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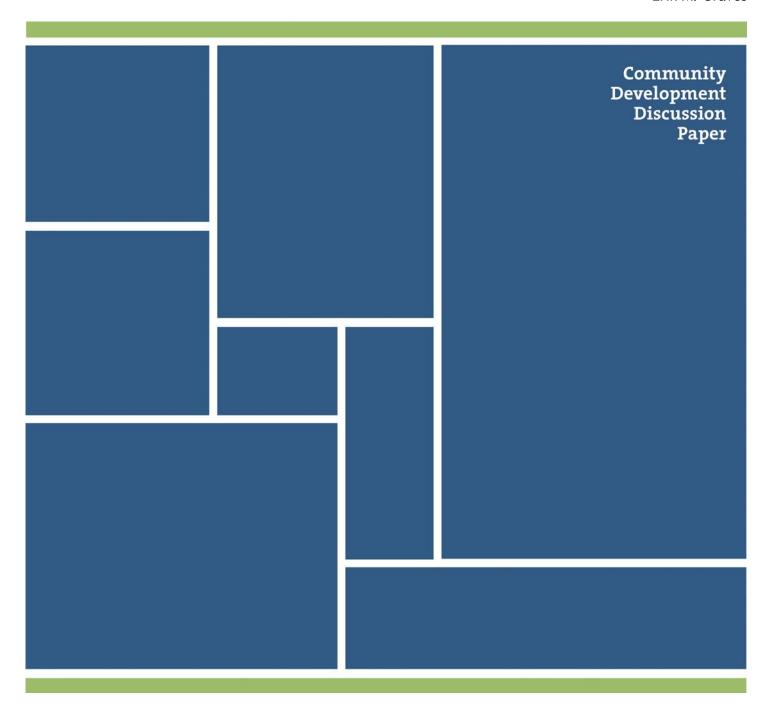# Selecting for Safety:

A Qualitative Meta-analysis of Neighborhood Violence and Residential Decision Making

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Community
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Discussion
Paper

Selecting for Safety: A Qualitative Meta-analysis of Neighborhood Violence and Residential Decision Making

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Abstract

Many studies have established that people in high poverty neighborhoods who select to participate in housing mobility programs cite crime and violence as primary motivations for wanting to make a residential move. Using a novel approach, we analyzed qualitative data across several studies to explore the frequency and dimensions of safety concerns, relating these to the role of neighborhood forces in the residential decision-making process. We asked the following questions: What are the sources and frequency of motivations for residential mobility among participants? In what ways does neighborhood violence factor into residential mobility? Does a more accurate understanding of the role played by neighborhood violence in residential mobility have either theoretical or practical implications for practitioners or policy makers? Qualitative data pertinent to voucher programs, neighborhood crime and residential decision making were gleaned from 20 studies published between the years 2000 and 2014. Our meta-synthesis revealed not only that neighborhood violence is a key factor in the decision making of voucher holders but also a complex one. Violence affects all of the factors that participants consider in the relocation equation: the needs of the household, housing unit features, the prospective neighborhood and its institutions and how these will affect both participants and their dependent children. We also consider the policy implications of the costs to opportunity incurred as a result of neighborhood violence and the magnitude of the role that neighborhood violence plays in shaping residential decision making.

Introduction

Although much about U.S. cities has changed during the last century, a persistent strong correlation between poverty and rates of criminal violence across urban neighborhoods is still considered a "bedrock conclusion" among sociologists and criminologists (Hipp and Yates, 2011). Additionally, many studies have established that people in high poverty neighborhoods who select to participate in housing mobility programs cite crime and violence as primary motivations for wanting to make a residential move. Why certain neighborhoods are perceived as places that produce such threats to safety is a key problem and one that this paper will consider but not try to solve. Here we focus on the often overlooked role and consequences of neighborhood violence on behavior among low-income and often minority households that choose to participate in housing mobility programs. A large body of literature has linked a number of social problems in poor neighborhoods -- including crime and violence -- to a variety of behaviors. Despite increasing levels of confidence that neighborhood environments do affect individual outcomes, a thorough understanding of the specific mechanisms matters both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, more work is needed to identify the ways in which neighborhoods influence behavior. Practically, effective housing policy depends on understanding the mechanisms underpinning these observed behavioral outcomes.

Beginning in the 1990s, federal low-income housing policies increasingly prioritized facilitating movement out of areas of concentrated poverty. Researchers have assumed that the "pull" or appeal of opportunity neighborhoods would align with the internal motivations of families to participate in mobility programs. However, participants have often indicated that the greater impetus is the "push" or deterrents in their current neighborhood and the lack of safety, in particular, that leads them to relocate using a voucher. This study focuses on the way neighborhood violence influences mobility thinking among assisted households, thus serving as a mechanism that initiates residential decision-making processes. Among questions that we ask are the following: Based on qualitative accounts, what are the sources of and frequency of motivations for residential mobility among voucher program participants? In what ways does neighborhood violence factor into residential mobility? Does a more detailed clarification of the

role of neighborhood violence in residential mobility among participants have either theoretical or practical implications?

According to the dominant residential mobility framework, households generally change residences to resolve housing stress and dissatisfaction arising as a person transitions from one life stage to the next. However, studies of marginalized populations have led many researchers to conclude that this pattern fails to hold true across disadvantaged income and racial groups. When marginalized households move, these moves less frequently result in a net improvement in satisfaction. Mobility is often involuntary, and, while voluntary mobility relieves some of the pressures of poverty, it does not necessarily remove all of them (Briggs, Popkin and Goering, 2010; Scanlon and Devine, 2001). In sum, mobility is not a reliable mechanism for attaining household promotion among low-income households.

Our review of the literature on housing vouchers, neighborhood violence, and residential decision making among assisted families enabled us to conduct a qualitative meta-analysis of aggregated responses from households across the United States that had sought to make residential moves through housing mobility programs. Descriptions of decision making further suggested that the experience of neighborhood violence influences residential satisfaction at various levels, ranging from the individual household, to the housing unit, and, more broadly, to the neighborhood and its institutions. Furthermore, program participants describe neighborhood violence as affecting both themselves and their dependent children. Our analysis has revealed some pending questions about the role of neighborhood violence in shaping residential behavior and decision making.

Background

For many years, researchers have argued that neighborhood conditions cause differences in individual outcomes and that a poor person living in a high poverty environment would be worse off economically than if that same poor person were to live in a low poverty environment (Wilson, 1987). This literature has linked neighborhood poverty to a variety of behavior-related outcomes, such as teenage pregnancy, impaired cognitive functioning,

compromised physical health including a higher incidence of asthma, and early exit from the public school system (Sampson, 2012). Researchers have long debated whether neighborhoods affect many aspects of children's development, educational success, and social, behavioral or economic outcomes (Kling, Liebman and Katz, 2007; Ludwig et al., 2013; Sanbonmatsu, Duncan, and Brooks-Gunn, 2006). More recently, rigorous research suggests that neighborhood socioeconomic conditions can have substantial effects on such outcomes, particularly due to long-term exposure during childhood (Burdick-Will et al., 2011; Chetty, Hedren and Katz, 2015; Harding, 2003; Wodtke, Harding and Elwert, 2011).

Despite increasing confidence in the causal relationship between neighborhood contexts and individual outcomes, effective policy interventions depend on understanding the mechanisms behind these outcomes and the processes by which people sort into and out of neighborhoods. Thus scholars are still specifying how "social environments shape the behavior of poor people" (Tienda, 1991; Clampet and Massey, 2008; Chetty et al., 2015).

