored, and that some families might choose to not leave their existing neighborhoods, friends, and peer networks. Participants were described like objects, such as "those" people, which is indicative of the general objectification of poor people who receive housing assistance and who "depend" on federal government for help.

An MTO policy paper¹⁰⁴ described the demonstration as "small" with approximately 130 families with children in each of the 5 metro areas; that, those motivated families who apply will then be carefully screened for credit problems, criminal background, housekeeping skills, and other factors that will ensure that they are suitable candidates for this demonstration; that MTO offers one strategy for ensuring that poor families, who depend upon HUD for housing assistance and who have been carefully counseled and screened, can exercise meaningful choice about where to live; that the screening will include visits to the families' homes in order to see their housekeeping habits first hand; and that those in the Section 8 group (without the low-poverty neighborhood restriction) will likely choose to stay near their familiar networks.

For interviews with the *Baltimore Sun*, HUD prepared a written statement with themes, entitled: promoting choice and mobility in public and assisted housing.¹⁰⁵ The four themes can be summarized as follows.

¹⁰³ Letter from Stegman to Bentley, July 27, 1994. [doc 64]

¹⁰⁴ MTO policy paper. [doc 64]

¹⁰⁵ HUD document with themes for Baltimore Sun interview, August 1994. [doc 115]

Moving people is part of a long-term antipoverty strategy.

HUD pointed out that the concentration of poor people in high-rise public housing units had had negative effects on families, communities, cities and suburbs, and society as a whole. Contrary, housing mobility as demonstrated through the Gautreaux program had shown positive results, and had real potential to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty and dependency afflicting many poor inner-city families.

Baltimore will experience positive effects by fostering MTO and housing mobility.

HUD's long-term plan was to modernize and deconcentrate Baltimore public housing units, but not all of them. HUD anticipated demolishing most public housing and building new housing projects in their place. Also, it planned on constructing scattered site developments, in addition to providing families with Section 8 certificates and vouchers.

The current status of MTO, and the anticipated time frame of seven years for the implementation of public housing, scattered site housing, and voucher housing.

HUD attempted to ameliorate the fear of the upset communities relating to the number of residents who would move with certificates and vouchers. Indeed it identified that the number of residents moving to the suburbs would be very small! It suggested: "So it is ridiculous to equate the demolition of Baltimore's high-rise projects with the wholesale movement of public housing families to the suburbs; those who are talking about 18,000 families being moved are blatantly misrepresenting Baltimore's plans."

HUD's ideology is anchored in housing mobility.

HUD conveyed to the public that taking a moral stance to reduce spatial separation by income and race was an ambitious and courageous goal that was not easily achieved. A hard road was ahead and it would take time to overcome prejudice. It stated that some in Baltimore and elsewhere are fanning the flames of prejudice and fear with gross distortions of the truth for their own political purposes. It reiterated its commitment to providing housing choices for all Americans and to making public housing an asset to the communities in which it is located.

For another interview with the news media regarding MTO Baltimore, HUD drafted a document with a slightly different emphasis than the aforementioned one.¹⁰⁶ It elucidated the importance HUD placed on mobility as a sound anti-poverty strategy, and described the MTO as a national-scale Choice in Residency (CIR) program. HUD reiterated its commitment to continue to reform the Section 8 program which facilitated choice and mobility for its recipients. It stated that MTO was going to be implemented in Baltimore, but that the second round of the demonstration was canceled to move forward immediately to the national scale through CIR which sought to reform the existing Section 8 program to encompass tenant counseling and landlord outreach.

Furthermore, HUD presented housing mobility as a long-term anti-poverty strategy buttressed by the positive results from Gautreaux, which presented the potential to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and dependency. The purpose of reforming the Section 8 system was to enable true housing choice for poor people. As such, CIR would facilitate choice. Participants could stay or leave their existing neighborhoods, and mobility barriers would have been addressed. The fourth theme

¹⁰⁶ HUD document with themes for Broder interview, August 1994. [doc 40]

echoed the fourth theme addressed in the aforementioned notes in preparation for the *Baltimore Sun* interview.

In September 1994, PD&R prepared a paper that justified MTO by comparing it to Chicago's Gautreaux program¹⁰⁷ and claiming that the much larger Gautreaux program in Chicago created no problems with receiving communities. Meanwhile, the much smaller MTO population moving to Baltimore suburbs was perceived as devastating by residents of the receiving communities, which confounded perceptions that could undermine the initiative in that location. HUD argued that it understood there were different political circumstances in Chicago and Baltimore and made a compelling case that deconcentration worked well in Chicago to get MTO running elsewhere.

The paper suggested that the difference in "reception" between Chicago and Baltimore suburbs was related to the different backgrounds of these programs. Where Gautreaux was mandated based on a court case, MTO was based on federal legislation. This insulated the Chicago program from the political process while Baltimore was clearly subjected to it: "Unless we are to be governed by court orders more than most of us would wish, we must then confront the politics of this issue. Nothing less than the future of America's large cities may be at stake."

Several more articles reflecting the residents' and local politicians' vehement opposition to MTO appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* in September 1994¹⁰⁸, and HUD officials took this very seriously. The articles stated, for example, that Hayden asked HUD to postpone implementation of the program, and quoted angry residents and local

¹⁰⁷ Drafts of Embry paper, September 7, 1994. [doc 118, 119]

¹⁰⁸ Baltimore Sun article, September 10, 1994. [doc 128, 127]

politicians showing how they stereotyped public housing dwellers (i.e., “they need heavy duty counseling and be taught to bathe and not to steal”). The articles also reflect that MTO was viewed as a political/partisan issue supported by democrats and opposed by most republicans. One black middle-class resident of Baltimore County was quoted to say: “sadly, this issue has become just another political contest”, and “the poor should not be pawns in a political game with their lives and destinies are at the whim and wish of a few people”, and “they have a right to choose not only how they live but where they live.” Consequently, Goering emphasized via inter-office memo to Turner¹⁰⁹ that HUD needed to take the issues in the Baltimore community very seriously, and respond to any inquiries pertaining to the MTO in Baltimore. Based on the tone of this memo, HUD was clearly disquieted at the news media coverage and the residents’ opposition.

To summarize, HUD framed MTO through the lens of the expert elite, and very much supported its implementation. Couched within the larger narrative of an anti-poverty strategy, housing mobility through MTO was extolled as a salient policy intervention that leaned on positive results of Gautreaux. At the same time, it diverged from Gautreaux in that it was not court-ordered which made it subject to political attack. The official documents HUD produced in response to the Baltimore conflict -- i.e. those prepared for the media and local government officials -- are characterized by technical jargon (i.e., housing mobility as demonstrated through the Gautreaux program had shown positive results, and had real potential to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty and dependency afflicting many poor inner-city families; no more than around 140 families would move to the better neighborhoods; only families with a solid credit history and

¹⁰⁹ Memo from Goering to Turner, September 9, 1994. [doc 129]

good housekeeping standards would move – that was part of the screening process) relating to the MTO’s design and implementation, and are filled with thorough and deliberate prose (i.e., MTO would benefit society as a whole; only qualified families would be permitted to move – they deserved a chance at attaining the American dream for their children). The promotional narrative of HUD reflects their top-down, expert-oriented approach. The way HUD framed MTO for the Baltimore residents, on the other hand, is slightly different. Because HUD failed to inform local constituents of the ensuing MTO implementation directly, the documents prepared for the public focused on deflating panic by addressing the residents’ concerns. HUD tried to assuage the public by focusing on logistics, such as the concrete (small) numbers of MTO families that would move into their communities, that they would be thoroughly screened, etc. This narrative is in direct response to the public fear of MTO families. In fact, the discourse showed that the federal government in attempting to solve the inner-city housing crisis granted space to NPO’s in the provision of housing services (counseling, search assistance) that HUD had not provided to a great extent as part of the regular Section 8 program. In other words, NPO’s would assume greater *agency* in poor people’s lives. Deferring the monitoring of families to such NPO’s was incorporating space for the third sector, and did not make HUD appear too dominant.

Baltimore resident framing of MTO

This section investigates how residents of Baltimore County, notably the predominantly white, working-class inner-ring Baltimore suburbs of Essex and Dundalk, framed the MTO program. In general, residents were unpleasantly surprised when they learned of plans to move MTO families into their neighborhoods.

One community leader who served as President of the Greater Eastern Baltimore Community Council, President of SAFE, and sat on the boards of directors for the Rosedale Community Association, the Southeast Democratic Club, and the Eastern Political Association, wrote in a letter to the editor of a local newspaper¹¹⁰

[MTO] can have drastic effects on our communities if it is not properly done. Of course our society has a moral responsibility to correct the horrendous conditions that prevail in public housing projects such as Murphy Homes. But will problems relating to drugs, crime & trash be transferred to our communities? Will communities close to buslines, close to schools & shopping, become overburdened?

She also wondered who was calling the shots, why elected officials (i.e. HUD Secretary) were not talking to community residents, and whether the people in the affected communities would have a say.

One resident wrote a very powerful letter to Senator Sarbanes of Maryland complaining whole heartedly about the demonstration.¹¹¹ The letter demonstrates the deep-seated opposition to housing mobility, poverty deconcentration, MTO, government hand-outs, and anything else that opposes meritocracy and the capitalistic pathway of buying into a neighborhood and housing as commodity versus entitlement. He stated that it has been learned that there is no requirement for any of the family members to seek employment or in any way make themselves accountable for these monies, only that they are “poor”. He furthermore contended that the welfare system was commonly regarded as a dismal failure, and continues to exist because ‘poverty pimps’ at HUD and other state and local agencies do not want to see their ‘cash cow’ eliminated. They do not offer empowerment, rather, they offer another form of slavery.

¹¹⁰ Letter to the Editor, Dundalk Eagle, Dundalk, Md., May 12, 1994. [doc 135]

¹¹¹ Letter from Baltimore resident to Senator Sarbanes, July 27, 1994. [doc 126]

He complained that his Baltimore neighborhood had crime and drugs because of Section 8, through the failure of PHAs to screen Section 8 recipients thoroughly for criminal behavior, and via a lack of collaboration between PHA and Section 8 landlords to address these issues. He suggested PHAs were only interested in placing as many families as possible irrespective of the associated risk factors. He did not want to sound like a NIMBY but did not want to live near Section 8 housing. He also did not want his federal tax dollars squandered on people who could care less about themselves.

He called for a meeting with Cisneros regarding this “appalling program” as well as a public hearing regarding this colossal waste of taxpayer dollars to supposedly help those who are less fortunate. He asserted that the program was “cloaked in secrecy” and that if the wider public were aware of it there would be more resistance. He also claimed his property value decreased dramatically due to subsidized housing. In the final paragraph, he cited the Declaration of Independence, and asked “whatever happened to personal accountability” with regard to the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness: “Am I supposed to be happy about my neighborhood turned into another ghetto”, and that he was forced to pursue happiness elsewhere.

The letters also described the residents’ outrage and several heated community meetings, as well as the response by County Executive Hayden who had asked HUD to postpone the MTO implementation. Quotes by angry residents and councilmen showed the stereotypes inflicting public-housing dwellers: that they needed heavy duty counseling, for example, and to be taught to bathe and not to steal.

In a letter to the editor, one resident wrote in opposition to MTO,

People who have worked long and hard for whatever they have surely have earned the right to be concerned and skeptical about some theoretical, sociological people-replacement plan. That is not to say that I am against social change, but not when it may cause more problems than it solves.

Community flyers¹¹² distributed by some concerned residents in Essex also reflect the residents' position on MTO. Their outrage was rooted in fear, primarily, that their neighborhoods would become crime-ridden, and drug infested, that new ghettos would arise, and that their school systems would decline. They also felt resentment towards the "undeserving" poor, who did not have to work to leave the ghetto but instead received government handouts.

To summarize, the residents' frame opposed MTO based on several key aspects. First, residents felt oppressed and politically marginalized as no one had informed them of MTO nor involved them in the process. In the role of the oppressed, the residents felt powerless over their space which was threatened by the infringement of poor minorities. Second, they expressed fear (i.e., of the *other*, of sharing resources, of *change*). Described by HUD as white and working-class, they had unfavorable assumptions of Section 8 recipients and the norms and behaviors they would bring to their neighborhoods. As such, racism factored into their frame. Thirdly, they were unwilling to share their resources (neighborhoods), which they had earned through hard work. Thus, one crucial aspect of their framing of MTO was the holding on to deeply entrenched values of hard work and meritocracy. As opposed to the altruistic societal cause touted by HUD, MTO was viewed as "government handouts" or the spending of their tax dollars to benefit the lazy and undeserving.

¹¹² Community Flyer, 1994. [doc 135]

Media / journal coverage of the MTO Baltimore conflict

Local newspapers in Baltimore quickly picked up on the community dissent relating to MTO Baltimore. A series of articles reflect the perspectives on the issue, particularly the perspectives of residents, politicians, as well as the federal government.¹¹³ It stated that Baltimore County residents have had fears of blacks moving into their neighborhood ever since the white-flight of the 1950s. Hence, County residents distrusted any federal government initiatives facilitating such moves. That distrust, according to the report, had contributed to the nature of local politics, and undermined urban renewal and public housing construction in the County. The news articles also indicated that the controversy surrounding MTO had implications for local politics, that is, politicians who publicly opposed MTO could win votes but still profit from MTO-related contracts (such as new Section 8 housing construction). It was also suggested that local residents viewed MTO as forced integration or social engineering, especially since public housing had never been built in the County. Thus, low-income housing in the County was hotly contested. At the same time, local politicians and residents felt left out of the planning and implementation stages, and much of the negativity reverted back to exclusion. They felt alienated by HUD and contemplated plans for retribution.

In a national news article entitled “Clinton’s Wrecking Ball for the Suburbs” published in the *Wall Street Journal*¹¹⁴, Bovard suggested that the Section 8 rent certificate program paid very high rents to enable poor (MTO) families to live in luxury apartments with extravagant amenities such as swimming pools and parquet floors. The

¹¹³ Baltimore Sun article *Housing Controversy Replay*, August 7, 1994. [doc 138]; Baltimore Sun article *Former newcomers now face anti-incumbent foes in re-election bid*, August 23, 1994. [doc 130]

¹¹⁴ Bovard, J. (August 4, 1994). Clinton’s wrecking ball for the suburbs, *Wall Street Journal*.

author gave examples of families in L.A., New York, and Chicago who moved into such affluent conditions under MTO. He implied that Section 8 families were welfare recipients with welfare mentalities and behaviors who “end up sowing chaos in suburban neighborhoods”. Some Section 8 renters were “deadbeat, hooligan, and violent renters”, and he claimed that Section 8 was a sorry attempt to “end the stigma of welfare”. In addition, he asserted that “Chicago has distributed thousands of Section 8 certificates to public housing residents who have used them primarily to move to a handful of communities on the city’s southern edge” and that Congress was about to pass a law that would “greatly expand” the Section 8 program.