As a result of racial segregation, class segregation and urban sprawl, U.S. metropolitan areas exhibit an uneven distribution of neighborhood-based opportunities, including access to safe living conditions, school quality, healthy food access, social networks, and proximity to employment (Briggs 2005; Galster and Killen, 1995; Ihlanfeldt, 1999). Research consistently shows that minority households' desire to live in socially and economically diverse areas is not matched by a supply of available suitable units (Charles, 2003). In addition, low-income households often lack complete information about neighborhoods (Krysan and Bader, 2009) and racial discrimination. The perceived potential for discrimination (Sharkey, 2012) influences access as well. Together these forces -- broadly termed the geography of opportunity -- contribute to racial and economic segregation and influence individual's opportunities and life outcomes.

For many policy makers and researchers, housing vouchers are accepted as one way to reduce segregation, allowing poor people to leave disadvantaged neighborhoods in order to seek opportunities to thrive in higher opportunity places (Clark, 2005). Often this has been the justification for policies that provide a housing subsidy through housing vouchers rather than relegating households to housing projects (Crump, 2002), through the conversion of public

housing units to housing vouchers through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban (HUD) Development HOPE VI program, and through the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration (MTO) (cf., Katz, Kling and Liebman, 2000)-- one of the most ambitious and prominent housing policy experiments to date.

Begun in 1974, the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program is one of the largest housing subsidy programs in the United States yet serves only a fraction of poor households. The most recent HUD data indicate that annually the program serves over 2.2 million households — including more than 1 million households with minor children (Sard and Coven, 2006). Structured to enable households to access housing in the private market, the HCV Program allows voucher recipients to identify private market housing that meets the program's quality and affordability standards.

Neighborhood and housing mobility researchers typically have made two key assumptions about residential decision making in the voucher context. First, the participant choice assumption holds that given the structure of the HCV Program, many policy makers and researchers assume that the program provides participants with "the freedom of choice" (Matthews, 1998). By giving recipients a choice on housing location, voucher recipients can decide which housing configuration best suits the needs of their household. Some might opt to sacrifice space for a better school district or for a shorter commute to their place of employment.

Second, the participant motivation assumption has maintained that only unusually motivated families participate in the voucher program and thus differ from the general neighborhood population in terms of their preferences and decision-making processes. This selection bias would complicate conclusions about the effectiveness of using vouchers to promote economic mobility. If only "the most motivated families" are to be included or selected to join a program, their experiences --including measured results or outcomes – would not be typical of the eligible population and would confound or confuse outcomes (Jencks and Mayer, 1990). Family motivations and aspirations are "believed to influence how much a family values their children's behavior and development (as well as their choice of place of residence)" (Sastry, Ghosh-Dastidar, Adams, and Pebley, 2006). Researchers have assumed that the pull of

higher-opportunity neighborhoods drives families that are motivated to seek economic and social advancement to select into the program.

In fact, subsequent analysis of voucher programs has undermined both the choice and selection assumptions and has revealed that, in many cases, households confront barriers to executing their choices and that families' motivations for participation differ from those initially assumed. Researchers began to recognize the supply-side challenges that many families encounter in relocating out of highly concentrated poor neighborhoods (Goetz, 2003; South and Crowder, 1998). Studies have illustrated how voucher holders continually confront structural and programmatic barriers that prevent them from accessing low poverty neighborhoods (Graves, 2015). Discrimination, inadequate transportation and the scarcity of suitable dwelling units form the main structural barriers to mobility into low poverty neighborhoods, especially in tight housing markets (Basolo and Nguyen, 2005; McClure, 2008; Pendall 2000).

Moreover, past surveys of voucher participants have confirmed participant concerns about safety as a primary reason for their self-selection into the HCV Program (Goering, Feins and Richardson, 2002; Hanratty, McLanahan and Pettit, 1998; Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum, 2000). Surveys of recruits into the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) voucher program have found that while 2% cite employment concerns (e.g., "to get a job" or "to be near my job"), 53% want to move due to fear of crime. Evaluations of other mobility programs have reported similar results (Popkin, 2010, Varady and Walker, 2000). Finding that voucher holders in general select into much safer but not lower poverty neighborhoods, Lens et al. (2013) have concluded that voucher households "simply care more about safety levels than poverty rates, and thus use their choice to select safer communities." Although this suggests selection into a voucher program for a different reason — parental concern for family safety, it affords little understanding of how unsafe neighborhoods affect participants' mobility decisions (Hipp, 2010).

Other research has illustrated how participants may seek to meet their safety needs while remaining in high poverty neighborhoods. Although researchers often have cited structural barriers as the reason participants make this compromise, these high poverty

neighborhoods may also offer familiar settings, neighbors who respect rather than discriminate against them, and locations that are close to supportive networks of family and friends (Goetz, 2003; Pashup, , Edin, Duncan and Burke ; 2005; Pendall, 2000; Varady and Walker, 2007). That safety influences both movers' and non-movers' decision making suggests that policy assumptions about participants' motivation have failed to assign safety its appropriate relevance in the residential decision-making process.

Neighborhood crime and individual behaviors

To students of urban crime, it likely would not be surprising that concerns about crime are ranked high by housing voucher holders, since a peak in urban crime coincided with the expansion of the HCV program in the late 1990s. Since the mid-20th century, social scientists have focused on neighborhoods and crime, having observed and documented an association between a neighborhood's low socioeconomic status and rates of neighborhood violence. Neighborhood crime and violence have a number of noted consequences for residents, including higher levels of criminality, victimization, and psychological harm (Stafford, Chandola, and Marmot, 2007; Santiago, Wadworth and Stump, 2011; Skogan, 1987; Sampson, Raudenbusch, and Earls, 1997; Dupéré and Perkins, 2005; Ellen and Turner, 1997).

Researchers have less frequently pursued the question of whether or how crime itself may be a mechanism for other outcomes, or the ways in which neighborhood violence complicates daily functioning. Current theory on how exposure to crime affects non-criminological behaviors has focused almost exclusively on children and adolescents. Research on the effects on children and youth of exposure to community violence has focused on school success (Bowen and Bowen, 1999) and on preschoolers' behavior and cognitive performance (Sharkey et al., 2010) and on how exposure to neighborhood violence in childhood impacts adult earnings (Chetty et al., 2015). Hipp and Yates (2011) have argued that crime can directly motivate residents to respond through residential mobility, and they have concluded that crime is not the only mechanism spurring mobility out of neighborhoods. Yet how this mechanism operates is not well understood. Altogether, this literature suggests that exposure to violence

remains an unexplored pathway that might compromise adult behaviors and, on the basis of data from participants' accounts of their own motivations, is a pathway that we examine here.

While not typical of all U.S. neighborhoods, the high poverty neighborhoods that voucher seekers often originate from exhibit elevated violent crime rates. Such crime rates, coupled with the randomness of drug-related turf wars and police response, can lead residents to fear for their lives (Briggs et al., 2010). At these extreme levels, neighborhood violence represents a mortal threat (Logan, 2003). High levels of concern about neighborhood safety may be considered to be an indirect form of victimization (Andreescu and Weber, 1995) that limits one's social activity (Conklin, 1971; Garofalo, 1979) and leads to a loss of confidence in public authority (Moeller, 1989). Women are more likely to express concerns about safety than men (see, e.g., Clemente and Kleinman, 1977; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981; Parker and Ray, 1990).