Polikoff refuted Bovard’s arguments in a letter to the *Wall Street Journal* editor¹¹⁵ and accused the paper of proffering diatribe rather than responsible journalism. Addressing the assertion that the government paid extremely high rents for these families, he argued that Bovard deliberately selected his (atypical) examples in the most expensive cities in the nation, referred to the very small percentage of families who rented four-bedroom fair market rental units, failed to mention that rent figures included utility costs, that the apartments were below median for unsubsidized apartments in the area, and that these Section 8 families contribute one-third of their income to rent not leaving taxpayers with the significant “burden” Bovard suggested. He refuted Bovard’s assertion that Section 8 families destroyed neighborhood by alluding to Gautreaux, which produced no evidence of such wreckage. To address Bovard’s point that Section 8 families were “hooligans” or “criminals”, Polikoff reminded readers that (1) landlord participation in the program was voluntary, (2) landlords were entitled to run background checks of

¹¹⁵ Letter Polikoff to Bartley, August 26, 1994. [doc 123]

potential renters, and (3) processes of eviction were the same for all renters regardless of whether they received government subsidies or not. Finally, Polikoff stressed that most Section 8 recipients were not the “welfare” families as described in the article, but instead tended to be working poor, elderly, disabled, etc. He elaborated that over half of non-elderly, nondisabled Section 8 recipients held jobs.

Several additional articles relating to MTO appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* in September 1994¹¹⁶. Their inflammatory rhetoric grabbed the attention of PD&R officials. One article contained excerpts from a radio interview with a Baltimore official who compared MTO to Fidel Castro’s release of criminals, mentally ill and the AIDS patients during the 1980 Mariel boatlift. Another article labeled the issue of the Baltimore MTO as political and partisan. It shows not only how the demonstration was viewed by Baltimore but also how the media can shape public opinion. For example, it quoted a black middle-class resident of Baltimore County who said she understood both sides of the Baltimore issue. She believed that the fear that residents had was substantiated since moving families were unlikely to relinquish the “problem behaviors” that had contributed to their “problems” in the first place. This line of argument, that poor people lack appropriate social capital is still prevalent. For example, an *Atlantic Monthly* article by Rosin (2008) notes that the move of Section 8 households into the wider Memphis metropolitan area was linked to an increase in crime in those neighborhoods into which poor families moved.¹¹⁷ The author’s analysis suggested that this pattern held true for metropolitan areas across the nation. Briggs and Dreier (2008), however, refuted the argument. However, Rosin (2008) also pointed out that “sadly, this

¹¹⁶ Baltimore Sun article, September 10, 1994. [doc 128, 127]

¹¹⁷ Rosin, Hanna (2008). American Murder Mystery, *Atlantic Monthly*.

issue has become just another political contest” where in the end it was partisan and mostly important because of votes. “The poor should not be pawns in a political game with their lives and destinies at the whim and wish of a few people. They have a right to choose not only how they live but where they live.”

In a letter¹¹⁸ to Secretary Cisneros in support of MTO, a member of the United Way of Maryland suggested that the nature of the opposition to MTO was strictly political. She saw the MTO program as an important pathway towards providing poor people with a chance to live in a safe neighborhood with better access to jobs and other opportunity structures. Commenting on the opposition in Baltimore, she opined that harsh words were spoken by political opportunists, who saw a chance to scare people into uninformed action. She also noted that she looked to Cisneros’s leadership to “keep MTO and CIR on track” and use [his] office and experience to counter these political manipulations, and continue federal funding for these programs. She urged him to support the MTO program to ensure that poor people are not excluded from reaching for the American dream.

The opposition in Baltimore, however, had far-reaching ramifications. While in 1993 Congress allocated \$70 million for roughly 1,400 housing vouchers and the delivery of housing counseling to help families move, the additional MTO allocation of \$150 million planned for 1994 was cancelled because of the strong community opposition in Baltimore (Goering & Feins, 2003:46-50). Apparently, according to Kevin Kelly, a key staff member of U.S. Senator Mikulski from Maryland, HUD staff were told to “kill” MTO altogether. However, HUD agreed to compromise, and implemented MTO at the

¹¹⁸ Letter from Linda Wolfe, Independent Living Specialist, October 12, 1994. [doc 116]

Baltimore site and not launch the second stage of MTO. Consequently, the already allocated funds were rolled over to the more general Choice in Residence (CIR) program¹¹⁹. The shift from MTO to a more general CIR program will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Summary

To conclude, the conflicts between the discourses and frames reviewed in this chapter represent deeper level value conflicts – who holds power over space and resources, the extent to which the redistribution of resources is justified, or a moral imperative, and societal attachment to values of hard work and meritocracy.

The document analysis reflects the discourse on housing mobility and voucher portability between public and government entities. The hegemonic discourse (as a concept of “normality”) of the HUD power elite has extolled housing mobility as a promising policy solution to address concentrated poverty, without much consideration for the implications for residents in receiving and more resource-rich communities. People in these communities, as this chapter demonstrates, not all necessarily view poverty concentration in the inner-city as a problem. Rather at least some local members cling to traditional ideals of meritocracy where housing is a commodity that is earned.

From a policy perspective, this chapter suggests that problem definition, the first step in the policy making process, depends heavily on the interpretation of the problem. In other words, different agents and actors involved in the policy process can have different concepts and realities. Indeed some are even affected in very different ways.

¹¹⁹ HUD document, 1994. [doc 27]

This makes consensus building virtually impossible absent a democratic, inclusive process of policy deliberation. For example, the federal government viewed poverty concentration in inner-cities as *the* problem, and the deliberate (socially engineered) placement of poor minorities as the solution. Suburban residents in Baltimore County did not share this view. Instead, they viewed the infringement of poor people into their communities as *the* problem that would affect their safety, education, property values, and ability to communicate family and majority values to their children.

The above discussion provides insight into the competing frameworks of MTO from the perspectives of the federal government, the local government, and residents in receiving communities. It shows the potential detriment of elite-controlled policymaking and implementation process. One that had been more strategic and inclusive would have enabled pre-consideration of the Baltimore County residents and their local/county/state representatives. However, the lack of consultation with the community and local politicians, and the resistance of residents and local politicians at the Baltimore site were so significant that HUD canceled the second-year expansion of MTO.

Chapter 7

Poverty deconcentration and housing mobility dominate the policy discourse

Introduction

While MTO was being conceptualized, several concurrent HUD demonstrations and programs aimed at poverty deconcentration were in the works: e.g., the Bridges to Work demonstration, the Jobs-Plus demonstration, and HOPE VI. HUD hoped that, “the substantial body of careful research on each of these efforts would produce more knowledge about the social and economic effects of low-income housing policy – a long-neglected, much maligned domain of public policy- than any work carried out in the preceding thirty or forty years” (Briggs et al., 2010: 52). In this chapter I review published and unpublished documents contained in HUD’s MTO archive on mobility research initiatives outside of the actual MTO. Congress charged HUD with producing cutting-edge mobility research, which resulted in the dominant housing mobility discourse among HUD’s leadership, top PD&R officials, and outside experts. The research centered on analyzing existing mobility initiatives to improve Section 8 portability and to foster the deconcentration of poverty in inner cities.

The emphasis on regional housing opportunities was nothing new. Since the HUD Reform Act of 1989, designated housing desegregation efforts were included in the Headquarters Reserve (a portion of the budget authority available for housing programs, specifically, up to five percent of the federal HUD budget for the FY for programs such

as housing needs resulting from the settlement of litigation; and housing in support of desegregation efforts). Consequently, the Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity informed all regional and field office Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) directors that several hundred rental certificates and vouchers were available for desegregation purposes.¹²⁰ This initiative was to “promote more racially or ethnically inclusive patterns of occupancy” since rental certificates or vouchers would help correct “past discriminatory actions.”

Around the same time (April 1991), HUD PD&R officials exchanged ideas regarding the Metropolitan Opportunities Demonstration Program (MODP), a precursor to MTO.¹²¹ It was not clear whether the initiative should aim at moving poor people around within cities or whether it should deliberately move them into the suburbs. MODP was to be different from scattered-site initiatives like Yonkers in that it would not be a racial desegregation initiative, and also a departure from Gautreaux and other court-ordered racial desegregation cases. As “a fresh start” for voucher allocation, this demonstration was envisioned to be an exceptional vehicle for mobility research as it intended to “show whether modern programs will pay off in higher employment and better educational outcomes”! Greater provision of social and monitoring services by PHAs and NPOs were key to this intervention.

Roisman and Botein¹²² described various mobility programs across the nation. Since most mobility programs were engendered by litigation, the authors posited that,

¹²⁰ Memo Mansfield to FHEO directors, April 17, 1991. [doc 54]

¹²¹ Memo Gatons, Goering to Shroder, Khadduri, April 20, 1991. [doc 48]

¹²² Roisman, Florence W., and Hilary Botein. 1993. Housing Mobility and Life Opportunities. *Clearinghouse Review* 27.

“litigation is likely to be essential in achieving housing mobility.” The Fair Housing Act required that federal housing and community development funds be used to counter existing, past, and future discrimination/segregation in housing. Moreover, the government was required to “undo existing discrimination to truly increase open housing opportunities.” To advance this goal, the authors suggested that legal advocates draw from the program designs of existing housing mobility programs, and that private, nonprofit fair-housing groups were preferable to PHAs in administering housing mobility programs. They added that “counseling is essential” and, finally, that

every federal, state, and local agency exercising authority over any aspect of housing ought to be devoting its resources and power to enabling mobility because segregation is at the root of injustices and most grievous problems, and legal services advocates can do a great deal to give many people a real opportunity to improve their own and others’ lives.

Section 8 mobility research initiatives

The Section 8 mobility research suggests that HUD was urgent about expanding the empirical base on housing mobility through Section 8 vouchers. By increasing data and analysis, gathering information about the process of housing search, and providing a more reliable quantitative and qualitative baseline for comparison, HUD would gain critical insight about housing mobility processes.

In January 1994, the Urban Institute (UI), a Washington based think tank, proposed a cooperative agreement between HUD and UI to conduct studies of existing Section 8 special mobility programs.^{123/124} There were two components to the study.

¹²³ Letter Peterson to Goering, January 31, 1994. HUD and UI Section 8 special mobility programs research outline [doc 43]

¹²⁴ UI document, February 8, 1994. [doc 28]

One would produce a series of analytical reports on survey findings for each of the metro areas--Chicago, Memphis, Hartford, and Dallas--as well as cross comparison with existing research in Cincinnati and Chicago, expanding the empirical base beyond Gautreaux. Two new surveys would help identify common aspects and differences between sites, and produce an overall assessment of the study of the effectiveness of mobility programs. A second component would examine the housing and search process in two tenant-based housing mobility programs, paying special attention to the experiences of heads of households and their children, as well as landlords and counselors. Interviews in the second component would complement first component findings by providing a fuller understanding of individual motivations, experiences, and barriers encountered during the housing search. In addition, administrative and counseling staff would be interviewed so that the NPO and PHA administrations of the two tenant-based mobility programs could be compared.

Rosenbaum (Chicago) and Fischer (Cincinnati) offered to aid in the questionnaire design, and local firms conducted surveys using well-trained minority staff. The study would mirror the tentatively proposed MTO demonstration, in that it would compare three groups: movers to suburbs, movers to eligible housing, and non-movers. It would also examine the families' selection bias and degree of "creaming" of participants. This study was to be completed in time for an October 1994 housing mobility conference.

HUD's goal was to reform the existing Section 8 program into one of interest to the private market and to provide for metropolitan-wide availability of Section 8 housing. A series of memos was exchanged between HUD staff regarding the Move to

Independence (MTI) demonstration.¹²⁵ HUD officials claimed, “We’re clearly not looking for moves but rather for a feeling of choice, even if tenants don’t act on it.” This is indicative of HUD’s reform objective, which was primarily to increase *choices* for Section 8 recipients, in addition to stimulating the private market housing, and (hopefully) breaking up concentrated poverty.

HUD’s research priorities in 1994

Michael Stegman, HUD’s Assistant Secretary and director of PD&R, issued a policy brief entitled “Creating Communities of Opportunity Research Priorities 1994.”¹²⁶ The brief elucidated Secretary Cisneros’s mission for HUD to create cohesive, economically healthy communities of opportunity throughout America and to reinvent the way to perform housing research. HUD’s primary mission was to generate reliable and objective data and analysis that inform policy and to obtain definitive answers to questions about how to reduce racial segregation. Quick-turnaround studies, conferences, and long-term evaluations would systematically measure outcomes, produce reliable databases regarding housing conditions and needs, and provide documentation on how HUD programs worked.

Stegman’s brief¹²⁷ also suggested that HUD’s goal was to “take full advantage of the wealth of intellectual resources outside HUD by forming active partnerships with researchers, practitioners, advocates, industry groups, and foundations [while being] “committed to involving a greater diversity of perspectives, methods, and researchers into

¹²⁵ Memo Kennedy to Goering, March 12, 1994; memo Gray to Goering, March 16, 1994. [doc 17]

¹²⁶ Stegman brief. [Doc 94]

¹²⁷ Ibid.

HUD research.” This goal statement mirrors themes discussed in previous chapters of a top-down, elitist research agenda and of the involvement of HUD-defined experts in the reform process. The “diversity of perspectives” systematically excluded the input of the subjects of the planning. It also reflects that the dominant discourse centered on tenant-based reform, since project-based housing assistance was already outmoded (as the following statement indicates):

Although public housing plays a critical role in meeting the housing needs of low-income Americans, the vast majority of households are and will continue to be served by the private sector. The Department is committed to expanding both opportunities for homeownership and the availability of affordable rental housing.

HUD viewed the persistence of housing market discrimination and residential segregation as “one of the most daunting problems we face as a society.”¹²⁸ Undoubtedly this was because such segregation perpetuated inequality and prejudice through the isolation of poor and minority households in mostly poor and minority neighborhoods. HUD’s objective was to enforce fair housing laws, ensure the affirmative marketing of housing opportunities, and foster open access to communities throughout metropolitan regions. The much anticipated MTO evaluation was regarded as the front runner for contributing to HUD’s initiative.

HUD also wanted to “bring excellence to HUD’s management.” Stegman’s brief¹²⁹ asserted that, “to achieve any of its ambitious policy objectives, HUD must become more efficient and cost effective,” and be “held accountable for achieving outcomes, not just for adhering to proper procedures.” Finally, HUD opted to focus on service standards, for example customer service quality and program performance.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Section 153 research

To meet President Clinton's request for a new national urban policy and agenda, Congress charged HUD to address Section 153 of the Housing and Community Development Act (1992) and consult with fair-housing groups, tenants, PHAs, and others involved in mobility programs in Memphis and Dallas. It also suggested HUD look at implementation and impacts of the ways in which Gautreaux-like efforts differed from the regular Section 8 program. It furthermore requested that an independent assessment of impediments to mobility be conducted. Congress asked for revisions to the program to enhance dispersion of the poor.

Goering, however, thought that relying heavily on measures of satisfaction and perception of the latest movers in Memphis and Dallas was too weak since using only interviews to measure impacts would be insufficient. So he suggested a meeting with fair housing groups, PHA's, tenants, and others prior to submitting the final draft response to Congress's request. Additionally, Goering sent a memo¹³⁰ to Turner expressing his dissatisfaction with the proposed research design, précis, and budget, and suggested revising the proposal.

Polikoff also contributed to the discourse by submitting a "component of [the] proposal for HUD on housing mobility," which was supposed to be an unsolicited proposal designed to help address the Congressional Section 153 request. In his proposal he posited that MTO and the other existing housing mobility programs served to further public policy for assisted housing, and that:

¹³⁰ Memo Goering to Turner, December 22, 1993. [doc 15]

knowledge of the practices that first, lead to success in assisting families to move to areas not impacted by poverty and race and second, that enable significant numbers of those family members to adapt to their new neighborhoods, to find employment and to achieve in education is essential in framing sound public policy.

Congress wanted to expand the knowledge of the effects of mobility programs beyond the specialized Gautreaux and Cincinnati programs to foster a better understanding because the “empirical base for generalization is slim.” A study expanded beyond these two cities was viewed as allowing HUD to prepare a more systematic comparison across sites. A draft of the “component” study indicates that the new study was aimed at understanding the administrative procedures of housing mobility programs with an emphasis on household heads’ (tenants) perceptions and experiences.

Thus, the Section 153 research was geared towards testing other current mobility efforts. To that end, Goering remarked, “Senate staff and the private fair-housing movement requested that HUD quickly assess efforts other than the Chicago Gautreaux project”¹³¹, and examine the Section 8 fair market rate (FMR) rental units, counseling by PHAs, existing ethnic and racial discrimination exercised by landlords, etc. to *quickly* assess the effectiveness of mobility as a desegregation tool. That HUD sought to fill this research gap following a research hiatus is indicated in a memo¹³² where Stegman asserted to Turner that, since HUD had produced no research on other existing desegregation programs outside of Gautreaux that offered effective policy guidance on a crucial set of issues. Therefore, he recommended allocating \$200,000 to this immediate initiative to inform the MTO, MTL, and other desegregation remedies. According to Stegman,

¹³¹ Letter Turner to Stegman, March 11, 1994; Memo Turner to Goering, March 28, 1994. [doc 42]

¹³² Ibid.

PD&R also has sponsored no research on the effects of any race desegregation of Title VI compliance agreements, leaving us unable to offer effective policy guidance on this crucial set of issues. We are unable to address any of the questions related to which types of desegregation efforts work best, in which locations, at what cost, and with what tangible impact on levels of segregation in projects.

In response to the Section 153 research project, Polikoff insisted that deliberate placement of families in opportunity neighborhoods, as in Gautreaux, was necessary to see positive results. He wrote to Cisneros expressing concerns regarding the “Moving to Independence, Choice in Tenancy, or whatever it’s finally called.”¹³³ He suggested that HUD needed to be explicit about goal setting, for example, setting aside a portion of Section 8 vouchers for low-poverty neighborhoods, and not just make it about service delivery of PHAs and counseling, especially since “HUD had already been called social engineers and accused of ethnic cleansing.”

The MTI language, in Stegman’s opinion, talked about enhanced choices and not deconcentration of the poorest populations or of attacking the extreme spatial segregation by race, class, and income, which would be better. He claimed that MTI should not be based on the “quality and uneven Section 8 counseling,” but rather it should address how Section 8 had aggravated racial and economic segregation. HUD, he pressed, should do everything it possibly could so “that scarce housing resources do not continue to be used in that way.”

In July 1994, Polikoff wrote to Cisneros again regarding MTI or CIR, pushing for the earmarking of Section 8 vouchers for use in low-poverty neighborhoods.¹³⁴ He reiterated that a deliberate desegregation initiative was more pressing than testing the

¹³³ Memo from Polikoff to Cisneros, March 30, 1994. [doc 88]

¹³⁴ Letter from Polikoff to Cisneros, July 25, 1994. [doc 19]

effects of housing counseling and accused HUD of falling back on its own rhetoric to solve the problem of residential segregation and poverty concentration in inner cities.

However, as promising as the Gautreaux results were, HUD felt the need for increasing the research base on mobility programs with definitive, quantifiable results. This is demonstrated in the second draft of the effects section of the Section 153 Special report,¹³⁵ where it was suggested that Gautreaux, the oldest mobility program, was “subject to the limitations of all social science research” and could not prove causality since its subjects were self-selected. Therefore, statistical differences between the two Gautreaux groups were not necessarily the result of a move to a better neighborhood.

In addition, the outcome of Gautreaux could not be equated with other mobility programs in different geographic locations. Thus, it was not a blueprint model that could be readily applied in different parts of the country, as it lacked a public housing control group as well as certain data crucial to a thorough analysis, such as a strong baseline and follow-up survey of families who dropped out of the Gautreaux program. Thus, its results yielded a conservative estimate since its population did not represent the typical public-housing family. Thus the generalizability of its findings was limited.

A HUD draft of the Section 153 report (an overview of mobility programs)¹³⁶ described the scope, service delivery, and characteristics of mobility programs in Chicago, Cincinnati, Boston, Memphis, Hartford, Las Vegas, Yonkers, and Dallas. These programs varied in terms of services and advice to residents. Chicago, Cincinnati, Memphis, Dallas, Boston, and Yonkers programs were based on consent decrees.

¹³⁵ Doc 31

¹³⁶ Doc 32

Hartford, however, was based on a voluntary agreement and Las Vegas on a Title 6 agreement with HUD. HUD annually issued 100 to 540 certificates and vouchers for all of these programs combined, while Gautreaux had allocated 150 certificates each year in Chicago alone until 7,100 families from the plaintiff class had moved.

Most programs had restrictions such as moving families to census tracts with less than 50 percent minority representation, or less than 10 percent low-income or certificate or voucher households. In addition, most programs provided additional services, such as housing search counseling, some landlord outreach, and some follow-up services. With regard to barriers to mobility, 13 percent of Gautreaux families were dropped from the program based on poor housekeeping skills, 12 percent had poor credit histories or were not paying rent on time or had no income, and 5 percent could not find suitable housing because they had large families (four or more children).

Another draft of the Section 153 report¹³⁷ suggested that the differing Federal court consent decrees or compliance agreements for the programs determined to some extent the variation in program administration resources and guidelines. This made them hard to compare. For example, the Chicago and Cincinnati programs required clients to move to non-segregated neighborhoods, which begged the question of whether HUD's true interest was to impose constraints or provide choices. That is, mandating families to move to specific neighborhoods did not exactly provide families with choices, and, as such, was criticized as "social engineering". Additionally, program specific external factors shaped program outcomes, such as the metropolitan Fair Market Rate (FMR),

¹³⁷ Doc 34

housing availability, and racial tensions in receiving communities, all of which posed potential barriers to housing mobility.

With regard to racial tensions, the older mobility programs like Chicago and Cincinnati faced less opposition from the metropolitan area. In Memphis, however, “families prefer to wait for a regular Section 8 certificate or voucher so their choices are not restricted.”¹³⁸ In Hartford, the Section 8 certificate/voucher programs were administered by a for-profit, private organization. A regional administrative plan between Connecticut PHAs and Connecticut Civil Liberties Union supported families to find housing outside of the city, and the Housing Education Resource Center with the help of private funding assisted families in moving outside of Hartford.

In Dallas, the Mobility Division (a group of six members established by the Dallas Housing Authority) assisted families in finding housing outside of areas with high poverty concentrations, tours, housing counseling, and landlord recruitment, and large housing authorities were able to move families into non-impacted areas in which less than ten Section 8 rentals had been used within a span of a few years. The consensus among program staff was to expand housing beyond traditional low-income, segregated neighborhoods to “have real freedom of choice and full access.”¹³⁹ Additional counseling and housing search assistance beyond what the regular Section 8 program provided was needed to “assist families interested in moving to new areas but who cannot or will not do so without outside help.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

HUD assumed that an analysis of Section 8 mobility research would indicate variations and similarities among programs, and enable HUD to synthesize the results and find a common workable model for fostering mobility. However, within two decades there had been a small number of programs focused on desegregation, but Section 8 submarkets and concentrations of Section 8 housing tended to locate in the worst neighborhoods. Indeed, a study by Fischer¹⁴¹ indicated this sort of pattern also arose in Cook County, Illinois, where networks, neighborhoods, and personal referrals were at the root of “re-segregation” in addition to other impediments. According to Stegman, such re-segregation was problematic in conducting statistical analyses, since any effects of desegregation would be harder to detect. He wrote to the Senate Banking Committee regarding the partial draft of Section 153 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992 report on in August 1994, suggesting “we [HUD] strongly suspect that it will show a potential problem of correlation in high-poverty neighborhoods.”¹⁴²

Ongoing findings from mobility research

A memo exchanged in 1994 between top officials at HUD’s PD&R reflected their interest into mobility and desegregation, in addition to scattered-site housing research produced by non-HUD researchers.¹⁴³ Turner asserted that, “we need to design and launch our own work on this topic [scattered site housing]...It is not our job to fact-check [other] stuff on scattered site housing.” Consequently, HUD initiated a housing and development brief about residential mobility programs as part of the HUD USER series

¹⁴¹ Fischer, Paul. 1993. “A Racial Perspective on Subsidized Housing in the Chicago Suburbs.” A Report to the MacArthur Foundation.

¹⁴² Letter Stegman to Weech, August 26, 1994. [doc 38]

¹⁴³ Memo Turner to Goering, September 22, 1994. [doc 23]

that would describe and review research and trends in a particular policy area.¹⁴⁴ It indicated that MTO was part of a larger trend at HUD to disperse those receiving housing assistance. Referencing existing patterns of racial segregation relating to John Kain's work on spatial mismatch,¹⁴⁵ current mobility studies examined the spatial mismatch hypotheses. The analysis thus far indicated that residential segregation imposed a high commuting cost on black workers and that living in suburbs made blacks likelier to be employed. It also suggested that job decentralization aggravated the harmful effects of residential segregation on black employment.

The brief proposed residential mobility as the solution to overcome the effects of race and place. For example, Gautreaux's success in social integration, employment rate, and education suggested that intensive counseling was critical for integration, as well as to "overcome attachment to existing social networks." Gautreaux successfully relocated 4,500 families over a period of 15 years into 115 suburbs -- an impact too small to cause fear of the suburban families. This evidence was buttressed by outcomes of programs in Dallas, Memphis, and Cincinnati, where moving into white enclaves was found to be more important than moving into suburbs per se, according to the analysis. In a way these results were indicative of what HUD viewed (implicitly) as successful mobility initiatives. For example, mobility was successful if families who moved to better neighborhoods severed the ties to their old neighborhoods, which was assumed to encourage the assimilation into the dominant culture. Another example of successful

¹⁴⁴ Note Heenan to Turner, April 11, 1994, with HUD brief. [doc 84]

¹⁴⁵ Kain, John. 1993. "The Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis: Three Decades Later." *Housing Policy Debate* 3:371-460.

mobility was if the numbers of families moving into better neighborhoods were small enough to not cause community panic.

The brief¹⁴⁶ also mentioned that residential mobility had mostly disappeared from the HUD policy agenda for a decade and reemerged in 1991 when HUD proposed and Congress authorized MTO. MTO was different from Gautreaux in that the poverty- level was a criterion, not the “whiteness” of the neighborhood, though the two tended to be highly correlated. As such, it marked MTO as an antipoverty program or empowerment initiative that defined barriers facing inner-city residents in economic terms.

Through recent regulatory changes, the portability of Section 8 vouchers outside of issuing PHAs but any PHA within a metropolitan region was permitted, and HUD’s Moving to Independence (MTI) initiative would incorporate counseling services by providing grants to NPOs for counseling to extend to the entire Section 8 program, and encourage mobility. Another initiative was metropolitan-wide assisted housing where comprehensive clearinghouses would coordinate information on and access to housing assistance on a regional basis, and NPOs would manage integrated waiting lists for all assisted housing programs available in a metropolitan area [regionalism]. Here, families on waiting lists were offered the first opportunity to relocate, and received counseling services, which would make for one-stop-shopping for poor families. According to HUD, “whether conceived as a strategy for enhancing residential diversity or as an anti-poverty program, the concept can succeed on its own.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ HUD brief. [doc 84]

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

In April 1994, the Association for Public Policy and Management (APPAM) proposed a panel convened by Abt Associates, titled “Mobility Programs as Vehicles for Promoting Economic and Social Integration” for an October conference on housing mobility programs so that researchers, policy makers, program implementers, et cetera could discuss experiences, concerns and benefits of mobility programs to drive these forward.¹⁴⁸ Turner’s paper on MTO’s long-term strategy was included in the papers to be presented, adding to the diverse experience and perspectives on the processes and outcomes of mobility programs. Other papers scheduled included research on Gautreaux and the Cincinnati Mobility Program. The goal of the conference was described as “including academic and non-academic researchers, as well as practitioners and government representatives, this panel offers a range of perspectives on the potential benefits from mobility programs as well as important areas for the government and implementers to consider as mobility programs expand.”¹⁴⁹

MTI – Move to Independence

Stegman described the MTI counseling initiative program to Katz as follows.¹⁵⁰ Funded under the Section 8 program, MTI was a major departure of the traditional Section 8 program administration in that counseling would help families move out of high-poverty neighborhoods. These counselors would also provide information on housing options throughout metropolitan areas, and help assisted families move, so “their children can grow up without the depressing effects of blight and poverty around them.”¹⁵¹ MTI

¹⁴⁸ Letter Finkel to Noto, April 25, 1994, with APPAM proposal. [doc 63]

¹⁴⁹ APPAM proposal. [doc 63]

¹⁵⁰ Memo from Stegman to Katz, MTI program description, 1994. [doc 21]

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

entailed competitively awarding MTI grants to PHAs in metropolitan areas with high-poverty concentration (HUD identified). If the PHAs did not apply for these grants, then they would not receive the regular incremental increases allocated to them for Section 8 funds. If PHAs failed to successfully implement MTI, then they would also not receive incremental raises in assistance from HUD. The HUD criteria for PHA receipt of MTI funding depended on the percentages of minorities and poor within a PHA jurisdiction, the concentration of Section 8 recipients in a jurisdiction, local PHA matching funds, as well as past record of PHA and NPO success of counseling.

The rationale was that, typically, PHAs did not provide counseling for moves beyond city limits. The MTI, on the other hand, offered choice and support to families, extending the offer of mobility counseling to the universe of Section 8 recipients. The MTO did this just for experimental families. In 1994 HUD would competitively award \$4 million in mobility counseling funds with the same objective as under MTI and MTO. HUD articulated their goals for MTI as follows:

While the Certificate and Voucher programs have successfully broadened residential opportunities for low-income families (especially when compared with public housing and other project-based programs), these programs have not come close to reaching their full potential for promoting increased mobility. MTI offers participating families significantly expanded choice as well as meaningful support so they can act on these choices.¹⁵²

Bruce Katz of HUD made the decision to change the name from MTI (Move to Independence) to CIR “Choice in Residency”.

¹⁵² Ibid.

CIR – Choice in Residency Program

A HUD policy brief on the difference between MTO and CIR¹⁵³ shows some preliminary outcomes of MTO and CIR. It marks that a shift to tenant based assistance was well on its way. The main difference was that CIR was a national program, not a demonstration. No family was required to move to a low-poverty neighborhood. Moreover, non-profit counseling was voluntary to all Section 8 applicants, not just people already living in public or project based housing. Congress appropriated money in FY95 for the MTO program, but HUD proposed to reprogram funds for CIR (waiting for appropriations committee to consent on negotiation). HUD intended to repeal MTO in 1995 because there was no further need for the demonstration given the decision to support CIR. It was hoped that CIR would bring an increase in Section 8 accepting landlords, and that it was intended to change the pattern of racial and poverty isolation for Section 8 renters (currently in Section 8 submarket). Evidence from the MTO's Boston site, for example, suggested that only a few MTO families chose to move to non-traditional neighborhoods, but preferred to use their Section 8 vouchers in their familiar environment: "they prefer their own newly refurbished project housing to the risk of moving to a new community far from their friends, employment, schools, and services."