Thus, while much of the voucher research has reflected more recent scholarly concerns about how neighborhoods affect access to opportunity and residents' ability to thrive, it has been less sensitive to the co-location of poverty and violent crime, which has been substantiated in past research. In the voucher literature, inattentiveness to the effects of crime on behavior may be because a large portion of U.S. citizens live in relative affluence and safety in contrast to the high incidence of crime in high poverty, urban America. Only a few researchers have studied how Americans balance meeting physiological and security needs with other motivations (Tang, Ping and West, 1997). Empirical research in psychology has found that people are motivated to first meet their needs of survival and security and, after achieving these needs, can proceed to meeting higher-order needs (Maslow, 1970; Wahba and Bridwell, 1973; Lawler, 1973). Simply put, the need to survive takes precedence over the need to thrive. Some locations do not meet this need, especially in the international context (Tang, Ping and West, 1997); but researchers have rarely considered if neighborhood violence would serve as a motivating threat to one's basic needs for survival or how that might influence behavior or decision making.

In sum, while violence is a longstanding issue in some neighborhoods and is of profound importance to voucher program participants, there remains a paucity of knowledge on the role

of neighborhood violence in individual behaviors and outcomes, in particular with respect to mobility thinking and behavior. In the next section, we will introduce and discuss a conceptual framework for residential decision making. We will then discuss how neighborhood violence and threats to safety work within that framework to inform mobility decisions among voucher users.

Residential decision making

With research having revealed that the issues of choice and selection are more complicated than first assumed (Briggs at al., 2010), some have urged more deep consideration of the residential selection process (Sampson, 2008). Scholars have turned to the residential decision-making frameworks provided in the demography and sociology literatures (Sharkey, 2012; Briggs, Comey and Weismann, 2010; Darrah and DeLuca, 2014) in an effort to understand "how structure and preferences interact" and thereby influence residential decision making (Darrah and DeLuca, 2014). Although intra-regional mobility frameworks largely consider the general population, using mobility frameworks can allow for a fuller understanding of the residential decision-making process for voucher holders. Specifically, this frame can enable a better understanding of the role of neighborhood safety, among other household and housing unit factors, in subsidized movers' residential decision making. Above and beyond the academic gaps that such knowledge can address, such an understanding will provide critical insights to federal and local policy makers enlisting mobility strategies.

While not completely cohesive, the intra-regional mobility framework developed by demographers has some relevance for understanding mobility decisions among voucher program participants. Intra-urban mobility theorists began by establishing that residential mobility is an individual decision-making *process* rather than a dichotomous move-versus-stay outcome (Speare, 1974). Potential movers first develop "mobility thinking" or an interest in moving before making later decisions about where to move and any ultimate relocation. This mobility thinking is brought on by changes in satisfaction. Households typically determine satisfaction by assessing the "fit" between household needs on the basis of life-cycle factors,

such as age and family status, and the "place utility" (Wolpert, 1965) of both housing unit traits, traits of the surrounding neighborhood and institutional factors (Briggs, Comey and Weismann, 2010; Clark and Dieleman, 1996; Newman and Duncan, 1979; Rossi 1955; Speare, Goldstein and Frey, 1974). A poor fit "pushes" a household toward mobility thinking. This literature is often cited for correcting the assumption that household mobility is a sign of household dysfunction, as previous bodies of literature had held, and demonstrating that mobility is predictable and is used strategically to maximize benefits to the household (Rossi and Shlay, 1982).

In adjustment moves, families seek to adjust their housing in response to changes in housing satisfaction, locational preferences, household formation and size, marital status or employment, and they maximize housing and locational advantage through a move (Morris, Cruss and Winter, 1976). These moves are voluntary because the households, on some level, exercise choice (Morris et al., 1976). Moves often occur at pivotal moments in the life-course. Plans to start a family and the recent birth of a child can trigger dissatisfaction with the current housing environment (Kulu and Milewski, 2008). Families with children approaching school age may become dissatisfied with the local schools and may want to move. Conversely, for families with school-age children, relocation may be especially disruptive because of broken social ties and interrupted academic experiences (Schafft, 2006). At the other end of the life cycle, dissatisfaction arises again when households need less space after children have left home and/or when a spouse dies, which often prompts a move to a retirement home (Winstanley, Thorne and Perkis, 2002; Morris et al., 1976).

While household economic considerations are a factor in satisfaction, a positive change in economic status alone rarely triggers mobility (Coulter, van Ham and Findlay, 2015). Employment does play into mobility thinking for intra-urban moves, though often indirectly by the household considering accessibility to employment, rather than proximity (Speare, Goldstein and Frey, 1974). Compared to life cycle changes that occur more frequently, a household's economic status is relatively stable over a lifetime, and changes in economic status do not always correspond to changes in residency. That is, people change residences much more frequently than they change economic classes (Coulter, van Ham and Findlay, 2015).

Neighborhood factors influence satisfaction, as the neighborhood effects and geography of opportunity literatures have highlighted. Most see neighborhood factors as interacting with life-cycle factors, with factors like neighborhood safety having greater salience for families with dependent children. Yet precisely how neighborhood factors influence satisfaction is not well understood. Some have argued that neighborhood conditions only play a minor role in satisfaction (Anderson, 2008), whereas others have characterized households as assessing neighborhood qualities in a "bundle" that includes safety, access and other traits of locations (Briggs et al., 2010; Galster, 2003). Social relationships in the neighborhood are also factors, especially ties to family (Speare, Goldstein and Frey, 1974), and racial composition (Ross and Turner, 2005; Yinger, 1995; Bruch and Mare, 2006; Schelling, 1971; McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). As noted earlier, there is some data suggesting that crime directly induces mobility (Dugan, 1999; Hipp, 2010; Tita and Greenbaum, 2009; Morenoff and Sampson, 1997).

Finally, residential decision-making research has echoed the neighborhood effects and geography of opportunity literature in identifying institutional factors as relevant to satisfaction. Some institutional factors, like the qualities of the local schools, are relevant for families with children in school. Other institutional factors matter as well, such as quality of policing, prevalence of homeownership, density and open space, and, to a lesser degree, political party composition (Tam Cho, Gimpel and Hui, 2013).

After households assess satisfaction in the decision-making phase, an analogous "place utility" logic is enlisted in the following phase of residential mobility – consideration of alternative locations. Here again, demographers have used life-cycle and household-specific quality-of-life needs as a standard for assessing the conjoined utility of the various combinations of housing unit, neighborhood and institutional factors of other locations. The gap between the expected utility of a new location and the current place utility "pulls" a household toward a specific location.

Mobility among Marginalized Households

While researchers have critiqued the mainstream model, most often for its normative assumptions regarding decision making among two-parent, male-headed households (cf., Morris et al., 1976; Clark, Deurloo and Dieleman, 2003), studies of low-income households have further exposed how the stylized mobility of mainstream households and the experience of mobility for low-income ones differ. While low-income households also encounter life-cycle and locational stresses that could possibly be resolved through mobility, research has shown that low-income households often have relatively less control than mainstream movers over the decision-making process and therefore less often utilize mobility for household advantage (Schafft 2006; Skelton, 2002).