In August 1994 Stegman responded to an internal HUD memo that CIR would address problems of concentration and the use of Section 8 as well as landlord submarkets, informed by MTO, Gautreaux, and other court-ordered mobility initiatives.¹⁵⁴ A subsequent memo¹⁵⁵ related the distribution of MTO funds to CIR

¹⁵³ Doc 8

¹⁵⁴ Memo Dong to Goering, August 24, 1994. [doc 26]

allocations. Specifically, the distribution of MTO funds to “selected cities as determined necessary – not required to distribute through fair share formula and subject to competitive process.” As such, the MTO statute had special circumstances in that it qualified as a non-geographically allocable item. As a demonstration program, it had special funding with statutory requirements bearing on allocation of the demo funding. Even after 1993 it could only be used in selected cities with certain characteristics as determined necessary for purposes of the demonstration. That is, Congress had not required the allocation of MTO funds by a fair share formula. A point of contention was whether a portion of the converted CIR funds could be used to add 600 vouchers and certificates to MTO sites.

The shift from MTO to a more general CIR program was reflected in an unpublished HUD document entitled, “budgetary concerns relating to MTO and CIR.”¹⁵⁶ Here, questions were raised about whether the Department of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) FY94 MTO funding could be reprogrammed into FY95 CIR funding. HUD felt that the counseling funds could be transferred but incremental rental vouchers and certificates could not. Another concern was whether MTO vouchers at the five demonstration sites could be increased if the money rolled over to CIR funding. HUD explored whether the headquarters reserve could be used to fund additional vouchers and certificates for CIR because it was a desegregation strategy. It was suggested to use some of the allocated headquarter funds towards a mainstream program for the disabled for five MTO sites (without NOFA), as headquarter funds were not typically subjected to competition requirements.

¹⁵⁵ Memo Balis to Kenison, Reardon, September 28, 1994. [doc 26]

¹⁵⁶ HUD document, 1994. [doc 27]

Under the category “housing counseling for homeownership and rental housing choice,” the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations recommended that the housing counseling program should be restructured and reauthorized to include the CIR proposal, but it should not set aside Section 8 certificates to accompany the rental counseling program. The committee “has grown increasingly concerned about the number of set-asides of Section 8 units for special purposes and the resultant reduction in units available for fair share distribution nationwide.” They recommended that local discretion should determine decisions about special uses of Section 8, but supported HUD’s expansion of housing choice. CIR was designated to replace MTO, give grants to NPOs and PHAs, facilitate Section 8 certificates, counsel families, provide transit to families, and recruit landlords. In 1995, \$75 million would be set aside for CIR, and \$75 million in 1996. Just 5 percent would be set-aside to settle fair housing litigation. This discussion indicates HUD’s interest in providing more choices for voucher recipients, and not for mandating moves to opportunity neighborhoods through set-asides. This can be interpreted as an actual awakening to the root causes of housing segregation where set-asides would constitute mere band-aid approaches to fixing the problem.

Still, by necessity, the discourse had to address certain housing market barriers such as metropolitan FMRs. In August, HUD officials exchanged memos suggesting that low-income housing was sufficiently dispersed so that additional policy might not be needed.¹⁵⁷ It was posited that greater use of Section 8 exception rents where certificate or voucher holders can not locate housing bearing rents within the established FMR standards) would suffice to meet the metropolitan-wide FMR needs. Exception rents

¹⁵⁷ Memo Gray to Goering, August 30, 1994. [doc 16]

entailed that local PHAs requested that FMRs could be raised by up to 20 percent in a designated area. Many had not done so because more families could be supported at the lower FMR levels. As such, the implementation of a submarket FMR policy was questionable, and based on the report findings, HUD did not think such a policy was needed.

In September of 1994, HUD PD&R officials (“we’re the data people”) discussed what data to provide to drive the general HUD CIR strategy forward, demonstrate the benefits of CIR based on negative effects of concentration, positive results of Gautreaux and mobility, and the “drag effects of low income populations on a regional economy.”¹⁵⁸

Between September 1994 and March 1995 a series of memos was exchanged within HUD regarding the CIR NOFA and CIR evaluation. It illuminated HUD’s thinking on mobility, what to do and not to do in terms of evaluating the programs, HUD’s hope for them, as well as the importance of data collection.¹⁵⁹ Turner discussed the MTO/CIR conversion with Stegman, who was impressed that there was not a lot of knowledge regarding the counseling/outreach features that helped families move to low-poverty locations. “He [Stegman] wants the first CIR NOFA to strongly encourage innovation and experimentation, so that we can do an early evaluation of the effectiveness of different counseling/outreach models.” She mentioned to him that the second MTO NOFA had language to that effect, and that he wanted PD&R to write the

¹⁵⁸ Memo Kennedy to Leonard, Khadduri, Goering and Ross, September 6, 1994. [doc 20]

¹⁵⁹ Memo Turner to Goering, September 20, 1994; Memo Turner to Allen, February 28, 1995; Memo Turner to Neary, March 10, 1995. [doc 36]

CIR NOFA and implement the counseling component. In addition, Turner recommended that CIR might not be expanded to include 70-90 metro areas for evaluation. Indeed, she believed the larger CIR evaluation could include the evaluation of existing mobility programs (Section 153 report) and new court ordered mobility programs. CIR could be rescinded based on the opportunity to evaluate counseling of already existing programs.

In December 1994, HUD issued a statement outlining the structure of CIR.¹⁶⁰ Regarding the application process of CIR grants, HUD asserted that “we propose to conceive CIR in the spirit of reinventing HUD,” and that CIR should go to sites where PHAs and field offices assumed serious responsibility for them, were proponents of the program, were committed, and could successfully implement the program. The proposal needed to state that there was a problem of overconcentration of Section 8 certificates in neighborhoods of PHA jurisdictions; how they planned to reduce the problem; that the field office would need to be active and monitor the success of changes. CIR funds would be awarded competitively.

The program description¹⁶¹ delineated CIR into introduction, proposed merger of certificate and voucher programs, authorization and payment standards, rental assistance, eligibility, project-based certificate program, portability of vouchers, homeowner option, and implementation. The basic gist of CIR was that HUD would fund enhanced metropolitan-wide housing search and a counseling component, through which the housing choices of families would be advanced. The individual counseling to families applying for or already receiving tenant-based assistance under Section 8, transportation

¹⁶⁰ Doc 2, December 12, 1994.

¹⁶¹ Doc 3

assistance, information and counseling as families adjust would not only advance such choices, but would also be aggressive outreach to property owners.

Goering sent a memo to Leonard that provided CIR directions and indicated that race-based (not poverty-based) placement was an objective in addition to counseling-independence.¹⁶² He explained that “we [HUD] have never been good at race decanting,” and favored forging regional consortia of Section 8 providers, which would minimize the counseling component to improve Section 8. In addition, Leonard made a distinction between CIR and Gautreaux, emphasizing the importance of properly preparing families to relocate:

dumping families directly into better off areas without any real preparation, though our intention is to make them valuable members of the new community..this option bears too much of the Gautreaux stamp of remedying a city’s legal liability by taking its residents into a new area and trusting that that environmental change – almost alone – will cause changes in behavior and opportunity to (magically) occur.

Still, if the objective was to improve the standard Section 8 system of counseling and referrals, then the emphasis needed to be on counseling to help with opportunities in less poor areas. This would entail new guidelines for PHAs to improve the system of counseling and screening in order to attract and enlist additional landlords with units in low-poverty areas, as well as a welfare-reform like improvement in families’ self-sufficiency through counseling services. The counseling performance could then be measured by seeing how many families moved out of welfare and HUD assistance into economic independence. According to Goering, “this was what MTI/CIR was all about!” This would take time, and money allocation for three to four years, and would also mean

¹⁶² Memo from Goering to Leonard, December 12, 1994. [doc 7]

that job or educational training and social services should be required for MTO families, making it “a grand family self-sufficiency effort in its infancy.” Stressing economic independence, CIR would be an

opportunity opening program aimed at eligible poor for the poorest parts of metropolitan areas who will be shepherded into new lives/new neighborhoods...[and be] tied to the needs of individual Section 8 families who elect to move out of the worst case communities with the help of intensive case management based assistance.

Khadduri sent a note to Stegman, Leonard, and Turner about the design of the CIR program in addition to a report on a meeting with the NOFA working group.¹⁶³ She suggested that officers of FHEO and PIH sought recommendations from PD&R on CIR’s design and implementation. Particularly it sought a vision for the CIR program, and funding percentages for non-competitive allocations and the competition for metro-wide programs that “offer creative, metro-wide solutions”, i.e. programs that employed a regional approach to affordable housing provision. The NOFA implied a hierarchy for counseling provision from families who were work-ready to other eligible families.

The CIR counseling NOFA encompassed the program’s background, funding allocation, eligibility, and guidelines.¹⁶⁴ CIR placed emphasis on a regional approach to housing mobility, which would be facilitated through counseling strategies, particularly those focused on helping families harness the portability of their voucher and using counseling and landlord outreach. The PHAs and NPOs would be encouraged to apply for the funding, and those with a regional emphasis would be likely recipients of the funds.

¹⁶³ Note from Khadduri to Stegman, Leonard, December 21, 1994. [doc 11]

¹⁶⁴ Draft of CIR counseling NOFA, December 21, 1994. [doc 5]

According to an FHEO official, CIR was an effort to help transform the Section 8 program to positively affect its participants as well as its communities.¹⁶⁵ He asserted that “the CIR program can truly transform the Section 8 program for the good of its participants, and for the good of their communities as well.” The program was intended for all new Section 8 recipients as well as existing Section 8 recipients seeking to move to lower poverty neighborhoods. They would get assistance of metropolitan-wide counseling service (nationwide) –the kind of counseling that was given to Gautreaux families. Recipients who were unemployed would be “provided extensive opportunities to improve themselves and prepare for employment as counseling offices would be expected to connect with job training, bilingual education centers, and so on.”

Summary

With regard to the dominant housing policy discourse, the large amount of documents contained in the HUD MTO files relating to housing mobility research and initiatives in addition to the MTO indicate the increasing dominance of housing mobility in the HUD policy discourse. MTO, Section 153 research, and MTI/CIR are indicative of HUD’s intent to reform the Section 8 voucher system to provide choices for poor families and address residential segregation. The research was partially driven to collect evidence in support of the deconcentration/housing mobility paradigm, and reflected an interest to engender a blueprint for reforming the Section 8 voucher system. To that end, Gautreaux and other isolated court-mandated de-segregation programs needed to be synthesized so that HUD could better understand what worked and what did not. When MTO (initially called MODP) began to take shape in 1991, it was different from racial desegregation

¹⁶⁵ Letter from Achtenberg, Assistant Secretary of FHEO to Mikulski, May 1994. [doc 10]

initiatives in that it focused more on enhancing a) the pathway to mobility through increased support from PHA's and NPO's, and b) the educational and employment outcomes for Section 8 recipients. Specifically, mobility counseling services provided by the third sector, and a change in the role of PHA's was regarded as central to HUD's reform strategy. Landlord recruitment and housing market realities played important parts as well. Based on President Clinton's desire to engender a new national urban policy agenda, Congress charged HUD to prepare a Section 153 research report that would describe characteristics and the effectiveness of existing mobility efforts in an effort to fill the research gap and to inform MTO and MTI/CIR. The report, however, indicated that poverty concentration continued despite voucher portability into non-poor areas. Determined to break up concentrated urban poverty, HUD mandated that counseling was available to the entire Section 8 recipient population through MTI/CIR – a national deconcentration program that followed MTO on a national scale. This is indicative of HUD's continued interest to break up poverty concentration.

With regard to the process of policy deliberation, while HUD was interested in “involving a greater diversity of perspectives, methods, and researchers into HUD research”¹⁶⁶ which suggests that they took an inclusive approach, their primary mission (as articulated in HUD's research priorities in 1994) was to generate reliable and objective data and analysis that inform housing policy to reduce racial segregation. In fact, the documents reviewed in this chapter showed no evidence of including multiple perspectives, approaches or methods, but the process of deliberation driving the mobility research initiatives was elitist and top down. HUD's effort to objectively assess mobility

¹⁶⁶ Michael Stegman, policy brief entitled “Creating Communities of Opportunity Research Priorities 1994.”[doc 94]

initiatives was demarcated from the marginalized Section 8 families who were powerless subjects excluded from the discourse.

Chapter 8

Analysis

Fischer's postpositivist logic of policy evaluation

In the following sections I combine my empirical findings as discussed before into a comprehensive framework according to Fischer's framework of practical deliberation. Thereby, I integrate empirical and normative inquiry and consider how policy arguments are affected by *frames* and *power* relations. An empirically driven approach (e.g. MTO statistical analyses) explicitly neglects normative realities (researchers are supposed to take on an objective perspective toward their subject matter) and, instead, focuses on "how things are" without considering if the underlying processes are democratic or socially just, and whether different values or social meanings are considered. Conversely, my deliberative approach values the contextual setting of a socio-political construct, and considers value frames that shape our understanding of problems, as well as normative and qualitative perspectives.

The approach I employ in my research overcomes what Fischer (1998) coined "outmoded epistemological assumptions" anchored in "traditional concepts of objectivity and proof," and thus addressed the "multidimensional complexity of social reality" towards a postpositivist epistemology.¹⁶⁷ Practical deliberation, on the other hand, challenges the positivist contention that normative argumentation is irrational but validates it through the informal logic of practical reasons. Employing Fischer's (1995)

¹⁶⁷ Fischer (1998). Beyond empiricism: Policy inquiry in postpositivist perspective, in *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 26 No. 1 (Spring, 1998): 129-146.

approach to policy analysis, a framework of practical deliberation, this study deconstructs the process of policy deliberation and, coupled with the empirical MTO research findings, disentangles the ideological interrelated discourses of social choice, societal vindication, situational validation, and technical verification. Table 8.1 outlines the evaluative framework.

I adopt Fischer's (2003) discourse approach to this analysis because of its emphasis on language and power, which stresses the renewed role of ideas and beliefs to political and policy argumentation. The informal logic of policy deliberation and its interrelated phases, spanning from the policy situation (poverty deconcentration / housing mobility) or concrete program outcome (i.e., are people moving or are they better off) to the normative ideal order of society reveals different frames, which enables us to recognize various perspectives that ought to be considered in our final policy recommendations.

Level: First-order Evaluation

Technical-Analytic Discourse: Program Verification (Outcomes)

Organizing Questions:

- Does the program empirically fulfill its stated objective(s)?
- Does the empirical analysis uncover secondary or unanticipated effects that offset the program objective(s)?
- Does the program fulfill the objective(s) more efficiently than alternative means available?

Contextual Discourse: Situational Validation (Objectives)

Organizing Questions:

- Is the program objective(s) relevant to the problem situation?
- Are there circumstances in the situation that require an exception be made to the objective(s)?
- Are two or more objectives equally relevant to the problem situation?

Level: Second-order Evaluation

Systems Discourse: Societal Vindication (Goals)

Organizing Questions:

- Does the policy goal have instrumental or contributive value for the society as a whole?
- Does the policy goal (and its normative assumptions) result in unanticipated problems with important societal consequences?
- Does a commitment to the policy goal lead to consequences (e.g. benefits and costs) that are judged to be equitably distributed?

Ideological Discourse: Social Choice (Values)

Organizing Questions:

- Do the fundamental ideals (or the ideology) that organize the accepted societal order provide a basis for a legitimate and equitable resolution of conflicting judgments?
 - If the social order is unable to resolve basic value conflicts, do other social orders equitably prescribe for the relevant interests and needs that the conflicts reflect?
 - Do normative reflection and empirical evidence support the adoption of an alternative ideology and the social order it prescribes?
-

Table 8.1 Fischer's Model *The Logic of Policy Evaluation* Levels, Discourses, and Questions (Source: Summarized from Fischer (1995).