First, low-income households are much more likely to be renters, and this distinguishes them from a large percentage of mainstream households that move into homeownership as they proceed through the life cycle (Briggs et al., 2010, Schacter, 2004). In part because of their tenure status, renters move four to five times as often as owners (Schacter, 2004; Schafft, 2006; Fitchen, 1992), and low-income and minority populations are overrepresented among the population of frequent movers (Newman and Owen, 1982). Low-income households are also much more likely to make involuntary moves (Briggs et al, 2010, Fischer, 2002; Schacter, 2004; Desmond, 2012) in ways consistent with the U.S. Census Bureau definition of involuntary moves, such as job loss, death, divorce, eviction, fire, unaffordable mortgage or rent, or nonrenewal of lease, and other interpersonal factors, such as domestic violence and relationship breakup (Schafft, 2006). Forced moves happen when households move involuntarily and are "necessitated by events totally beyond the control of the households. The primary causes of involuntary moves are "eviction by public or private action and the destruction of the housing unit" (Clark and Onaka, 1983). When households are pushed from their places of residence, these moves are unplanned and often unpredictable and therefore do not align with the concept of adjustment moves.

Low-income households and households of color, in particular, also face constraints when considering their housing alternatives — the second phase of the residential decision-

making process. Low-income households also tend to move within, into and across already distressed communities (Fitchen, 1992; Schafft, 2006; Sharkey, 2012). Such households are also more likely to be "hypermobile," making "a series of downward and presumably unsatisfactory moves" (Kearns and Smith, 1994, p. 116) that often lead to increased insecurity for the households involved (Fitchen, 1992, Schafft, 2006).

Similar to households in the general public, employment-related factors make up the smallest percentage of reasons for interregional movement among low-income households (Schafft,2006). Moreover, low-income households are much less likely to migrate toward economic opportunity, e.g., to take a job in another region (Fischer 2002). Research has shown that low-income households of color are less able to translate income gains into choices to live in predominantly white suburban neighborhoods due to persistent discrimination (Emerson, Chai and Yancey, 2001; Massey and Denton, 1993; South and Deane, 1993).

People with lower incomes have fewer options in the housing market and are often more inclined to settle for their current housing situation; they less often envision moving. Most obviously, income constrains the ability to translate dissatisfaction into mobility (Anderson, 2008). Yet studies also have shown that when members of these households consider alternative locations, their previous experiences, including discrimination and their lack of information hamper their ability to objectively assess alternatives.

Low-income movers also appear to be aware of the realities of neighborhood dynamics when they are weighing alternatives. Neighborhood change research has suggested that some places of opportunity do not remain so for long. Evidence has shown that voucher holders who move to low poverty areas often witness an in-migration of poorer families, which subsequently increases the area's poverty rates (Briggs et al., 2010). Thus, when low-income households and low-income households of color consider alternative locations, they weigh the great costs of moving -- both social and economic -- and remain mindful of what "might appear to be a compelling reason to stay: previous experience of chronic movers that conditions will be no better after the move" (Skelton, 2002).

We add to these critiques that researchers could more clearly articulate the sources of dissatisfaction and ordering of preferences among low-income households. Households must

assess their satisfaction in terms of how their housing context meets both higher order needs to thrive and basic survival needs. High-quality schools for children and proximity to work enter into a household's considerations about satisfaction in terms of ability to thrive. Low levels of social disorder, such as loitering, the presence of litter and trash and anti-social behavior, could be considered amenities relevant to thriving too. Even low level of certain types of crime, such as property crime could possibly be characterized as an amenity. Yet, violent crime can produce an environment of intimidation and fear, which can be interpreted as a threat to basic survival.

Taken together, the housing voucher research, neighborhood crime research and residential mobility research point to a general gap in our understanding of how crime influences mobility and decision making. The housing voucher research has identified how structural constraints, such as discrimination and housing market characteristics, interact with satisfaction to influence mobility among low-income households and how crime and violence are major sources of dissatisfaction. The crime literature has established that the presence of poverty and the occurrence of violent crime are strongly related, and has contributed to a nascent understanding of the non-criminological consequences of living in a high-crime environment. The residential decision-making literature has demonstrated that a decision to move is a complex one for any household, and households assess satisfaction along many dimensions at various levels – household life-cycle characteristics, housing unit characteristics, neighborhoods, and institutions. While for mainstream households mobility is often predictable, beneficial and strategic, this is less so for low-income households. Crime and violence, as structural features of low-income neighborhoods, influence satisfaction and thus mobility behavior but has yet to be addressed in light of this body of literature.

For the remainder of the paper, we focus on crime and safety as factors that voucher households consistently identify as key sources of dissatisfaction. We used qualitative metasynthesis to describe how participants incorporate neighborhood safety into their assessments of residential satisfaction and thus their decisions about whether to move.

Methods and data

Research on housing voucher programs has produced a large body of qualitative data that is valuable for describing the role of neighborhood violence in residential decision making. It has also allowed researchers a deeper understanding of how neighborhood conditions intersect with other housing unit and neighborhood structures and individual preferences. To understand the role of neighborhood context in residential decision making for participants in a housing voucher program, we pursued a technique known as qualitative meta-analysis. Specifically, we relied upon the qualitative descriptions documented in studies undertaken throughout the United States of people who had elected to make a residential move using a housing voucher.

We seek to highlight three roles for qualitative research. First, qualitative studies can be deployed to help explain the results of prior quantitative work. Qualitative methods are particularly well-suited to providing direct access to the conditions of poor neighborhoods and their residents' "interpretations of these conditions." Qualitative work is also often necessary to identify the mechanisms that produce effects observed through quantitative analysis (Small and Feldman, 2012). Second, qualitative studies play a central role in the process of discovering and validating hypotheses (Wilson and Chadda, 2009). Third, use of a metasynthesis can bring together data spanning individual qualitative studies, allows analysis of themes present across numerous studies, and permits development of a theoretical account on the basis of the breadth and depth of the body of data.

We synthesized data on the use of housing vouchers. We relied on statements transcribed from 20 studies that included interviews with voucher holders. The method was both inductive and deductive. The first step was to locate the relevant literature. Using Web of Science as our primary database, the search began using text words and keywords. The search was conducted for articles pertaining to housing vouchers and other related terms (such as "HCV, Section 8"). Following from this, search terms were used to identify articles that reported studies using a qualitative research design. After this method yielded fewer than eight studies, we turned to use of the Google Scholar search engine, which indexes "gray area" research, such

as theses and government reports. This search was complemented with forward and backward citation tracking and contact with researchers and practitioners in the housing voucher field. Inclusion criteria included the following: (1) research that included a qualitative design component (this included randomized control trials, cohort studies, and mixed methods studies that included both surveys and focus groups); (2) published articles/reports and dissertations/reports/book chapters; (3) investigations of location-choice deliberations (thus many other qualitative inquiries were excluded from this analysis because they did not focus on these two criteria); (4) evidence of verbal interaction between the researcher and the participant that informed the formulation of the results; and (5) only articles about housing vouchers in the United States. The resulting selection after applying these criteria was 20 articles (table 1). These articles were entered into NVivo qualitative analysis software, and the direct quotes attributed to the voucher program participants were identified for coding.

To prepare for the coding stage, we first developed themes from the theoretical literature about structural constraints and individual preferences that are believed to influence residential decision making. We referred to these as the "choice/constraint" framework. Subsequent readings enabled development of subthemes in a grounded fashion. The author read the selected studies three times: First for an initial understanding, and second for an initial coding and development of grounded themes. These two phases led to 32 distinct subthemes relating to the a-priori and grounded themes. During the third reading of the studies, coding was done for these grounded themes. The fourth and final step, the metasynthesis step, involved reviewing these themes, their relative frequency in the body of qualitative data and their relationship to the theoretical framework. Safety, an a-priori theme, stood out as dominant and generated seven subthemes: household safety considerations, general safety in the housing unit, child safety in the housing unit, general neighborhood safety, child neighborhood safety, policy and school safety. The author then organized these themes according to the dimensions of residential decision making.

While the majority of the qualitative studies provided detailed accounts given by the participants regarding their concerns over safety, no studies analyzed the data across sites to explore the frequency and dimensions of safety, nor how it relates to the residential decision-

making process, as is our intent here. Again, that is the purpose of this meta-analysis: to identify and analyze patterns that appear common to many studies and to provide a theoretical account for the identified pattern.[1]

These studies contained participants' accounts of which factors contributed to dissatisfaction as households were taking into account household composition and housing unit, and neighborhood and institutional factors. We present the results below and then highlight the key dimensions that prompted participants to discuss neighborhood safety concerns in light of these factors.

Findings

The qualitative data revealed a variety of motivations for residential mobility among participants, who are almost exclusively women and often mothers. Many, especially those coming from large urban centers, are also people of color. Table 2 presents the data in our choice/constraint framework, highlighting the frequency of times that we had coded the data as conforming to the most common themes. Overall, these data represent the distribution of themes found in 20 qualitative studies on the residential decision making of voucher recipients in a variety of relocation contexts. Individuals had volunteered to participate in voucher programs, had signed up for a standard housing voucher or had lived in public housing slated for demolition and had elected to use a voucher rather than relocate to another public housing complex. Regardless of context, all participants shared the common experience of having been offered vouchers to change residences.

As outlined in Table 2, decision making for voucher holders is complex. Participants must operate within the constraints of both the larger housing market and the particulars of the voucher program. Common constraints include availability of transportation, racial discrimination and inability to gain access to the private housing market. In short, participants

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[1] For example, Katz, Kling and Liebman, from the case study of MTO in Boston noted, "Our qualitative interviews confirmed that fear for the safety of their children was the most powerful motive for most families in deciding to apply for MTO, and that this fear was greatly reduced among families that moved to new neighborhoods" (Katz, Kling and Liebman, 2000).However, the authors do not attempt to analyze the causes or consequences of safety as a mechanism for residential decision making.

encounter difficulties finding desirable units or they lack a sufficient credit score to obtain them. The voucher program itself is sometimes a barrier, such as when participants are pressured for time by program deadlines or lack adequate relocation counseling, or receive insufficient housing subsidies.

Table 2 also presents data related to levels of satisfaction (as conceived of by demographers), since this reaction influences mobility thinking among voucher participants. It may not be surprising that data on dissatisfaction would be more prevalent than data on satisfaction, given that voucher programs are designed to help people who are already motivated to relocate. Nonetheless, participants cite features that they enjoy in their neighborhoods of origin—most commonly, needed services, such as proximity to medical care and after school and childcare programs as well as amenities like nearby stores. Some participants mention emotional attachment to their neighborhoods of origin, some life-long, and attachment to networks of social support.

The more abundant data on dissatisfaction indicates multiple kinds of dissatisfaction. Interpersonally, they show that stressful and demanding networks were as prevalent as supportive ones. The qualitative data arising from our analysis shows that participants identify a general lack of opportunity as the fourth most prevalent source of dissatisfaction: "You get to a point where you think, 'I'm tired of this. I hate this place. I deserve better.' ").This finding contrasts with previous quantitative surveys of residents, in which only a small percentage want to move due to a lack of job opportunities. Our analysis reveals that crowding and a desire for a single-family dwelling, a traditional variable of dissatisfaction, also ranks high for voucher participants. Many note that inadequate living space informs a desire to move. Social disorder -- drug dealing, noise, anti-social behavior and physical disorder -- is the second greatest source of dissatisfaction in the data. Violence and lack of safety is the chief source of dissatisfaction, and we will now turn our attention to this data.

Neighborhood violence and residential mobility and satisfaction

The theme "safety need" is one of the most prominent and consistent themes observed

in the analysis, as well as one of the most complex. Spanning cities of diverse size and region of the country, relocation contexts and participant demographics, participants frequently stress how the need for safety motivated their interest in using a housing voucher to make a residential move. Nearly all of the studies surveyed include details about participants' safety concerns.

In this section, we focus on how lack of safety and neighborhood violence works to motivate residential mobility for voucher recipients. We do so both because of the primacy and the prevalence of the theme. By primacy, we mean that concerns about violence are primary motivations, consistent with established convention stating that the motivation to survive trumps the motivation to thrive. Housing voucher program participants indeed feel that survival is at stake and that finding a location with lower levels or more predictable patterns of crime is not an amenity but a necessity. By prevalence, we mean that safety considerations cascade throughout all of the factors that voucher holders consider. Participants describe how neighborhood violence affects institutions, neighborhoods and their dwelling units. They also describe their particular sense of vulnerability, as single heads of households with dependent children. Table 3 presents a breakdown of the safety dissatisfaction data presented in aggregate in Table 2.

Household vulnerability and residential satisfaction

As the residential mobility literature has outlined, individual factors — chiefly age and family situation — are the primary factors for residential satisfaction. As shown in Table 3, households make numerous references to household vulnerability, by which we mean the head of household speaks about safety concerns specifically due to the presence of children or the absence of an additional parent in the household. Also, we inferred that the age and gender of children in the household was interacting with the presence of neighborhood violence to shape the level of satisfaction of participants with their current housing and alternatives. Mothers detail their fears of allowing young children to play outside: "You never know when somebody start shooting" (DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2010. P.1477). Mothers relate a different set of worries

for older children, having distinct concerns for boys and girls. For boys, some mothers worried about them getting involved in drug-related violence or becoming victims of police brutality. As one participant detailed: "So bad, you know, when my oldest son — when he was a kid, he saw this drug dealer on the corner, and he said, 'I want to be just like that when I get older.' I said, 'Oh, it's time to go.' "Another mother notes: "I have a ten-year-old son... . And by his being a boy, his chances of joining a gang is very, very high" (Popkin, 2000, p.18). Mothers of girls worry about rape and sexual harassment. Popkin (2006) identified sexual predation as a key factor, and Duncan (2008) has described mothers worried about drug dealers using their power to make sexual advances on adolescent and pre-adolescent girls: "They go for the 12-year-olds, the 11-year-olds, and give them drugs, and that's not good. ... I have seen a lot of young girls like that ... . I refuse for my daughter to be like that" (Duncan, 2008, p.7).

Because many voucher users are single women and mothers, safety and neighborhood violence are a particular source of dissatisfaction. As noted earlier, studies have shown that women experience greater vulnerability to crime, and many are responsible for children, who are themselves a highly vulnerable class. Moreover, as sole caretakers, the voucher holders are unable to rely on a second parent to provide care and protection for their children. Many voucher seekers live "doubled up" (that is, with another household), a less than optimal situation. In our review of the pertinent literature, we did not find any qualitative accounts of female participants doubled up with a male-headed household, but frequently participants lived with mothers, sisters and/or aunts in unsafe neighborhoods. For example, Deluca and Rosenblatt (2010) highlighted that a participant lived "doubled up in her mother's neighborhood, which has such a dense drug trade that the fieldworkers had to wade through drug deals to get to the front door." Thus, while sometimes doubling up allowed for another adult in the household, household vulnerability was still an issue because participants often lived with equally vulnerable households in dangerous places. For households with multiple children, especially if some were young and others adolescents and a mix of boy and girls, the kinds of dissatisfaction with respect to safety multiplied.