First-order evaluation, technical-analytic discourse: verification of MTO outcomes

Table 8.2 Summary of the first-order evaluation, technical-analytic discourse: Program verification (outcomes)

<u>Program Verification (Outcomes) – Technical-Analytic Discourse</u>	
Program objectives: produce data set for neighborhood effects research and support dispersal discourse	
1. Does the program empirically fulfill its stated objective(s)?	Yes – it produced a data set for quantitative analysis. No – ambivalent results did not support dispersal discourse.
2. Does the empirical analysis uncover secondary or unanticipated effects that offset the program objective(s)?	Yes – threats to validity of data set Yes – families that moved experienced a host of difficulties (access to transit, lack of job opportunities, failure to build new social networks, remaining close ties to old neighborhood social networks and institutions)
3. Does the program fulfill the objective(s) more efficiently than alternative means available?	No – different research design would be better aligned with normative concerns of voucher recipients, but, would focus on “real choices,” not support dispersal discourse

The technical-analytic discourse is the first phase in Fischer’s framework, and is aimed at answering the central question, “*Does the program empirically fulfill its stated objective(s)?*” HUD articulated the MTO objective as follows:

*The Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration [seeks to measure] benefits [that] can be achieved by improving the neighborhoods of poor families... to understand the impact these moves have had on housing, health, employment, education, mobility, welfare receipt, and delinquency.*¹⁶⁸

Hence, MTO was designed to accomplish two goals, one more explicitly, one more implicitly. Explicitly, MTO was to produce a data set to measure neighborhood effects,

¹⁶⁸ MTO Interim Impacts Evaluation, by Orr, Feins, Jacob, Beecroft, Sanbonmatsu, Katz, Liebman, and Kling, 2003

and, implicitly, to buttress HUD's salient housing policy discourse centered on housing mobility, poverty deconcentration, and dispersal within a positivist, technocratic (experimental) research design.

According to Fischer (1995:28-29), "experimental research represents the formal application of the scientific method to the social action context of public programs." In accordance with the scientific method then, the MTO process required the development of a set of measures to make tests of the program's success possible. In this case, indicators were identified by Abt Associates, which was subcontracted by HUD to develop the research design, survey instruments, and variable selection. These indicators were measured three times longitudinally at a baseline survey, a follow-up survey, and a final survey, which is currently ongoing. MTO survey results combined with administrative data were measured to examine a change or "difference" among sample groups. The results would test the hypotheses that the relocation of families to wealthier neighborhoods improved the well-being of experimental families in four domains: housing and neighborhood conditions, social environment, educational opportunities, and employment.

Does the program empirically fulfill its stated objective(s)?

The answer is yes and no. The demonstration indeed has produced data that facilitate the kinds of empirical, statistical analyses initially envisioned. Even a best-possible MTO design cannot possibly investigate all important aspects of the people receiving housing assistance, however. Moreover, ambivalent MTO results do *not necessarily* buttress the neighborhood effects hypothesis *or* support the poverty deconcentration, housing

mobility, dispersal discourse. In other words, HUD's normative assumptions do not match all empirical dimensions of voucher recipients. To gain insights into the empirical dimensions that illuminate the ambivalent results, I turn to results of a qualitative study of MTO families conducted in 2002 which I mentioned in Chapter 3.

Prior to the MTO Interim Impacts Evaluation, Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham (2002) of the Urban Institute prepared a final report on "Families in Transition: A Qualitative Analysis of the MTO Experience" for HUD's PD&R. It gave personal accounts of MTO families across sites, illuminating neighborhood effects on families, informing the survey design for the ensuing quantitative evaluation, and assisting "in the interpretation of the quantitative findings from the analysis of the survey and administrative data" (ii). A series of in-depth interviews-- not a sufficient yield to analyze program effects -- primarily provided MTO researchers with facts for developing hypotheses that could be tested to explain critical findings. These interviews also elucidate the *dispersal controversy*. A summary of the qualitative results that delineate the experiences of MTO experimental families who moved suggests that there were secondary effects of MTO. These effects are discussed in the next section.

Secondary effects that offset MTO's objectives

Several secondary effects undermined HUD's implicit objective to support the salient dispersal discourse centered on housing mobility, poverty deconcentration, and dispersal. While most MTO families generally felt safer in their new neighborhoods, many experienced challenges in the private housing market such as higher rent and utility cost burdens often leading families to return to the more affordable housing in higher poverty

neighborhoods. In addition, their rents in tighter rental markets in better neighborhoods were often significantly increased and/or some landlords considered selling their properties. Some MTO tenants did not have positive experiences with landlords in terms of personal conflicts and responsiveness to maintenance problems. In addition, children missed their social networks, and adults reported missing the lack of access to public transit.¹⁶⁹

Many MTO movers appreciated the level of civility in their new neighborhoods compared to that in public housing units. However, while they were expected to form new social connections in their low-poverty neighborhoods (new neighbors would provide role models with respect to norms and “acceptable” social behavior), most movers did *not* build new social connections with their neighbors. This was largely due to their neighbors spending most of their time away and/or because of racial, language, and cultural barriers leading them to feelings of isolation and loneliness, particularly in adults. In fact, many Section 8 and experimental group members indicated that they maintained close ties to social networks in their original neighborhoods,¹⁷⁰ which could have militated against possible beneficial effects of new neighborhoods.

With respect to educational opportunities for children, many of the experimental MTO children continued to attend schools close to their original neighborhoods. This, as suggested above, had the potential of undermining expected gains they might reap from attending schools in the new neighborhoods. According to the interviews, the lack of spatial change in schools was motivated by parents tending to choose sending their

¹⁶⁹ Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham (2002). Report on “Families in Transition: A Qualitative Analysis of the MTO Experience”.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

children to charter or magnet schools or to schools near their original neighborhoods.

They opted to do so because of existing social ties; because of a lack of confidence in the new, unfamiliar schools; or because of certain special needs provided in those schools.

Secondary effects were trumped by two other notable trends. First, several of the interviewed families moved to a city versus suburban neighborhood, where their children attended schools that in some cases were worse than in those of their public housing neighborhoods. The second was that many children in the sample displayed behavior that led to disciplinary consequences in their new schools.¹⁷¹

Although many of the interviewed adults had improved access to job opportunities and, therefore, reaped the intended positive benefits from their new neighbors in terms of job search or additional education, larger societal economic forces and a strong economy and welfare reform encumbered researchers' ability to isolate any neighborhood effects. Many also had health problems and other impediments (i.e. lack of education, addictions, criminal record, etc.) to full employment.¹⁷²

In summary, findings from the interviews suggested that many normative assumptions that HUD held about participants and their moves to opportunity neighborhoods were insufficiently viable. Nevertheless, they informed the quantitative analyses reported in the MTO Interim Impacts Evaluation report (thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3), resulting in a range of new data items that measured families' perceptions.

MTO met its explicit objective of producing data that could be used to test hypotheses relating to neighborhood effects. To that end, in the domains of housing,

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

health, employment, education, mobility, welfare receipt, and delinquency, the MTO Interim Impacts Evaluation report¹⁷³ measured the effects of moving poor families to lower-poverty neighborhoods.

However, as Fischer (1995:30-32) warned, threats to internal and external validity in experimental research should have been accounted for when judging the acceptability of these experimental findings. For example, Clampet-Lundquist and Massey (2008) pointed to three facets of selection bias that interfered with the ability to isolate the identified “neighborhood effects.” First, families who were assigned vouchers tended to move into racially segregated neighborhoods. Second, families who were randomly assigned vouchers often decided not to use them. Third, movers in the experimental group only had to stay in non-poor neighborhoods for a year. Many participants opted to move when the year was up; thus neighborhood effects were difficult to detect – i.e., statistical comparisons between experimental and control group members failed to yield robust results. These limitations were viewed as flaws of the MTO research design.

Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) also point to several potential pitfalls of neighborhood effects research. For example, omitted variable bias can arise if key control variables are lacking—that is, relying on census and administrative data sources alone as controls is likely insufficient to capture important dimensions of neighborhoods, such as networks and social control. The omission of important individual-level variables poses a similar, albeit likely less critical, problem. Variable endogeneity (variables with values that may well be affected by existing neighborhood effects) was also detected. For example, “parents who stay in poor neighborhoods may do so to

¹⁷³ (Orr et al., 2003)

reduce their commuting time so that they have more time to spend with their children, or they may stay because rents are cheaper and the additional funds can be used to pay for private schools or other activities for their children” (ibid.331).

Unanticipated effects from empirical analyses

MTO was to produce empirical evidence to support the deconcentration and housing mobility discourse. The following sections recap some of the MTO quantitative research findings (discussed in Chapter 3). As already mentioned, it neither produced consistent evidence for the existence of neighborhood effects nor buttressed any other aspect of housing mobility. Combined with the secondary effects described above, the mixed MTO results suggest several unanticipated effects and prompted researchers to think of alternative interpretations and speculations for the underlying behavior of MTO families, some of which are listed below.

- Employment in the experimental group was undercut by transportation difficulties and disrupted social networks.^{174 175}
- Male youth experienced an increase in arrests for property crimes. This does not align with the theoretical framework (contagion model) that guided this research. Possible explanations: difference in criminal behavior between male and female youth; differences in parental supervision for males versus females; differences in academic achievement, risk taking, or criminal offending in the population as a whole;¹⁷⁶ differences in policing across neighborhoods.

¹⁷⁴ Turney, Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling and Duncan (2006), *Neighborhood Effects on Barriers to Employment: Results from a Randomized Housing Mobility Experiment in Baltimore*

¹⁷⁵ Turney, Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, and Duncan (2006)

¹⁷⁶ Kling, Ludwig, and Katz (2005)

- Another study that countered the contagion hypothesis suggested that across-neighborhood variation in arrest for violent crimes in the MTO sample is mostly explained by neighborhood racial segregation, presumably because drug market activity is more common in high-minority neighborhoods.¹⁷⁷
- “Human capital” barriers that existed prior to experimental group moves into low-poverty neighborhoods constitute one explanation for the lack of employment or earning gains. Another factor was that most jobs across groups were in retail or health care, and the informal networks that many rely on for these types of jobs did not exist in the low-poverty neighborhoods (differences between their own human capital and the education and skills of their new neighbors).¹⁷⁸
- Families with children were less likely to move to low-poverty areas; there were no significant differences in lease-up rates between Section 8 and experimental group families (despite counseling services for the latter group); racial status, level of education, marital status, or car ownership did not influence lease-up rates.¹⁷⁹

Does the program fulfill the objective(s) more efficiently than alternative means available?

A different set of questions on the participant baseline and follow-up surveys could have yielded a completely different set of hypothesis testing and subsequent analysis. In terms of the research design, alternative means could have included a greater emphasis on normative and situated measures (i.e., not all poor neighborhoods are alike, in terms of social organization or quality of life for families who reside there; differences in parenting practices have different outcomes on children and youth; value of social

¹⁷⁷ Ludwig and Kling (2007)

¹⁷⁸ Turney, Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, and Duncan (2006)

¹⁷⁹ Snell and Duncan (2006)

network) perhaps best ascertained by trained and qualified qualitative research staff. Ethnographic and case-study oriented field work would have added depth to the various components of housing search, inter-neighborhood move, neighborhood adjustment and assimilation, the availability of new opportunity structures, and so on. With regard to evaluation, participants could have been involved in selecting criteria that would be measured and quantified for the demonstration. To that end, one research strategy that HUD could have used for the MTO analyses could have been *action research*. Select MTO families, representatives of the PHA and NPO, and a HUD researcher could have formed small discussion groups to ascertain (through conversation) important themes/criteria to be measured.

A possibly resulting alternative discourse not centered on dispersal might have focused on holistically developing communities (i.e. increasing safety measures, creating economic opportunities, improving housing quality, improving schools, and so on). Consequently, alternatives to dispersal could have been analyzed that also aimed at providing “real” choices. To that end, the demonstration could have emphasized the preservation of existing social networks rather than physical relocation. Identifying pathways that keep people in their original neighborhoods and a focus on opportunity structures to help them enter the middle class without sacrificing a loss of *community* would benefit the larger society in the long run.

Standard models of neighborhood effects emphasizing the hoped for contagion effects of relocation suggest that, “interventions focused exclusively on neighborhoods rather than on factors directly related to the child, family, and school are unable to solve

the myriad problems of children growing up in poverty.”¹⁸⁰ Most studies indicate that the salient motivation for parents to move has been their children’s safety, not employment and children’s schooling, which is what programs such as Gautreaux and MTO stress.¹⁸¹

Because this research departs from the technocratic, positivist policy evaluation model, it considers objectivity, social context and an awareness of the political nature of the policymaking process and move towards a more comprehensive analysis that factors in normative judgments (Fischer, 1995). Accordingly, the next phase, the contextual phase, identifies how MTO could have been differently structured to address the normative realities (i.e., safety, disenfranchisement, failing institutions, lack of employment opportunities, political corruption and inertia) of poor people living in urban areas with high levels of poverty concentration.

First-order evaluation, contextual discourse: situational validation of MTO objectives

Table 8.3 Summary of the first-order evaluation, contextual discourse: situational validation (objectives)

Situational Validation (Objectives) – Contextual Discourse

Program objectives: Demonstrate that housing mobility and poverty deconcentration provides poor people with access to opportunity structures

1. Is the program objective(s) relevant to the problem situation?
 - No – opportunity structures are unequal regardless of where people live (systemic issue)
2. Are there circumstances in the situation that require an exception be made to the objective(s)?
 - Yes – mismatch between empirical measures and normative realities should lead to revised, more appropriate, tangible set of objectives
 - Yes – lack of lucidity in MTO design/implementation forced HUD to involve the public in Baltimore, and stop second round of MTO funding

¹⁸⁰ Sanbonmatsu, Kling, Duncan, and Brooks-Gunn (2006)

¹⁸¹ Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000)

3. Are two or more objectives equally relevant to the problem situation?

Yes – both people-based and place-based reform relevant to provide voucher recipients with real choice where to live

The contextual phase in Fischer's logic of policy evaluation seeks to ascertain if policy objectives are appropriate to the problem investigated, and emphasizes the normative discourse and interpretive methods of qualitative analysis. "As a normative process of reasoning, then", according to Fischer (1995:70), "validation turns the focus of deliberation from program outcomes to the justification of the objectives".

Turning to the first concern of validation, in this research the question is, "is the MTO demonstration (and data set) *relevant* to demonstrating that housing mobility and poverty deconcentration provides poor people with access to opportunity structures?" To answer this question, it is necessary to consider the problem's definition and the validity of the criteria used to ascertain the success or failure of a solution. Or put differently, are the problem definition and goal formulation relevant to address the empirical and normative reality of the situation? Designed as a demonstration and vehicle to test housing policy reform prior to improving the existing housing voucher policy, MTO was conceived through HUD's expert-elitist frame. It is therefore first critical for this analysis to tease out HUD's definitions of the problem and the solution.

The processes of problem identification and definition, according to Fischer, "can only be understood as socially constructed phenomena" (1995:76). Accordingly, let's recall aspects of the deliberation process that reflect how HUD defined the problems and solutions that engendered MTO, bearing in mind that the process of deliberation was *inclusive* of elite-experts, and *exclusive* of housing voucher recipients, their counselors, and PHAs. With that in mind, the ensuing analysis must be viewed in the appropriate

context of a single dominant narrative among elite-experts, obfuscating an alternative narrative of voucher recipients and residents of high-poverty communities for input and feedback into the demonstration.