Housing unit and housing satisfaction

Many voucher participants described how neighborhood violence contributes to dissatisfaction with their housing units. Frequently, women cite fear of being victimized in their own homes by neighborhood gun violence. For example, one woman in Newport News, VA, says: "When I went to bed, there was the sound of gunfire" (Varady and Walker, 2000, p.45). Similarly, a participant in Atlanta recounts: "There have been a lot of times [in the pre-voucher housing] I felt like [the gunfire] was so close I didn't get up, I just rolled on out" (Brooks el. al. 2005, p.17).

In addition to fears of gun violence, participants also tell of feeling other threats to their safety occurring proximate to their places of residence. These threats include gang activity and drug trade. As one women in Chicago details, in the housing where she had lived prior to using a voucher, she would encounter: "Constant gangbangin', constant drug sellin'" (Pashup et. al., 272) outside the doors of her apartment. Women also recount fearing sexual assault; a woman from Chicago recalls that she wanted to move "… because when I first got in the projects, the guys, I would be with my kids, they would grab my butt, they would sexually harass me on the elevator" (Popkin, 2000, p.17). Taken together, women describe experiences in which neighborhood conditions led them to fear for their personal safety in and around their housing units. They describe how concerns about being robbed, raped or shot in their own homes motivate them to find a new place to live.

While participants expressed concern for their own safety, participants with dependent children, articulate their concerns vividly and with urgency. Many describe threats to their children's safety encountered in their housing units or apartment complexes. As one woman recounts, common spaces such as elevators and hallways are especially sinister: "These projects been up here for I don't know how many years, they're bad, … the kids put their paper, cans, and their piss, spit, beer, all that, my kids have fell in piss I don't know how many times on the elevator and … it's just horrible" (Popkin, 2000, p.17). Another woman describes her fear of common spaces in her building as well as her concerns about the impact of exposure to violence on her children: "I don't want to live around this, I don't want to subject my kids to all

of this stuff, and I certainly do not want to be getting on the elevator with people who I knew could actually take somebody's life, beat them on top after they done shot them."

Neighborhood factors and housing satisfaction

Neighborhood violence was often reported as influencing voucher holders' residential satisfaction —in particular, the immediate threat it posed to them physically, as compared to a more abstract concern about neighborhood quality or reputation. A participant in Boston offers her depiction of the neighborhood environment: "When you go outside, you don't know what's flying around the corner. You gotta look both ways when you open the front door. You had to constantly look behind you to make sure nothing's comin' around you. … It was like living in prison. I was afraid to get in my own car and go some place, and come back home and not know if your house would be shot out or what" (Katz, Kling and Liebman, 2000) Another participant further elaborates: "I have walked past their way and had a guy come out with a shotgun. With me walking down the street. For what, he gonna take my life?" (Popkin, 2000, p.17). One woman notes the high rates of murder and drug abuse in her Atlanta neighborhood: "Somebody is always getting killed. In fact three have been killed this year. And drugs, drugs, drugs … ." (Brooks, 2005, p.16).

Participants also express how broader neighborhood threats to children's safety motivate them to move, including some who had not originated from public housing and those who were new recipients of housing subsidies. Some participants explain how fear of violence led them to restrict the routines of their children: "I was afraid to let them out much. … You never know when somebody start shooting." (Deluca and Rosenblatt, 2010, p.1477)Another participant in Boston articulates her fear of random violence that frequently occurs in the neighborhood. She wants to move, reasoning: "As long as the kids is safe, that what my main concern was. … They can't grow up normally in an atmosphere of fear. They can't play games and stuff. … I wouldn't let them go out, because I was afraid. Bullets don't got no name" (Kling, Lieberman and Katz, 2005, p.14).

Institutional factors, safety and residential satisfaction

Also significantly affecting residential decision making among participants is the experience of neighborhood violence through two institutions, the police and the public schools. Participants say their motivation to change schools primarily arises out of a concern about school safety. "A number of mothers saw residential mobility, coupled with school mobility, as a critical strategy to improve their children's well-being. They were desperate to remove their children from the violent conditions of some of the city schools" (DeLuca et al., 2013). For example, one participant feels that if she doesn't get her daughter out of the city school system "… she wasn't gonna make it." In this context, the expression to "make it" refers, as DeLuca and Rosenblatt (2010) note, to "a common sentiment that children would not 'survive' in the city schools. This fear drove some of the movers to participate in a voucher program. Thus, it appears that these parents are not worrying about their children's chances of thriving in the urban public school system but are speaking literally about survival: "Um, it's a bad school. My girlfriend's son got kilt up there" (DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2010, p.1467). Briggs similarly had found that most parents emphasize perceived safety and convenience as indicators of a "good" school rather than reliable evidence of academic support, such as small class sizes, student counseling, and tutoring, which might lead to higher levels of academic achievement. Instead, these parents place a high priority on ensuring that their children are going to be safe at school, even if this meant staying at the school in their original neighborhood (Briggs, 2006).

For example, one participant says that the "only thing" she dislikes about the school is "there was always riots, they always started fires. … My concern was my child's safety. … It's beginning to run into a pattern with the school catching on fire. You have children from other schools that's coming into this school starting fights and stuff. It's just you all need to pay attention to that as far as we need more security." Another mother relates how "one boy put his hair on fire and burned a braid. The seventh grade, one boy threatened to kill him, you know, it was terrible. Threatened to kill him over a soda, ´cause Robby brought a soda and the boy wanted to drink his soda, and Robby told him no" (Deluca and Rosenblatt, 2010, p. 1471).

Participants also identify local police departments as a source of residential dissatisfaction, in light of neighborhood violence. The police are described as ineffectual in reducing crime and violence: "Big, huge fights where the police come and mace people. … You probably would hear the ambulance or the police around here, you might hear it every night or whatever" (Rosenblatt, et. al, 2013, p 272). Criminals are described as able to predictably evade police patrols, such as when "burglars and muggers used the complex's interior courtyards to hide from police because they were not visible from the street" (Varady and Walker, 2000, p.122). Others fear that the police would not protect them from retaliation. Explaining why she didn't report an assault, a woman says: "I couldn't get a police report because … the CHA manager was telling me once you call the police on them then you're gonna make it hard for them to sell their drugs, and it's gonna be hard for you to live over here." (Popkin and Cunningham,2000, p.17). Finally, when discussing their experience of neighborhood violence, voucher holders suggest that the institutions themselves may be a source of threat. One woman in Chicago points out that, in the housing where she had previously lived before using a voucher, she used to encounter "constant police harassment."

Consideration of alternatives: trade-offs and safety

As participants enter the next phase of decision making, that is, considering alternatives, accounts have suggested the primacy of safety among participants, relative to other criteria during their housing search. One participant explains that the most important factor is escaping her current threatening environment and that access to her place of employment is relatively unimportant: "I don't care about being close to work. I just want to be away from Rainier" (Galvez, 2010, p.13). This finding about tradeoffs is consistent with findings from prior studies (Wood, Turnham, and Mills, 2008; Smith, 2002). Thus, while studies have shown that some participants weigh a number of competing motivations, neighborhood conditions threaten their basic need for safety on multiple levels, leading some to select for safety.

Other qualitative data show participants knowingly moving into or remaining in unsafe neighborhoods and developing strategies to secure safety. Some satisfy safety needs by moving

to another part of the neighborhood or by simply relocating down the block. Participants attempt to satisfy other preferences, such as proximity to networks of social support or other dwelling unit needs, especially when seeking larger apartments. Participants detail how safety factors into their satisfaction, not always culminating in a decision to move but rather a change in routine. Participants sometimes acknowledge that they were locating into unsafe neighborhoods because they offer more living space or proximity to formal and informal sources of support. One such participant explains: "It's not so much that the neighborhood is bad, because I can deal with it, you know what I'm saying, but I need more space." Another participant had been living in an area that had drug activity up the street, where not long before there had been a shoot-out between rival gangs. But this participant says that she found the neighborhood safe, because she could "avoid the drug activity."

Accounts have shown that participants devise strategies to minimize their exposure to crime and violence in their neighborhoods. For example, many mothers enforce rules that limit their children's play areas in an effort to avoid conflict with drug dealers or violence in the neighborhood. One of the most common adaptations to violence is "telescoping," (Rosenblatt and Deluca, 2012) or redefining the neighborhood to be the space right outside their front door. In this way, they could distinguish these relatively safe places from the general crime in the wider neighborhood. As one participant explains: "This block right here is nice, don't get me wrong. I wouldn't change the block I live on for the world, this is a nice block. But these surrounding blocks is a mess" (Rosenblatt and Deluca, 2012, 272). As Rosenblatt and DeLuca (2012) noted, mothers strictly enforce rules regarding where children can play and travel, and these strategies are often exemplary of good parenting in less safe areas. Rules around avoiding violence extend to neighboring behavior. In addition to avoiding certain parts of the neighborhood, minding one's business means being quiet, not borrowing from neighbors, and not getting involved with conflicts in the neighborhood. "Keeping one's head down" or "keeping to oneself" is described by many as part of what it means to be a good neighbor.

Discussion

Early research into household mobility had confronted the assumption that mobility is a reflection of pathology on the part of the household, but, in fact, it was shown that mobility is a predictable and often positive response to changes in the life course (Rossi and Shlay, 1982). The mainstream housing literature has established that, in general, households use mobility strategically to increase their financial and human capital, most commonly by moving to invest in property located where they believe their children will benefit from improved opportunities to thrive. However, for low-income households, the voucher data suggest that for low-resourced households, the decision about when or where to move is often far less strategic, but often not because of the character of the household, as held by original pathology assumption, or for lack of internal motivation or good information, as more recent literature suggested Rather, household mobility can be — and often is — a response to a drive to meet basic safety needs. Although some disadvantaged households are compelled to relocate for reasons such as eviction, what may be construed to be voluntary mobility through a subsidized program can be in direct response to external conditions that threaten a family's survival needs.

Insights from this meta-analysis of the residential mobility literature introduce the idea that neighborhood violence is a key influence on decision making and behavior — either prompting a decision to move, affecting the assessment of alternatives, or causing the adaptation of activity within the current neighborhood. Assumptions that low-income households use a housing voucher program mainly as a means to facilitate movement out of concentrated poverty are unsubstantiated by systematic analysis of the many factors affecting the residential decision-making process of low-income families.

Both structural forces (such as race-based discrimination and scarcity of affordable, quality housing units) and individual preferences (such as a desire for proximity to kin or certain neighborhood amenities) contribute to residential patterns and locational outcomes. Studies of the HCV Program have suggested that an opportunity exists to learn more about "how structure and preferences interact" and influence residential decision making (Darrah and DeLuca, 2014). Follow-up research would highlight issues related to how the structure of the

neighborhood itself -- and the level of crime and violence that high concentrations of poverty produce – serve to influence residential preferences.

Using residential models of decision making allows for a conceptualization of the dynamics of residential decision making and its complexities – for both mainstream and marginalized households. It also allows us to understand how safety is a multifaceted variable that affects satisfaction – and survival -- at multiple levels when households consider household, dwelling unit, neighborhood and institutional factors. For voucher participants, neighborhood safety is more than a generalized threat: a broad spectrum of safety factors can lead to diminished levels of satisfaction, pushing participants toward thoughts of relocation.

This qualitative metasynthesis allows us to refine and theorize about the recognized push of neighborhood violence toward voucher programs and household mobility. First, our findings confirm the presence of past misconceptions in policy making and researcher thinking that had assumed the "pull of opportunity" to be dominant in low-income families' mobility decisions. Although housing voucher participants are motivated by a desire to pursue opportunity (such as securing a single-family home), most recount feeling driven away from their current neighborhoods by a need to improve the odds of survival for both themselves and their dependents. These accounts lead us to conclude that what draws people to participate in mobility programs is the need to improve day-to-day chances of survival as much as it is to improve long-term life prospects. Of pragmatic significance is that the former motivation, which is informed by certain observable objective neighborhood conditions rather than internal unobservable psychological motives, can be both measured and affected by neighborhood level policies.

Concern about violence is a primary mechanism that spurs voucher program participation, and this has implications for practice. Reprioritizing goals for federal mobility strategies may be warranted – i.e., to improve neighborhood safety for participating families in addition to or instead of improving parental economic "self-sufficiency" and children's educational attainment. Living in a high-crime environment prompts a variety of responses among residents, but many choose to participate in mobility programs to seek safer surroundings. This finding also suggests that local mobility counseling programs may be better

able to support families when sensitive to what families are seeking to avoid and the relative salience of safety in the school systems, for example, as compared to teacher-to-student ratios.

Second, findings from the metasynthesis demonstrate that low-income families are making mobility decisions on the basis of a multifaceted notion of safety as it relates to the family structure, within the housing unit and building and beyond to the surrounding neighborhood and institutions. Again, mobility policy expectations for participating families must be consistent with these realities. Beyond mobility programs, however, neighborhood actors and institutions are failing to provide even a modest level of safety, as described by voucher participants. We learned about property managers whose on-site efforts leave women vulnerable to assault in elevators and also about some local law enforcement exacerbating victimization by criminals. Therefore, parallel investments in school safety and community-police engagement are clearly needed.

Not only does our literature review highlight the limits of dominant theories, the framework and qualitative synthesis demonstrate the calculus in voucher holders' decision making and behaviors when navigating existential threats in many aspects of their lives. More thinking and research based on a newly emerging mobility theory has the potential to further advance mobility policy making so it can encompass both the potential for improvement and persistent peril of certain residential neighborhoods.

Finally, this paper demonstrates the need for a "mobility theory" specific to low-income families. Neighborhood conditions of violence function as a mechanism that influences preference and action. Participant descriptions of how concerns about neighborhood violence affect their residential lives and motivate their desire to change residences offer some insight into the question of how neighborhood conditions influence mobility behavior. In the case of poor people seeking to make a residential move, a need for safety shapes their behavior..

Another relevant observation is that rather than opting to relocate at strategically advantageous stages of life, voucher program participants are often induced by neighborhood violence to relocate at inopportune moments, which places these households at a further disadvantage. This is a direct consequence of decision making that selects primarily for safety.

Numerous outstanding questions remain about the role of neighborhood violence in shaping residential decision-making frameworks among voucher users. Does this pattern hold true for households that are not offered vouchers? Do high levels of neighborhood crime also compel unassisted households toward relocating even though they lack the means to do so? While the literature had anticipated parental dissatisfaction with the academic standards of schools in high-poverty neighborhoods, it is safety— not educational quality — that dominates concerns in the school context. Is safety so compromised in the public school system that parental focus is chronically diverted away from educational achievement, which is so critical to long-term economic well-being?

Mothers who decide to live in unsafe neighborhoods in exchange for fulfilling other family preferences (often described as a "trade off" scenario), do not relinquish their focus on safety nor do they accept a certain level of victimization. The data show that mothers actively defend against victimization where they live. Their descriptions show them deciphering the code of the street, explaining that code to their children, and mandating and carrying through on behavioral changes, which include restricting their movements to avoid danger zones, as well as changing the norms of parenting and neighboring to enforce their adopted survival regime. By spending time and energy securing safety for their children, what is the cost to mothers in terms of household stress and expended energy not available for other parental and personal pursuits? If dealing with neighborhood violence is the top priority for some families, how likely is it that these families can meaningfully consider and act on other relevant dwelling unit and neighborhood factors?