Problem framing

HUD framed the problem as follows:

- poverty concentration
- impediments to leaving neighborhoods of concentrated poverty such as social networks, job search strategies, peer groups, role models, discrimination in schools, etc.
- racial residential segregation continued to exist
- regional barriers to housing and employment opportunities
- Section 8 families were having difficulties finding suitable housing particularly near employment opportunities
- discriminative housing market towards Section 8 families
- poor Section 8 families lived in neighborhoods with few jobs or lacked job skills for available jobs
- poor certificate and voucher success rates and other measures of performance in housing and employment programs
- despite portability, voucher families did not often move to affluent areas even though they frequently expressed a desire to do so
- minimal housing mobility because of a dearth of affordable housing in better neighborhoods

In sum, the elite-expert narrative suggests that poverty concentration, according to the “Culture of Poverty” theory advanced by Wilson and others, was problematic in that it undermined the assimilation of voucher recipients in poor urban neighborhoods into the dominant mainstream, middle-class society, and prevented the adoption of dominant

(Anglo-Saxon, protestant) norms/values, as well as their entry into economic self-sufficiency. Subsequently, HUD recognized that residential segregation remained high even after the shift from place-based to people-based assistance, specifically to portable housing vouchers and certificates.

Solution framing

HUD framed the solutions as follows:

- reducing long-term dependence on government assistance programs
- advancing enforcement of fair housing and to avoid further civil rights suits against HUD
- supporting and enhancing mobility programs
- improving access to regional housing and employment opportunities
- expanding fair housing for all so that minorities find housing outside of racial concentration
- achieving successful placements in higher-income neighborhoods on a metropolitan-wide basis
- utilizing the Section 8 portability to forge linkages between housing and job opportunities
- aligning housing, economic development, employment services, child care, and human resource agencies
- gaining an overall sense of mobility programs in terms of cost-benefit relationships such as cost and cost savings at Federal, state and local levels
- enhancing the quality of life for Section 8 recipients, and spur economic development, broaden housing and employment opportunities for low-income families within the metropolitan region
- counseling and follow-up assistance to families
- basing future Section 8 existing housing programs funding allocations upon efforts of PHAs to provide effective mobility program

- creating area databases listing housing opportunities
- benefiting state and local housing, human resources, and employment service agencies through documentation of evaluation results
- identifying the non-financial barriers to mobility, and structure the demonstration to help families overcome those barriers, which hypothetically would lead to positive long-term effects on employment and earning for adults, and education for children
- counseling and desegregation based on Gautreaux “evidence”

To summarize, several factors signaled a need for HUD to investigate the problem through large-scale, longitudinal research such as MTO, to better understanding the pathways to mobility. These factors included the probability of neighborhood effects scholarship and the associated housing mobility discourse; the success of Gautreaux; and increasing pressure from litigation over residential segregation law suits. Moreover, entry into low-poverty neighborhoods was to facilitate the test of the contagion theory, the premise that poor people when surrounded by middle-class people would adopt middle-class standards, norms, and values. Such assimilation could be tested through the MTO data set which consisted of measures derived from standard psychological surveys and administrative data.

Is the program objective(s) relevant to the problem situation?

Whether a program objective is relevant to the problem situation, according to Fischer (1995:71), “required bringing together a normative criterion and the facts of the situation”, whereby a gap between a normative standard and perception of an existing or expected situation is viewed as a “problem.” Under this standard, the MTO research goal of producing a data set to empirically measure neighborhood effects relating to housing

mobility was partially met. Aside from the aforementioned flaws to the research design (i.e. attrition, selection bias, omitted variable bias), the richness of the MTO data set enabled an extensive interim report, as well as numerous research papers, books, and articles, as well as a final report (currently being processed). But, whether the data are *relevant* to measuring the success or failure of voucher recipients' assimilation into opportunity-rich, middle-class environments requires further reconciliation of statistical evidence with the normative relevance of the demonstration.

MTO enabled a better understanding of the pathways leading to voucher portability and of the barriers to housing mobility. But, we must be mindful that this objective is not focused on providing a full set of housing choices. It was designed to further drive the agenda that entailed mobility, poverty deconcentration, middle-class assimilation of an elite set of housing experts. Accordingly it is motivated by their political values and agent interests -- poverty concentration is the problem, as a federal agency charged with addressing urban and housing issues, the obvious solution is to mainstream poor people into middle-class, "decent" neighborhoods. Nevertheless, MTO research does provide some useful insights into the complexities of the housing mobility approach, and identifies some barriers that continue to exist (i.e., lack of affordable housing in suburbs, lack of landlords willing to accept Section 8 vouchers).

However, an alternative discourse centered on a broader set of housing choices that better reflects the normative concerns of residents would have undoubtedly produced a very different policy strategy. If the problem really was safety, disenfranchisement, failing institutions, lack of employment opportunities, political corruption and inertia, the MTO explicitly was *not* designed to address it. In addition, the number of participating

MTO families was small. Thus “helping a few escape” did not really address the larger systemic problem. The larger problem relates to an uneven distribution of resources rooted in the hyper-capitalistic socio-political system. Specifically, the fragmentation of political jurisdictions, giving power to municipalities where important social policy areas such as housing and education are strongly tied to local tax bases, buttressed the divide between cities and suburbs. Housing policies failed to support city residents and caused segregation along race and income lines. According to Weir, the “failure to remedy spatial divisions ensures the persistence of poverty across generations” (1994:341). Such spatial divides undermined both local empowerment and universal policy strategies, and “local empowerment can become a very conservative goal that allows the broader political community to concentrate social and economic problems in particular places and refuse to take responsibility for those problems” (1994:341).

In sum, the data set engendered through the MTO demonstration was descriptive. It led to empirical investigations and was relevant in answering some key research questions. But its relevance was limited due to normative concerns of housing voucher recipients, as discussed below.

Are there circumstances in the situation that require an exception be made to the objective(s)?

Arguably, HUD could have been more *responsive* to the qualitative aspect of MTO report findings, which illuminated a somewhat different set of participant concerns. Through them, it becomes clear that HUD’s normative assumptions and the empirical findings do not fully address the larger issues. Families’ had difficulty in leasing up, and

felt forced to remain in low-poverty neighborhoods due to the cost burden and difficulties in assimilating to these new environments. If the above had been known a priori along with participants' inability and unwillingness to quickly form new social ties, HUD may have developed a different set of objectives and revised the demonstration design. For example, the demonstration could have included voucher recipients in the process of identifying the problems as well as the solutions which could have opened the political space to an alternative discourse of place-based reform. In addition, larger economic forces, and other impediments to gainful employment could have shifted the objective from economic independence toward the acquisition of skills and *preparation* to enter the workforce.¹⁸² In summary, it can be inferred that the concept of drastic change in environment (from high- to low-poverty level) did not work (most experimental families who did lease-up, moved back closer to their original neighborhoods one year after the demonstration implementation), and therefore could have led to a revised set of objectives in the MTO research design. These objectives could include addressing the variations in resources and needs of voucher recipients, creating economic and social links across jurisdictions, pathways towards regional integration, strengthening poor communities, forging a variety of linkages among different communities, and expanding connections across place.

One situation did require HUD to alter its objective, that in Baltimore detailed in Chapter 6. There, controversy forced HUD to become more transparent, to consider the community's input, and to effectively cancel a second round of MTO allocation.

Are two or more objectives equally relevant to the problem situation?

¹⁸² Ibid.

HUD could have followed the Administration's goal of creating opportunity for everyone, and making a broader set of housing choices *for the poor* a reality. In the wake of Baltimore's controversy over dispersal, place-based reform might have re-emerged as an important alternative research objective for HUD. Specifically, one *real* choice did remain: voucher recipients could remain in their original neighborhoods and have non-housing service opportunities (daycare, transit, job training) made available to them there. Such an approach could have focused on larger systemic reform, notably urban reinvestment and revitalization, particularly in the areas of schooling, housing quality, homeownership, safety, employment opportunities, neighborhood economic development, job skill training, inter-governmental revenue sharing, and an improvement in resource distribution in general. In spite of place-based reform efforts such as HOPE VI and the Jobs Plus demonstration, an alternative public housing discourse was not equally considered. As suggested above, there are many possible ways to combat problems inherent to the inner-city poor, but most remained peripheral tactics in HUD's reform agenda.

Second-order evaluation, Systems discourse: societal vindication of the MTO goals

Table 8.4 Summary of the second-order evaluation, systems discourse: societal vindication (objectives)

Societal Vindication (Objectives) – Systems Discourse	
<u>Policy Goals: Refine housing voucher policy to improve mobility</u>	
1. Does the policy goal have instrumental or contributive value for the society as a whole?	
	Yes, if it entails providing real choice such as the right to move <i>and</i> the right to stay put
	No, if it entails a patriarchic, one-sided push for dispersal
2. Does the policy goal (and its normative assumptions) result in unanticipated problems with important societal consequences?	
	Yes, it is antithetical to wide-held belief in meritocracy

- Yes, it causes a new set of problems for voucher families in addition to old problems
3. Does a commitment to the policy goal lead to consequences (e.g. benefits and costs) that are judged to be equitably distributed?
- Yes, there are benefits and costs for Federal government and voucher recipients
- N/A – cannot be “judged”, depends on perspective, situated in larger social, economic, political system

Moving from first-order to second-order evaluation entails turning to the broader policy goal that contextualizes the program objectives and to an examination of the program’s larger societal value. Societal vindication is attained if fostering housing mobility by assisting voucher recipients to move to non-poor neighborhoods is a net positive contribution to American society. According to Fischer “Vindication is an empirically oriented ‘pragmatic test’ of normative assumptions which requires the formal assistance of sociological and political inquiry” (1995:115). Consequently I ask whether the social system that contextualizes the housing voucher system is conducive to housing mobility into opportunity-rich neighborhoods, and I explore whether the society-wide implementation of an MTO-like program would yield the wider societal impacts that HUD envisioned.

Society at the time MTO was conceived did not buttress core U.S. housing policy discourse of housing mobility and poverty deconcentration to the extent that HUD hoped. HUD sought to refine the existing housing voucher system to expand fair housing opportunities for Section 8 families by opening up the suburbs. However, the social system discriminated the housing market against many Section 8 families, and maintained regional barriers to housing and employment opportunities (i.e., lack of available Section 8 units in low-poverty neighborhoods, property tax system, local autonomy, residential segregation). As such, HUD -- change agents and producers of beneficial public policy -- felt that the social system needed “revision” so that poor

minorities could more rapidly assimilate. HUD had an ambitious goal that would not be easily achieved in light of the meritocratic ideal, prejudice, racism, and NIMBYism.

HUD's commitment to provide housing choices for all Americans and "to making public housing an asset to the communities in which it is located" entailed addressing suburbanites' fear of and resistance towards poor people.¹⁸³ However, the problem was "suburbanites' fear", whereas the policy addressed the behavior of poor people. Nevertheless, HUD viewed housing mobility as a long-term anti-poverty strategy that would potentially break the inter-generational cycle of poverty and dependency.

An alternative discourse could have implied that the social system that contextualized the intervention would benefit from policy that would indeed provide choices for voucher recipients. However, the emphasis is on *choice*. The provision of affordable housing in "better" neighborhoods was viewed by many voucher recipients as an improvement to the existing housing voucher policy, but the restrictive aspect of moving to low-poverty neighborhoods was not the answer. At the societal level then, the policy goal was too repressive and should have been more liberal to account for social networks, kinship, and ties to the neighborhood. Or, put differently, MTO was too prescriptive in mandating that experimental families had to move to low-poverty neighborhoods, and hence was not focused on offering choice in residency.

Does the policy goal (and its normative assumptions) result in unanticipated problems with important societal consequences?

¹⁸³ HUD document with themes for Baltimore Sun interview, August 1994. [doc 115]

A critical normative assumption was that residents in low-poverty communities would be open to receiving poor people in their neighborhoods, an apparent outcome of Gautreaux. Let's consider the local sociospatial dynamics at the implementation sites. For example, the controversy relating to MTO's implementation at the Baltimore site elucidates a problem. It was germinated from competing frames and a general belief in the American social political system (meritocracy). Government handouts are viewed by many as antithetical to the meritocratic system, and many believe that tax dollars are misspent on social programs that help the poor, in part because many believe such programs are not as reforming as intended. Baltimore residents were strongly opposed to sharing their resources. This reflects their general fear of "the unknown" and of their deeply rooted belief in meritocracy (buying into neighborhoods, housing as commodity not entitlement).

The magnitude of social resistance against poorer in-migrants should not be discounted. Residents feared that their own neighborhoods were soon to be under siege by poor minorities: The most vocal were sure MTO families would bring with them what Wilson termed "ghetto related norms and behaviors" (culture), which could corrupt their own children. They also worried that the incoming families would shift their neighborhood's political status quo. Ultimately, they did not want to live near Section 8 housing or have federal tax dollars "squandered on people who could care less about themselves." They did not want to suffer decreases in their properties' values due to nearby subsidized housing. A resident in Baltimore pointed to the declaration of

independence and “whatever happened to personal accountability? Am I supposed to be happy about my neighborhood turned into another ghetto?”¹⁸⁴ Another resident stated,

People who have worked long and hard for whatever they have surely have earned the right to be concerned and skeptical about some theoretical, sociological people-replacement plan. That is not to say that I am against social change, but not when it may cause more problems than it solves.

Thus, Baltimore residents’ framing of the MTO reflected deeply entrenched values of hard work and meritocracy. They viewed HUD’s elitist MTO as a “government handout,” the spending of tax dollars that would benefit the “lazy and undeserving.”

Another normative assumption was that the demonstration would benefit voucher recipients in a variety of domains. As the previous sections elucidate, HUD’s normative assumptions and voucher recipients’ actual realities were misaligned.

Does a commitment to the policy goal lead to consequences (e.g. benefits and costs) that are judged to be equitably distributed?

Costs of MTO

Program/Demonstration Cost

In June 1992 in a memo¹⁸⁵ to Weicher, Gatons requested MTO funding be increased by 50 percent above the original allocation for the sake of providing technical assistance and evaluation services. This memo was the outcome of Gatons’ discussions with PD&R and PIH staff who said the increase was needed for preparing a detailed program manual, training nonprofit staff, standardizing program design and implementation through extensive on site supervision, careful monitoring of client participation in the early

¹⁸⁴ Letter from Baltimore resident to Senator Sarbanos, July 27, 1994. [doc 126]

¹⁸⁵ Memo Gatons to Weicher, June 19, 1992. [doc 109]

stages, and undertaking a process evaluation at each site. He claimed that the “original cost did not anticipate the need for intensive training and monitoring which are required to effectively implement this demonstration in all five sites,” and that it was critical to “assist in designing an effective, carefully controlled demonstration and in reaching clear, persuasive conclusions about the impact of the MTO program.”

- Abt Associates was contracted for 15 months to assist with the design and implementation of the demonstration
- initial MTO cost: \$100,000 per year per state to participate (for project administration, special landlord outreach, data collection, monitoring, reporting, buttressed by matching funds/grants, and assisted by the Department of Labor and Health and Human Services) (Abt submitted revised MTO budget to HUD including a change from 2-day training to 3-day training for PHAs and NGOs, a preliminary 2-day reconnaissance visit, an annual data report, refined design of random assignment system at level of each PHA, and supplementary funding for the implementation and evaluation task order for MTO.¹⁸⁶ The initial cost for MTO had been estimated too low.)