The gaps in knowledge and our newly emerging understanding have policy implications. For example, if families are primarily motivated by the need for safety and security to participate in a program, shouldn't meeting that need be a prime measure of the program's success? What are the consequences of a program not meeting this basic need?

Other policy implications underscore the urgent need to make neighborhoods safer. Better forms of policing, progressive responses to drug crime, and increased social capital and collective efficacy within neighborhoods will likely help. However, the research cited at the beginning of this paper has established that safer neighborhoods do not result from indirect

approaches but require direct tactics like income transfers, earned income tax credits, and government-sponsored employment programs that increase income-earning potential, directly reduce poverty, and consequently curtail a major contributor to violence and criminality at the source.

Table 1. List of studies used in this meta-analysis

Authors and year of publication	Title of study	Data source	Locations	Number of participants	Selection mode of participants
Briggs, Comey and Weisman, 2010	Struggling to stay out of high-poverty neighborhoods: Housing choice and locations in moving to opportunity's first decade	Moving to Opportunity	Chicago, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Boston	Not listed	Experimental
Briggs and Turner,1996	Lessons for Practice	Moving to Opportunity	Chicago, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Boston	Not listed	Experimental
Brooks et al., 2005	Resident perception of housing, neighborhood, and economic conditions after relocation from public housing undergoing HOPE VI redevelopment	Case study	Atlanta, GA	93	Involuntary relocation

DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2010	Does moving to better neighborhoods lead to better schooling opportunities? Parental school choice in an experimental housing voucher program	Moving to Opportunity	Baltimore, MD	249	Experimental program
DeLuca et al., 2013	Segregating shelter: how housing policies shape the residential locations of low-income minority families	Case study	Mobile, AL	100	Special program
Duncan, 2008	New lessons from the Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity residential mobility programs	Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity	Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York	Not given	Experimental and special program
Frieman et al., 2013	Housing Assistance and Supportive Services in Memphis	HOPE VI	Memphis	Not Given	Involuntary relocation
Galvez, 2010	Getting past 'no': Housing choice voucher holders' experiences with discrimination and search costs	Case study	Seattle, WA	31	Involuntary relocation

Kling, Liebman and Katz, 2005.	Bullets don't got no name: Consequences of fear in the ghetto.	Moving to Opportunity	Boston	Not given	Experimental program
Pashup et al., 2005	Participation in a residential mobility Program from the client's perspective: findings from Gautreaux Two	Gautreaux Two Housing Mobility Study	Chicago, IL	71	Program recruits
Popkin, 2000	Searching for Section 8	Plan for Transformation	Chicago	141	Involuntary relocation
Popkin and Cove, 2007	Safety Is the Most Important Thing: How HOPE VI Helped Families	HOPE VI	Chicago	881	Involuntary relocation
Rosenblatt and Deluca, 2012	"We Don't Live Outside,We Live in Here": Neighborhood and Residential Mobility Decisions Among Low-Income Families†	MTO	Baltimore	124	Program recruits
Scott 2012	A case study of Anacostia: the role of housing vouchers on the local housing market	Case study	Washington, DC	84	Standard HCVP program

Smith, 2002	Housing choice for HOPE VI relocatees	HOPE VI	Baltimore, MD; Louisville, KY; San Antonio, TX; and Seattle, WA	88	Forced relocation
Teater 2011.	A qualitative evaluation of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program: The recipients' perspectives	Case study	Midwestern City	14	Standard HCVP program
Varady and Walker, 2000	Vouchering out distressed subsidized developments: Does moving lead to improvements in housing and neighborhood conditions?	Case studies	San Francisco, Kansas City, Newport News, Baltimore	201	Involuntary relocation

Varady, Walker and Wang, 2001	Voucher Recipient Achievement of Improved Housing Conditions in the US: Do Moving Distance and Relocation Services Matter?	Case studies	San Francisco, Kansas City, Newport News, Baltimore	201	Involuntary relocation
Wood, Turnham and Mills, 2008	Housing affordability and family well-being: results from the housing voucher evaluation	Welfare to Work	Atlanta; Augusta, GA; Fresno, CA; Houston; Los Angeles; and Spokane, WA	141	Experimental
Zuberi, 2010	Limited exposure: Children's activities and neighborhood effects in the Gautreaux Two Housing Mobility program.	Gautreaux Two	Chicago	46	Program recruits

Table 2. Mapped to our "choice/constraint" framework, the distribution of themes of concern to housing voucher recipients. (Quotations directly attributed to a program participant are representative of coded content for each theme.)

CONSTRAINT		CHOICE	
Structural	**Programmatic**	**Satisfaction**	**Dissatisfaction**
Discrimination (22)* "If you're trying to move into a suburban, nice, pretty neighborhood, lot of times they don't want to let you in because of your color." (Popkin, 2000)	Counseling (36) "How they talk to people. Talking to you like you were a child or a kid. If you're working in a professional setting, you're supposed to talk like a professional. It makes you feel low." (Teater, 2010)	Accessibility and services (13) "I'm a diabetic. Wanted to be close to the clinic." (Smith, 2002)	Safety (61) "They had a shootout next door. … I said to my kids, 'You're not staying home by yourselves no more. That's it.' … You wouldn't want to raise your kids in that." (King, Lieberman and Katz, 2005)

Access to private housing market (20) "The credit checks determine where you live." (Galvez, 2010)	Timing (17) "You would have to end up living somewhere that you don't want to live because of the simple fact they done put a rush on you." (Popkin, 2010)	Attachment to place (4) "I've been in this area all my life." (Scott, 2012)	Social disorder (51) People are 'Blah! Blah!' Loud! The music is high, there's ghetto people. You even hear 8-year old kids F-talking! . . . You know those kids are trouble." (Briggs, Comey and Weisman, 2010) . . "
Transportation (15) "You move to a location where the nearest grocery store is 2 miles away. How are you going to go there and get back with a full bag of groceries?" (Varady and Walker, 2000)."	Insufficient subsidy (10) "I moved into my place because the deposit was affordable. If I had more [for the deposit] I would have paid it and gone somewhere else." (Galvez, 2010)	Interpersonal attachment (3) "It's all about my mom, I don't care what area, but I just don't want to move too far away from [her]." (Pashup, et. al, 2005)	Crowding (16): "My kids are teenagers and I thought ... 'We cannot be bumping into each other in these apartments.' We definitely need space." (Rosenblatt, 2012)

		Amenities (3):" You have lived across from this full-service grocery store for 20 years now, and you move to a location where the nearest grocery store is 2 miles away. How are you going to go there and get back with a full bag of groceries?" (Varady and Walker, 2000)	Lack of Opportunity (13) "I knew there was something better you know. There had to be something better." (DeLuca and Rosenblatt, 2010)
Number of comments directly attributed to program participants and coded to the specified theme.			

Table 3. Safety-related subthemes coded as causing dissatisfaction among housing voucher recipients (61 total instances)

Household concern	Dwelling unit concern	Neighborhood concern	Community institution
Household vulnerability (26)*	All household members (14)	All household members (28)	School safety (5)
	Child-related (6)	Child-related (17)	Inadequate policing (4)
* Number of comments directly attributed to program participants and coded to a specified subtheme. Data in aggregate also presented in Table 2			

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