Other cost-related questions included:

- Would there be any tipping or threshold effects when a certain percentage of poor/minority households moved to the suburbs? (Measure it based on change in racial/socioeconomic composition and effect on property value)
- How much would the housing voucher program cost if it were an entitlement?
- How much additional rental housing would be required in suburban communities to meet realistic demand?
- What would be the impact on FMR rent levels?

Social / Human Cost

¹⁸⁶ Memo Bradley to Stegman, September 1993. [doc 107]

According to some scholars,¹⁸⁷ the social cost associated with MTO included: potential minority political disempowerment, destruction of community, neighborhood destabilization, weakening of community development and local community grassroots initiatives, and loss of ethnic group solidarity. MTO families reported the following cost: loss of connection to kinship and friendship networks, loss of community support systems such as churches and social clubs, lack of access to transit and social services, and lack of connection in new neighborhood.

Another cost associated with the dispersal strategy is the potential diversion of scarce resources away from the voucher program where many families are on long waiting lists to receive assistance. In other words, families selected for dispersal programs may be advantaged over families who are on regular housing voucher waiting lists.

Benefits of MTO

Based on the ecological model of human development, the neighborhood is a context for child development. Further, many accepted theories suggest that affluent neighbors provide benefits especially for low-income children. Wilson's (1987) research was prominent in the variable selection of the instrument. He had found that neighborhood characteristics such as the absence of affluent neighbors, negatively impact the healthy development of children. Furthermore, his underclass concept such as social isolation, under-preparedness, criminal behavior, etc. was considered. Adolescent development

¹⁸⁷ Summarized from David Imbroscio (2008), "United and actuated by some common impulse of passion: challenging the dispersal consensus in American housing policy research. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol.30, Number 2, pages 111-130 and Popkin, Harris, and Cunningham (2002). Report on "Families in Transition: A Qualitative Analysis of the MTO Experience".

was impacted as well, as he found an association between neighborhood characteristics and adolescent drug use. He claimed that children's development and well-being changes when a family changes neighborhoods.

Benefits envisioned by HUD

- families would become economically self-sufficient and not “drain the system”, either through welfare dependency, incarceration, or otherwise posing increased tax burdens,
- Facilitate independent evaluation of the process and impacts of the demonstration (i.e. gain overall sense of mobility programs in terms of cost-benefit analysis at Federal, State and local levels),
- long-term benefits in employment and education,
- rich data set for outcome measure.

Benefits reported by MTO experimental families

- feeling safer,
- more civility in new environment,
- marginally improved access to job opportunities,
- some positive role modeling from new neighbors in terms of job search or additional education.

Analyzing these costs and benefits and the trade-off is difficult, particularly given the discrepancies between assumptions and realities. Such an evaluation requires moving to the next and final phase in Fischer's model of policy deliberation, the ideological discourse.

Second-order evaluation, ideological discourse: social choice (values)

Table 8.5 Summary of the second-order evaluation, ideological discourse: social choice (values)

Social Choice (Values) – Ideological Discourse	
<u>Policy Goal: Refine housing voucher policy to improve mobility</u>	
1. Do the fundamental ideals (or the ideology) that organize the accepted societal order provide a basis for a legitimate and equitable resolution of conflicting judgments?	
Yes in theory- democracy is overarching ideology	
No in practice – hegemonic power relation between elite-experts and the poor creates closed political space and exclusion	
2. Do normative reflection and empirical evidence support the adoption of an alternative ideology and the social order it prescribes?	
Yes – inclusive democracy and participatory/shared governance	

According to Fischer (1995:156) “social choice is about what kind of society we should like to live in” and “the selection of ... ‘ideological’ principles...that should govern the development and maintenance of the good society or way of life.” To make a normative judgment that is considerate of both the policy experts’ and voucher recipients’ frames calls for reference to the existing ideologies governing our society. Several ideological principles that are not necessarily mutually exclusive dominate aspects of our society, for example, collectivism, welfare capitalism as a principle of (modern) liberalism, individualism (the values and freedom of the individual), democracy, equality, and so on. Which salient ideological principles frame the “move vs. right-to-stay-put” controversy is addressed in this final phase of Fischer’s policy deliberation model.

HUD as a federal agency is charged with developing policies that value a group and the common good, consider the well-being of the community (constituents) being served and affected by such policy, and determine how such a policy affects and improves society. In addition, HUD has some influence over the distribution of federal tax dollars aimed at helping people in need. It can be said then that HUD’s push for

housing mobility (helping poor people to gain economic independence) was framed by ideological principles of collectivism and welfare capitalism (the welfare state).

I advance the view that people should have a real choice, including the “right-to-stay-put.” This alternative discourse focuses on ideologies of liberalism and individualism, which are centered on the values and freedom of individuals. To that end, I am an advocate of the importance of inclusivity in the planning/policymaking process with an understanding that there are multiple realities (and value systems) that need to be considered and are critical in building consensus. This stance emphasizes *real* choices and self-determination in choosing where to live.

Do the fundamental ideals (or the ideology) that organize the accepted societal order provide a basis for a legitimate and equitable resolution of conflicting judgments?

Ideally, a shared democratic ideology should champion the normative frame clash posed by the collectivism/individualism or dominant/alternative dichotomy, and facilitate the principle of *inclusive* open forum discussions on best practices. Such a larger ideological framework would encourage consensus building as a collective, and arriving at resolutions to affordable housing provision and/or advancing *real* choices for voucher recipients through participation by all constituents involved. Granted, such a pathway is more cumbersome, and may not lead to one ideal collective resolution. But, it would diffuse the dominant housing mobility discourse, open up the political space, and shift the balance to democratically include alternative discourses.

While I understand that HUD is charged to investigate and address larger societal trends (i.e. why aren't more voucher recipients taking advantage of the portability

feature, and moving to better neighborhoods?), and as such serves the important function of equalizer in the role of a federal government institution to address larger societal problems (i.e. unequal resource distribution, inequality in accessing opportunity structures), the political space could be opened towards a system of shared governance. Specifically, it could include other methods of investigation that would shift the focus from the technocratic, positivist paradigm towards a more contemporary, postpositivist pathway of investigation to create knowledge and analyze phenomena. In our case, diverse methods could lead to a more holistic objective to ameliorate urban poverty and related social problems, and a different set of goals beyond an exit strategy to help poor people escape the ghetto and access traditionally exclusionary suburbs.

From the perspective of those not so sold on solving the urban poverty problem through dispersal mechanisms, the push for mobility—at least the way it was conceived and implemented—poses a threat to democracy and individualism. As such, it is an exercise of discursive power, or worse, a measure of coercion to maintain control over the discourse and their receivers at the lower end of the hegemonic totem pole. As this research has described, the process of deliberation was driven by elite-experts who certainly intended to “help” the poor based on their own assumptions and narrative, but who made little effort in including the poor to ascertain the broader spectrum of their normative realities.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ In his 2008 Urban Affairs article, David Imbroscio elucidates the controversy surrounding dispersal. He argues that dispersal discourse a) rests on biased and distorted research questions, and fails to address its negative implications such as NIMBY-ism, b) does not provide a “real” choice by enhancing the exit strategy versus the ability to stay in an (improved, more livable) urban neighborhood, c) entails knowing what is best for the urban poor (patriarchal), d) potentially represses the human freedom and individual autonomy of the poor by repressing their residential freedom and inculcating mainstream norms and values, (and ideas that marginal citizens need the help of “experts”) e) provides thin and ambivalent evidence that

Proponents of dispersal such as the HUD officials who designed, managed, and researched MTO, argued that they were interested in protecting and expanding residential opportunities for the poor.¹⁸⁹ They argue that place-based assistance as well as place-based reform efforts have failed and that MTO was to be viewed as “one small piece in the policy puzzle regarding how HUD and public housing authorities could do a better job of helping the poor” (ibid.141). To that end, they contend that multiple policy approaches are required to address inequality caused by larger political-economic forces (ibid.142). Goering and Feins (ibid.142) suggest that,

The core of any U.S. housing policy should address the enormous need for decent-quality, affordable housing in decent neighborhoods. Neglect of this need has been bipartisan and long-standing, a manifestation of enduring structural obstacles to addressing the intertwined problems of income and racial inequality embedded in the economic and social dynamics of metropolitan housing markets. So much is at stake in addressing this unmet need that many competing forces will emerge to lay claim to a national right-to-stay policy, including many who will oppose any solution to the affordable housing problem.

There seems to be a dichotomy between theory and reality of MTO and “helping the poor.” The underlying values of the dominant discourse reflect in the elite narrative, and the political space on the issue of dispersal was not opened up for voucher recipients’ participation or the sending or receiving communities’ participation. To that end, HUD maintained hegemony in the political sphere and secured the dominant discourse. The exclusion of voucher recipients and neighborhood residents in all stages of MTO demonstration design and implementation suggests that the policy process was neither egalitarian nor democratic.

the approach works, and f) discounts alternative approaches to help the poor, such as community development.

¹⁸⁹ Goering and Feins (2008). Social science, housing policy, and the harmful effects of poverty, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol.30, Number 2, pages 139-148.

Do normative reflection and empirical evidence support the adoption of an alternative ideology and the social order it prescribes?

What I have attempted to demonstrate in this research is how a closed political space in the deliberation process on housing policy dominated by elite-experts has produced the MTO. To protect their core beliefs and preserve their hegemony in the political sphere, the elites failed to include alternative or competing discourses in the process of deliberation. Their assumptions about the problem and the solution signal the divorce between their normative assumptions and empirical realities reflected in the ambivalent MTO results. The demonstration could have been structured differently, and better aligned with ideologies such as inclusive democracy, social liberalism with emphasis on social justice and civil rights, and a renewed emphasis on community and shared communitarian goals. How such ideological principles could lead to concrete action is explored below.

An inclusive alternative to traditional policy-making

Policy deliberation practices could aim to be more inclusive of seeking the inputs of various constituents, particularly those directly involved or affected. For this research, HUD could involve voucher recipients, community organizations, and NPO's more directly rather than relying on expert data and deference to the subcontracted Abt Associates. HUD could strive to be more inclusive (democratic) throughout the process of MTO deliberation to solicit direct input and build consensus around contentious perspectives.

Such inclusive deliberation in the policymaking process, theoretically advanced by many contemporary urban theorists (i.e., Forester, 1989; Minnich, 2005; Sandercock, 1998; Young, 2000) entails the recognition of social difference through ongoing and open dialogues about problems, framing practices, solutions, and consequences, thus transforming policymaking into a more socially- and contextually-responsive process. John Forester (1989), for instance, posits that power is retained and reproduced by excluding certain groups systematically from the decision-making process that affects their lives, which restricts public political argument to limit opposition to existing patterns of ownership, wealth and power. Participatory action research, on the other hand, could have presented one pathway for HUD to explore a new way of framing urban issues and problems. To that end, MTO participants could have been involved in the policy process with a greater emphasis on their perspectives. Forester suggests that

stories play a comprehensive role in the planning and policy process by providing us with information. It is the very richness of stories that threatens their generalizability and enables them to be so revealing. Stories not only present but construct problems, as well as provide institutional and normative history (1989:43).

Through stories, judgment becomes important in the deliberative practice, and because of hegemonic power citizens may remain ignorant of their ability to take corrective action, therefore, Forester (1989) would have undoubtedly advocated for communicative actions of many participants (including voucher recipients) in the design of MTO. Iris Marion Young (2000) also calls for a communicative democratic approach to discourse, which embraces different cultural perspectives. She posits that ideally the political participants are open-minded and not bound by the authority of prior norms or requirements, which means that HUD could have approached the process of policy deliberation through communicative democracy to solve collective problems through narrative and personal

accounts of voucher recipients. In the same vein, Elizabeth Minnich (2005) calls for a new path towards genuine democracy whereby knowledge is transformed to uncover the ramifications of hidden biases and power hierarchies. Through such a process, HUD could have become aware how policymakers and the dominant culture reinforces status quo and encumbers the path towards new ideas and social concepts and how the dominant intellectual tradition has systematically excluded certain marginalized populations from actively contributing to knowledge. Leonie Sandercock (2004) echoes this sentiment and critiques value-neutral, empirically based planning for planning that accounts for multicultural cities and their diverse, often marginalized population with emphasis on their stories. Therefore, policymaking in our increasingly pluralistic society needs to be sensitive towards cultural diversity and social difference.

Planning and policymaking at the federal government level should consider different knowledges to promote the common good and avoid perpetuating entrenched patterns of social and spatial inequalities. Granted, there is a fine line between promoting the equitable distribution of social benefits and the transformative action of social mobility, but such an exercise need not be anchored in power-based decision making. Equal and engaged participation by constituents directly and indirectly involved is important in defending against segregation and oppression. According to Habermas (1984), social order includes shared norms, social institutions determining moral behavior, and communicative action. He stresses the importance of process whereby deliberations should include questions of strategies, goals, identities that are often situated in settings of structured inequality. Thus, histories and backgrounds are important and surface through storytelling, especially for traditionally marginalized

groups. To that end, MTO could have been planned through a communicative and collaborative process, and a political space that is open to deliberative discourse.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

We need to change the way Americans talk and think about the needs of the minority poor; rekindling the nation's will to address urban poverty will not only help the poor, it is also an essential part of rebuilding the sense of national community and public purpose that is now deeply eroded. (Weir, 1994:342)

Summary, analysis, and synthesis of preceding chapters

In the preceding chapters, I examined the process, nature, and dynamics of policy deliberations at HUD that have produced the MTO particularly with regard to embedded power dynamics and democratic processes. In addition, I explored how the frame (assumptions, beliefs, perspectives and perceptions) through which HUD viewed poverty concentration, housing mobility, and voucher recipients has contributed to the dominance of the housing mobility and dispersal discourse. Using *postpositivist* methods for a discursive analysis of the policy deliberation process, I interpreted the meaning of MTO empirical results (Chapter 3) within the normative context of housing voucher recipients.

The shift from place-based to people-based housing assistance and, hence, towards poverty deconcentration and housing mobility was discussed in Chapter 2. I reviewed the historical context for my empirical research covering U.S. housing policy of the preceding half of a century or so. Specifically, I documented the history and development of public housing policy, housing vouchers, as well as public community revitalization efforts. Moreover, I elucidated how and why the poor (predominantly minorities) tended to inhabit America's post-industrial, disenfranchised urban centers,

and how this subsequently gave rise to certain sociological theories and neighborhood effects research. In addition, I discussed how HUD's views on poverty and poverty concentration and deconcentration fostered the dominance of the dispersal discourse. While scholarship in these domains has focused on a variety of qualitatively *and* quantitatively oriented research projects that were designed to understand the effects of poverty concentration and neighborhoods, HUD increasingly focused on producing generalizable positivist, technocratic studies grounded in quantitative research for the sake of guiding future housing policy. To that end, the MTO was conceived as the best feasible vehicle to statistically test neighborhood effects in the government and social science milieu.

Chapter 3 provided a description of the MTO research design, the data it was expected to obtain, and the empirical research that it was designed to enable. MTO's experimental, large-scale, longitudinal research design was believed to help researchers to attribute changes in the families' circumstances to the MTO intervention, and to test whether moving to low-poverty neighborhoods positively impacted families' lives. The large body of empirical scholarship it has instigated to date speaks to the extent to which HUD hung its hopes on the dispersal discourse. It also shows how it focused on the search for "hard-evidence" through positivist methods since they believed that through these methods only could one hope to discover generalizable policy "truth". However, the demonstration has neither buttressed the existence of neighborhood effects nor the concept that moving families to non-poor neighborhoods yields strong, positive results. Instead, it casts doubts on the effectiveness of housing mobility and dispersal as an avenue for housing policy, despite academic elitist support it had so tenaciously received.

This failure led me to question HUD's assumptions and the hegemonic dominance it lent to elite experts as well as the closed political space under which MTO was conceived. I subsequently got permission to search HUD archives to help me fill the gap between known normative assumptions and available empirical evidence. To that end, subsequent chapters elicited the discursive mechanisms through which the key agents gained and maintained dominance over the discourse, the political nature of the deliberation process, and the policy assumptions and framing practices of HUD policy during the focal period.

While the deconcentration discourse proliferated as a result of failed social policies to remedy the inner-city housing crisis, largely resulting in law suits regarding racial residential segregation/discrimination, the driving force behind MTO was the advocacy of Alex Polikoff. In Chapter 4, I discussed how the impetus for MTO was rooted in the apparent success of the Gautreaux dispersal/counseling model. It sparked strong interest in the possibility of dispersal initiatives that were enhanced by counseling services. It was believed that only a larger-scale demonstration sponsored by HUD's PD&R office could verify the Gautreaux findings. HUD officials who supported Polikoff's idea and endorsed MTO assumed that most poor families wanted to and should leave their neighborhoods, and that regional integration was the best available means to facilitate the families' economic independence since it would overcome the spatial mismatch problem and improve employment opportunities for the poor.

According to the correspondence among the policy elites, there was a *need* for an intervention to help poor people and to substantiate the effectiveness of the dispersal strategy with cutting-edge research at PD&R. Even though dispersal was just one of

many possible policy solutions that were known to fight urban poverty, excitement over a multi-metropolitan project focused on the spatial deconcentration of the poor grew over the months to follow. Moreover, the political space mostly remained closed to alternative discourses. Consequently, a small circle of top policymakers at HUD designed MTO through an iterative process of refining its details (such as determining neighborhood poverty level thresholds, cost and funding details, family selection, etc.). And even though they sought buy-in from foundations to harness their financial support and seemed considerate of input from other governmental offices and Polikoff, the conceptualization of the demonstration was an “inside-job” at HUD.

Chapter 5 focused on the role of experts and their participation in the MTO deliberation process under the new HUD leadership of Assistant Secretary Michael Stegman. PD&R officials moved forward with the design of MTO. This action further promulgated a discourse on publicly funded access to housing dominated by regional housing mobility through expanded dispersal strategies. MTO was designed to spur the portability of Section 8 vouchers. But it was deemed necessary mostly to create a vehicle for housing mobility research. PD&R’s consultation with academics and policy experts suggests several underlying dynamics. On the one hand, in shaping MTO, PD&R’s top policy makers positioned themselves as elites rather than consensus builders. Their narratives and actions as stated in internal memos reflect the dominance of their values in developing the MTO. Still, HUD did seek input from an advisory/working group to refine the demonstration’s design. Archival documents reveal that the deliberation process was discursive and iterative as PD&R’s top policy makers designed MTO. The “major priority” for PD&R was a commitment to “designing and carrying out an

evaluation of MTO that provided definitive measures of both short-term and long-term impacts of moving from a high-poverty neighborhood to a low-poverty neighborhood”.

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HUD contracted with Abt Associates (“a research contractor with extensive Section 8 program experience”¹⁹²) to assist in setting up MTO sites, develop procedures for random assignment of households, collect baseline data, and design methods for tracking households for at least a decade. Abt and the academic community provided HUD with input and feedback into site selection, research design such as data selection, the sample frame for participating families, research reporting intervals, et cetera. They also provided implementation advice. MTO families were viewed as research *subjects* as the following statement where Abt discussed MTO participant recruitment reveals:

How should outreach be conducted and what should be the message to interested participants? What was the appropriate [emphasis] message to attract the right group to the demonstration -- who would be the “right group”? When should the lottery be mentioned to participants...after eligibility?¹⁹³

The process of deliberation was not democratic, although it did include the thoughts and opinions of a significant number of experts with policy expertise. In this respect the policy formation process can be viewed as rather exclusionary and quite elitist. PD&R positioned their values driven by a technocratic (epistemic) orientation over those of housing assistance recipients, who undoubtedly had a different normative context. While the deliberation paid some attention to the existing social ties of participants, most MTO planners emphasized processes that would lead to successful relocation to “better” neighborhoods and the portability of housing vouchers. Still, for

¹⁹⁰ Letter Stegman to Rossi, November 3, 1993. [doc 161]

¹⁹¹ Letter Stegman to Fischer, November 3, 1993. [doc 152]

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Abt Associates, Inc. summary of MTO meeting, December 21, 1993. [doc 186]

the most part, HUD archives reveal that the political space for alternative discourse was closed. Even though the baseline survey results suggested that 85 percent of MTO applicants participated to escape crime, data collection centered on variables related to parental care and cognitive stimulation, health, school performance and problems, and child supervision. Though the chosen MTO variables did not necessarily match the real problem as ascertained from the baseline survey¹⁹⁴, HUD predominantly relied on measures from behavioral and cognitive psychology to measure the medium- and long-range success of the demonstration.¹⁹⁵

While Chapters 4 and 5 highlighted the political nature of the policy deliberation process, Chapter 6 drew attention to the MTO frame differences that transpired prior to the implementation at the Baltimore site. In addition to MTO's political nature, the problem situation in Baltimore shows that the formation of the MTO program was complex and situated within a multi-faceted social/political struggle. The demonstration prompted tensions and resistance by the receiving community and local government officials' exclusion in the MTO process, their shared sentiment of feeling "sandbagged" by the Feds. On an ideological level, the local opposition to the MTO reveals a high potential for deep-seated antipathy towards recipients of public assistance by receiving communities. In particular, the reception by the poor of government "handouts" undermines any meritocracy among the poor as well as the use of tax payers' dollars toward this segregation remedy. Local residents and politicians alike militated so

¹⁹⁴ Discussed in Chapter 8

¹⁹⁵ Standard measures used in social science, particularly psychology, to ascertain behavioral/cognitive outcomes on children and adults. For examples, see summary of MTO empirical studies summarized in Chapter 3.

strongly against MTO that HUD canceled the second round of MTO funding, converting the allocations directly to CIR.

The conflicts between the discourses and frames reviewed in chapter 8 represent deeper level conflicts of values. They revolve around concerns such as a) power over space and resources; b) the extent to which the redistribution of resources is justified or even a moral imperative (given the attachment to traditional values of hard work and meritocracy); and c) the commodification of housing, and the concept of “buying” into a neighborhood and associated services and institutions. The document analysis reports the discourse on housing mobility and voucher portability between public and government entities. The hegemonic discourse of the HUD power elite extolled housing mobility as a promising policy solution to address concentrated poverty. Little consideration was taken of the implications for residents in the more resource-rich receiving communities. These communities, as this chapter demonstrated, did not focus on poverty concentration in the inner-city as a problem. Instead they clung to traditional ideals of meritocracy where housing is a commodity that should be earned. Of course, these communities were not seeking solutions to help the poor and were instead rather self-centered on NIMBY issues.

From a policy perspective, the preceding chapter suggests that problem definition, the first step in the policy making process, depends heavily on the problem’s *interpretation*. In other words, different agents and actors involved in the policy process and affected by it had quite different perspectives. This makes consensus building difficult, even with a democratic, inclusive process of policy deliberation. For example, the federal government viewed poverty concentration in inner-cities as *the* problem, and

the deliberate placement of poor minorities as the solution. But the suburban residents in Baltimore County did not perceive HUD's solution as tenable. Instead, they viewed the entry of inner-city poor into their communities as *a* problem that would affect their safety, education, property values, and families' value systems.

In Chapter 7, I elucidated the extent to which housing mobility (dispersal) was advanced by the government and gained dominance in federal housing policy discourse. While offering a review of various housing mobility and dispersal initiatives sponsored by HUD, this chapter suggested that the currency of the dominant discourse was propelled through a hegemonic pathway, whereby the President inculcated his priorities throughout the governmental hierarchy (President Clinton → Secretary Cisneros → Assistant Secretary Stegman). HUD-sponsored demonstrations and programs (i.e. Bridges to Work demonstration, the Jobs-Plus demonstration, HOPE VI) that preceded and that were concurrently developed were envisioned to “produce more knowledge about the social and economic effects of low-income housing policy – a long-neglected, much maligned domain of public policy- than any work carried out in the preceding thirty or forty years” (Briggs et al., 2010: 52). Congress charged HUD with producing cutting-edge mobility research, involving HUD's leadership, top PD&R officials, and outside experts. The research centered on analyzing existing mobility initiatives to encourage the Section 8 voucher portability and to deconcentrate poverty in inner cities. Many of these initiatives focused on regional housing opportunities and desegregation (aka dispersal).¹⁹⁶ The intent was to “promote more racially or ethnically inclusive patterns of occupancy” as “rental certificates or vouchers [would] serve as an additional means of correcting past

¹⁹⁶ Memo Mansfield to FHEO directors, April 17, 1991. [doc 54]

discriminatory actions” and were a “critical component in [the] intensified desegregation program.”

The move to the suburbs was an envisioned outcome of MTO and other initiatives, where MTO was to be “a fresh start” for voucher allocation. It was viewed as an exceptional opportunity for mobility research! The greater involvement of PHAs and NPOs providing services and monitoring was incorporated in this intervention. Most prior mobility programs were created via litigation.¹⁹⁷ The Fair Housing Act required that federal housing and community development funds be used to further the Act and counter existing and past/future discrimination/segregation in housing, and “impose duty to undo existing discrimination to truly increase open housing opportunities.” Existing housing mobility programs were used as blueprints for administering housing mobility initiatives. So private nonprofit fair-housing groups were preferred over PHAs in administering housing mobility programs, counseling was deemed to be an essential component, and finally

every federal, state, and local agency exercising authority over any aspect of housing ought to be devoting its resources and power to enabling mobility because segregation is at the root of injustices and most grievous problems, and legal services advocates can do a great deal to give many people a real opportunity to improve their own and others’ lives.¹⁹⁸

Housing mobility research pointed to an increasing dominance of housing mobility policy discourse at HUD. MTO, Section 153 research, and MTI/CIR indicated HUD’s intent to reform the Section 8 voucher system so that it could provide wider set of housing choices for poor families and address residential segregation. The research, which developed much new data to test facts from case study work, reflected a strong

¹⁹⁷ Roisman, Florence W., and Hilary Botein. 1993. Housing Mobility and Life Opportunities. *Clearinghouse Review* 27.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

interest to reform an existing problematic publicly funded housing system. Findings from Gautreaux and other isolated court-mandated de-segregation programs needed to be synthesized to give HUD a better understanding of what worked and what did not in ameliorating persistent intergenerational poverty. Mobility counseling services was viewed as the salient trajectory of action, and a change in the role of PHAs to include more extensive service provisions and monitoring was regarded as central to HUD's overall reform strategy. Landlord recruitment and housing market realities played important parts as well.

In this study, I examined the process, nature, and dynamics of policy deliberations. I demonstrated that policymaking in the case of MTO was anchored in a particular set of narratives that constructed a dominant discourse. That discourse was contextualized by a framework of assumptions about a set of problems and their solutions, and a perceived construct of their causal relationship. At the micro level, the elite-experts sought to validate this relationship through the production of a data set that would facilitate rational, scientific methodology. At the macro level, they strived to promote the *common good* which was entrenched in dominant ideology. By way of closing the political space, they furthered normative social goals and their core values. This manifested their hegemony, and assured the prevalence of the dominant discourse.

Frame-critical discourse analysis and Fischer's model of policy deliberation provided the analytical framework for this study (Chapter 8). I examined the process of policy deliberation through which HUD produced MTO, and sought to answer how and why poverty deconcentration and housing mobility have dominated the housing policy discourse and produced the MTO. Moreover, I attempted to elicit the power relations and

hegemony of elite-experts in inducing and promulgating the housing mobility and dispersal discourse. In drawing attention to the deliberative/discursive mechanisms through which HUD and their chosen experts refined the demonstration, I revealed how the elite-experts pushed their narrative to maintain dominance over the housing discourse, and how the political space was closed to alternative discourses and input marginalized groups.

My empirical analysis was anchored in primary and secondary archival research of HUD documents. To that end, I collected over 200 documents relating to MTO at the HUD headquarters in Washington D.C. Data collected include policy papers, memos, field notes, emails, letters, policy briefs both published and unpublished, telephone call records. The empirical analysis of these data supplemented with extensive MTO research, books, and ancillary information relating to MTO, as well as a host of supporting literature in the disciplines of housing policy, neighborhood effects, sociology and psychology was central to this study.

My analysis suggests that a small circle of top policymakers at HUD designed MTO in the interest of promoting the dispersal discourse, and producing a data set that would facilitate objective scientific research to demonstrate neighborhood effects. Even though HUD consulted the experts in deliberating MTO, the process was exclusionary and elitist, and the political space remained closed to alternative discourses (though dispersal was called one of many solutions to fight urban poverty). The elite-experts were more interested in producing empirical evidence in support of the dispersal strategy, than in gathering information to better *understand* the situated, normative realities of voucher recipients (such as the costs and benefits of living in a high-poverty

neighborhood according to the perspectives of the voucher recipients who reside there), leading to a frame clash between empirical and normative claims. The proliferation of housing mobility research outside of MTO indicated the increasing dominance of housing mobility policy discourse and HUD's intent to reform the Section 8 voucher system to encourage dispersal, and address residential segregation.

Implications

Employing discourse analysis and Fischer's logic of policy deliberation enabled me to contextualize the empirical MTO results, the normative assumptions held by elite-experts, and the alternative discourse as expressed through interviews with MTO families. This study recognizes policymaking as an inherently political process, and the framing of problems and solutions as social constructs. Given our growing cultural diversity it is critical to recognize social difference, and different knowledges to promote the common good and avoid perpetuating entrenched patterns of social and spatial inequalities. With this in mind, policy research ought to be aligned with ideologies such as inclusive democracy and participatory governance, and emphasize inclusivity, social justice, civil rights, community and shared communitarian goals. Equal and engaged participation by constituents directly and indirectly involved is important in defending against segregation and oppression. Consequently, policy initiatives aimed at social reform should reflect the input of all constituents involved, and be planned through a communicative and collaborative process, within a political space open to deliberative discourse.

Limitations and future directions

Limitations of this research are limitations of all policy analysis- this analysis is not value free. There are multiple interpretations of the social world and the interpretations, in turn, are also shaped by the prior experiences of the interpreter (me), as well as the material that is interpreted (HUD documents). To be sure, my frame is certainly shaped by the histories and contexts of German and U.S. societies, as well as by my life experiences. As I suggested in the preface, the lens through which I see the social world is very much shaped by growing up in Germany where resources are distributed more equitably. Obviously, this experience has shaped how I view the role of government, specifically, as an entity to ensure a “social safety net” for all its members. Hence, I believe that government ought to have a strong role in addressing social problems related to poverty and housing.

In addition, this research is also limited because it does not directly involve participants. I could have interviewed MTO families, mobility counselors, members of involved public housing authorities, members of Abt Associates, etc. to identify additional frames. Without direct involvement of MTO participants in the deliberative process, my analysis is subject to real public discussion. Future policy analysis would therefore directly involve participation of related policy actors in the deliberation and analysis process to make it inclusive and democratic.

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